

St Johns Parish

Minutes of the Vestry

May 13, 2008

The May vestry meeting convened in the Parish Life Building at 7:00 PM.

Members present were: Junior Warden Boyd Baker, Dannie Barteet, Darlene Blitch, Billy Crowther, Neal Edgerton, Senior Warden Perry Gervais, Stephen Haynsworth, Sherri Houston, Trace Paradise, and Libby Puckette. Also present were: Father Joe Gibbes, Treasurer Cindy Pennington, and Recording Secretary Susan Shealey. Absent were: Sue Jenkins, Adair McKoy, and Father Greg Snyder.

Father Joe called the meeting to order by opening with prayer.

Senior Warden Perry Gervais led the vestry in the reading of the Vision.

Dannie Barteet made a motion to accept the minutes of the last meeting as submitted. Trace Paradise seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved.

Old Business:

Financial Situation:

Billy Crowther opened the discussion stating that he was uneasy with the state of the budget, and where the church is financially as we head into the middle of the year. He suggested the vestry begin discussion about the situation. He reminded the vestry about the shortfall last year, and suggested that the church is headed in the same direction for this year. He states that he feels it would be irresponsible to go into 2009 with a significant shortfall.

Cindy Pennington commented upon question from the vestry that there is a combination of things that are contributing to the present situation. Her belief is that the vestry should be talking about who the church is touching, and rely on the Lord to bless the financials. She reminded the vestry that there are reserves, liquid assets, and property. If we were to look at St. John's balance sheet, we should be ashamed for all we have been blessed with and are not using. The question should be who are we touching and how are we impacting others.

Billy Crowther asked if we are spending money doing God's work. Are day to day operations God's work? He stated that at some point we have to stop deficit spending.

Stephen Haynsworth asked if maybe we should be looking at ways to increase revenue instead of cutting back spending. He reminded the vestry that as the leaders we need to offer people opportunities to pledge. He suggested that we go on in faith for the ministries of the church and see if the Lord will bless it.

The vestry asked about attendance and the numbers suggest that attendance is stagnant but not down.

Darlene Blitch commented on utilizing money from the Grace Chapel fund by suggesting that if we continue to "dip" into that fund, then it will be gone. She feels that it is not a good trend to cover the budget with that money.

Boyd Baker replied that the vestry should be acting according to scripture which says that we are to be responsible but he is not sure of what the answer is at this point. Libby Puckette

agreed that yes, we are spending money but asked “Are we growing in our faith?” If programs are working and people are growing in their faith, then we should keep doing it. We also need to be in prayer about this issue.

Perry Gervais concurred. He said that the concerns were valid and that the vestry ought to pray about it. He recommended that any big expenditure be addressed individually going forward, even if that meant a special meeting to discuss. He asked the vestry to pray every day between now and the next meeting regarding this issue. He also wondered if the numbers and figures that we are printing monthly in the Bridge are presented in a way that would explain the urgency of the financial needs and situation. He also suggested that we put a note in the Bridge to pray about the budget and the needs of the church.

Neal Edgerton commented that since the vestry knows the funds are there, they tend to rely on them. He suggested (not entirely tongue in cheek) that the vestry give all Grace Chapel funds to the Outreach Committee and then maybe the vestry could see the seriousness of the financial situation.

Boyd Baker then commented that he would rather get the congregation to “wake up” to the problems and needs rather than cut the budget.

Billy Crowther mentioned that his thoughts were not about cutting outreach and programs but about being wise stewards.

Darlene Blich asked the vestry to look at staffing and wondered if the church can really support the staff we have since it is such a large portion of the budget. Sherri Houston commented that staffing is currently 65 % of the budget.

Father Joe commended the vestry for their concerns about stewardship. He informed them that he and Father Greg have talked, and continue to talk, extensively about the various issues. The staff is very mindful about how they spend money as well. There is a plan in the discussion phase about streamlining staffing already. Father Joe did tell the vestry regarding ministries however, that if we feel called to do certain ministries we should do those ministries.

Trace Paradise stated that as a vestry we shouldn't look at the mechanics at this point but get on our knees and pray first.

Billy Crowther asked the vestry to commit to reviewing areas of ministry and report back next meeting. He also suggested that a letter go into the July Bridge asking the congregation to pray about the budget.

Perry Gervais affirmed that request and asked the vestry to pray diligently for thirty days specifically about the budget.

Sherri Houston asked the vestry to consider how the people who have left money to the church would feel about the way we have spent it? She also reminded the vestry that she was opposed to staffing up as quickly as we did. She strongly believes that we moved too fast in that direction. She also suggests that programs are not necessarily what we need to be doing either. She feels that we need to get back to the Bible and to more relational things.

After this discussion, it was decided that the vestry should pray about the budget daily for the next meeting, report back with a review of areas of ministry, and that Billy Crowther and Perry Gervais would construct a letter for the July Bridge to be presented at the next vestry meeting as well.

