

**St Thomas Episcopal Church Vestry (Hybrid) Meeting**  
**Monday, February 22, 2022**

Present: The Reverend Canon Lisa Fry, Rector; Elizabeth Moran Senior Warden, (via Zoom); Edmund Hartt, Junior Warden; Sarah Groman, Kendra Watkins, Jan Lyle. Shirley Fierro, Clerk. Guest: Terry Mello, Former Treasurer; Excused: Eileen Morelli, Troy Bickham, Dean Jackson.

The meeting opened with a prayer led by the Rector at 5:37 p.m.

A motion was made by Edmund to accept the minutes as amended and seconded by Jan to accept January 22, 2022 minutes as amended. All were in favor. None were opposed and Sarah abstained due to this being her first meeting since election. The minutes were accepted.

## **Reports:**

**Rector:** Maine CDC: still requiring masks. Consideration will be given if this changes. In the interim masks will continue to be mandated throughout our building.

No comments have been received regarding the published Survey.

The By-Laws are in need of revisions to keep St. Thomas in compliance with the Diocesan mandates. This should take approximately three months. Please bring names to Lisa of those interested in joining this revision committee.

After the Building issues are settled the following are proposed.

- A Sacred Ground Class;
- Revisit the institution of a Wednesday evening service;
- A summer theater class for the youth;
- Assist with Asset Mapping meeting with the congregation to take a look at all assets we bring to the community and our church. Assets come in all forms, and if we recognize what we're good at we can build on the positive as we go forward in mission.

**Senior Warden:** Reiterated the need for revision of the By-Laws. Delving into the archives has unveiled amazing discoveries. More on this next month. Altar Guild members are direly needed. Either Elizabeth or Susan Freeman will be writing an article for Tidings with an appeal for volunteers. Altar Guild books for guidance were discussed. Lisa will check her books with other priests and Elizabeth will check into this as well, but rector suggests that since each church is different from others, we develop our own formulary.

### **Junior Warden:**

Building and Grounds: Bill Freeman has asked to be on the Building and Grounds Committee, as have Barbara Lawrence and Donovan Bowley. Refinishing the floors in the parish hall will begin the week after Easter. The exact date will be announced once more information is available. The floors will take at least a week to sand and finish, and then additional time allotted for the floor to completely dry, or "cure". Activities planned for the parish hall and adjoining areas will need to be moved.

### **Former Treasurer, Terry Mello:**

Terry Mello attended the meeting to express her concern and the seriousness of the lack of audits during her entire time as Treasurer. She shared the history of her ongoing requests for volunteers to conduct yearly audits. St. Thomas' has not had a full audit since the Diocesan Supervised Audit of the 2014 Financials which was conducted in 2015 by Terry Mello and Chris Glass with the assistance of Terry Reimer, Canon for Finance and Stewardship at the Diocese. An audit is required every year with a Diocesan Supervised audit conducted every four years. There were volunteers in place to handle the 2015 and 2016 audit; however, the 2015 Audit was never started and the 2016 audit was stopped when the audit chair was unable to complete the audit due to time constraints. There was an audit committee to review the 2018 financials – this audit process took less than 4 hours and was not considered a complete audit of our accounts. For the 2020 and 2021 financials, Terry was the sole person handling the finances and she has routinely requested volunteers to review the books to protect St. Thomas'.

Unfortunately, no one was willing to help. Terry is very concerned that, since there has not been a full audit in the 7 years she has been Treasurer, she could be the victim of false accusations and her personal integrity could be affected.

Kendra Watkins expressed interest in helping with the 2021 audit. Rev. Lisa suggested that the Vestry ask Phil Groman and Bob Bannon to join the team (Phil has expressed interest in this previously). Terry indicated that the 2014 Audit took about 6 weeks (working one day/week reviewing the accounts). She also indicated that all the files are on the computer in the Finance Office and she is willing to help with accessing the files necessary. There is an Audit Manual from the Diocese that gives step-by-step guidance for conducting an audit.

Terry then presented the Finance page of the Parochial Report for 2021. The Diocese instructed all parishes that received 2020 and 2021 PPP funds should report those monies as “Assistance from diocese for operating budget” rather than Normal Operating Income. In this way, these funds will not be considered for the 2023 Diocesan Assessment. The 2020 and 2021 PPP Diocesan loans have been forgiven.

The rector discussed that the following statistics were reported for the Parochial Report: the average online attendance for all services was 80 people and the average in person attendance for all services was 35. This is specifically for the time the church was open in 2021, Mary- December. Online Noonday prayer and Compline, and occasional Morning Prayer were offered 328 times during 2021—a very high number of services for St. Thomas’. When counting numbers for the online services, we use “views” which merely counts devices watching, but does not include how many people are watching each device. Compline for example, had between 17 and 62 people watching weekly on Saturdays. How people access church services may be changing, but we have had very steady viewing and attendance, especially compared with other Episcopal Churches in the state.

#### **New Business:**

**Rector poses question for Vestry to answer from Parochial Report,** *“What have we learned in the past years, and how do we realize the changes in our faith community, and what will we bring forward in the future with us?”*

#### *Comments from the vestry:*

- Discussion on how our needs are changing and how we might meet the challenges of that change
- The removal of masks and how will it impact Confirmation classes and Sunday School
- Our church isn’t particularly inclusive. How do we become a more inclusive community?
- Ask the children what they would like to see happen with them this year, via Zoom meeting just for them.
- Restorative justice – invite a team in to help us resolve any issues, known or as yet unknown;
- Currently we have one group of Wayfinders: a small prayer and discussion group, who meet monthly. Are more people interested in forming another Wayfinders group?

The New Vestry Members were welcomed: Sarah Groman and Kendra Watkins.

- A new day and time are being considered for Vestry meetings. A consensus approved a 6:30pm time on Mondays at least during the school year. Zoom will continue to be an option during bad weather, or on occasion. Current By-Laws state that Vestry must meet at least eight times a year.
- On the horizon: a Vestry Retreat which will take place on a Saturday in late March. It will not be at St. Thomas. Times will be between 9:00 - 9:30 am and 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon. The Masonic Center has a space with a kitchen, we will ask if they might donate the space.

#### **Old Business:**

Tower presentation is this week. The Architect has not seen the tower without the white plastic. We are early in the decision-making process. Putting off repairs is more costly. Maintaining something that was poorly designed continues to cause financial and repair issues. Inside the Chapel the damage is apparent. A suggestion was made to take pictures of the damage and also show the different elevations and how it will look to give people a better idea of what decision we are supporting.

A few suggestions:

Change the bulletin cover and literature with a different picture of the church, since the current one is not accurate—it was a drawing made prior to the Tower addition as a way to “sell” the idea to the parish. Show Donovan's photo of the roof with

snow and emphasize that the cricket is a problem that recurs frequently and has caused us the loss of a third of our organ. The Tower must be completely disassembled to at least the window level.

The Rector is on a reading week the first full week in March as part of her continuing education. She will be working from home.

A motion was made by Edmund and seconded by Jan to conclude the meeting. All present were in favor. The Vestry meeting adjourned with prayer led by the Rector at 6:54 pm.

The next Vestry Meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 21, 2022, live and on Zoom, at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Shirley Fierro: Clerk