

Episcopal Church of the Ascension

Vestry Minutes

March 6, 2022

PRESENT: Senior Warden Kristen Keating, Junior Warden Danielle Allen, Monty Peterson, Lauren Kingsland, Ed Armstrong, Ruth Anna Skowronski, Randall Adams, Shirley Allen, Lisa Blanc, Susan McLaughlin, Roger LeCompte, Gary McLaughlin (Treasurer), Michelle Wood (History & Children's Formation), Megan Didavi (Children's Formation).

Meeting started at 2:04pm following prayer by Padre.

Kristen invited Michelle and Megan to do their presentation for Godly Play. Michelle and Megan wanted to fill in the vestry with what is going on with Sunday school.

Michelle began by defining what Godly Play is. It is a curriculum of spiritual practice that explores the mystery of God's presence in our lives. It encourages us to engage with the meaning of God and to discover God. A lot of religious educational programs teach children by telling children what to know about God. Godly Play engages the children in the process of exploring who God is. It was developed over 40 years ago by Jerome Berryman who is an episcopal priest, theologian and educator. It is a classroom that is like a worship space. Together with the children, they have a feast and prayer. It is modeled after the Montessori education principles. The children explore themselves and their spirituality on their own. The program started when Rev. Beth O'Callahan was at Ascension. She engaged the parishioners on building the material which helped in engaging with the stories.

Michelle stated that we have a core set and also teachers were recruited for the program. Over the years, we have several who have been trained to teach the program. Denise Lionetti, Lovetta Willie, Georgette and Mardia Dennis, Kristen Fitzpatrick, Eliane Dunn, Megan Didavi and Zadinga Ogada are trained teachers. After the story, the children are required to engage with the story on their own. It is an open thing; the more we hear it and we reflect on it, the more we hear what God is telling us. We have the stories of creation, Noah, Moses, The Ten Commandments, The Birth of Jesus and The Parables. There are stories of baptism and The World Communion, The Apostles and Pentecost. Megan chose a story the children have enjoyed and demonstrated the story. It is the story of Abraham and Sarah.

After the story is told, questions are asked of the children and there are no right or wrong answers. One of the principles is to have mixed ages in the class and they learn from each other.

They need to feel capable. Kristen asked if there are activities after the story is told. Megan said there is a packet they use to make anything they want. Modeling clay is also used to make different things. They can also recreate the story. Danielle wanted to know which comes first, Godly Play or Joyful Path. It appears Joyful Path has been abandoned and she wondered if it is because Godly Play works for all ages. Joyful Path is for older children and we didn't have many kids to participate. When this group matures, they will graduate to Joyful Path. Michelle and Megan said they hope that as the kids grow, there will be stories to include for older children. Lauren asked if they follow the church calendar or are the stories repeated? Michelle said they start each year in September and they start with The Creation story. There are Advent stories, Parables, Easter and others. It is hard to understand the parables so it is repeated often so it will stay with the kids. Padre thanked them for all they do and have been doing for a long time. May 1st will be Children's Sunday.

CONSENT AGENDA: Kristen said the book that was distributed on Shrove Tuesday was 'Living Well During Lent' and not 'Lent Madness'. It will be corrected in the previous minutes. Monty made a motion to accept the minutes with the correction. Lisa seconded and it passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS: Gary said that in January, we had a net income of \$8,000. If we look at the financial status of the world, we should know that our endowment has taken a \$14,000 hit. At this time, we do not need to do anything about it. We had about \$61,000 in income and \$53,000 in expenses. Gary explained to the new members of the vestry that for a while now, the older vestry did not make a parochial report for the diocese. We have been reporting an ungodly number of members but every year, he has chopped off the number until we get to the real number of members. We are about 400 members based on pledge and plate donors. We have about 156 each Sunday with 106 online. Padre said that there is a book in the sacristy which accounts for the numbers who attend the services. During the Covid years, we did not have the numbers recorded because services were held online so we are trying to figure out the real numbers now. Gary is still going through the report and the due date has been extended to April 1st by the diocese. Any concerns should be sent to Gary by tomorrow so that the report can be sent after tomorrow.

Gary went through the financial report by page. Stewardship on page 5 of the report shows the PPP grant of \$44,000 in 2021. Roger moved to accept the parochial report and Lisa seconded. It passed unanimously. Gary will send the copy to be signed by email.

Facilities: Randall referred to the committee report which is complete but he wanted to expand on the two plumbing issues. One of the items that is not on the list is a drain that had disintegrated from the sacarium. It has been fixed but we have to wait for the bill. A long term

issue is the horizontal pipe which is more susceptible to rusting and rotting than vertical ones. In classroom six downstairs, he was unable to snake one of the pipes which means walls may need to be cut out; it means major repairs are required. We should also be careful what goes down the pipes. Kristen asked Randall if he had communicated this with Eileen. He has not. She will discuss it with Eileen. The urinal has not been fixed either. We need to face this down the road.

