



September Vestry Meeting

Minutes

Tuesday, September 26, 2023 6pm

Diocesan House Council Room

Dinner hosts: Kathy & Scott K.

Saint Mark's Cathedral acknowledges that we gather on the traditional land of the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish People, who are still here, and we honor with gratitude the land itself and the life of all the Coast Salish tribes.

Vestry Members Present

Carmen Brady (Zoom)
Greg Hamm, Junior Warden (Zoom)
Scott Hulet, Senior Warden
Becky Kacel, Diocesan Member
Kristen Kelly
Scott Kovacs, Junior Warden
Kathy Minsch
Katie Prettyman, Diocesan Member (Zoom)
Chris Rigos, Junior Warden
Peter Snyder
The Very Rev. Steve Thomason, Dean
Alexandra Thompson
Doug Thorpe

Vestry Members Absent

Tina Blondino, Diocesan Member
The Rev. Canon Arienne Davison, Bishop's Representative
Wayne Duncan
Justin Mills

Officers Present

Lynne Cobb, Treasurer
Re Knack, Chancellor

Officers Absent

Barbara Erickson, Clerk

Staff Members Present

Erik Donner, Cathedral Administrator
Emily Meeks, Special Projects Coordinator
The Rev. Linzi Stahlecker, Curate

Dean Thomason opened the meeting with the Land Acknowledgement and a prayer at 6:00 PM.

Approval of August 23 Meeting Minutes

Motion was made, seconded, and carried to adopt the August 22, 2023 minutes as proposed.

SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

Strategic Planning Update and Conversation

Alexandra Thompson shared an overview of the activities of the Strategic Planning Committee. The Committee was formed out of Vestry's recommendation in April and has been meeting since July to envision the direction and goals of Saint Mark's as a cathedral and parish in the next 18-24 months. The Committee started by looking back at the 2020 plan (finalized before the pandemic) and found that there is a lot to celebrate in the existing plan. They also used insights to inform the current work such as intentionally coordinating stewardship, finance, and facilities into a shared area of focus.

The Committee will formally outreach to the parish and has already started the process of gathering feedback from individual parishioners; for example, Alexandra and her daughters created a "transformation tree" and invited parishioners to write their thoughts on sources of transformation at Saint Marks on Ministry Fair Sunday. Emily Meeks shared a model adapted from the College of Congregational Development—Sources of Transformation—that the Committee is using to guide the work. Emily asked Kathy Minsch to read Acts 2:42-47 as a deeper connection to the model. Emily oriented the group to the sources of transformation connected in and through a circle: Formation and Justice, Life in Community, and Stewardship with Prayer and Worship at the center. She reflected that all parts of congregational life can be a source of transformation, but that ultimately the transformation comes from God. She also shared additional ideas that are motivating the work of the Committee – e.g., life in the congregation is like the flow of a river; we are not trying to redirect the flow but rather looking at how we can "push off" within the flow and that in community we seek to be transformed by love and we seek to share this love with others.

Scott Hulet shared that he felt Emily gave an excellent summary of the work of the Committee, particularly with the focus on transformation and God's work within us. Dean Steve Thomason reflected that the Committee is thinking about how Saint Marks can be a sacred gathering place in new ways, while recalling that when he first arrived to Saint Mark's, the focus needed to be on a parish community first. Doug Thorpe referenced The Rev. Canon Jennifer King Daugherty's comments in the recent Restorative Justice retreat that everything centers around the work of God. The Rev. Linzi Stahlecker reflected that the model/graphic of sources of transformation represents the work of the Committee well, and Kathy Minsch shared that she feels the Committee has done excellent work. Alexandra then invited Vestry members to take a post-it note (in the form of leaves) and write 1-2 words about guiding principles/values that they would like for the Strategic Planning Committee to take into account in their work.

Emily summarized the Committee's timeline. Transformation groups will begin data gathering and ministry conversations from October through early January. They will attend ministry group meetings, host a series of engagement activities, and use various tools for collecting, incorporating and sharing input. Additionally, parishioners will have an opportunity to participate in an individual parish-wide survey. The Committee plans to have a formalized product in time for the February 2024 Vestry Retreat.

Additional items in progress include developing website content and a hosting a forum for the parish in January 2024. Questions can be emailed to strategicplanning@saintmarks.org.

