

Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Vestry Minutes
August 29, 2021

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

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

CONSENT AGENDA: Kristen asked that topic of wildlife be removed from the agenda. Arturo motioned to adopt the agenda with the correction. Lauren seconded and it was adopted.

OLD BUSINESS; Gary said that we did not have a good month in July. We lost about \$9,000. This is not going to change in September. If we have two months of loss and we have other expenses, it will be a challenge. With the pledge campaign coming up, he is hoping people who have pledged will get caught up. Plate money is small and until attendance improves, it will not change. One Ascension Sunday had about 90 people in attendance; both physically and virtually. It is not enough. We don't have a good situation. Maybe by fall, it will change. We have about \$250,000 in cash. It is a fair amount, but we can't spend it. Lauren thanked Gary for the financial statements. She said that it is clear we don't have money to spend. She also spoke to a friend who is a senior warden in another church and most churches are suffering the same. There is a disruption in social behavior which includes going to church; this will not be fixed by the end of the year. We should continue doing outreach and invite people back to church.

Monty asked if a payment schedule has been worked out for the elevator and what the down payment will be. Gary's preference is to take what we can in loans and make monthly payments. If we spend the \$100,000, it will not bring in any money.

Facilities: Randall said he sent a list of about seven items as a reminder/status on projects. A couple of new things but nothing urgent. A couple of plumbing issues, a slow drain and leaky sink will need a plumber. He will see if he can snake the drain himself. The other issues are the low hanging trees and it will cost about \$3,600 to have a professional take care of it. Randall spoke to Sean and he is hoping to get the duct heaters done by the end of September to be ready for the winter. Kristen got the above list, but she did not see it in time for this meeting. There are no updates for the elevator project. According to Kristen and Zadinga, we are waiting for the money to proceed. Gary asked Randall to provide dates so he can give the approval for the funds. Randall said the goal date is October 1st to sign the contract and for the deposit. The key lock pads for the chapel will be installed this week. Zadinga thanked Randall for all he is doing and also making himself available for the meetings.

Sexton: A new sexton has been hired. Two people were interviewed, and Jesse was hired. He is still doing the media work. He has vacuumed, cleaned the bathrooms and disinfected the sanctuary after each service.

Yard sale: We made \$2,279 at the yard sale. We need to box the things and keep them in a room to make room for the Seventh Day Adventist church. The diocese wants stuff for the Afghan refugees. Kristen will get help and box the stuff to be given to them by September 20th. Otherwise, they will be given to a local charity. Danielle said that we can contact Green Drop who will come and pick up the donation. Ruth Anna said children's coats can be given to Linkages for Learning. Some of the children show during the cold weather without coats. Gary asked if we could donate to St. James' yard sale to repay them for their generosity to us. Kristen will check with them.

Fiestas de las Americas: Berenice was asked to discuss the Fiesta de las Americas. The last one that was done had food served after church services. Everyone dressed up in their native attire. The food truck idea was discussed at the parish council meeting. We can have three or four food trucks on the parking lot with music and only parishioners attending. Berenice said that her community has food trucks come once a week and those food trucks can be found on Facebook. They show up and set up. Lauren asked if we are looking for food from certain countries. Berenice confirmed that it will be Latin American food. A snow cone truck can also be added as well. Zadinga asked if we need a program or a plan for the events. She also asked why we are celebrating the day. Berenice said it is not necessarily celebrating anything but a celebration for the congregation and community. We can chat amongst ourselves about why we attend the church. Maybe do pamphlets to give away; outreach of some sort. A mariachi band is expensive. Ruth Anna suggested that we can get a dance group to come and demonstrate at the event.

Contracts-Berenice asked if we will consider the Seventh Day Adventist's request. It was discussed at the executive meeting and it was decided that they can use the chapel and Ascension House but not the main sanctuary. Padre will contact them.

Microphones for the choir: Jesse asked if we can purchase the microphones to improve sound, not only in the church but on zoom as well. We have a restricted fund for this purpose. Kristen recommends that we purchase the microphones. Gary mentioned that he has had a parishioner complain that he cannot hear in the church. Zadinga added that the equipment will cost about \$1,500 and we have about \$10,00 available in the restricted funds. Gary asked if we could use the same equipment that is used in the movie theatres. Kristen said that she thought Jesse had spoken about placing speakers in other parts of the church. Kristen thinks that in addition to the microphones, maybe we need more speakers so that if we have some at the back it will project

the sound and create a surround sound. We can ask Jesse if we need speakers or something more private and closer to the ear. Right now, they are only in the front. Arturo moved to purchase the equipment and Ruth Anna seconded. It passed unanimously. Danielle said Jesse has discussed the improvement and it comes from more speakers. Ruth Anna also said that in the Brazilian church, she picks up a device that makes translation better. Other sound quality issues will be discussed at the staff meeting.

OPEN MIC:

Padre- He shared a RESJ event scheduled for September 9, 2021 from 7pm to 8pm. He strongly suggests that the vestry attend this event. It will be on zoom. He will share the link by email.

Padre-Nominating committee: Arturo, Kristen and Wadai are cycling off the vestry. Padre has not heard from the nominating committee yet.

Arturo-During the yard sale, prep he had an opportunity to become more familiar with Ascension House; its structure and needs. He thought that even though we do not have any money, there has to be someone other than Kristen thinking about a long-term plan for Ascension House. If we don't think about it a year later, it will be in worse shape and we will still have the problem. A committee should be brainstorming. Zadinga said there is a committee but with the pandemic, everything has slowed down. Kristen said the committee didn't agree on what to do with it.

Lauren asked if it is still the case that we cannot tear it down and Kristen said yes. Lauren suggested that because the committee members change, it may be worthwhile checking in again with the City of Gaithersburg. Kristen also mentioned that Meredith who works with City of Gaithersburg government spoke with Michelle Wood about suggestions for its use. Ruth Anna said when the video is put together for the Expo there should be something in there to encourage people to come up with ideas or join the brainstorming.

Danielle She asked for prayers for Bishop Marianne. She was in a bike accident.

ADJOURNMENT: Kristen motioned to adjourn the meeting and Danielle seconded. It passed unanimously.

Arturo provided closing prayer. The meeting ended at 3:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Ophelia Yalley-Ogunro
Secretary of the Vestry