Kristen asked about the termite problem in the chapel. Randall said he will work on it this week. On the sanctuary lighting; it is difficult to get the bulb and he is trying to see what is available. The pulpit light is also out and it is difficult to see the reader. Randall has an extension ladder and Jesse will help him to replace the one light. He is researching the dimmers too. We have to fix these lighting issues. The lighting on the front sign at the corner of Summit and 355 is also out or dim. To convert to LED will cost \$471. Randall proposed to increase his pledge to pay for the lighting on the sign or pay for it outright. Padre thanked Randall for his offer and also the amount of time he spends on the facilities issues. Roger moved to accept Randall's offer to pay for the lighting on the signage. Ed also suggested that Randall and Gail receive appropriate recognition for this generous gesture. It was seconded by Monty and it passed unanimously.

Growing Young: Danielle said that they are looking for people to participate and she asked the vestry to come up with names of people who can participate. This week, the executive committee will contact those people and tell them about the initiative and find out if they are interested in participating.

NEW BUSINESS:

Tending Our Soil: Padre said that we applied and have been approved but we need to invite people to participate. Danielle said the Executive committee decided that we need a liaison to Tending our Soil. Kristen and Danielle will be the liaisons for Growing Young.

Rice Bowl: Kristin said several people have suggested sending the proceeds from the Rice Bowl to the people of Ukraine to help with charitable efforts there. Suggestions of charities were brought forth; ActBlue, they split the money among four different charities; Americares and they focus on medical supplies, International Rescue committee, World Central Kitchen is Jose Andreas' organization and International Fund for Animal Welfare. Randall said he is partial to UNICEF and he feels the Rice Bowl proceeds should go to some form of humanitarian aid for the folks in Ukraine. Danielle said that someone suggested that if a local charity is chosen, the vestry should consider the Refugee Resettlement in this area.

Roger suggested a different approach; his goal is establishing a relationship with another parish in other parts of the world. Depending on the goal, an endowment can be set up to support a seminarian or the local pastor. There are lots of ideas like this. The idea is forming a relationship

with those whose ideas we wish to support. Kristen said that the Rice Bowl is a one time offering to a charity. Padre said that the Lenten offering is used to support a humanitarian cause. This is not Sunday's plate donation, which is what can be used to support another organization on a recurring basis. Gary suggested Afghanistan or an African country. Kristen will put Roger's idea on the agenda for the next month. Roger was asked to bring suggestions to next month's meeting.

Names of all organizations discussed will be sent by email and Padre will announce it to the congregation on Sunday. Susan asked that a Charity Navigator ranking should be added to every suggestion before sending it to Padre. Padre also gave permission to vote on the charity by email. Danielle made a motion that we plan to send this year's Lenten Rice Bowl funds to a humanitarian organization focusing in Ukraine. Kristen seconded and it passed unanimously.

Microphones: Kristin said Jesse asked that we replace three microphones. The one on the pulpit is dead and the other two are the ones Padre and Tracey use. The \$3000 to purchase them will come from a restricted fund to which people donated at the beginning of the pandemic to upgrade our speaker system. Randall moved that we accept the microphone proposal from Jesse to purchase the microphones. Daniellle added that the \$3,000 to purchase the microphones will come from the restricted funds set aside for audio visual equipment. Lisa seconded and it passed unanimously.

OPEN MIC: Danielle said that the purpose of bringing this up is for understanding and possibly agreeing with the task. The intention is that if this is something we want to move forward with, the Parish Council can deal with it and the vestry will not have to advise their specific committees. This year the newest American holiday is Juneteenth and it will fall on Sunday this year. It is an opportunity to celebrate a large portion of our community and a way to recognize and honor the celebration. We can have One Ascension service and afterwards we can gather and have a barbecue so we are safe outside and in the open air. It can be an opportunity to showcase crafts and sell them. We can also do what St. James did when they visited and brought some of the crafts the kids made. No food, as in potluck but it can be prepared in the church. Most members felt it was a good idea. Kristen suggested we do a big celebration since we have been talking about doing that for a long time. Lisa mentioned that we used to have picnics at Bohrer Park. Kristen said we should have the service in the church so that people can still zoom in.

Elevator: Kristen gave a quick update of the elevator. The day before the elevator repair began ThyssenKrupp said we owe \$20,000 and they will absorb \$10,000 of it and we said we did not have the remaining \$10,000. They got the sub-contractor to come down \$1,000. Tracy has a contract lawyer friend who looked at all the documents and said it is Thyssen Krupp's mistake

and they need to come through with the money. We will meet with them in the next two weeks and we will see what comes of it. The work has come to a standstill until all this is resolved. Ed asked if the work came to a halt because of the issue. Randall said no. It is time to do electrical work and we don't have an electrician that's why the work stopped.

Increasing the number of people allowed in the church. Padre asked if the vestry is willing to increase the number of people in the building. Susan suggested increasing to 100 people in the building and also remove the ribbons at the end of the pews. Randall also suggested we take the stickers on the end of the pews and carpet as well. Susan moved to increase the number of people allowed in the building to 100 and mandatory masks will remain in effect; Kristin seconded and it passed. Lisa said no. She feels it should be lifted entirely. Things have settled and 100 is too conservative.

Padre said that the Parish council meeting will be held on March 15th at 7 PM. Ruth Anna asked if EDOW has any legal support and the answer is no.

ADJOURNMENT: Danielle moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Kristen seconded. Shirley provided closing prayer. The meeting ended at 4:27pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Ophelia Yalley-Ogunro
Secretary of the Vestry