

**Vestry of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church  
Richmond, Virginia  
Minutes of the March 26, 2024 Meeting**

The following Vestry members were present: Jeff Johnson, Andy Luke, Brenda McDowell, Anne Pinion, Whitney Van Der Hyde, Kathy Brock, John Crowder, May Fox, Mary Ashburn Pearson, Bill Davis, Katherine Farley, Greta Kidd, Nan O'Connell, Gayle Royals, Randy Seibert, Robert Birdsey, Chris Smith

**Staff Present:** John Rohrs, Fred Staley, Will Stanley

**Welcome** - Introduction and reflection on our week in relation to Holy Week

**Opening Devotions** - John Rohrs led opening prayer.

**Approval of Minutes** - The minutes of the February 26, 2024 meeting were approved by voice vote.

**A. Focus Time - Diocesan Engagement**

1. Convention Delegates: John Rohrs spoke about the upcoming convention November 7-9 (Thursday evening to Saturday morning) in Fredericksburg. St. Stephen's has 12 lay representatives who will accompany the 5 Clergy delegates. Eight of the 12 delegates from last year would like to attend leaving 4 open spots. The Vestry voted to affirm the following as additional delegates: Kathy Brock, Bill Davis and Nan O'Connell of the Vestry.

2. Diocesan Support and Engagement-  
Supporting document included with Vestry Packet. John Rohrs spoke on our relationship with the Diocese including: Lay and Clergy members (St. Stephen's) leadership roles and the importance of our role as the largest church in the diocese. This position correlates to our financial support of the Diocese.

The Diocese in turn supports churches during transition/Interim time, annual programmatic support of our staff and internal programs, support of external community programs (schools, prison ministries) which indirectly impacts us as well. The Vestry discussed our relationship (present and future) with the Diocese.

**Staff Sustainability and Sabbatical Planning**

1- Management Philosophy- John Rohrs believes in investing in the health and well being of the staff by supporting the sustainability of their roles and in their development. This focus creates a more positive culture and shift for our staff and clergy. As an extension of this philosophy, the practice of sabbaticals was examined and a committee convened to discern how St. Stephen's can effectively utilize this practice for our staff/clergy.

2- Sabbatical Policy- this common and standard practice for clergy and lay staff is typically considered after a staff/clergy's tenure of 5-7 years. St. Stephen's proposes eligibility for clergy after 6 years, with an expectation the clergy remains with St. Stephen's for at least an additional year following the sabbatical. A \$5,000 sabbatical reserve account is now established to support the clergy member in a pursuit of their choosing and/or to pay for supplemental clergy support of the church during this time. John Rohrs briefed the Vestry that the previous Executive Committee

approved tentative plans for Will Stanley to take a sabbatical in the summer of 2025. The Vestry discussed the plan and affirmed the sabbatical.

## **B. On-Going Business**

1. Financials- Fred Staley presented an overview of the financials indicating a modest budget surplus. Giving seems to be on trend with this time of year.

Chris Smith, Treasurer spoke and applauded Fred on highly usable financials and all the work he has done switching over the system. He confirmed Harris, Hardy and Johnstone as our auditor for 2024.

John Crowder provided an update from the Endowment Committee on their Advisory switch to Brown Advisory (Baltimore).

### **2.Executive Director's Report:**

Fred Staley stated he is researching new database software for an expected data migration this summer. He updated Vestry on the busy and full parking lot resulting from the Preschool and St. Catherine's student parking. He proposed a plan to mitigate constraints for next year and will prioritize parking for handicapped or elderly parishioners.

### **3. Junior Warden's Report -**

Jeff Johnson shared the need for updates to the current playground. Issues include aging and missing equipment, exposed roots and other grading issues and need for a general update/refresh. A few items can be addressed immediately, but the need for a long term plan was identified.

## **C. Senior Warden and Clergy Reports**

1. Senior Warden Anne Pinion welcomed new members of the Vestry and thanked those returning. She explained that she is always available for questions or concerns as is past Senior Warden Andy Luke.

2. Rector's Report - John Rohrs provided a brief preview of the Vestry retreat occurring Sunday, April 14 12:30-4:30 at Roslyn Retreat Center. His two goals are to build fellowship, formation and community of the Vestry as well as to tackle some larger conversations than can be addressed during regular meetings.

3. Vicar's Report. Will Stanley presented the increasing attendance numbers for January and February from 2022 to 2024. He commented on the current busy Holy Week that presently includes 24 services held by the end of Easter Sunday.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Whitney Van Der Hyde, Register