

Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Vestry Minutes
December 5, 2021

PRESENT: Senior Warden Zadinga Ogada, Junior Warden Kristen Keating, Monty Peterson, Lauren Kingsland, Ed Armstrong, Danielle Allen, Arturo Rodriguez, Wadai Dennis, Ruth Anna Skowronski, Gary McLaughlin (Treasurer), Randall Adams (Facilities) . **Absent:** Wendy Quijada, Adoma Baffoe.

Meeting was opened at 2:02pm following prayer by Padre Javier.

FACILITIES UPDATE: Randall said that late summer, he found that there was an issue with the VAV box for classroom two but decided not to spend money on a maintenance call. When the preventive inspection was performed by Precision HVAC, we found that the motor, relay and some of the wiring in the box were fried. We have to replace the motor, relay and capacitor and that costs \$1,760. It will restore the heat and air conditioning to the classroom. This needs to be approved by the vestry before the work can be done. If not, there will be no heat in room two. It is the room where Megan and Michelle have Sunday school class, so it is important to fix it. Zadinga asked if there were other facility issues and Kristen referred to the packet she sent for the outside lights, plumbing downstairs and the fire panel in the chapel.

The \$7,000 estimate for the outside and parking lot lights will be postponed until spring. We need to replace the lights on the walkway to the main church, outside the chapel and the ones on the porch. It is very dark and dangerous. Kolb Electric will be able to fix the lights before December 23, 2021 if the estimate is approved. Randall explained the scope of the work which includes the floodlights on the back of the church, over the stain glass window. The light on the chapel shows that the wires were capped off and they need to be replaced. The lights on the porch, security lights in the narthex have been disconnected. They may not have ever been on because there is no power connected to them. Randall would like up to \$1,000 to be approved to find out what is wrong with the porch lights. For Kolb it will be \$4,560 total to fix the lights. Ruth Anna asked if, in the future, we could change the church sign to one that scrolls information. The Presbyterian church down the road has one. Lauren said that Gordon Donnelly has had experience with those types of signs and that we should ask for his input. Ed said that he feels we have to expedite the repairs especially because the classroom will have no heat without the repairs. Randall said if it is approved today, he will send the signed contracts on Monday, then schedule the work immediately.

The estimate from Jaffe Electric came in lower on the pole lights but we have enough light in the parking lot. Randall said he does not want to tax the budget too much. Lauren is concerned that the wiring was capped off and it could be that there was a bigger problem. Randall thinks they just got abandoned and became corroded. The O'Connor contract is lower on the two

classrooms downstairs for the plumbing in comparison to Magnolia Plumbing. Randall explained that porcelain sinks have steel interiors with porcelain overlay. Over time, they rust and chip away and they have sharp edges. They need to be replaced as well as the faucets and drains that are corroded. Jesse has already ordered the faucets and all repairs can be done before Christmas. That total is \$2,275 and \$300 allowance for the faucets and drains. Arturo observed that all these repairs add up to about \$13,574 and he feels Gary should be involved. Gary said he will advise after all the discussion about the repairs have been completed.

The Ark fire panel in the chapel has lost its LCD screen. It costs approximately \$4,900 based on the estimate from ARK. Randall's recommendation is not to go with a rebuilt fire panel because they don't come with warranty. The replacement will bring the fire panel up to code and we will pass inspection. Zadinga asked if this was part of the last fire panel inspection and Randall explained that it is a coincidental breakdown after the fact. Zadinga asked Gary's input on how to finance all the repairs. Gary said that the facilities reserve fund is for the purpose of repairing issues with the facilities. There is about \$50,000 in that fund and the \$13,574 can be taken from it. He sees no reason not to use the funds for these repairs. Ed moved that the vestry approve the items for repairs discussed during this meeting. Kristen seconded and it passed unanimously. Zadinga thanked Randall, Kristen and Gary for working behind the scenes.

CONSENT AGENDA: Danielle said that the wording in the Open Mic item about an initiative to include LGBTQ and the Spanish community should read "would include" and not "should include". Lauren moved to accept the Consent Agenda with the corrections and Danielle seconded. It passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS; The issue Gary wants the vestry to see is that we are \$12,000 in the hole, year to date. The month to month seems okay but the average has not held. Our income is sporadic right now. We should come up to the average in the coming two months of the year. One of the key players is Lin and now that she is no longer here, Gary will deal with her position for now. It may not be smooth, but it will be done. He is looking at the job description and there will be some changes.

