Holy Spirit & St Mark’s, Plymouth & Ashland

Vestry and Bishop's Committee Minutes

September 15, 2019

Present: Rev. Kelly Sundberg Seaman, Rev. Deacon Maryan Davis, Joan Bowers, John Michaud, Katie Patten, Wayne Trombly, Guy Tillson, Ruth Harlow, Deborah Holland and Paula Hancock.

Scripture Reflections

Minutes: A motion was made by Wayne Trombly to approve the June 30, 2019 minutes. Guy Tillson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Camp Allen, Texas Update: The trip to Camp Allen, Texas was joyful, eye opening and exhausting. As a result of this time, we are being assigned a congregation coach for the next year. Our assigned coach will keep us on task and keep us healthy. One of our focuses will be to connect all parishioners to a small group. The groups will be social, educational or task oriented. We can learn through multiple relationships. We talked about what it means to be a welcoming congregation. We found that being a welcoming congregation will bring change to our faith community. Thoughts “we have always done it this way”, “no I/we don't need help”; the goal will be to remove these thoughts from our thinking and actions. We will be changing our view of stewardship from a yearly pledge drive to taking care of our faith community and all its assets both human and material. We will make sure that all members of our faith community has an affiliation with a small group. We need to understand that there is always surplus in our faith community. This surplus needs to be shared with the larger secular community and not squirreled away and saved for a rainy day. We discussed the strengths and weaknesses of all congregations present. We came away understanding ourselves and our connections to the secular community. We found that our connections and relationships with others in our faith community is the center of our spirituality.

Financials: Wayne presented our financial picture for both congregations for the month of August. Wayne explained that he sees himself as a financial consultant and not as a parish treasurer. The focus of our faith community is to come together for worship. Finances of the organizations should be seen as a lesser concern. Wayne projects that both congregations are looking at a $38-$40,000 deficit by December 2019. This follows a similar deficit of $20,000 incurred in the calendar year 2018. Wayne has met with the Diocese and made the same presentation to them as he has to us. The Diocese needs to make decisions about us. We need to make decisions concerning our financial picture. Wayne printed out our projected 2019 Budget. Our current assets are $49,465/yr. ; St. Mark's Wells Fargo account balance is $30,000 and is not restricted. It is a holder account to cover expenses for maintenance for St. Marks. We have endowment funds that we are unable to access. There is a fund in the amount of $97,000 which is what remains from the sale of the CHS property downtown. We can make a request to the Standing Committee to release some of this money from this account to us. We have $50.000 in the bank. We find that our income does not match our present expenses. It has been suggested that we create a line item budget format. We start with a zero budget. We then put in this zero budget: what we need as an organization and what we want. The Bishop's Committee discussed what our budget could look like if we sold the 263 Highland Street property and moved our office to the Enterprise Center on Main Street. It was felt that the Episcopal Church needs a presence in Plymouth both for our college presence and our presence in the region. We see ourselves presently as on the fringes of the Plymouth community instead of in the center of the Plymouth community. We need to consider how Holderness School might fit into our faith and financial picture. Wayne and Kelly looked at 1 Bridge Street (Enterprise Center) as a possible location for our church office. They were favorably impressed. It would put our office on Main Street and in the center of town. There is a problem concerning parking. The price for office space is tentatively set at $500/month. It was felt that the move to a Main Street office location would be a positive move.

Kelly has inquired of PSU about the present status of the old CHS property on Main Street. She advised that the building is not ready for occupancy. However, the building now is handicapped accessible, has accessible restrooms in the basement, has an elevator, the roof has been repaired, the asbestos has been removed and the building has been brought up to code. Kelly put forth the idea that our faith community might use the PSU chapel for worship. She advised that we will have access to the building. The question was asked: What is the purpose of our presence in Plymouth? Are we moving to become one faith community with a new identity? We remain today as two congregations and two legal entities. The Diocese at the moment does not know the legal and financial ramifications of two merged congregations into one faith community. We will as of Diocesan Convention 2019 both become a mission with mission status which will put us on equal footing. We need to look at Kelly's presence in Plymouth and at the college. We need to look at our August financials and be prepared for a longer more detailed discussion of our financial picture at our October 20 meeting. Please bring your questions and concerns. Ruth made a motion to accept the August financials as presented. Joan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Fall Initiatives: Kelly discussed upcoming Fall initiatives for our faith community.

* Kelly will have a discussion of the psalms at the CLC at 5:30 beginning October 16. We will also increase the use of psalms in worship.
* We will have a discussion group focusing on contemplative prayer. We will read and discuss contemplative prayer.
* As part of our Faith at Home Program families will focus on Psalms 139, 1, and the 23 psalm. Maryan has distributed bags of sand with the psalms printed on them. Our Psalm Program will run from October 16-mid November.
* We will talk extensively about our UTO collection during the month of October. Our UTO contribution will be presented at Diocesan Convention in November.
* CHIPS Program will be emphasized in October. Our contribution to this program will also be presented at Diocesan Convention in November. CHIPS is our program that supplies Christmas gifts and books to children of parents presently incarcerated in our state prison system.
* Wednesday, September 25 at 6:30 in the Community Room at Pease Public Library Kelly will make a presentation “Learnings from London” on her trip to London back in January. The diocese of London is growing. The Community Room is open to us from 5:30 on. We are planning to have brownies and cookies available for refreshments. If you can help by bringing cookies or brownies to the event can drop them off at the Pease Library from 5:30 on.
* There will be no monthly Community Breakfast at St. Marks for the month of September. The space is in use for the day on Saturday, September 28. The Community Breakfast will return in October.
* The Mason brothers will repair the fence around the playground at St. Marks.
* The present oil expense for St. Marks is now at $975/month by agreement between St. Marks and our oil supplier.

Stewardship Drive: We will have a Stewardship Drive during the month of November. The Stewardship Campaign will be a lay led unified stewardship campaign and focus on “Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee”. We will continue to ask: where is your joy? We will invite congregation members to give a meditation on each verse of the hymn during the month of November.

Vestry/Bishop's Committee Meeting Schedule: It has been decided that the Vestry/Bishop's Committee will meet on the third Sunday of the month for the months of October, November and December. The meetings are scheduled for October 20, November 17 and December 15. All meetings will be at Sherrill Hall at 11 AM.

**Adjournment:**A motion was made and seconded to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 12:15.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Hancock, Clerk