Chris Rigos asked how the process of transformation leads to the next step in the strategic planning process. Emily offered that the Committee first wants to understand how people experience/understand transformation. This can then help to identify where there is NOT a source of transformation (e.g., Seattle Service Corps ending → opportunity to use Leffler House resource in new ways). The process of understanding sources of transformation will allow Saint Mark's to better identify connections and deepen areas of ministry. The process should be "people-led" rather than "clergy led". Dean Steve offered that he

feels the Committee has a remarkable design and approach. Lynne Cobb wondered whether the process may ultimately result in change to Saint Mark's mutual ministry goals; Emily shared that this is possible, particularly as the strategic planning process came out of discussions related to mutual ministry goals at the February 2023 vestry meeting. Scott Kovacs commented that it would be helpful over the next few months to develop endpoints, evaluative measures, and benchmarks.

Emily then offered two questions for reflection for vestry members: 1) What comes to mind about aspects of our community life that would benefit from deepening in the lens of transformation? 2) Where are you observing transformation in your work at St. Marks?

- Scott Hulet – in the context of the vestry community. As you become more aware of decisions of leadership, one of the gifts of clergy is repeated trust, that this is God's work that is happening here. Not just another widget that we are making, we are instruments of the gospel. One and a half years into Vestry feels that has been transformative, humbling, sometimes overwhelming but God is in it.
- Katie Prettyman – important that we focus on being inclusive and compassionate. Meeting people where they are at. Mindful of folks that may feel alienated. Using inclusive language, thoughtful about how we engage with the community.
- Steve – Radix groups, pilgrimage groups – it's the relationships that are forged. For example, person in their 30s sitting and talking in church with someone in their 80s. This would not have happened without experiences such as pilgrimages and Radix.
- Lynne – small groups in general helpful. For example, at dinner the other night joking that should have small group for "women whose husbands don't come to church." Small groups can be transformative.
- Scott Kovacs – second year in being down out of the choir gallery. Has noticed that the nave of the cathedral is a powerful intersection for all these experiences with connection between different ministry groups (aside from the choir in the gallery). Really noticed it at the Restorative Justice retreat – when moved from Bloedel to nave, the energy changes noticeably because we are in the worship space. Being in the nave seems to lend a special energy. The work we do in the nave of the church is transformational.
- Emily – more in the church on Saturdays, love it to see the number of ways the campus is being used. For example, Bloedel, then to the nave, etc. – such a gift to see how we are reaching different groups.
- Doug – breaking into groups at the Restorative Justice Retreat, noted that lay leaders are best situated to guide the work. Centering prayer noticed that there is a power in the community that prays there – small group but powerful ministry.

To wrap up the Strategic Planning committee report, Alexandra reviewed some of the words Vestry members had shared: inclusive and compassionate, destination sacred space, respect, honor one another, welcoming to all backgrounds, healthy community, trust God is doing God's work among us, leafy.

Finance Report

Scott Kovacs has reviewed facilities issues. This year the Finance Committee is using a modified approach to budgeting – the budget draft will be later than usual because they need more information on the pledges for 2024, which are predicted to be softer than in previous years. The budget will be ready to present to vestry by Dec. 2023 when pledge numbers are better known. Some significant expenses are

predicted to rise (e.g., insurance estimated increase of 25%) but they do not have exact numbers yet. St. Nicholas Building continues to have needs for deferred maintenance (“the gift that keeps on giving”). Typically rent income would generate \$250,000 per year in income, but because of the repair/maintenance costs, the income is currently on track to be about \$85,000 for 2023 if no other major maintenance and repair issues arise before year-end. This has further motivated the decision to consider other ways to benefit from that property.

Lynne stated that the third tab on the monthly financial spreadsheet is now Affordable Housing (was Seattle Service Corps). All but \$12,000 of the expenses to date have been covered with grants.

Lynne reviewed the audit engagement letter. CLA (Clifton Larson Allen) will do a financial review of 2023 and then a financial audit of 2024. The firm sent the bill for their services late this year.

