

Vestry Retreat Minutes
The Church of St. Michael and St. George
6345 Wydown Blvd., Clayton, Mo. 63105

Friday, February 18–Saturday, February 19, 2022

Vestry Members in Attendance: The Rev. Andrew Archie, Ian Hagemann (*Clerk*), Betsy Panke (*Jr. Warden*), Rachel Martens, Will Springer, Bill Wallace, Peter C. Smith, Barry Kirk, Mary Katherine Ray, Nancy Reynolds, Joe Sheehan (*Sr. Warden*), Carl Eichenberger, Ruth Ezell, Daniel Smith. Saturday only: David Ott (*Treasurer*)

Clergy Assistants in Attendance: None

Guests: Dr. Nick Bideler (*Organist*), Laurie Brown (*Parish Life*), Sonya Woolley (*Administrator*)

Vestry Members Not in Attendance: None

Attachments/Handouts: Vestry Agenda, Strategic Plan 2020–2025 Summary, Financial Summary

Proceedings: The meeting was convened, and an invocation given, by the Rector at 8:00 p.m. at Cedar Creek Conference Center, New Haven, MO. The Vestry engaged in a get-acquainted exercise using a timeline of the Church and its Rectors, then answered a set of questions pertaining to the church for discussion at each table. The evening closed with the saying of Compline, led by the Rector.

The meeting reconvened at 8:30 a.m. with a Vestry Eucharist.

The Rector provided an overview of church life during the pandemic. Activities focused on heightened parishioner contact. Some parishioners perceive pandemic restrictions, such as wearing masks and not receiving the cup at the Eucharist, as a loss of control to be resented. Being a Christian is no longer typical in the United States. On the West Coast, one can easily find individuals who are three generations removed from churchgoing. In 2020, only 47% of Americans had a church affiliation, down 20 points from the turn of the century. Political identity is stronger than religious identity and this is diminishing church affiliation. The Episcopal church has the niche of highlighting aspects of the culture that may be invisible to the national evangelical movement.

Parishioners relate to clergy of their age and younger. The fact that we have grown may be thanks to our having recruited young clergy. Adults' lives are characterized by disconnection and loneliness and the church is a place where they can make connections—secondary, of course, to the connection they make with Jesus. The Strategic Plan indicated that we must improve our communications and this has not yet been completed. We have lost three staff [youth minister, part-time writer and musician] for various reasons, representing opportunities. One third of the congregation has lost

the habit of attending church. Some of the life-and-death needs that the church used to fill are now filled by secular means. And yet—the Church has now completed two of its most successful years in memory.

The Vestry discussed the significance of in-person and online participation for connectedness, belonging, and giving. A suggestion was made: at the end of online services, announce future in-person events.

The Parish Life Director presented a video showing activities of the past year, then summarized the Strategic Plan. We have successfully adopted the summer schedule year-round. Our plan to Invite—Welcome—Connect has (for better or worse) become a matter of reconnecting with lapsed members. The Faith in Action outreach steering committee has been reconvened. On April 24, the traditional Nicaragua mission dinner will become a tiki-themed festival to support seven outreach ministries. The Nicaragua mission has changed due to the situation in-country. Several of the local outreach ministries are continuing: the Shelter Ministry will serve breakfast again the 3rd Sunday of April. Episcopal City Mission birthday parties continued. Food was donated to the ARJ Last Days' Apostolic Mission and casseroles are being delivered to the Trinity food bank. The sandwich-making operation for the shelter has resumed. Our new business manager has accomplished most of the operational goals. James Leaks now works directly for the church and, using resulting cost savings, we have hired Lon Crain as a facilities manager. We will address deferred maintenance and try to replace contracted services with in-house skills, with resultant savings. The Stewardship director has made progress on all Stewardship goals. There is now an end-to-end procedure for handling donations and gifts. It is time for a capital campaign to address our physical needs, the last campaign being 15 years in the past. There are high-dollar needs, including the organ, that cannot be addressed via the Alleluia Fund. We don't know what stewardship would have looked like without a full-time director. The objective of improving collaboration with the St. Michael's School has not yet been achieved and remains a future direction.

The Senior Warden noted that the Strategic Plan should be a living document. Our role is to determine where we should be five years in the future. The Vestry participated in a brief exercise, with each table identifying a one-word description of the future Church. The Warden reminded the Vestry of the Mission and Vision of the Church.

The Treasurer provided a 2021 Review and 2022 Proposed Budget. He suggested that we are wealthy from the standpoint of endowment and facilities, but deeply illiquid. Only about \$1K of cash is unrestricted. The endowment is near \$14M, more than half of it restricted. Pledging has been stable during the pandemic, but in real dollars has not overall been rising since 2007; but being at a standstill may be a form of success since the broader church is shrinking. Expenses in the aggregate are down thanks to improved administration. The presentation here intentionally omits the Paycheck Protection Program forgiveness (\$339K) since it is not expected to happen again in the future. Were this money included, our performance would appear much more favorable to budget. The 2022 budget was shown. A \$70K deficit is projected, but such deficits

are often filled by special gifts. There was a discussion of the possibility of endowing specific roles, which would depend on finding donors interested in that role. The Senior Warden reminded the Vestry that this is a faith-based organization. A motion to accept the budget was made, seconded and unanimously adopted.

Upcoming Dates: March 6 will be a joint Evensong at the Priory. The next regular Vestry meeting will be March 17. Maundy Thursday will be April 14. April 24 will be Confirmation, with the outreach ministry dinner the same night. The Vestry are entreated to be in attendance whenever the Bishop is present.

The Vestry adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Ian Hagemann, Clerk of the Vestry