

St. John's Vestry Minutes for the 9/15/19 Meeting

Rev. Jan Oller called our meeting to order at about 12 pm. Present also were vestry members, Nancy Bennett, Jeff Burd, Sheila Evans, Jim Gary, Marc Hudson, Jessica Roosa, Jennifer Snook, Deb Vaught, and Alan White. John Culley, Sam Hildebrand, and Ellen Ball were also present.

We opened with a prayer led by Rev. Jan.

Minutes: Nancy moved and Jessica seconded that the minutes for the June vestry meeting be approved. The motion carried.

Financials: Treasurer John Culley briefly went over the September 2019 balance sheet. He noted that we are a bit behind in pledge donations, but since we are a bit behind in spending, this is not an issue. Marc moved the approval of the financials, Nancy seconded, and the financials were approved.

Liaison Reports: were acknowledged. Rev. Jan noted that in terms of Parish Life activities that there will be a Pitch-In Dinner on October 25th. On November 23rd there will be a chili cook-off from 3-6 in Whitlock and on Saturday, January 4th, there will be a White Elephant Epiphany Party (also in Whitlock) hosted by Kari Brock.

Old Business

Wheat House: We first took up the issue of the Wheat House. From the community's discussion the previous week, it had appeared likely that we would move to demolish the Wheat House. But Sam Hildebrand had a chance encounter that has possibly changed the fate of the Wheat House. At least, for now, as Sam mentioned, the Wheat House "is back on life support." This is what happened: this past week, Sam was at our church and saw a woman there taking photos of the outside of St. John's. Upon approaching her, he learned that she is Emily Eckhart from Indiana Landmarks and she was there to document the buildings in the historic Elston Grove area of Crawfordsville. Sam invited her inside the church and they talked further. She told Sam that Indiana Landmarks provides funds to renovate historic buildings. Sam replied that he had understood churches do not qualify for such funds. Ms. Eckert replied that that condition changed in 2015. Sam mentioned our Wheat House and how it was likely that we would demolish the building. On seeing the building, she found it a handsome structure, and implied that she would not like to see it razed. She told Sam that up to \$50,000 from Indiana Landmarks (with matching funds from St. John's) could be available for work to renovate the building. She also thought that the estimates that we had for renovating the building were perhaps greater than it actually would cost. For now, we will cut off the utilities in the Wheat House. Sam, or someone else, will look in on the building once or twice a week. So, Sam summed up his position: "I wouldn't pull the plug on the Wheat House." Nancy wanted to know if there was anything inside that could be dangerous. Rev. Jan did not think so. She suggested that if anyone has any further thoughts on the Wheat House that he or she get in touch with members of the committee. Rev. Jan moved that we postpone our decision about the Wheat House until the committee meets to discuss this new context.

Update on Pathways to Vitality: Deb Vaught reported that based on their meetings in May and August it is still unclear about the direction we will take with the congregation project. She mentioned that the committee will go on retreat to Waycross in October and delve into the process more deeply at that time. It appears that our Pathways priest will be with our community from April until November 30, 2020. Rev. Jan added that the committee will be meeting again this forthcoming week. It is just beginning its work of team-building. For this work, the committee will be reading *The Art of Gathering* in order to understand better how to have gatherings that will transform the ways we spend our time together. The goal of the Pathways program, as Reverend Jan explained it, is to help St. John's become a more vibrant and sustainable community that will be an agent of God's love in this world. This work is undertaken at a time of great change. What will the ECUSA look like in thirty years? She invited us to think about how wedded we are to the way we do things and how we need to be more open to change and adapting to new and challenging conditions. She gave as an example the little Episcopal church, St. Stephens, in the town of New Harmony which has recently experienced the closing of its schools and its banks. Little St. Stephens, with 20 parishioners, also faced closure. But the parishioners went to work, raised money, and in a few years, they burnt their church's mortgage, and remain a functioning community. Jessica asked about projects we might consider. Rev.