OLD BUSINESS

Affordable Housing Update from Emily Meeks

- Cost assessment of St. Nicholas building (historic rehab vs. new construction) from RAFN in progress. Less straightforward than anticipated in considering factors such as seismic work and roof replacement. More conversations and assessment are needed such as connecting with seismic engineering firm.
- This week – will hear a lot of noise, Geotech Consultants, Inc. will drill 80-foot boring in the parking area behind trash bin on the north side of the Cathedral. Three additional borings will occur toward the backside of the building. These borings will reveal how soil conditions could impact construction plans.
- atelierjones (architect)
 - Helping Saint Mark’s consider different capacity studies, what are the options for expanding capacity?
 - Developing a sustainability playbook for Saint Mark’s as we ensure decisions that align with carbon reduction goals (types of materials and systems used in a potential building).. The document will establish requirements, evaluate adaptive reuse, and summarize sustainability options, goals and certifications. For background, atelierjones is an expert in mass timber, a form of sustainable building.
- Forums:
 - Recording posted on the website from Sunday and Wednesday conversations.
 - FAQ documents will be updated to share with Vestry based on new questions and comments gathered from parish so far.
 - Questions received have not been as tough as expected. Have received interest around the trees, how could one live there. Interesting to hear what people appreciate about Saint Marks – the green space around Saint Marks is important to many. Some people park further away to experience a walking “pilgrimage” to the cathedral.
- Recommendation from AHE Committee to revise criterion for affordable housing based on learnings from the committee to date on ownership. Steve shared the new language proposed to Vestry to approve: ***Whether by means of ownership, a condominium regime, or a covenant running with the land, St. Mark’s should be able to assure that the St. Nicholas site furthers the Cathedral’s mission objectives permanently. Ownership or control of how St. Nicholas is used during and after the affordable housing project is missionally imperative.***
 - This language ensures that Saint Mark’s mission is followed permanently whether by ownership or site control.

- Chris comments that the new language would resolve anxiety that some have expressed that we would lose control of the property.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the new language for affordable housing.

Grant updates

- Evangelism Grant from The Episcopal Church (\$8,000) will be submitted October 13. The focus is supporting updates to Carriage House to welcome Lambert House and in revitalizing the Leffler garden.
- Emily and Doug will be working on a potential grant related to the MAIA project.
- Worship grant through Calvin Institute of Vital Worship is in progress with a theme/focus now selected, “Cathedral as Pilgrimage.”
 - Linzi – pilgrimage is overarching theme through Wisdom School, groups have traveled on pilgrimage, Saint Mark’s is a cathedral and is destination for non-parishioners.
 - How can we expand Saint Mark’s availability, invite others to visit, and extend welcome into the space?
 - Grant period would be summer 2024. Considering building an experience that would allow the Cathedral to be open for six weeks over summer months to include tours, daily worship, and other TBD programming on site.
 - Grant gives flexibility with opportunity for additional connection points such as:
 - Cathedral Day sharing the theme of “Cathedral as Pilgrimage.”
 - Greenbelt
 - Labyrinth
 - Visual arts ministry
 - Connection with affordable housing – exhibit on redlining
 - Preview of this energy around being curious of the space with the liturgical ministry training on Saturday, September 23 – scavenger hunt, learning through architecture, place and story.
 - Alexandra – how is money needed to achieve the grant goals? A large focus would be on communications such as printed materials and developing virtual experience and self-guided tours. Other items include training Cathedral docents and hospitality.
 - Funds also will allow for increased accessibility (e.g., different languages and formats).
 - Doug and Alexandra indicated interest in being part of the project team.

Emergency Response Planning (Scott Kovacs)

- Subcommittee working on the emergency plan document is meeting soon
- Not everyone knows what the various parts of the building are. E.g., Hard to try to explain what the smoke sacristy is – working through in a way that creates document that is legible and portable + useful to use and first responders. Necessary to hide vulnerabilities. Interesting process. Second document meeting tomorrow (Julia Logan, John Selberg).
- Aiming to have something for vestry by the Nov 2023 meeting.
- Layered process, problem solving regarding issue of room numbers. Hard to rename things like Bloedel Hall, etc. But need naming scheme. Floors renumbered when elevator installed as part of Living Stones project – time to embrace new language.

- Sept 16th distributed emergency water containers – 1000 gallons of water now stored in Capitol Hill, Saint Mark's has played important role in helping enhance the ability of Capitol Hill North emergency response capability. Helped make connection with St. Joseph Parish, Seattle First Baptist may also be helping out (communication, safety).
- New safety film on downstairs windows and new doors adjacent to elevator lobby.

Caretaker Position from Dean Steve

- Position has been posted. Has been interviewing people, meeting on campus tomorrow with a finalist. Still references, background checks but seems to be a good match/hopeful.