The loan will pay for the mortgage and the elevator, but he has not seen any movement as far as that is concerned. The loan process is slow because of issues with the counties in Maryland so there is no deadline on when the settlement will be. Hopefully, there will be some resolution by the end of the month. Gary said that he received about \$10,000 this week and even though it is earmarked for next year, it makes the money situation better. He asked the vestry to send in recommendations for an Administrator with talents as office manager, familiarity with Realm, someone who knows accounting and also speaks Spanish.

NEW BUSINESS;

Nominating Committee: Padre said that he has spoken to Adoma and Wadai about the nominations. Padre said that Wendy is now working on Sundays and can no longer attend the vestry meetings, so she wants to be replaced. Padre will find a replacement.

Call List: Zadinga said the call list has to be revised so she will reach out to Wendy since she was the last person to work on it. It will be good to do that at the end of the year. Zadinga gave credit to Ruth Anna who suggested reaching out to the congregation again.

Administration update: The job description for the administrator is on the website. Padre has been working with Kristen and Betsy on this. He asked that we share it with family and friends to apply. Ruth Anna said she can help Gary with QuickBooks. Randall will continue to help with the contractors. With Lin's absence there are payroll issues that need to be addressed and Gary suggested hiring a temporary employee.

New Committee: The Race, Equity and Social Justice committee has changed their name to Ascension Equity and Justice committee. The committee would like the vestry to recognize the Ascension History committee as a new committee and not a subcommittee of the AEJC committee. They will have a full committee standing. The chair will attend the Parish Council meetings and they will have a vestry liaison. Ruth Anna explained their mandate. It is an initiative from the diocese for the churches to look at their history in regard to slavery and reparations. The diocese of Maryland has pledged \$1,000,000 for reparations. So far, the committee has been researching where our church came from. Ascension was a mission from Christ Church, Rockville. The land was donated by Summit Hall farm and the family used enslaved labor. The committee is researching all of this and the families that were present during those periods. She invited people who are interested in researching to join the committee.

Annual meeting: Padre would like the vestry liaisons to ask the committee chairs to present their report for the annual meeting before January 10, 2022. The annual meeting will be held on January 23, 2022 and it will be virtual. They need to send the reports to Jesse so that he can make it part of the packet. The candidate forum will be held on January 16, 2022. The diocesan convention will be held on January 29, 2022 at the cathedral. Proof of vaccination is required. Zadinga asked about the vestry retreat. Padre said it will be on February 11-12, 2022 if it is in person. If it is online, it will be on February 12, 2022.

OPEN MIC;

Facilities issues: The way the sanctuary is heated will be a problem in the future. We use two heat pumps that have been hooked together. Number three and four. Number three is dead and will need to be replaced. We heat the sanctuary with number four and the duct heaters. We will need number three by summer, otherwise there will be no air conditioning. The five-ton heat pump we need costs approximately \$30,000. It might be a good time to look at going solar.

Kristen and Randall think we should explore going solar as a way of looking at all our options. Zadinga wants to be a part of the team to research and come to the vestry with suggestions. If interested, please let Kristen know.

ADJOURNMENT; Danielle moved to adjourn the meeting and Lauren seconded. It passed unanimously. Ruth Anna provided closing prayer.

The meeting ended at 3:33pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Ophelia Yalley-Ogunro
Secretary of the Vestry

**Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Committee Chairs' and Liaisons' Reports**

PARISH LIFE, Janet King, Chairperson
No report submitted..

FACILITIES, Randall Adams, Co-Chairperson

No report submitted.

CHILDREN'S FORMATION, Megan Didavi, Co-Chairperson

In our Godly Play Sunday School class, via zoom, Michelle Wood and I had 5 children join us for our advent lessons. During each class, we are touched by the children's ideas, creative responses and gratitude for God's gifts. We are taking two weeks off for Christmas and New Years. January 9th, we recommence with an Epiphany lesson and then a series of parable lessons until Lent.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE, Curt Lindsay, Chairperson

Photographs provided by Living Compass have been set to appear on the parish Facebook page. A new photo appears each day with the quote for that day from "Living Well through Advent." The photos came with the quotes in English; Ruth Anna Skowronski edited each photo to add the Spanish translation. Arturo Rodriguez is gratefully acknowledged for his help with the translations.

