

## Vestry Minutes

FINAL

March 26, 2006  
Adams Room

Present: Clergy and staff: Paul Abernathy, Shearon Williams, Susan Block  
Wardens: Mike Townsend, Charley Donnelly  
Vestry Members: Stewart Andrews Eileen Blumenthal, Rod Lawrence,  
Julie Murphy Burton Reist, Lisa Sotir, Susan Thigpen, David Willson,  
Margaret Wood  
Officers: Jack Burton, Pete Carlson, Hank Donnelly

### Action Items and Discussion

#### **1. Space Use Committee**

Charley outlined the recommendations of the Space Use Committee. He reviewed the history of the Vestry's consideration of the topic and reported on the committee's survey of affiliated organizations that use church space. The consensus of the committee, he said, was to inform the St. Mark's Players that the space currently used for theater storage, located behind the mural in the Parish Hall, would be converted into two to four small group spaces.

In urging the project, supporters emphasized the need for additional space to accommodate the growing Sunday School program, which among others things is already lacking an appropriate room for the middle school class. But they also urged that the new space be thought of not only as for the Sunday School, but rather meeting a larger need for small group space throughout the week.

Charley, Rod and others who had met with the Players leadership reported that the response was cooperative and open to compromise in finding mutually acceptable arrangements. Talks have covered such topics as security and off-site storage. The Players have said they will work to reduce bulky sets and get rid of unneeded items. Still, some members warned of logistical problems during productions as a result of off-site storage.

Susan Thigpen moved approval of the first four of the committee's proposals, which called for:

- Enclosing the Undercroft Library as a classroom.
- Informing the Players that new uses were intended for the current storage space behind the mural.
- Authorized joint efforts to resolve resulting security and storage issues for the Players.
- Authorized commissioning of an architect to develop plans for developing the space as either two or four classrooms, the latter option also requiring a staircase.

The motion was approved without objection.

## **2. Christian Education Report**

Christian Education Co-Directors Kitty Donnelly, Beth Mahood and Jane Sherman held an extended discussion with Vestry members about Christian education and related issues. The discussion was based in part on the co-directors' written response to the Vestry about the Vestry Retreat Action Plan and its call for reducing unnecessary work and leader burnout. But the conversation ranged broadly over a variety of education topics, including teacher recruitment, course content and parish support. A few members suggested that the functional education may not be meeting the needs of some of the newer members of the church.

Paul delivered a ringing endorsement of functional education: "Functional education is the core of our community—the vehicle that our community has used for more than half a century. It's a process that allows bonding to happen, and when visitors come, they sense the vibrancy, self-disclosure and risk-taking that results. Functional education for me is the foundation of our community life. That's the piece that I would never want to lose. It brought this place out of the ashes."

Above all, Vestry members offered gratitude to the co-directors, and absent colleague Matt Ossolinski, for the tremendous amount of effort involved in running the Christian Education program. Julie's words of appreciation were followed by prolonged and stormy applause.

## **3. Sunday Worship Schedule**

Vicki Street presented the results of the Worship Committee's months-long inquiry into changes in the Sunday morning schedule. She reported, however, that the group was evenly split on whether to have a service schedule of 8:45 and 11:15 or 9 a.m. and 11:15. Following are some of the comments from the discussion:

Burton: You can't do the whole service at 9 am [within the current time limit].

Thirty to 40 percent of services run over, and that puts a crimp in everything else that morning.

Vicki: Worship Committee also wants to drop announcement by Vestry greeter, [to help save time].

Margaret: My concern is that time has become the primary consideration. To have the ability to structure an imaginative service, you need time. Also, the tight schedule puts a lot of stress on the verger, leading to difficult personal interactions between those running the service.

Charley: Why not just shorten Sermon Seminar?

Burton: The problem is that there is not enough time for the 9 am service. We need more time. So I would support 11:15 and 8:45, or just 11:15, but we have to do something.

Paul: We have to be customer focused. Most people are not that concerned about formal liturgy. You're trying to change the culture in extending the time in order to put in more traditional elements.

