

Episcopal Church of the Epiphany

Vestry Mid-Year Retreat Minutes

August 17, 2025

In Attendance:

Vestry - Sally Walker, Matthew May, Judy Jarady, Andrea Strahan, Jordan Moody, Kay Lee, Jacob Geiger, Kathy Corcoran, Cody Chaffins, and Tracey Laird;
Clergy - Amy Dills-Wright, Carmie McDonald
Ex officio - Kaylie Gibbs

Meditation:

Amy asked everyone present to share how they were doing before reading the “Letter to a Young Activist During Troubled Times” by Clarissa Estés to close the meditation.

Consent Agenda:

Approval of the June 22, 2025, vestry minutes was included as part of the consent agenda. There was a motion to approve, duly seconded, and all voted to accept.

Rector’s Report:

Amy noted that fall programming is planned or already underway. There was excellent turnout last week for a program about death and dying in community. She also noted the upcoming “Making the Most of Your Third Act” event (previously called the Final Affairs Fair) that will occur on September 7 and is being led by Peggy Palmiter.

Amy then led a discussion about worship, as we continue to draw near-capacity crowds. Some parishioners have already expressed anxiety to Amy about a potential move to two services, as many people love the vibrancy of our current service and are worried moving to two services would cause a sense of disconnect and change the feel of the parish. There are also concerns about whether or not we have sufficient volunteers, especially acolytes, to fill the serving roles. The Vestry discussed various possibilities for the future, noting that any change, if it were to occur, need not replicate what Epiphany did in the past when it held multiple services. Matthew, and others, noted the importance of seeing what other congregations—including those beyond the Episcopal Church—do to sustain a sense of community when having multiple services. The Vestry will continue to consider this topic in the coming months but made an immediate suggestion that we put out extra chairs, as we do at Christmas or Easter, to ensure we are ready for larger crowds and to signal that the pews will need to be filled as full as comfortably possible rather than half-full.

New Business:

Estate Gift from Floyd Parker:

Epiphany received an unrestricted gift of \$40,000 from the estate of Floyd Parker, a parishioner who died in 2024. The Vestry held a lengthy and thoughtful discussion on how best to use this gift, noting that the new Enduring Light Endowment was a logical place to place unrestricted estate gifts but also acknowledging the urgent community needs we are hearing about from ministry partners, especially in areas such as food insecurity, homelessness, and refugee resettlement. Sally proposed that the church tithed 10% of the gift toward immediate community engagement and place the rest in the endowment. Jordan and others asked if that split met the urgency of the moment, and after further discussion Jacob made a motion, seconded by Jordan, that 25 percent of the gift, a total of \$10,000, be made available for community engagement work and the remaining 75 percent, or \$30,000, go to the Enduring Light Endowment. All voted to accept the motion. Carmie will follow up with various community engagement ministry leaders

and bring the Vestry a further proposal on how to allocate this additional \$10,000 in community engagement funds.

Core Values Survey Report:

Kay led a discussion about an in-depth report she prepared on the parish core values, with a particular focus on the environmental and racial justice pillars of the values. Kay invited ministry leaders to reflect on how their work was consistent with these values. Carmie pointed out this report shows the work of various ministries and guilds is not siloed but instead touches on our core values in overlapping ways that are woven into all we do. She noted that ministry leaders valued the opportunity to reflect on and celebrate their work. The group discussed the need to share some of these findings through the Ministry Fair, at the Parish Annual Meeting, or during coffee hours. Vestry commended Kay for her work on this topic and noted this sort of work is an important way for the parish to keep its core values front of mind. Tracey noted that regularly reflecting on core values adds a sense of intentionality to our work as a parish.

There was also discussion on how, or if, individuals might share things they are doing individually or with other small groups with the larger Epiphany community, so that people might be able to go as a group—or even represent Epiphany—when attending a rally, protest march, or other event. Vestry agreed to continue thinking about this issue and acknowledged that Realm might offer us a way to form further interest groups where people could be in contact with each other.

