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

Vestry Meeting/ Bishop's Committee Minutes

September 19, 2018

Present: Rt. Rev. Bishop Rob Hirschfeld, Rev. Kelly Sundberg-Seaman, Bea Thibeault, Joan Bowers, Deborah Holland, Angie Criscuolo, Anne Hunnewell, Dick Osborne, Dick Bennett, Lew Overaker, Kate Donahue, Barbara Brooks, Bengi Ambrogi, Kathy Lennox and Paula Hancock.

Absent: Kate Laucks, Shannon Inkel, Katie Patten,

Kelly opened the meeting at 3:30 PM.

**Property Issues**: Bea Thibeault advised the Vestry/Bishop's Committee that the elevator at St. Mark's has been fixed. St. Mark's has entered into a two year maintenance contract in the amount of $761.61. St. Mark's received a donation of $1,000 for the elevator repair. The elevator was repaired at a cost of $996. St. Mark's received a 10% discount on the repair as well as all maintenance fees for travel. All licensing and elevator inspections will be done out of the Concord office.

Dick Osborne advised that the leak in Griswold valve is in the process of being fixed. The Community Life Center ramp needs to be completely replaced. The front of the building needs to be repainted. Repairs need to be done to the entryway to Griswold. Estimates are being sought for the work.

**Bishop's Remarks:** Following the Bishop's annual visitation to a parish he meets with the Vestry/Bishop's Committee. The parishioners of Church of the Holy Spirit and St. Mark's are working valiantly and faithfully to worship. They continue to baptize and teach as well as being a presence in the Pemi Valley region. The Diocese is now coming alongside. The Diocese wants these two congregations to thrive. We need to address and repair issues of trust. The Bisohp's recent visit in August was normal church.

Dick Bennett sees four alternatives for these congregations to move forward: 1) remain as we are; 2) revert to mission status and the use of supply clergy; 3) to divest ourselves of all properties while merging all endowments and returning it all to the Diocese; 4) Give back everything to the Diocese and find a neutral place to worship.

The Bishop was advised that the level of tension in the CHS congregation appears to have leveled off. The worship seems to be working. The congregation accepts that there is no conclusion to the issues at this time.The CHS congregation has strong feelings that they will not be combining with St. Mark's. One parishioner feels that things are going well. One sees us slowly blossoming. We could come together under the guidance of Kelly and both congregations are serving God in their prospective communities. It was felt that community/individual support was important. There seems to be a problem with the 8 AM service being too early and weekday events are too much with some personal schedules. Parishioners who live at a distance from the church find the distance to Ashland for services is too great. The point was made that we have new faces in the congregation. We can heal through conversation.

**Bishop's Vision/Proposal:**

The Bishop is concerned about the people who have been disaffected by our past. He is concerned about bringing new Episcopalians into our churches. He is concerned about rising up the youth among and around us in a way that is joyful and melts barriers.

Six years ago Holderness was not interested in using their chapel. Church of the Holy Spirit was not interested in Holderness. There was no water in the Holderness chapel, no handicap access, no bathrooms. The chapel is presently too small for the present student body. In 2018, Holderness has taken on Rev. Josh Hill as chaplain, Church of the Holy Spirit has taken on Rev. Kelly. Josh Hill, Kelly and the Holderness Board of Trustees would like to see something new happen. Holderness School presently has enough money to renovate the Chapel of the Holy Cross.

Across from Ttinity Church in Holderness is an empty piece of property that is owned by Holderness School. The property has access to Rte 175. The proposal is to build a church on that empty property. This church would be designed by members from Church of the Holy Spirit, St. Mark's and Holderness School. The building would be big enough to accommodate the Holderness School student body as well as enough space for worship services for Church of the Holy Spirit and St. Mark's and the Holderness School community. The church would be a community church and its name is still to be decided. Rev. Josh Hill would be the chaplain for the Holderness School student body. Rev. Kelly and possibly Rev. Deacon Maryan could be the staff for the CHS and St. Mark's congregations. It would be a new creation and would be handicapped accessible. Holderness School, Church of the Holy Spirit and St. Mark's would contribute their ideas in the final design of the building. Monies for the project could come from the Bishop's Discretionary funds.

In order for the new proposal to go forward the property at 263 Highland Street in Plymouth would be sold and the profits put toward the support of the clergy. St. Mark's for its part would become a summer chapel and Sherrill Hall would continue to sponsor outreach opportunities during the school year. St. Mark's would be closed during the winter months. Holderness School would own the new building. We would fund Rev. Josh Hill. Outreach opportunities to Ashland, Plymouth State and Holderness communities could be our new outreach/ministry. The new building would solve the problem of territoriality felt by both congregations. St. Mark's chapel would be available for the Squam Lakes summer community. The Rector's office would be moved to Holderness School or Sherrill Hall. The project would take a few years to complete.

Holderness School is interested in giving money for the chapel because they are interested in the spiritual life of the student body at Holderness School. The conversations to date have been positive and momentum is building for the new building project. We need openness from Church of the Holy Spirit and St. Mark's. We need their input on the architecture and design of the building. We have an artchitect who is a listener for all ideas for the building. There is a concern about traffic flow on Sunday mornings close to Holderness School.

Governance: The dream is one community body. The Vestry/Bishop's Committee would work with the Holderness School Student Committee. The Sunday services would be run by community members. The Holderness School student body would greatly benefit from seeing a woman priest worshipping and working with them. With Holderness School owning the building it will be less stressful for Church of the Holy Spirit and St. Mark's in terms of no more property expenses, fuel expenses, snowplowing expenses. St. Mark's would become part of the Chapel Committee and part of the community of summer chapels. This community meets once a year.

There is no intention of disenfranchising either of our congregations during the transition period. Communication and transparency is important. It is important we have space for functions and meetings in our new building. Our congregations would be present in the new building. Maintenance would not be a church concern. Our church concern would change to that of involvement in mission and the building of individual relationships. Holderness School is interested in having a Sunday brunch on Sundays for us.

The feeling from those present was that the building of a church in a neutral place would bring back parishioners who have felt marginalized in the past. This project will show that our historical fences have been taken down and change can begin. The sense of those present was that we are curious about the proposed project. We are positive and would like to move forward with the proposal.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 4:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Hancock