Jan gave as examples the imaginative work of Good Samaritan in Brownsberg which established a church without a building, of St. Timothy's on Southside of Indianapolis which has seen its community shift from middle class to blue collar and continues to find ways to persevere, and All Saints Indianapolis which had no adult education program and has developed a program that is ongoing. There are lots of possibilities. We need to think about who our neighbors are in the immediate vicinity of our church. What do they need? What keeps them from coming here? Are there projects within the community people would like to do? Our Bishop invites us to think about ways of worshipping differently. In response to a question about Christian Ed. for our children, Rev. Jan mentioned the parents of children in 5th grade and under have decided that they will share the teaching responsibilities—a different set of parents will teach the children each week. The meeting for Christian Ed. for children in the sixth grade and up fell apart and will need to be rescheduled. Perhaps the kids will come to adult ed.? With a bit of irony (this clerk conjectures), Rev. Jan wondered if we should become a church for those 65 and older.

New Business

Sam Vaught's Request: Rev. Jan brought up Sam Vaught's request for his ordination as a transitional Deacon. (This interim status is required for six months for those candidates seeking their ordination as priests.) Sam will be ordained as a transitional Deacon at the Cathedral on December 12th if approved by the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee, and the Bishop. Jim moved and Jeff seconded the motion that the vestry approve his appointment to the status of transitional deacon. The motion carried.

Coffee Hour Hosting: Sue Fain has wondered how can we get folks to sign up for coffee hour. Sue wonders if different groups can host the coffee hour from week to week. Deb liked the idea. Jennifer suggested that perhaps the greeters should be coffee hour hosts—this idea had some purchase. Coffee Hour has become a moveable feast—refreshments are imbibed during both Christian Ed. and during the official coffee hour after church. Thus it is important to have food in Whitlock by around 9. Rev. Jan will talk to Sue and Meegan and write up an article for the next Newsletter.

Sextons Leaving: The Morrings who have been the sextons for St. John's since 2012 have changed work schedules and so must resign as sextons. Rev. Jan quickly summarized the duties of the sextons. Shirley and Jeff Burd might like to do this job—they will give it some thought. The sexton, set by the church, is now paid \$15 per hour per person. Rev. Jan mentioned that we now have Whitney and Hannah Anderson working in the Nursery during our church service.

(Since we had a big agenda, we agreed to stay an extra fifteen minutes.)

Review of our Congregation's Summer Visits:

Brownsberg/Good Samaritan: We largely agreed that there was a good vibe at Good Samaritan. We were generally impressed by how well the congregation could set up and take down in a borrowed space. Some also liked the informality. And their music was appreciated. We also found meaningful the opportunity to write welcome notes to immigrants in the larger metropolitan area. Jim dissented—it felt to him more like an environmental club than a church service.

St. Peter's Lebanon: We were struck by the enormous stewardship responsibilities that our host couple had assumed—mowing the grounds, tending the gardens, and taking care of the bee hives. Jennifer wondered what honeybees have to do with our Christian practice. Rev. Jan mentioned that churches with small congregations often have a matriarchy or patriarchy: a member or a couple in the community play a major leadership role.

St. Andrews Greencastle: It was noted that the Sunday we attended was the priest's next to last service. Those who visited were impressed by the music; and it was noted that the church's music program is an informal subset of DePauw's music department due to the number of people with connections to both the music department and St. Andrew's. There was a lovely, generous reception following the service—great hospitality!

Rev. Jan's Sabbatical: Rev. Jan reported briefly on her sabbatical. She found that she was about six weeks into her sabbatical before she could fully settle into the fullness of her days and acknowledge to herself that she was indeed on sabbatical.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15.

--Respectfully submitted on 9/25/19 by Marc Hudson, Clerk of the Vestry

Dates to keep in mind:

Sept. 28th -Oct. 9th: Rev. Jan away;

Sunday, Sept. 29th- Rev. Bill Wieland;

October 6- Brendan O'Sullivan-Hale

Oct. 13th: 2p-Diocesan Neighborhood meeting/Whitlock Hall

Oct. 15th: 6:30: Just Mercy book discussion/Whitlock Hall