

**Vestry of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church**  
**Richmond, Virginia**  
**Minutes of the August 26, 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 (virtual), Mary Ashburn Pearson, Joan Putney, Andrew Robertson (virtual), Gayle Royals, Randy Seibert, Chris Smith (virtual), Brandon Spalding

**Staff Present:** John Rohrs, Cate Anthony, John Jenkins, Kathleen Wilson-Kennedy

**Welcome and Check-Ins:**

- Opening devotion: vestry members shared the "Hearts of their Weeks."
- Opening prayer
- Approval of minutes: The minutes from the June 24, 2025 meeting were approved.

**Focus Time:** Presenting Stephanie Peramas for postulancy

- Bill Davis and John Jenkins discussed Stephanie Peramas. John serves as Stephanie's presenting priest and Bill is involved in the Parish Discernment Committee. Bill described the PDC's role, which is to ask probing and sometimes uncomfortable questions to determine whether the call is authentic. PDC members participated in a training session on listening guidelines, becoming familiar with the signs of the spirit, and practicing a discernment session before meeting with Stephanie three times during June 2025. The overwhelming consensus of the PDC is that God is calling Stephanie to serve and that she is listening.
- The next step is for the vestry to nominate her as a postulant for ordained ministry. The nomination must be confirmed by the bishop's office. If this happens, she will likely enter some form of theological training next fall. The bishop determines which seminaries are available.
- The vestry voted unanimously to support Stephanie for postulancy.

**On-going Business**

- Treasurer's report: Randy presented the report.
  - In July 2025, the operating cash decreased due to the monthly operating deficit; however, overall the annual budget is ahead of last year thanks to a surplus associated with unstaffed positions. The surplus may decline until we get into the big giving months toward the end of the year, at which point it is expected to increase.
  - We anticipate a draft of the 2022 audit by the end of this week. Once that is finalized, the 2023-2024 effort can begin. We have received the engagement letter from Harris, Hardy, & Johnstone, PC for that effort. This effort should include the work for the forensic review associated with the insurance claim for employee fraud.

- The insurance claim is pending completion of the forensic audit. The anticipation is that the settlement from the insurance claim would take place in 2025.
- Capital projects
  - John shared a series of unexpected facility issues which have arisen in recent months which must be addressed. These include:
    - HVAC:
      - The HVAC unit in the fellowship hall has leaked onto the floor, damaging the wood floor. The floor needs to be fixed; however, it was also determined that several HVAC units need to be replaced, and the piping that feeds the units is over 60 years old and nearing the end of its useful life. The system of pipes needs replacement to prevent future issues.
      - Eight of the 24 existing fan coil units are proposed for replacement during this effort; the remainder are to be replaced in the future as needed at a per-unit cost of approximately \$10,000.
      - Other recommended improvements include upgrading from a two-pipe to a four-pipe system. A two-pipe system allows for only air conditioning or heat to be used at one time; the new pipe system would allow the flexibility to go back and forth by the day.
      - Another recommendation is to install an ultraviolet light system into the HVAC units to prevent mold growth.
    - Audio-visual system:
      - The a/v systems have had consistent problems with buffering when services are streamed. There have also been power surge issues with the audio system during church services.
    - The executive committee of the vestry met with sextons and key members of the buildings and grounds committee, and a representative from James River Air, on Monday, August 18, 2025 to discuss these unforeseen issues; the finance committee further discussed them during its regularly-scheduled meeting on August 21, 2025. The consensus is that the repairs and improvements cannot be delayed.
    - Robert presented a “Facility Issues” summary which came out of this meeting. The estimated expense budget based on quotes received from various vendors is \$381,700, which includes a 10 percent contingency. Robert communicated the proposal to seek vestry approval to fund the facility expenses from the Capital Reserves account. The balance of the Capital Reserves account is currently \$1,317,831; the typical annual draw from this account is 4.5% (approximately \$59,000) for the annual operating budget. Any operating surplus at year-end would be moved to replenish the Capital Reserves account. There is a current operating surplus of

approximately \$226,000 which is anticipated to continue to year-end.

- The vestry discussed their continued interest in a facilities assessment to inform budget-level planning over the next several years and the potential need and target fundraising amount for a future capital campaign. Jay suggested that part of the facilities assessment effort include best practices in terms of capital reserves planning, including the introduction of a long-term capital fund.
- The vestry approved taking the required amount (estimated to be \$381,700) from the Capital Reserves funds to pay for the facility improvements, which would be replenished with the anticipated operating surplus at the end of calendar year 2025.

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

- Senior Warden's Report
  - Robert reported that he and John recently held two opportunities for discussion after Sunday services to answer questions and to provide an opportunity for one-on-one conversation regarding the contents of his Sunday, June 22, 2025 Special Parish Meeting. Attendees generally provided positive feedback.
- Rector's Report
  - John announced that the first Sunday Forum of the season is Sunday, September 14, which will include parish updates such as introducing new staff members and a brief reprise of the June 2025 special parish meeting presentation, among other items.
  - Staffing Updates: David Ellis, the new director of facilities and operations, began work last week and Kathleen's official first day as executive director of finance and administration was this Monday. The new sexton has been on staff for two weeks and is doing a great job so far. Will Stanley will be back in the office Tuesday, September 2. We are looking forward to welcoming Judy Davis on October 1, 2025 in a ¾-time role. John and Bill Sachs are working on the details of his new agreement for a reduced role which will take effect in January 2026. The search for a new director of music is ongoing. Of four interviewees, one has been invited for an in-person site visit/interview during September 10 and 11, 2025, which will include rehearsals with all choirs.
  - Dogwood Preschool lease update: John, Katherine, and Kathy have been meeting for several months with the Dogwood Board to negotiate the new lease agreement, which would take effect in July 2026. John shared a summary matrix of the contents of the draft, revised lease agreement.
  - Annual giving campaign: This year's theme is "Abound in Hope" and campaign funding priorities include items associated with outreach, Christian formation, music, and hospitality and welcome, among others. John shared with the vestry the draft text that will be used for the campaign brochure. Last year's goal was 875 pledging units (households) and a total of \$2.7M and the goal for this year's

campaign is 875 pledging units and \$3M. The public kick-off for the campaign is Sunday, October 19, 2025.

- The next Ministry Night is Thursday, September 25.
- John announced that the new church logo is being used on various documents. The signage update project is also ongoing, with the current effort being Sarah Bartenstein sharing proposed sign design and location with various church committees.
- John thanked the vestry for treating the St. Stephen's staff for lunch (scheduled for August 27, 2025) as a gesture of appreciation.

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

- None were discussed.

Closing prayer and adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.