

Vestry of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Richmond, Virginia
Minutes of the June 24, 2025 Meeting

The following vestry members were present: Molly Anderson, Robert Birdsey, Kathy Brock, Bill Davis, Katherine Farley, May Fox, Greta Kidd, Jay Moore, Nan O'Connell, Mary Ashburn Pearson, Andrew Robertson, Gayle Royals, Randy Seibert, Brandon Spalding

Staff Present: John Rohrs, Sarah Bartenstein, Dillon Gwaltney, Paige Trivett

Welcome and Check-Ins:

- Opening devotion: vestry members shared the “Hearts of their Weeks.”
- Opening prayer
- Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the May 20, 2025 meeting were approved.

Focus Time: St. Stephen's graphic identity

- Sarah and Dillon presented on the ongoing effort to update St. Stephen's graphic identity and to add and replace signage on campus. The updates include:
 - Logo:
 - A new logo for St. Stephen's has been developed to reflect our current mission, vision and values and to complement the new church website.
 - The new logo incorporates vestry suggestions received during a draft presentation last year.
 - Sarah and Dillon also presented “sub-brand” logos for our front porch ministries (farmers market, the café, and the May Fair House), which were designed to echo elements of the main logo.
 - The new logo and the existing church seal are not interchangeable.
 - The seal will continue to be used on letterhead, church bulletins, and other official uses.
 - The logo will be used for the website, social media platforms, eSpirit, and brochures and other printed materials, among other uses.
 - Signage:
 - The existing “slat signs” in the church building will be replaced with new signage with type and colors that are compatible with our new graphic identity; three new exterior signs are also planned.
 - We have issued an RFP to five local sign companies. Once proposals are received, Sarah and team will consult with the building and grounds, fine arts, and hospitality committees for review and feedback.
 - The budget for the project is \$10,000; depending on cost proposals, the project may need to be funded using additional sources or conducted in phases.

On-going Business

- Treasurer's Report: the April 2025 and May 2025 financials were reviewed at the same time.
 - Guide Serve has hired a senior resource who will be dedicated to St. Stephen's to help us catch up after delays over the past several months.
 - Guide Serve has waived two months' fees (which equates to approximately \$9,500) as an act of good faith in light of the ongoing personnel situation.
 - Expenses were under budget for both months, mainly due to the personnel line item. However, available operating cash continues to decrease as is typical during the summer months.
 - The effort to complete the 2022, 2023, and 2024 audits continues. Mike Koschak is providing additional information requested by the accounting firm last week.
 - John submitted a letter to the Diocese of Virginia informing that St. Stephen's is not able to meet the recommended 10 percent level of covenantal giving this year, although we continue to increase our giving to eventually reach the 10 percent goal. This year's goal is eight percent, which is around \$230,000-\$240,000.
 - Outreach grants committee presentation
 - James Driscoll, co-chair of the outreach grants committee, presented the recommended slate of grants for the vestry's review and approval. The vestry has approved \$125,000 in the annual budget for outreach grants.
 - He noted the five unofficial criteria of the outreach grants committee:
 - Focus in the east end
 - Help women and children
 - Consider applicants with high parishioner involvement
 - To consider applicants with "clean books" (accurate and demonstrated stewardship of the funding provided)
 - Each applicant has a spiritual component
 - The application process is conducted annually, even if an organization has received a grant in a previous year.
 - There was discussion regarding the Westminster Canterbury line item- this amount goes to a Fellowship Fund to assist female residents to pay the entry fee to live at Westminster Canterbury. Some members of the vestry suggested that this line item be moved to another area of the church budget in future years, such as pastoral care or the Women of St. Stephen's.
 - The vestry unanimously approved the outreach grants committee recommendations.
- Junior warden's report: Kathy Brock advised that playground improvements continue and are anticipated to be completed in July.

Clergy and senior warden reports

- Senior warden's report
 - The presentation during the special parish meeting on Sunday, June 22 has garnered positive feedback from the congregation. Robert thanked the vestry for their support.

- John and Robert have suggested holding “office hours” after Sunday services to answer questions and to provide an opportunity for one-one-one conversation regarding the contents of Sunday’s presentation.
- Rector’s report [Notes condensed for Executive Session]
 - John met with the three chairs of this year’s annual giving campaign—Andrew Robertson, Becky Boyers, and Wortie Ferrell—to begin planning for this year’s campaign.
 - John shared the staff projects list for summer 2025. Paige Trivett shared details of her effort to support various pastoral care ministries at St. Stephen’s. She will be leading the preparation of a pastoral care resource guide and resource network (both in hard copy and digital format). She will also be curating a list of St. Stephen’s parishioners who have successfully endured an experience and who can share their experiences with others in a similar situation.
 - Dogwood Preschool: Katherine, Kathy, and John met with representatives of the Dogwood board to begin lease negotiations. The current lease is in its third and last year; these negotiations are to prepare for the new lease agreement. He is hoping to share a draft lease agreement with the vestry in August, and a final agreement in September. Two items of consideration are the lease term and the rate.
 - Staffing updates: We have relaunched the position advertisements for the Executive Director of Finance and Administration and Director of Facilities and Operations.
 - John updated the vestry on Bill Sachs’ plan to shift to a much more limited role in the new year as Historian-in-Residence, and corresponding conversations with another area priest about the possibility of her joining the staff as associate rector for pastoral care.
 - John briefed the vestry on another personnel situation which is still evolving.

New Business/Parking Lot Items

- The vestry will not meet in July and will resume meetings in August 2025. Any updates on ongoing business can be communicated via email.

Closing prayer and adjournment: the meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ashburn Pearson

Register