Committee Reports:

LaRoche Building:

Boyd Baker reported that it would cost a minimum of around \$300,000.00 to do renovations on the building. This figure represents the combination needed regarding state regulations about renovating for a school/daycare, electrical and mechanical systems, and contractors. Neal Edgerton suggested that the vestry move forward with the renovations for St. John's purposes and not for purposes of a day care. He reminded the vestry that Sarah Hocutt with Creative Play would be at the June meeting to discuss utilizing the building, and we could keep that in mind. He also suggested that we take the original blueprints that were done for that building, tweak them a little, and use those for renovation.

Darlene Blich asked the vestry if they were not contradicting themselves. Based on the budget issue that was just discussed about how grim the budget looks, and the fact that the vestry is writing a letter to the congregation about the budget, should the vestry then continue talking about a \$300,000.00 renovation?

Neal Edgerton reminded the vestry that the renovations were voted on two years ago. There is a need to make the LaRoche Building "usable". There have been many repairs that have not been done under the assumption that renovation would take place. Now those repairs need to be forthcoming as the building is showing the signs of lack of repair. The vestry directed Boyd Baker to go forward with an appraisal to ascertain the amount of money we would be allowed to spend without exceeding 50% of the value, which would require total renovation up to current code. The appraisal should be binding for up to a year, and less than \$10,000.00. There is money set aside in the Building Fund that can be used for this appraisal.

San Juan/St. John's Partnership:

Stephen Haynsworth updated the vestry on this partnership. He reported that it was going well. Father Greg and Father Joe have been assisting Rev. Mercedes with the Hispanic Service, and Rev. Mercedes has assisted Father Greg and Father Joe with some St. John's services. Thom Pennington and Diane Haynsworth are continuing with the Hispanic Sunday School class and all are moving forward. The Holy Spirit is moving in this area and the Lord is blessing the program.

275th Anniversary Committee:

There is no report at this time. The vestry asked that Karie Ann Crowther, chair of the committee, come to the June vestry meeting and give a report.

Scholarship Committee:

Sherri Houston announced that she is ready to step down as chair of this committee and asked if there was anyone else interested, or if the vestry had any recommendations. Trace Paradise made a motion that Libby Puckette be the new chair of the Scholarship Committee. Libby agreed to accept the position. Dannie Barteet seconded the motion, and the vestry approved Libby Puckette as the new chair of the Scholarship Committee.

Evangelism Committee:

Libby Puckette updated the vestry on the Franklin Graham training programs that begin this week. She also reported that over 200 people accepted Christ at the Rock the City event which was directed at the youth of the community.

Senior Warden's Report:

Perry Gervais informed the vestry that the Barrier Island Free Medical Clinic was up and running. He reminded them, as at the last vestry meeting, that they only have a three year lease and are interested in talking with us again about the land on Main Road. Dr. Charlie Davis will be the contact person, and Perry asked the vestry if they would like for him to come to the July meeting to discuss the project. The vestry agreed, and Perry will invite Dr. Davis to that meeting.

Junior Warden's Report:

Boyd Baker stated for the record that the painting of the sanctuary was complete. The vents were scraped and painted as well, but Boyd notified the vestry that because of their condition and age, it is likely that they will have to be replaced in the future.

The tree survey is back from Rawson. There are several, if not many, trees that need to be removed from the property. This is a work in progress.

The question was asked about the status of, and the amount in the Colonnade Fund. Cindy Pennington, Treasurer reported that there was currently \$67,000.00 in that fund. This project will be started and incorporated with the timing of the renovations of the LaRoche Building.

Associate Rector's Report:

Father Joe reminded the vestry that Father Greg was at a Trinity Board meeting for the week, and therefore unable to be at the meeting.

He then informed the vestry that he, Father Greg and Beth Snyder had to be to Wadmalaw Island to help parish families recovering from the tornado that hit on Sunday.

He reminded the vestry about the First Broad Street youth group from Tennessee that comes every year for mission work. The "front group" will arrive on May 28 to begin set-up. They will leave on June 7th and will be occupying the Parish Life Building for that week.

Joe asked the vestry to pray for Father Greg and the Board at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry as they pray for a leader for the school. There are three solid candidates.

Missions week was a huge success.

Father Joe asked the vestry members to look at upcoming dates.

Treasurer's Report:

Cindy Pennington, Treasurer, stated that revenue for the month looks extremely good at \$70,000.00, but to be aware that that \$21,000.00 is made up of two lump sum annual giving pledges from parishioners.

She explained variations to the budget related to Pension/Retirement and Worker's Comp premiums. Both expenditures were increased beyond what was budgeted based on unexpected audits of previous year's payroll and increases.

The financial audit is currently at a standstill as the auditor awaits reports from our banks regarding confirmation of our bank statements and status. As those are sent to the auditor, he can finish the audit and produce the report.

With the vestry prepared to break into small groups, Father Joe concluded the business portion of the meeting and it was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Shealey