Burton: We're not trying to go High Church, but we need extra time to express the culture of the place more freely.

David: The Worship Committee has worked hard on this process, but not reached a consensus. I don't see a crying need for change.

Vicki: Tight discipline works OK most of the time to keep 9 am on schedule, but not when there is something different, such as baptism or Liturgy of Departure.

Julie: Strongly opposed to shifting early service to 8:45 am.

Susan: What if we drop the Vestry greeter and one clergy greeter to save time, but not change the schedule.

Paul: Dropping the Vestry greeter would leave the service without a lay voice in greeting.

Mike then moved to shift the later service to 11:15 am. Paul stated that if the change went into effect, the early service would still be held to 45-50 minutes, while the 11:15 service would end by 12:30 pm.

The motion was approved by voice vote. Two "nay" votes were heard. Mike stated that he and Paul would put together a letter to the community outlining the changes to the service schedule and the reasoning behind it, as well as alerting the community about the Vestry decisions with regard to Space Usage.

#### **4. Nominating Committee Report**

Julie Murphy advised that there are 5 nominees for vestry and 3 for diocesan delegate. Each class is working on assigned task. Of the 3<sup>rd</sup> years, Stewart is running the meeting; Julie is responsible for child care, and Rod is handling election issues. She asked everyone to encourage people to come and to talk up the meeting. The Gospel will include photos and statement. The annual meeting information will be on web page.

Stewart asked about how we deal with people showing up for regular services, and asked if the sandwich board can include a notice, as well as postings on the doors. Shearon suggested putting it on the webpage, because so many people show up through the website.

Paul asked about when it will begin. Rod said that as soon as service ends, there will be time for people to register, collect food and drop off children. Paul suggested that with 5 candidates and reelections, should not be too long.

Susan Block noted if there was anything that we wanted the staff to do, please just ask. Margaret suggested posting people outside the door to let people know about the meeting. Rod asked Mike, Charley and the clergy to talk during the vote counts to keep people there.

## **5. Warden's Report**

Mike advised that the sabbatical update materials are long – please review, and ask Mike if you have questions.

He reported on the work done on the Katrina relief proposal – it was enormously slimmed down, so that there will be a total contribution of \$4000 plus a furniture drive. \$3000 will come from the Outreach board's funds, which it has approved; the remaining \$1000 needs to be raised. While the furniture drive doesn't require vestry approval, the \$1000 fundraising requires approval.

MOTION: Mike moved/Charley seconded to give Jo Ellen Hayden the authority to raise \$1000 via announcements, during the next 1-2 weeks through April 15. Unanimously approved. Vestry had earlier approved the project by email.

Mike noted that the Mardi Gras dance made \$400.

Nadine Hathaway has agreed to be Register, subject to Vestry election.

An update was provided to the Vestry from Doris Burton on the Bishop's Blend coffee project – the new coffee has proven popular and the sale of bags of the coffee has helped offset the increased cost. Doris requested that the project, which had been approved on a three-month trial basis, be extended for the rest of 2006. Mike moved the question, Lisa Sotir Ozkan seconded, and the extension of the Bishop's Blend coffee program was extended for the rest of the year by a unanimous voice vote.

## **6. What's New, Working, etc.**

- Pete Carlson reported that church utility bills are running \$13,000 in a month, rather than \$5000 from last year. Is doing an audit, will ask Don Ellison to help.
- Margaret Wood – Move up the Mission Statement on the cover of the bulletin
- Eileen – we had 90 people sign up for the Agape dinners.
- Lisa – advised on change in number of issues of Gospel to September, November/December, February, April, May/June.
- Eileen – her granddaughter is attending St. Mark's, and is hearing good things about the church.
- Paul – mentioned that the 20s and 30;s group wants some things that are not typical at St. Mark's – like more formative prayer experience. Because we're skeptical, hard to find here. Mike mentioned that the group has an April dinner planned to discuss prayer, which represents a change from the kinds of activities done by previous iterations of the group.

Respectfully submitted,

Hank Donnelly, Register  
Lisa Sotir, Vestry Member

Reviewed and approved by Vestry, April 2006