

**Episcopal Church of the Ascension  
Vestry Minutes  
February 2019**

**PRESENT:** Rev. Javier Garcia Ocampo, Senior Warden Betsy Hasegawa, Rose Buck, Gordon Donnelly, Meredith Horan, Janet King, John Pruessner, Bob Waters, and Susan McLaughlin. Absent: Junior Warden Zadinga Ogada, Berenice Rodriguez, and Luis Pedron. Others in attendance: Ascension Treasurer Avin Lalmansingh; St. Barnabas Reverend Betsy Bagioni.

The meeting opened at 2:07 p.m., with a check in around the table followed by a short prayer.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**St Barnabas.** Reverend Betsy Bagioni led a discussion with the Vestry about St. Barnabas use of Ascension's building and integration with Ascension. She thanked the Vestry for welcoming St. Barnabas. They appreciate the Vestry proposal to use the Chapel and how members of Ascension have been welcoming to members of St. Barnabas, regularly stopping to ask how to say "hi" or "how are you," etc; they feel it's a comfort and a gift to be a part of Ascension. St. Barnabas plans to stay in close communication with the Vestry to work at being good partners. They would like to work together during Lent (in an undefined capacity), assisting with the Shrove Tuesday supper, and 1A Sundays when they occur. Reverend Bagioni will make herself available to attend Vestry meetings to answer questions they might have for St. Barnabas.

Reverend Bagioni She announced the National Episcopal Convention of the Deaf will meet at Ascension in the coming week. They are excited to see where St. Barnabas has moved. St. Barnabas's ministry is to include chaplaincy for Gallaudet University. They would like to get that back up and running. The Vestry asked to hear the results of the meeting if possible and support them in accomplishing their full mission.

The vestry asked if the Chapel is meeting their needs. Reverend Bagioni reported that St. Barnabas is very happy to use the chapel space. Their use of the chapel space has been a reminder of the poor condition of the chairs in the chapel. Reverend Bagioni agreed that fixing the chairs would be helpful as would storage as they are ready for more. Everyone agreed that this is a great chance for both churches to clean up and go through their belongings. Ascension will remove more things to make space for St. Barnabas's use.

In partnership, Javier offered to post announcements for St. Barnabas along with the Ascension announcements in each week's bulletin. This offer was received well. Reverend Bagioni extended an invitation to their upcoming visit to St. George in Fredericksburg to hear from a deaf Buddhist monk.

Finally, Reverend Bagioni shared the signs for "hello," "ok," "good morning," "yes," and "I'm paying attention" at Susan's request.

**CONSENT AGENDA:** Janet moved that the consent agenda be adopted, Gordon seconded the motion, and it passed. The Contract Review item would be tabled until the next meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**2019 Budget.** Avin Lalmansingh announced that 2018 is now closed. He and Lin are working on the 2019 budget for discussion at the Thursday meeting. A summary will be ready for the March Annual meeting. 2018 was a very good year and that gives him high hopes for 2019. \$350k worth of annual pledges have been received. The Facilities reserve fund will continue. Avin asked if the Vestry could provide some insight into when the budget would be adopted, at the upcoming Finance Meeting or the next Vestry Meeting. Discussion followed attempting to determine when a budget has historically been decided.

Betsy asked about the Trust Income money they decided to put into savings; if it was on the previous month's report. Avin explained that the timing of when it was moved followed the close of the previous month's book. It will be in the January report. He's provided a note of this in the reports until the January report comes out.

**Facility Committee.** The roof no longer leaks. New panels for the ceiling will be ordered. Javier would also like to have the office cleaned up and fixed so the counselor that is paying to use it can move in again as she is currently using the Library. Discussion was made about if an insurance claim was or could be filed; that option had been explored but is not an option as it was from improper maintenance and not from some specific environmental occurrence.

John detailed the interactions with Parker Pearce and Ted. Parker Pearce is looking into why the heating isn't working properly in the Church. They are waiting for confirmation that a firmware update is required to set the VAV Box; the firmware for the final adjustment to regulate the heating and cooling has been ordered. They were to be in contact with Ascension on Monday. The final fixes shouldn't cost any more since this was all a part of the replacement that was already paid for.

Ascension House needs to have the HVAC system repaired or replaced as the heat stopped working. Javier suggested using another company vice Parker Pearce. A quote for the work at Ascension House was received by Parker Pearce and a second company that is closer to Ascension and works with other Episcopal churches. The new company quoted ~\$5k less than Parker Pearce for the same work. That work proposal will be shared with the Vestry. Gordon asked if that company offers a maintenance contract. Javier pointed out that Parker Pearce didn't complete the annual inspection that was paid for in the current maintenance contract. John explained that the Facilities Reserve is replenished and that the Chapel also requires work.

