The Episcopal Church of Church of the Holy Spirit and St. Mark's

Vestry Meeting/Bishop's Committee Minutes

March 24, 2019

Present: Kate Donahue, Guy Tillson, Paula Hancock, Ruth Harlow, Rev. Kelly Sundberg Seaman, Joan Bowers, Wayne Twombley, Cecelia Cox, Deborah Holland, John Michaud, Kathy Lennox, Rev. Deacon Maryan Davis and Katie Patten.

The meeting opened with a Scripture reflection at 11 AM.

Paula made a motion to accept the minutes of the February 3, 2019 Vestry/Bishop's Committee meeting as presented. Joan Bowers seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ruth Harlow made a motion to accept the 2019 Safe Church Policy. Joan Bowers seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The Safe Church Policy is in the midst of transition. Ruth will keep the Vestry/Bishop's Committee apprised of the changes.

Upcoming Dates:

* Next Vestry/Bishop's Committee Meeting Sunday, April 28 at 11 AM Sherrill Hall.
* Vestry/Bishop's Committee Retreat, Saturday, May 4. Location to be determined. Morning session through lunch. Outside facilitator. Focus get to know each other.
* Episcopal Revival hosted by the southern Episcopal parishes. Focus on evangelism, bluegrass music, speakers, celebratory Eucharist at middle school.

Communications: Kelly advised the Vestry/Bishop's Committee that Dick Osborne has resigned as Junior Warden at CHS. She made the following points:

* Our faith community is under scrutiny by others in our Ashland/Plymouth communities.
* Speak truthfully and honestly both at our meetings and to our congregations
* Be gracious to all parishioners
* Emphasize to our congregations and our Ashland/Plymouth communities that we are a joyful and growing place and that “church” feels good. Remember that all of us present and former members are all brothers and sisters who need respect.
* Our community is in communication with many former members.
* We are involved in connecting with members in nursing homes, homebound members through home communions, conversations, Ash Wednesday chowder lunch for the community and Ecumenical events.

Renewal Works: Renewal Works works with Episcopal Churches and partners with the Forward Movement, an arm of the national Episcopal Church. The long form of the Renewal Works final report will be sent to Vestry/Bishop's Committee members in 1-2 weeks which documents in more detail the trends found at CHS/St. Marks. We were compared with other Episcopal churches with 200 members or less. Areas that need our attention are: More engagement with the Bible, more use of and familiarity with our Book of Common Prayer (especially our Baptismal Covenent); more education regarding Episcopal practices. We need to focus on spiritual growth for ourselves and our world, ability to change and evolve in our spirituality.

Recommendations:

* Expanded sense of leadership. Grow into our leadership
* Discover and implement communication and information to a dispersed congregation
* To have all members of Vestry/Bishop's Committee engage in leadership
* Work on intentional friendships and conversations. Remove obstacles to conversations
* Develop a personal relationship with God
* To articulate our faith and why we serve in the local community
* Large percentage of congregation have been members for 20+ years. Tendency to fall into habits and find it hard to change with the situation. Desire to deepen faith.
* We have a higher level of dissatisfaction with our faith community (30% vs. an 18% average level).
* Our faith community is clergy centric rather than spiritual centric. We need to become more spiritual centric and less focus on membership.
* We need to find a path to spirituality and emphasize spiritual growth
* Focus on personal ministry and ownership

Deacon Report: Rev. Deacon Maryan explained and demonstrated packets that are going home with our marginal families, our homebound members. The packets give the recipient(s) activities that can be done at home daily. There is one packet for Lent, Holy Week and Easter. 25 people receive our large print newsletter monthly.

St. Mark's Junior Warden Report: We are updating our fire extinguishers and smoke detectors, plans to paint the foyer, the font at St. Mark's will be rebuilt by the Ashland Fire Department.

Financials: The first two months financially are better but not as good as presented. The next financials at the April meeting will show our first quarter financial update. We were forgiven $6,000 from this year's Fair Share payment. Kelly has received a $16,000 grant for ministerial excellence. Kelly has received a $3,400 Young Adult Grant for her work at PSU from the national Episcopal Church.

There will be more details about the May 4 Retreat. Please direct questions to Joan Bowers. There is more to come from Kelly's trip to London. She found that churches grew in London because they give things away, they give from the heart and they give to others. More details to come.

Adjournment: A motion was made and seconded to adjourn. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 12:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Hancock, Clerk