For some time, the committee has sought to be divested of the responsibility for overseeing the annual Ascension Expo, believing that worship is only one of the areas featured at the event. A few months ago, the thought was advanced that the Parish Council would be a more appropriate body to assume this responsibility. The matter was raised at the December 9 Parish Council meeting, and the council agreed that this was appropriate.

A concern was raised about whether it is appropriate to have any decorations around the altar and Advent wreath other than greens during Advent. The question was addressed to Padre Javier, who said that he knew of no time other than Lent when flowers are not appropriate.

Concerns were also raised about instructions for worship support functions, particularly lay readers and Welcome Team members, needing to be updated and communicated to all who need them. A general feeling is that these instructions need to be reviewed and updated. A suggestion was also made that these instructions be posted on the web site. These matters will be taken up at a meeting in the near future.

The committee had reserved December 20 for a final meeting of the year. During the preceding week, it was determined that there were no matters that needed attention at that time, and so to make room for holiday preparations, it was decided to wait with our next meeting until after the start of the new year. We plan to meet on January 3.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE, James Black, Acting Chairperson

No report submitted.

ASCENSION EQUITY AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE (AEJC)

(Formerly Race, Equity and Social Justice Committee [RESJC])

Since our last report, our committee has met twice, on December 2 and 16, and has announced one upcoming event for the congregation.

We begin most meetings by rooting our mission in Scripture through our Scripture, Poetry, and Prayer exercise. Members choose a selection from any tradition that speaks to our mission and write a short statement on why it resonates. They present their selections, and we discuss them. Ed is compiling the contributions for presentation to the congregation. We plan to call for contributions from the whole congregation for this compilation. Vestry members are cordially invited to participate; send selections to Ed at edward.armstrong21@starpower.net.

We changed the name of our committee to the Ascension Equity and Justice Committee to better reflect the scope of our mission.

To make AEJC meetings more predictable and accessible, we decided to hold AEJC meetings on the first and third Thursday evenings of each month (instead of every two weeks).

At the annual election on December 2, Laurie Yelle was re-elected as committee Chair. Ed Armstrong, James Black III, and Mary Rouse volunteered to serve on an Advisory Board for the committee.

We continued to reflect on the AEJ Committee's path going forward, emphasizing outreach to the congregation and the community. Members were encouraged to help with Ascension's community outreach activities. Many members had already been helping, and additional members signed up.

At each meeting, Ed briefed us on local, state, and national news relevant to our work, particularly issues around criminal/social justice and federal legislation on voting rights. (Vestry members interested in receiving these news briefs should contact Ed.)

Ed arranged for the AEJC to host Montgomery County At-Large Councilmember, Will Jawando, in "A Conversation about Criminal and Social Justice in Montgomery County" via Zoom on Thursday, January 13, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. Ed created the publicity for the event. In conjunction with Padre Ocampo and the Rev. Beth O'Callahan, Rector of St. Nicholas in Darnestown, he arranged for the event to be offered to all Episcopal churches in Montgomery County. Vestry members and all of Ascension's parishioners are encouraged to register and attend. The event has been included in *This Week at Ascension* and the *Green Bulletin*, announced at the Sunday service, and sent to the Wednesday Morning Book Club, the Vestry, the Parish Council, and the Youth Group leaders. Rev. Beth O'Callahan has sent the announcement to Deans/Clergy members of all Episcopal churches in Montgomery County.

We held a planning session with Padre Javier and Rev. Beth for a return visit by EDOW Missioner for Equity & Justice Hazel Monae to our congregation and all Upper Montgomery Episcopal churches (Rev. Beth is Dean). The Zoom event is planned for February or March.

Michelle, chair of the full-fledged Ascension History Committee, kept us informed about the work of EDOW Reparations Research Cohort and her committee members' progress in researching Ascension's history.