Finally, the group discussed the idea that site visits, such as the ones Vestry makes to ministry partners a few times a year, could be opened up to other members of the parish.

Amy noted that it is important to draw a distinction between advocacy and actions of individuals or groups of parishioners and official advocacy by the church, given our commitment to welcome people from a wide range of political backgrounds.

Parish Hall Flooring Donation:

Matthew informed the Vestry that an anonymous parishioner has offered to pay the cost of reflooring the Parish Hall with a wood laminate material. The pledge is to cover the full cost of the work, which is estimated at about \$15,000. Matthew noted that a floor of the type proposed was part of the original vision for the room but never installed due to costs.

Discussion of various flooring options, and the care of our existing floor and the extent of its usable life, ensued, covering the importance of ensuring the new floor was environmentally suitable and that it would hold up to use by the parish and Little Forest School.

Matthew made a motion, seconded by Cody, to accept the anonymous gift and move forward with the installation of a new floor. All voted in favor of the motion.

Discussion then turned to the kitchen, which has several floor tiles that are loose and in need of replacement. The Vestry agreed that if we are going to install a new floor in the Parish Hall, it makes sense to work on the kitchen at the same time.

Tracey made a motion, seconded by Cathy to approve a repair or replacement of the kitchen floor up to the amount of \$8,000, to be drawn from the building and grounds budget. Matthew will work with Jason, our facilities coordinator, to review options and pursue a resolution.

Old Business:

Epiphany Preparedness Update:

The CPR class was successful; Sally suggested this be an annual offering. The photos of medical responders in the congregation are now posted in the usher's closet and the VPOD clipboard. Work is underway on a similar sheet of our Community of Hope volunteers who can assist visitors who may request food or need assistance accessing other services. To-go Food bags are kept in the locked pantry, which can be opened by Building Key #1.

Solar Installation:

Matthew reported the engineering team is finalizing the plans and will soon submit a permitting application, with the hope to begin installation by late September or early October.

Ministry Reports:

Several vestry members shared mid-year ministry reports. These will continue in future months.

Parish Life: Judy noted that Parish Life plays a key role in welcoming newcomers and that we are doing a good job of engaging people. Our events are love in action and draw lots of parish participation. There is a need for more help cleaning up when we all gather to eat! Judy also noted an opportunity to include more youth and young adults in putting on these events. She gave kudos to Polly Nodine for her work chairing this ministry, and Shea for her support publicizing all of the Parish Life events.

Finance: Andrea said the church's overall financial picture is strong, with the launch of the new Enduring Light Endowment and great stewardship results in recent campaigns allowing the church to grow the work it is doing while also preparing for potential lean years in the future. She reported that the committee will continue to explore how the church can partner with community-based credit unions while ensuring we are also not compromising the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations.

Endowment: Jacob noted the new Enduring Light Endowment is now set up and operational. The existing grant endowment's ongoing impact was on display earlier in the day as the grant to the Camp Mikell capital campaign, which was approved by the Endowment Committee earlier this year, was presented to the camp's executive director during her visit to Epiphany.

The meeting concluded with Midday Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Jacob Geiger

Vestry Reports

Adult Formation — Carol Bartlett

Epiphany's adult formation programs have given community members the chance to continue engaging with issues of faith during the summer break. Epiphanites Paul Hinson and Suzanne Yoder offered a book study on Barbara Brown Taylor's *An Altar in the World*, and have recently begun a study of Carl McColman's *Read the Bible Like a Mystic*.

Our inaugural summer film series, "Faith, Film, and Food" has been well received. Fourteen people attended June's screening of *Black Panther* and thirty-eight joined us for *Conclave* in July. Our series will conclude with a screening of *Shrek* in August as we continue seeking ways to build intergenerational connections within the community. Staff and lay leaders Paul Hinson and Ann Fowler will meet in the fall to evaluate the impact of the series and possibilities for the future.