NEW BUSINESS

Global Mission Grant – Arab Evangelical Home and School in Ramallah

\$5K potential grant application completed to support the Arab Evangelical Home and School in Ramallah. Grant builds on partnership with Father Fadi Diab (who preached at Saint Mark's in July) through St. Andrew's and the Arab Evangelical Home and School. Last February the school's heater broke and there is not a sustainable heat source for the children this winter. Saint Mark's has also contributed through the Dean's Discretionary Funds. Alexandra asks whether they are seeking money from additional sources; yes, Father Fadi is visiting other churches on the West Coast in addition to other outreach efforts. The Diocese requires Vestry authorization for formal application.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the \$5,000 assistance for the Arab Evangelical Home and School in Ramallah.

Stewardship appeal (Chris Rigos)

- All 13 speakers are lined up, eight in-person and five video.
- Video speakers – one is Dean Steve, monitoring to make sure they get filmed
- Appeal Materials will be mailed this week (Thurs 9/28/23) to parishioners.
- Gratitude conversations – all committee members have made articles in Friday newsletter, individual takes on why they believe in giving back.
- Sunday Oct 1 – Chris will be at 8, 9, 11 services and give preview of Oct and his personal approach to gratitude and giving
- Monday Oct 2nd – first video will appear (Steve). Usually get good reading rate – separate emails from Friday newsletter.
- Sundays speakers at 9 and 11 in October.
- New materials – phraseology different this year
- 10/29/2023 speaker will be senior warden Scott Hulet, followed by ingathering. Stewardship Ministry and Finance Committee will bring food. Alexandra and Emily will have table space for Strategic Planning Committee.
- Chris welcomes thoughts, prayers, ideas, tips, encouragement, suggestion for next year
- Linzi – wonders if any speakers at the 8am service after 10/1/2023 – Chris says that he does not think that the committee has gone to the 8am service, so starting this year will go only once to the 8am (no time in the service). Speakers are supposed to stick to 4 min but hard to do/time creep when people give speech, so makes it hard to do in the 8am service. Linzi wonders if we can point people to link/video during the weeks after 10/1/2023. Chris says perhaps he can go back to the 8am each week. Steve says not in the culture of the 8am service, incumbent upon the preacher to bring it up every week during the 8am service.
- Dean Steve asks for 100% participation on the part of the vestry, better to get everyone from vestry to commit early. If able, would appreciate increase in pledge/financial commitment for 2024.

2024 Budget Planning

- Staff in the budgeting process, meetings in the next week to create expense side of things
- Draft budget to finance committee and vestry in Nov 2023
- By dec will combine with the finance committed → present full budget.

Nominating Committee for Individuals to Stand for Vestry, Diocesan Convention

- Proposed: Julia Logan (chair), Jim Buskirk, Carrie Davis, Scott Kovacs, Michael Perera, John Selberg, Maria Coldwell, and Dean Steve (ex officio). Seven members, nearly all with experience in years past.
- Does not preclude anyone in parish from recruiting and encouraging people to stand for election as well.
- Eight people needed to stand for election to vestry, and twelve for Diocesan Convention.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the proposed individuals to the Nominating Committee.

COLA for Staff Based on CPI-Seattle

- Every year diocese looks at the CPI from July of previous year to June of current year → this year 4.6% is proposed for 2024. Will be voted on for clergy at Diocesan Convention in October.
- Vestry has always considered it important that lay staff get the same COLA that clergy get.
- Finance Committee would like to propose 4.6% COLA for all lay staff.

The Finance Committee's recommendation for a 4.6% COLA for lay staff in 2024 was approved.

- Erik/Linzi/Steve/Emily step out for rest of the COLA discussion: Scott H. brings up Steve's salary. The wardens recommend an increase of the Dean's salary by 4.6%.

The wardens' recommendation for a 4.6% salary increase for the Dean in 2024 was approved.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Senior Warden

- Annual mutual ministry review for the Dean coming up.

Dean

- Thank you note from Faith Action Network for our support for them.
- Canon Daugherty's reflection that justice work is spiritual work. Have been trying to name this for justice ministries—coalesced so well in Jennifer's reflection at the retreat.
- Restorative justice retreat – approx. 50 attendees, new individuals participated, good energy.
- 2011-2022 average Sunday attendance, total number of members, annual operating revenue → doubled operating revenue, average Sunday attendance is down as compared to pre-pandemic but as compared to other churches it is very good number. With live-stream views we are higher than pre-pandemic. We know that we have had a lot of turnover and deaths (30 deaths since Nov. 1, 2022). Steve asks are we engaged as a dynamic, evolving parish and Steve feels that we are, particularly as compared to many parishes that are struggling to stay open.
- Radix groups forming now, encourages us to join. Way of transformation/experiencing spiritual transformation.
- On-site Cathedral Caretaker & Security Manager – hoping to be in place in a few weeks.
- Dementia and spirituality forum Oct. 4 – partnering with St. James Cathedral and UW professor of neuropsychiatry. Emily – started at UW, not a lot of faith communities having discussion regarding dementia. Being informed about how to care for dementia – by 2050 the numbers of people experiencing memory loss will be very large, important topic. Now 75 people registered for this discussion and many are not from Saint Mark's. Steve thinks will be great forum, great way to

open our doors to the surrounding community. Attendees need to register whether participating in-person or via Zoom.

