

**Vestry of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church**  
**Richmond, VA**  
**Minutes of the Meeting: May 21, 2024**

**Vestry Members present:** May Fox, Andy Luke, Katherine Farley, Gayle Royals, Nan O'Connell, Mary Ashburn Pearson, Greta Kidd, Brenda McDowell, Bill Davis, Randy Siebert, Anne Pinion, Kathy Brock, Chris Smith, Robert Birdsey

**Staff present:** John Rohrs, Will Stanley, Fred Staley, Sarah Bartenstein, Dillon Gwaltney

Special thanks were noted to:

- John Jenkins and the other leaders and assistants who shepherded the Freshmen through the whole formation and preparation process for Confirmation.
- The Music staff and volunteers for the Musical Banquet fundraiser, reportedly very successful.

**Opening Devotions:** John Rohrs led opening prayer

1. **Approval of Minutes** – the minutes of the April 23, 2024 meeting were approved by voice vote.
2. **Focus Time** – Part 1: Update on the new Website status and process

Sarah Bartenstein and Dillon Gwaltney gave a very thorough summary of the progress and status of the new website. We are ending our time with the previous company due to the increasing size needs for our website and the scaling back of that company. The new company will be Landslide Creative, of Nashville, with some emphasis in its selection due to the experiences reported by various churches and other non-profits, but few Episcopal churches, to avoid the same-ness seen in other Episcopal church sites. It is built using Word Press, which will allow easy integration with other systems. The new site will be a more accessible design, with many more built-in search and analytics functions, and the monthly maintenance and hosting fees will cost about 1/3 less per month.

Different people on staff will initially be trained in specific areas, to get things up and running quickly; later stages will have expanded cross-training. Information will be gathered from each ministry/outreach area to ensure that the specific functions they need are incorporated soonest. The pre-launch session will be June 13, and a “construction” punchlist will be created and addressed. Parishioners will be provided opportunities for assistance in test-driving the site.

The new site will be more vertical, to be more accessible for scrolling, such as on a handheld device; pages will have portals to go elsewhere without having to go Home; many more videos will be incorporated, both informational and atmospheric; existing pages will be updated, with analytics expected to be built into the site with assistance from Landslide.

**Focus Time** – Part 2: New Church Management Systems (CHMS)

Fred Staley presented the proposed selection for a new CHMS. Ministry Platform was selected as the best replacement for our current out-dated system which is too small and will not be well-supported in the future as it is phased out by the parent company. Selection of Ministry Platform followed extensive search and discernment process, which indicated that it should be a big improvement. It is designed for resource sized churches, is cloud-based, and uses open-source

software for the platform. It will be much more efficient in linking related processes, saving staff time and ensuring accuracy in matching information.

Key advantages are its parishioner-facing platform that integrates with the website, and a new St. Stephen's app; streamlined event and calendar integration; easier membership/financial and parishioner involvement updates allowing better notifications to ministry and program participants; more streamlined access for accounting; and integrates well with existing programs already in use. Costs are approximately \$500 - \$700 more per month, but savings in other areas may offset some of this.

The Vestry endorsed moving forward with adopting Ministry Platform as our CHMS.

### **3. On-Going Business**

#### **A. Treasurer's Report – Chris Smith**

1. Thanks to Fred Staley for leading Finance 101, and to all the participants
2. Finance committee discussion about operational reserves indicated we need better understanding of our capital needs in order to set progress toward meeting them
3. Continued optimism about receiving the remaining ERTC refunds  
Continued by Fred Staley
4. Giving is down as summer approaches, which is traditional
5. Investments fell in April
6. Annual fund about \$25,000 behind budget
7. Pledging a little behind; reminder notes will be included in quarterly notifications
8. Security services over budget – not a place we should cut costs

#### **B. Executive Director's Report – None at this time – see CHMS in Focus Time**

#### **C. Junior Warden's Report – Jeff Johnson**

1. Buildings and Grounds: Spring Walkaround – campus in good shape, only small items noted; Preliminary discussion on how to deal with donated plants, both process and location
2. Blossom Bash for Dogwood Preschool – raised \$34,000

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

#### **A. Senior Warden's Report – Anne Pinion**

1. Vestry hosted receptions honoring volunteers – both went well; kids loved the donuts
2. John Rohrs' Parish update in the evening for Celtic Service – response was very positive; attendees indicate they are feeling more a part of things, and noting how hard the staff works

#### **B. Rector's Report – John Rohrs**

1. Informed Vestry that he will be away on Family vacation June 3 – 12. Will Stanley will be available all dates except June 4; Fred Staley will also be available.
2. June Vestry meeting – possible plans to invite back Cindy Barnes for annual Mutual Ministry Review.
3. Core Values discussion and follow ups from Vestry retreat potentially in July.

4. Outreach framework/ Being With – will be the framework for the presentation at Shrine Mont Parish Retreat
  5. Outreach director – the most effective, sustainable approach seems to be to build it in as part of the annual giving campaign. It needs to be a sustainable position; presented well to be supported financially by the parish. The Week of Compassion/ Outreach Ministries blast in November will build attention within the parish.
- C. Vicar's Report – Will Stanley
1. Thanks to Robert Birdsey for assistance with graphical analysis!
  2. Stewardship Committee – Debbie Dunlap steps in as Chair; Blair remains on committee; they expect to build off the framework from last year. Continuing to look at future planning.
  3. Thanks to Susan for great help in Shrine Mont scheduling.
- 4. New Business**
1. Adoption/purchase of Ministry Platform (CHMS) received Vestry approval – approved by voice vote.

Meeting Adjourned with short blessing by John Rohrs.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kathy Brock, substitute Register