

**St. Stephen's Vestry Minutes**  
**November 16, 2022**

**Present:** Fr. Ashton Sims, Fr. Charles Fels, Bonnie Bautz, Tom Clary, Judith Delaney, Liz Herbes, Rachel Kirk, Cyril Meredith, Beth Reed, Sandi Robertson Jim Rousey, Barbara Steele

**Absent:** Fr. Bailey Norman, Adam Cavender, Lew Felton

**Guests (incoming 2023 Vestry members):** Leah Bailey, Ashley Hillis, Courtney Manrod, Barbara Neill

**Call to Order:** Fr. Fels

Fr. Fels called the meeting to order at 6:35pm. He opened with the topic "What is Vestry all about?" It is an opportunity to grow in Christian understanding and knowledge making practical decisions about a spiritual business. It is a journey on The Way. Then he led a lectio divina.

**Approval of Agenda:** Fr. Fels

The agenda was approved (Jim Rousey/Liz Herbes).

**Approval of Consent Agenda:** Judith Delaney

There was a correction to the Minutes of the October 11, 2022 meeting. The correction is to change Judy Hartman to Heather Hartman. The corrected minutes were approved by voice vote.

Voice vote approved the prior approval by vestry poll October 25, 2022 allowing Rachel Durfee to be added as an authorized user of the Regions Visa Card

**LEADERSHIP REPORTS**

**Priest in Charge:** Fr Fels

Bishop Brian Cole has assigned Fr. Fels as the Vicar of St. Stephens until early January 2023. He served at St Alban's in Washington, D.C., at St Bartholomew's in NYC, and Good Shepherd in Knoxville. He retired at 72. He has always been interested in growth. He thinks St Stephens has a future for growth but not without issues. There are very capable people on Vestry. Oak Ridge is on the threshold of scientific knowledge. Intelligent people are looking for a faith that they can accept. We have excellent facilities, a nearly full-time music director, and two clergy of the right age which will speak to the demographic that is coming along. But, there is no clear grasp vision of what St. Stephens is. Episcopal church is positioned to speak to Gen Z and the Nones. We have everything we need to grow.

**Assistant to the Priest in Charge:** Fr. Sims

Fr. Sims is very appreciative of Fr Fels being here. He is preparing an educational offering for Advent – Meditations of the Icon of the Virgin Mary by Rowan Williams. There is a solid plan for the Advent and Christmas seasons. There will not be a Thanksgiving service this year. If any Vestry member sees anything that needs to be addressed, please let him know.

**Sr Warden:** Judith Delaney

Since Bailey has been out, the Bishop has called 3 times to check on St Stephens. Lew Felton is resigning his position on Vestry at the end of 2022. Emily Doane will fill his spot for the remaining 2 years.

New phones go live on December 9 after installation and training.

Disability insurance for staff is in effect with the receipt of the first bill.

Judith welcomed the new Vestry members. They will vote next month for Sr Warden, Jr Warden, Treasurer and Secretary.

Delegates to the Diocesan convention. St Stephens can send 3 delegates with 3 alternates as backup when delegates cannot attend. The Convention will be in Johnson City on February 3-4, 2023. Ashton needs to make announcement to parish.

**Jr Warden:** Barbara Steele

Barbara had nothing additional to report.

#### **Items for Action**

**Finance:** Tom Clary

The financial statement for October was unanimously approved.

Barbara Neill provided a report on the status of funds in Gifts and Memorials (G&M). The Hyperion bill of \$10,348.95 was paid using G&M funds from two recent designated parishioner gifts and by using "Communication" and undesignated memorials/gifts. The Felton-directed expenditures for HVAC work and other expenditures totaling \$9,124.89 were deducted from these balances. That leaves the following balances:

- Undesignated memorials \$2,925.03
- Undesignated gifts \$18,257.76
- Memorials in pending status \$16,079.34 (includes new Skinner gift fund)
- Gifts/Memorials in encumbered status \$34,901.86 (includes \$9,942.11 remaining from the Stripling fund designated for Haiti and \$5000 for curate support)

If the G&M committee is notified of pending needs, some of the designated funds may be appropriate to use.

**Letter of agreement for Fr. Fels:** Judith Delaney

The letter of agreement for Fr. Fels to serve as Vicar until January 10, 2023 was unanimously approved.

#### **Items for Discussion**

**Stewardship:** Tom Clary

As of November 15, 84 pledges have been received. Based on outstanding pledge cards not yet returned and pledges to date, the predicted total of pledges will be \$513K. The goal is \$625K/\$675K based on a 20%/30% increase. Work on the 2023 budget was started and it appears \$630K is needed. There will be no interest from investments available to help balance the budget. The question is "can we afford 2 clergy?"

#### **Reports**

**NOTE:** Only those committees with updates to their reports are given below.

#### **New Business**

Bonnie Bautz is gathering information concerning improving the security of the church.

Fr Fels asked that the 4 outgoing Vestry members bring a reflection to share their wisdom with the new members.

Fr. Fels closed the meeting with a prayer by Thomas Merton

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Elizabeth Ellis  
Secretary

*Next meeting December 13, 2022*