- Steve will be on vacation October 9-23.
- Bishop search committee ramping up – releasing diocesan profile in next few weeks, will be accepting applicants until mid-November. Then interviews, followed by discernment retreat – then announce the slate by end of December. Meet/greet in late April, election in May 2024.

Events of note

- 9/28: Bishop Ernie Moral in-person/Zoom – indigenous spirituality
- 9/30: Convene (diocesan event)
- 10/1: 2024 stewardship launch
- 10/7: vocational deacon ordinations, including Lisa Graumlich from Saint Mark's
- 10/28: Diocesan Convention
- 10/29: stewardship ingathering

Ministry/Committee Reports

- **Worship and Prayer** – Peter – liturgical minister training Sept. 23 (scavenger hunt, fun, good turnout with about 50 people). Kathy points out that singing the hymns is prayer- he who sings prays twice.
- **Facilities** – Scott K. Nave lighting project progressing (warm and blinding in the compline corner). Remaining lights on order, due in Oct 2023. Bloedel renovation project moving along (Jason Riley doing work on this). Much in progress on other efforts re: upgrades, deferred maintenance projects (referred to Dropbox). Erik – new parking stripes on south side of the parking lot completed on Sept. 23. New striping on north side of cathedral will occur on Sept. 30. Sinkholes were repaired in August 2023.
- **Creation Care** – Kathy M. Seattle Clean building project – Dean Steve asked Creation Care Ministry to lead effort to reduce carbon output in the buildings (except St. Nicholas). Seattle Clean building program – carbon reduction required in old buildings as well as new, they provide coaching. Kathy, Judy Andrews, Ruth Mulligan, and Erik are leading the staff and consultants in this effort – energy management plan, energy star performance to measure accountability. Updates coming in future. Going to have Sunday forum “Finding hope in world of climate change,” facilitated by Elizabeth Clark-Stern – finding encouragement in midst of climate change. New fact sheet made – 10 ideas to live lightly on the earth – different things you can do + spiritual practices on the back. Updated regular fact sheet as well. Greenbelt work parties every two weeks 10-2pm, beginning Sept. 30. Doug participated in a conference last week that was on process theology, Doug gets the recordings and will look into how to share with others. John Howe was phenomenal, FYI for those who might be interested.
- **Intergenerational Council** – Alexandra – lots of activity over the summer. In the last meeting took time to start to look inward and think about how to proceed in the coming year. Spent time talking about what intergenerational means, how we want to define it, how do we talk with different members of the community. Broadening the definition of families- e.g., move away from idea that families need to involve kids, activities do not always need to include kids, coming up with ways to help ministries expand their thinking about inclusion and intergenerational groups. Linzi shares the diagrams – multigenerational (gathered in the same space but not interacting), cross-generation (polite interaction), intergenerational (transformational relationships between people of different ages). Intergenerational is dependent upon relationships arising in a transformational way. Trying to figure out how we can make this happen in the St. Marks community.

- **Restorative Justice Council** – Scott H. – created a subcommittee to create mission statement and charter (had not happened previously) – fruit from the retreat. Doug adds that part of the result of the restorative justice retreat was the future of the Mideast Focus Ministry. Not a lot of energy behind it, has been hard to get many people engaged. Natural process of energy moving to different projects, wants to make sure everyone is aware.
- **Communications** – Alexandra – meetings have occurred.

Reflection: Mutual Ministry Annual Review

The vestry reviewed ways in which the meeting had touched on mutual ministry goals. The intergenerational diagram reviewed during ministry reports, the approval of funding for heating project for home for children in Gaza Strip, and ongoing projects to reduce carbon emissions (e.g., lighting projects in the nave) were identified as examples of ways in which the meeting reflected mutual ministry goals.

CHECK OUT & CLOSING PRAYER

Checkouts were given, and the closing prayer was given by Becky Kacel. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen Kelly
Vestry Member

Erik Donner
Cathedral Administrator