On December 2, we held a lively discussion about our experience of visiting the National Museum of African American History and Culture on Saturday, November 20. Participants of that excursion and several others attended. James is creating an exhibit of the excursion highlights for the congregation.

The AEJC has decided to organize excursions related to our committee's mission, to be open to the whole congregation, on the second Saturday of every other month: February 12, April 9, June 11, and so forth. Possible destinations are the National Museum of the American Indian, the Holocaust Museum, and the Glenstone Museum and grounds in Potomac (www.glenstone.org). Laurie will coordinate the excursions, and James will coordinate transportation. We hope that another Ascension group will organize excursions for the congregation on alternate months.

Danielle, with the help of other AEJC members, continues to post on Ascension's social media sites a wealth of inspiring information related to the committee's work, such as observing Native American Heritage Month and encouraging others to join the committee.

James, Chairman of Ascension's Communication Committee, updated us about procedures for distributing our committee's information to the congregation through various means.

Gail, head of Ascension's Green Team, an environmental justice subcommittee of the AEJC, updated us on its progress.

We are compiling a list of resources on equity and justice topics for the congregation, to be disseminated in January. Vestry members are invited to contribute to the list by sending information on relevant books, articles, films, documentaries, websites, blogs, events, etc. to Laurie at lyelle@aol.com.

ASCENSION HISTORY COMMITTEE, Michelle Wood, Chairperson

The Ascension History Committee began in 2021 as a subcommittee of the Ascension Equity and Justice Committee. The committee has begun working on a project to learn about the history of the Church of the Ascension regarding race and racism. We are researching the history from Ascension's founding in 1880 to the present time. We are doing this work as part of a Diocese-wide initiative called the Reparations Task Force. The purpose of the Reparations Task Force is to investigate the financial legacy of chattel slavery in the Diocese. The congregational history project is the first component of the Reparations Task Force, focusing on exploring the history of congregations and connections to slavery.

Over the past several months, the Ascension History Committee has begun locating information on Ascension's history in the Ascension office and gathering records from the Diocese of Maryland and Diocese of Washington. We have begun researching the origins of the land and the source of wealth used to found and develop Ascension. We are also researching the history of Gaithersburg and Montgomery County to understand the context for Ascension's origins. We have also been exploring resources and lessons from foundational work conducted across the national church to understand the church's history and role in systemic racism. We are reading the Rev. Stephanie Speller's book *The Church Cracked Open* to help ground this work.

The committee has been investigating the founding and building of Ascension as a mission church of Christ Church Rockville. We began conducting research about the founding clergy and

vestry. We also began gathering background information about Gaithersburg and Summit Hall Farm, where Ascension is located. We developed a template for documenting key events, dates, and information about our history and for recording source material. The goal of the committee is to prepare a written report as part of EDOW's congregational history project.

The committee is following guidance from the EDOW in conducting its work.. Since September 2021 members of our committee have been joining monthly meetings convened on the first Saturday of every month at 11:00 am by the Rev. Peter Jarett-Schell of Calvary Episcopal Church of the EDOW Reparations Task Force. Our committee is using resources from EDOW archivists to organize our work.

In November 2021 chair Michelle Wood sent information to the Vestry to request that the committee become a separate committee, given the scope and scale of the activities the group is undertaking and the long timeframe for completing the report.

The history committee met twice in November 2021, on November 4 and 18 and once in December on December 16. We meet after the Ascension Equity and Justice Committee meetings. On November 22 we conducted an interview with a long-time parishioner, Barbara Harbison. On December 9, Michelle Wood attended the Parish Council meeting and gave an overview of the committee's activities and goals.

In early 2022 the history committee is planning several activities:

- Disseminate information to the congregation about the history committee and invite other Ascension parishioners to join.
- Review the documents provided from EDOW for organizing the history report and begin filling in details from our research.
- Identify areas for inquiry such as details about the founding vestry committee from Christ Church, Gaithersburg area events, connections to local historical organizations.
- Coordinate with history committee at Christ Church in Rockville to learn more about the history preceding Ascension's founding.
- Meet with EDOW archivists Cathy O'Donnell (St, John's Norwood) and Franklin Robinson (EDOW) for advice on reviewing documents, ways to summarize, suggestions for other sources.
- Review materials and documents on site at Ascension.
- Plan additional interviews to develop oral histories to complement the document review underway.

