SAINT PAUL’S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Minutes of the Special Vestry Meeting
May 11, 2020

There was a special Zoom meeting of the Vestry of Saint Paul’s Episcopal Church, Chestnut Hill, on the above date at 7 p.m.

There were present Ruth Desiderio, Rector’s Warden, presiding; also Interim Rector Albert J. Ogle, Assistant Rector Daniel J. Kline, and Vestry members Lisa Budd, Chip Butler, Steve Camp-Landis, Cheyenne DeMulder, Mark Duckett, Clark Groome, John Kimberly, George McNeely, Tabitha Oman, Steve Pearson, Kristen Poole, Louise Thompson, and Hugh Williamson. Director of Music Andy Kotylo was the Vestry’s guest.

Tim Albert was absent.

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m.

I. Interim Rector Albert Ogle opened the meeting with a prayer.

II. The Listening Hearts Guidelines were read.

III. The minutes of the April 20, 2020 Vestry meeting were approved unanimously.

IV. Accounting Warden Steve Camp-Landis presented the updated 2020 budget.

The budget includes $853,240 in expected revenues and expenses of $1,016,098.42. In addition there are two additional, one time only, sources of revenue totaling $163,000. The budget as submitted shows a $141.58 surplus.

There was a lengthy discussion about, among other things, our pledge to the diocese, the government’s Paycheck Protection Program, and the importance of increased stewardship in the years ahead.
The following points were made:

• The diocese has been very supportive of the parish this year and thus we should agree to the $16,362 pledge requested.

• The government’s Paycheck Protection Program has granted St. Paul’s $138,000. Steve thanked Albert Ogle, Ruth Desiderio, and particularly parish accountant Kristin Deissler for doing the work that made this happen.

• As of April 30, the parish endowment was valued at $4 million, a significant bounceback from the $3.6 million at which it was valued a month ago.

• The COVID-19 impact on the budget is estimated to be about $80,000.

• Steve said that going forward, “We’ve got to be vigilant about spending, we’ve got to be aggressive about stewardship, and we’ve got to be creative about entirely new sources of revenue.”

• Albert said that the parishioners have been generous this year. Stewardship Chairman George McNeely feels that we need to increase the number of donors and the level at which many of them give.

• The Financial Education report that will be mailed to everyone tomorrow should make it clear what our financial situation is and what challenges we face.

Approval of the budget as presented was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously.

V. Rector’s Warden Ruth Desiderio thanked retiring Vestry members Tim Albert and Tabitha Oman for their loyal and dedicated service to St. Paul’s over the last four years.

VI. Albert reported on the plans and the basis for the parish’s reopening. A lot of what happens will be determined by the diocese. Some highlights of his report included:

• The Vestry and the parishioners heard from have been very pleased with the virtual services. The feedback has been positive and many feel that even after we return to services in the church the virtual/online services should continue to be available.
• The timing of opening up is still unclear. Albert doubts it will be before July, maybe even later than that.

• He says that we’ll be in “a twilight zone until there’s a vaccine. We’re in a totally new period, a new reality.”

• The bishop’s thinking is that when we begin to offer public worship again it would be in groups of 50 or less.

• The issues of communion and singing remain huge question marks RE: what is considered safe, what we can and cannot do.

• Opening initially would be on a limited basis, maybe just one service per Sunday; everyone who wants to attend may need to sign up in advance; and everyone will need to wear masks and be physically separated.

VII. Hugh Williamson reported that since experts consider singing a very effective way to spread the virus it’s likely that for the foreseeable future, Hugh says, “It may not be safe to sing in church.”

It was decided to continue this discussion at the June 15 Vestry meeting at which time we will likely have had more guidance from the diocese and a clearer view of the status of the pandemic.

VIII. Albert announced that in accordance with diocesan guidelines the chorister and choir trips and the Parents Exchange-sponsored camping trip have all been cancelled.

The Parents Exchange’s pushback on this cancellation energized Assistant Rector Dan Kline to develop some guidelines as the parish moves into its new era.

IX. Dan made several recommendations:

A. The Vestry should suspend, in line with diocesan policy, all in person children, youth, and family events through August 31, 2020 or until we receive further directives from the bishop that indicate otherwise.

This recommendation was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously.
B. Dan asked the Vestry to encourage the creation of and provide ongoing support for a Children, Youth, and Family Council that includes at least one Vestry member.

This recommendation was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously.

C. Dan recommended that all staff, Vestry members, and ministry leaders take safe church training by August 31.

This recommendation was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously.

D. He also urged the Vestry to form a committee charged with the creation of a church-wide ministry leader volunteer policy with the expectations and guidelines for leaders and volunteers. The Vestry decided to defer action until this can be discussed further going forward.

X. Dan noted that Sunday School’s likely going to be suspended giving us an opportunity to think about how we include children in worship in the future. “There has to be more thought given to this,” Dan said, “and more trust that when a directive comes down it’s seen as being for the safety of the whole parish not as a threat.”

Kristen Poole noted that we don’t know what’s going to be on the other side of what is “a huge deflection point, with so much likely to be transformed. We need to get the message out that while things will be different, they won’t be bad.”

XI. Dan asked that the Worship Committee contain more 9 o’clockers and that it should consider how to integrate children and families into whatever worship services are offered after we reopen. The Vestry agreed.

XII. Ruth asked John Kimberly to review briefly the Financial Education Document. The Vestry was very positive about the piece, which will be mailed to the congregation tomorrow. Zoom discussions about the document are scheduled for Thursday May 21 at 7 p.m., Sunday May 24 at 11:30 a.m., and Tuesday June 2 at 7 p.m.

XIII. Ruth reported that the survey feedback document, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, is also being mailed tomorrow. Zoom follow-up meetings will be scheduled for shortly after those for the Financial Education discussions,
XIV. The annual report will be published and distributed (electronically with hard copies available for those who want them) on Thursday.

XV. The Annual Meeting on Sunday, May 17 at 10 a.m. will be on Zoom. Parishioners will be encouraged to e-mail any questions prior to the meeting. Marisa Curcio will be our logistical chief.

XVI. The Vestry went into Executive Session at 9:22 p.m. returning to regular session at 9:43 p.m.

XVII. Ruth said that the mutual ministry review required by Albert’s letter of agreement would be held shortly after the annual meeting. Bud Holland is the facilitator and the meeting will start with the Coordinating Committee. This is a mutual ministry, something that will review both the interim rector and the Vestry. As things progress, the Vestry will be kept up to date.

XVIII. The next meeting of the Vestry will be on Sunday, May 17, 2020, following the parish’s annual meeting.

XIX. Following Albert’s closing prayer, the meeting adjourned at 9:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Clark Groome
Secretary