Gordon motioned to "take funds out of the facilities reserve fund to replace the HVAC system in Ascension House in an amount not to exceed \$11k." Susan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Candidate Forum/Annual Meeting/Retreat.** Javier contacted several churches, between Bethesda and Poolesville regarding hosting the annual Retreat. St. Luke in Bethesda responded. They will allow Ascension to use their space with no charge/fee. They have ample parking, a labyrinth outside, and a room for the retreat's use during the planned weekend. Bob asked if the Vestry candidates are aware of the retreat.

A question was raised regarding Zadinga's replacing Janet for her final terms junior warden and if she needs to stand for election.

Jaet asked if there would be a single service held for the day of the Annual meeting. Further questions were raised about how it would be conducted citing past years as not being indicative of what to expect this year. It was determined that the Vestry will provide “coffee hour” for the meeting. Parish Life will setup on Saturday for the meeting.

Gordon asked if the Convention delegates are the same or if we have new delegates. Discussion opened regarding the length of a delegates term and if rotating between alternates and delegates every 3 year is an appropriate concept. Betsy will check with Lin for when each current delegate obtained their position.

**Annual Giving Campaign.** Susan provided handouts of the members that have not responded to the campaign and statistics of how this past campaign has fared compared to the prior two years. She posited that knowing how many members we have currently might explain the decrease in participants. She noted that many people who were contacted didn't respond. Despite the drop in pledgers, the amount per pledge has increased. Additionally, the pledges come from a more diverse body than in previous years including members that haven't pledged in the past and from attendees of the Spanish language service.

Susan suggested that those who haven't responded likely have a reason for not pledging this year. She recommended that rather than contacting those individuals again requesting them to pledge that instead the Vestry contact them to see how they are. Discussion that members don't want to hear from leadership only when they are being asked for financial support followed. This touched on the thank you cards that went out and why some participants didn't receive theirs yet, particularly those who pledged through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). Parishioners have expressed their delight at the birthday cards as well. It was suggested a card be made that is blank that can be used for other occasions, such as thank you cards for volunteering or participating in other events. There was follow-up discussion regarding EFT participants and if there is some option for them to put something in the plate to ease their possible discomfort at the perception of them not participating in the offering.

Susan intends to step down from leading the Annual Giving Campaign for the coming year but stands ready to assist whoever takes over. She has lessons learned and can share her ideas for a letter as well as plans for having people speak directly to the congregation at the various services.

**Communications Position.** Javier stated that Jesse has been offered, and accepted, the Communications Position. His salary has been set for the time being based on training, his current skill-set, and what services he engages in. His hours are currently Tuesday and Thursday from 0930 - 1400. Rose and Javier will meet to write a Position Description that is appropriate to the needs of Ascension. Gordon had high praise for his updates to the website.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Worship Committee.** Meredith spoke on the Worship Survey that was recently developed. The Vestry has expressed approval of the open ended question format. Meredith stated the questions would be reviewed by the Worship Committee at their Wednesday meeting. She opened

discussions on the timing of the survey and how it would be made available for widest dissemination, such as an online option. Betsy recommended it be timed to coincide with Javier's Priest-in-Charge Evaluation so fewer surveys will be issued successively. She also noted that the responses to the survey will likely be informed by parishioners' impressions of Javier so it makes sense to associate them. This would tie them to the Spring/April time frame. Gordon asked if there is a purpose statement with the survey since this will help explain why members are completing it. Follow-up questions regarded if the diocese has a one year review for the priest in charge and how to announce these surveys to the congregation.

### **OPEN MIC**

**Janet** reported on the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, which was submitted but left out of the Committee Reports in the packet, and there was a brief discussion of how best to finance it. Donations will be accepted but are not mandatory. Gluten free options will be available. Jesse and Freddy will be asked to participate providing music. RSVPs are requested to plan accordingly.

**Javier** brought up Andrew's concerns regarding the temperature requirements for the organ as well as temperature and humidity levels for the piano. These are not all viable given the size of the church. Andrew has suggested moving the piano.

**Javier** explained that one of the compressor units outside isn't working as evidenced by the snow and ice on it. Betsy asked for confirmation that work was recently done on it and if there's a warranty included. Janet also brought up the point of the Emergency Heat option on the system and what decision was made two years ago.

**Javier** announced he was contacted by the Bishop on Friday with an invitation to sit on the Strategic Planning Committee for the Montgomery County Region and if we could provide a lay person for the committee as well. Susan volunteered. Discussion began regarding opening the field to the congregation. Unfortunately, the Bishop needed an answer that Friday when he called.

**Javier** outlined his goals for Ascension regarding membership and participation. He asked the Vestry members to bring ideas to the next meeting for how to reach those goals (a minimum of 200 people per Sunday).

**ADJOURNMENT:** At 4:26 p.m., Gordon moved that the meeting be adjourned. Rose seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Danielle Allen  
Clerk of the Vestry