No other reports received.

**Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Treasurer's Report
November 2021**

Just prior to receiving the financial documentation for November from our Parish Administrator, she left our employ. What is available at this moment has been collected by myself and any and all errors are strictly my responsibility. Corrections that might be required going forward, will be brought to your attention. Income for the month of November was the highest in the 2021 fiscal year. This is due largely to pledge income being \$42,675 compared to the 11 month YTD average of \$31,956. This can be explained in 2021 pledge accounts being brought up to date, and the influx of early pledges for the 2022 campaign. In addition, our Building Use Fund, (Rent) was \$5,372 compared to the 11 month average of \$3,533.

Expenses for the month came in at \$33,961 compared to the YTD average of \$38,464. In this case, our usually high Facilities Expenses were Less than \$100, compared to our average YTD Facilities Expenses of \$5,361. It might well be explained by Facilities Expenses not yet accounted for, but at this time they elude your in-house accountant.

Net Operating Income was \$17,739, another exceptional number. This leaves us with a year-to-date Net Income of \$6,390. A small but likely sufficient amount to get us through the entire Fiscal Year without being in the red. Prayers are always welcome, both for our fiscal matters, but especially for a fully qualified accountant/bookkeeper.

**Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Vestry Closing Prayer Assignments
2021 - 2022**

February 2021	Kristen Keating	KristenKeating@westat.com
March 2021	Zadinga Ogada	Z_Zulu@msn.com
April 2021	Wendy Quijada	wendyquijada01@gmail.com
May 2021	Adoma Baffoe	agbaffoe@msn.com
June 2021	Danielle Allen	danielle.a.allen@gmail.com
July 2021	Wadai Bright	wadai203@yahoo.com
August 2021	Monty Peterson	monteathp@gmail.com
September* 2021	Arturo Rodriguez	rodriguez18915@verizon.net
October 2021	Lauren Kingsland	quiltqueen928@gmail.com
November 2021	Ruth Anna Skowronski	ruth.skowronski@gmail.com
December 2021	Ed Armstrong	edward.armstrong21@starpower.net
January 2022	Javier Ocampo	ocampo@ascensionmd.org

**Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Parish Life Events Calendar 2021**

Annual Events	
One-Ascension Sundays (single service and parish wide celebratory luncheon)	January 24, 2021 January 31, 2021 May 16, 2021* May 30, 2021 August 29, 2021 October 31, 2021
Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper	Tuesday, February 16, 2021
Ash Wednesday	Wednesday, February 17, 2021
Annual Meeting / Potluck Lunch	Sunday, January 24, 2021
Easter	Sunday, April 4, 2021
Ascension Day / Parish name day	Sunday, May 30, 2021
Pentecost	Sunday, May 23, 2021
Special Events	Usually several per year including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● yard sales/car washes ● dances and parties ● other fundraising events ● holiday festivals ● welcomes ● farewells ● dedications
Bishop Budde's Visit	May 16, 2021
Padre Javier's Installation	May 16, 2021

**Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Committee Chairs and Vestry Liaisons**

Standing Committees	Vestry Liaison	Chairperson
Christian Formation for Children	Wadai & Wendy	Megan Didavi
Christian Formation for Youth	Lauren & Wendy	Angie Hight-Walker
Communications	Ed & Danielle	James Black
Facilities	Monty	Randall Adams & Ted Bedell
Operations and Finance/Stewardship	Zadinga & Lauren	Gary McLaughlin
Outreach	Ed & Kristen	Eugene
Parish Life	Adoma & Zadinga	Janet King
Pastoral Care	Wadai	Javier Ocampo
Personnel	Monty & Lauren	Kristen Keating
Race Equity & Social Justice	Danielle	Laurie Yelle
Worship	Arturo & Ruth Anna	Curt Lindsay
Ad hoc Committees presently in effect		
Ascension House	Kristen	
Christian Formation for Adults	Arturo	TBD
Health and Wellness	Adoma	Danielle Allen
Inventory	Ruth Anna	Berenice Rodriguez
Nominations	TBD	Javier Ocampo
Reopening Committee	Adoma	
Sewing		