

**Vestry of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church  
Richmond, Virginia  
Minutes of the February 23, 2025 Meeting**

The following vestry members were present: Molly Anderson, Robert Birdsey, Kathy Brock, Bill Davis, Katherine Farley, May Fox (via Zoom), Greta Kidd, Jay Moore, Nan O'Connell, Mary Ashburn Pearson, Elizabeth Peay, Joan Putney, Andrew Robertson, Gayle Royals, Randy Seibert, Chris Smith, Brandon Spalding

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

**Welcome and Check-Ins:**

- John Rohrs thanked the outgoing vestry class for their service: Jeff Johnson, Andy Luke, Brenda McDowell, Anne Pinion, and Whitney Van Der Hyde, with a special word of thanks to Anne Pinion, the outgoing senior warden.
- Opening devotion: vestry members shared the "Hearts of their Weeks"
- Opening prayer
- Approval of minutes: one amendment was proposed by Katherine Farley to the January 28, 2025 meeting minutes (a "0" is needed in Item 4 after \$3,562,00); the minutes were then approved as amended.

**Focus Time:** Vestry organization

- Officer elections: The following officers for the 2025-2026 vestry year were elected:
  - Robert Birdsey, Senior Warden
  - Kathy Brock, Junior Warden
  - Chris Smith, Treasurer
  - Randy Seibert, Assistant Treasurer
  - Mary Ashburn Pearson, Register
  - Katherine Farley, Dogwood Preschool Board Liaison
- Committee preferences
  - Vestry members submitted their first, second, and third preferences for serving as liaisons to the various St. Stephen's committees.
- John explained to the new class that vestry members are also charged with counting money from the Celtic service and Sunday supper. Mary Feldman is to send an email tomorrow to new members to be added to the Ministry Scheduler Pro scheduling software system.
- John asked that vestry members please save the afternoon of Sunday, April 6 for a vestry retreat at the Roslyn Conference and Retreat Center on River Road.

**On-going Business**

- Treasurer's report: Chris Smith presented the monthly financial overview. He encouraged members to review the financials in the vestry packet circulated before each meeting, although there is also opportunity for discussion and questions at each vestry meeting. He

hopes to organize another “Church Financials 101” training this year. Fred Staley noted that this is his last vestry meeting and the format of summarized monthly report may change after his departure, although the remainder of the reports are standard from our vendor, GuideServe. Fred reported that a new group is conducting this year’s audit and the work is slower than in previous years.

- Executive director’s report: Fred provided the Parochial Report for vestry review and approval. Every Episcopal church is required to fill out this report annually and submit to the diocese by March 1. He noted that the figure in Line 3 in the financial information section will be used by the diocese to determine our “assessment goal,” which is the goal amount that each church is recommended to give to the diocese. St. Stephen’s is currently contributing around 7 percent of the stated goal. Churches can apply for an exception to the 10 percent. The vestry approved the Parochial Report to be submitted as-is.
- Junior warden’s report: Robert Birdsey presented a report provided by the outgoing junior warden, Jeff Johnson.
  - The Buildings and Grounds Committee’s February 2025 meeting was cancelled due to snow.
  - There are additional costs for the playground renovation that were not captured in the \$83,000± contract. Quotes have been received for a wrought iron fence (\$650) and to install a gate near the playground steps (\$1,600), which were found to be reasonable. A quote from the playground contractor to remove and replace mulch is \$20,000, which was higher than expected. St. Stephen’s staff will explore removing the existing mulch and then paying a third party to install new mulch. They have also requested a quote from a second company. It is probable that the additional items will cause the total project cost to slightly exceed the \$100,000 budget (of which \$50,000 is to be contributed by Dogwood Preschool and \$50,000 is to be contributed by St. Stephen’s).

### **Clergy and Senior Warden Reports**

- Senior warden’s report
  - Robert welcomed the new vestry members and requested that they engage in their first year and not be afraid to speak up. He is specifically interested in seeing the overall engagement of the congregation expand.
- Rector’s report
  - John shared several staffing updates: Omar Catedral (lead sexton at St. Stephen’s) was hospitalized the week before Christmas with an autoimmune disorder; after several weeks in the hospital, he is recovering at home. John and Fred recently visited him to communicate salary and compensation while he is out and to assess the potential for him to return to his job. They will have a follow-up conversation with Omar later this month. Fred Staley’s last day at St. Stephen’s is March 15; in the short term after his departure, existing staff will divide his roles and John hopes to hire one or two part-time administrative (data entry, etc.) staff or a part-time “higher-level” employee to oversee church operations. John announced that a seminarian will join the staff for an 8-week/40-hour-per-week internship beginning June 1, 2025. She is from Richmond, sponsored by St. Andrew’s Church in Oregon

Hill, and is familiar with St. Stephen's via her previous role at Anna Julia Cooper School.

- Vicar's Report
  - Will Stanley thanked the vestry for their generosity related to the sabbatical policy. He, Fred, John, and Cate Anthony will attend the Episcopal Parish Network (EPN) conference in Kansas City this week, where he hopes to find someone with the suitable skillset to fill Fred's position.

#### **New Business/Parking Lot Items**

- Andrew Robertson asked if St. Stephen's has conducted an audit of our financial controls and cyber security. Fred responded that New Dominion, our IT provider, is responsible for cyber security and is providing a satisfactory service; however, no audit has been conducted.

Closing prayer and adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 pm.

- New vestry members stayed after the meeting was adjourned for an orientation.