

## **St. John's Vestry Minutes for the 4/28/19 Meeting**

Rev. Jan Oller called our meeting to order at about 12 pm. Present were the Reverend Jan Oller, vestry members, Jeff Burd, Sheila Evans, Jim Gary, Marc Hudson, Jessica Roosa, Jennifer Snook, Deb Vaught, and Alan White. Treasurer John Culley and Sam Hildebrand (of the property/grounds committee) were also present. Nany Bennett was absent.

We opened with a prayer led by Rev. Jan.

**Minutes:** The minutes for the March 17 vestry meeting were approved.

**Financials:** Treasurer John Culley briefly went over the March 2019 balance sheet. He observed that we are presently in good shape, running a bit ahead in terms of income and payment of pledges. Marc moved the approval of the financials, Sheila seconded, and the financials were approved.

**Liaison Reports:** Jim Gary reported that two columbarium niches were reserved: for Samson Benjamin, Jr. and Jeanne Benjamin of Claremont, California. Jeff mentioned that he would get to the property report.

### **Old Business**

**Wheat House:** Rev. Jan informed the vestry that the YSB move from the Wheat House has been delayed because of water issues at their new building. Jan asked Sheila Evans for some history of the Wheat House. In the ensuing conversation, to which Sam Hildebrand also contributed, we learned that St. John's first acquired the Wheat House around 1970. There were classes and gatherings held in the Wheat House in those early years. And a coffee house aimed at Wabash College students was opened there around 1973. Later in the seventies the YSB was founded and the building was rented to the YSB for a nominal \$1/year. (Sam will provide an addendum with a history of the Wheat House.) We learned that while the Diocese owns Wheat House, the St. John's community can make the decision about the future use of the building (pending diocesan approval), though the parish is responsible for meeting the costs linked to that decision. As some background for our planning, Rev. Jan mentioned that if a debt payment amounts to more than 5% of the annual budget that is deemed too much. For St. John's that means about \$8000-\$9000 debt payment per year is the maximum we should absorb. (We have a good rating as a result of the rather high mortgage of our church building.) Rev. Jan also reported that a few years ago, in our discussion of "big hairy audacious goals" the Wheat House came up frequently in our community discussions, suggesting that parishioners care a good deal about the building. We will be having two community meetings in Whitlock this week to discuss the future of the Wheat House. They are scheduled for 5:15 pm on Wednesday, May 1 and 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 5. As members of the vestry, we are asked to be present for at least one of those discussions. We are encouraged to listen carefully to the discussion, and get a sense of our community's collective emotional attachment to the Wheat House. Essentially, the decision will result in one of the three options: rehab, sell, or demolish. Jessica noted the roughly sixfold difference in the costs of the two options. Rehab, roughly \$180,000; tear down, roughly \$30,000. (Though Sam clarified that some additional demolition clean-up costs would lift that cost into the \$42,000 range.) If there is a consensus about renovating the house, we will hire the architect, Gilbert Tobias, to make a thorough evaluation of the costs of such a renovation. (It was generally felt that White's study provided a very useful base line for the costs the rehab would entail.) Jim wondered if we might consider giving the building to someone. Jeff suggested that we could renovate the Wheat House and rent it out. Rev. Jan continued: We should participate in the upcoming discussions and listen intently and keep an open mind. Rev. Jan mentioned some previous thoughts about how the land might be used should the building be demolished: for a parking lot and green space, a labyrinth, a picnic space. She observed that because of the general availability of parking places nearby—people can usually find a place to park—the need for parking spaces is not great. Jim observed that we need to have an end vision for the building and/or the space.

**Updated "rolling" Building and Grounds Spreadsheet:** Marc observed that quite apart from the costs that razing or renovations of the Wheat House would cost, St. John's faces some major expenses over the next few years. Rev. Jan noted that we can put off expenses for a short time, but we must always keep up with the maintenance of our building. We set aside \$8000/year for maintenance: presently we have \$43,000 in the building repairs fund. Jim

appreciated the care given the maintenance of our building. Sam requested \$17, 874 for the following repairs/work to be paid from the building fund: to replace the flat roof membrane of the transept and install new flashing (cost: \$8, 672) and replace the two nave A/C condenser units mounted on flat roofs (cost: \$8, 712), and \$500 for the removal of the courtyard tree and to level the pavers in the courtyard for a total cost of \$17, 884. Rev. Jan made the motion to approve that work: the motion was seconded and then passed.

**Pathways to Vitality:** Jan reported that the Pathways Committee consists of Jerilyn Yerkes, Deb Swanson, Christopher Short, Mark and Meribeth Kussmaul and Deb Vaught. There will be an orientation for our Team on June 6th. Three parishes (ours, St. Mathew's and St. Peter's) will be involved. The candidate to be the Pathways Priest will visit the Diocese in early May: Rev. Jan and a few others will have dinner with him at that time. The Team will develop a "Vitality Project" during the program. Some previous projects have been: a pictorial directory (for a congregation that wanted to get to know each other better); a restarting of Christian Education; for a church "without walls," the development of a vestry and the education of the parishioners about all that the building of a church requires. The visiting Pathways priest will be with St. John's for eight months full time.

**Easter Services and Brunch:** Rev. Jan asked for comments about our Easter Services and brunch. Vestry members liked the new order of the Palm Sunday service with the Passion play coming at the end. Also appreciated were the Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services—the care given by the three priests to coordinate the individual efforts, and the collaboration and community building among our three churches. The Easter service was lovely, and the potluck excellent. The book on race in America selected by the bishop was found challenging, but it led to lively (and this clerk thinks important) discussions. Though we didn't always find common ground, we treated each other with courtesy and mutual respect.

The meeting was adjourned at about 1:20 p.m.

--Respectfully submitted on 5/1/19 by Marc Hudson, Clerk of the Vestry.

Below are some important dates to be mindful of:

- May 1<sup>st</sup> @ 5:15- Meeting about The Wheat House (WH)
- May 5<sup>th</sup> @ 4:30p- Meeting about The Wheat House (WH)
- May 5<sup>th</sup> @ 3p- Community Chorus concert @ First Christian
- May 11th: "Neighborhood Gathering" @ St. John's (10a-noon; Whitlock)[for Delegates and Alternates to Diocesan Convention]
- May 18<sup>th</sup>: Montgomery County "Dancing with the Stars"
- May 19<sup>th</sup>: Vestry meeting following the second service
- May 26<sup>th</sup>: Rev. Fatima Yakubu-Madus will preach (Diocesan Deacon f or Community Engagement) – will hold a special "Adult Forum" between services for conversation