We are looking forward to partnering with the Candler Foundry again during the 2025-2026 program year. Highlighted courses include:

The Power of Nonviolence – Donnell Williams

October 5-26, 2025

Nonviolence is more than a tactic; it is a moral and spiritual way of being grounded in love, courage, and the belief that justice is possible. This 4-week course explores a set of core nonviolent principles that have shaped movements for justice across history, including but not limited to the Civil Rights Movement. Drawing on the work of figures like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and the biblical vision that shaped him, we'll explore how nonviolence confronts injustice, transforms enemies into neighbors, and opens the door to the Beloved Community.

1 Corinthians: The Church's Story – Dr. Ebby Arnold

January 4 - February 8, 2026

This six-week, on-demand course traces the logic of Paul's letter to the Corinthians and offers present-day audiences space to interpret topics including worship, gender, and economic and cultural issues through the lens of the cross.

Bible and Poverty – Dr. Ryan Bonfiglio

April 12-May 3, 2026

This course explores biblical views on and responses to material poverty. We will examine the nature and dimensions of economic inequality in the biblical world and how that reality is addressed by various parts of Scripture, from the Law and Prophets to the Gospels and Epistles. We also will explore the scope and causes of poverty in America today, including how the church can respond through its various ministries.

In addition to these and other courses, Rev. Amy Dills-Wright and Rev. Carmie McDonald will offer several sessions throughout the year on Spiritual Practices for Staying Centered in Troubling Times.

Building and Grounds — Matthew May

Matthew will be discussing new flooring project at the August meeting.

Children + Youth Formation — Jordan Moody & Cody Chaffins

This summer, Epiphany participated in a multi-church Vacation Bible School and a youth pilgrimage with Holy Trinity Parish. At VBS, Epiphany had a particularly strong presence of the youth counselors and adult volunteers, whose dedication helped ensure that the week went smoothly.

Nine youth from Epiphany and Holy Trinity attended the pilgrimage to Sewanee, TN. We explored the campus of the University of the South which is home to one of the few remaining residential Episcopal seminaries in the U.S. We enjoyed many of Sewanee's scenic trails, learned about religious life and what it means to live a life of faith, and participated in community service with members of St. Mary's Convent.

A wonderful surprise this summer has been the enthusiasm for our Children's Chapel. Even during the vacation season, we have seen consistent participation from children and welcomed two new volunteers to help lead it.

In late July, we held formation training for our children's and youth volunteers. We are still welcoming volunteers in all areas of children's and youth formation.

Finally, on August 8th, we hosted a dinner for our "littles" at the rector's home. Nineteen participants attended. The children enjoyed ice cream sandwiches and a new bounce house, while parents had time to connect.

Community Engagement Partnerships — Kathy Corcoran

What is going well that we need to continue?

Some of our programs continue to have a great impact on our members and community. . Our Art Ministry, DEAM, and the Gateway and Holy Comforter Meal Ministries remain strong, making a meaningful difference both to our neighbors in need and to the volunteers who serve alongside them.

Art Ministry

The Art Ministry links Epiphany to different parishes and to the community. They will continue to incorporate the parish's core values into hosted artists. Upcoming displays will include fibre arts, sea glass jewelry, quilting and wood turning.

The Art Ministry will look into partnering with other groups about incorporating youth and parish members into the art ministry.

Feeding Ministry

- **The Gateway Food Ministry** has been going well and the ministry welcomed new volunteers after they hosted the summer breakfast. The Feeding Ministry will look into more ways to connect volunteers to the ministry.

- **DEAM** – DEAM is based at Holy Trinity. A challenge has been receiving food from the food banks. Due to reduced Federal Funding the food bank is unable to send as much food as they have in the past. DEAM is also offering food bags and coffee to unhoused populations. They are giving out 60-80 lunches a day. They have also been giving hot meals at holidays and had a great turnout at their Juneteenth Celebration. They look forward to serving more holiday meals.
- **Holy Comforter**- The Parish has an interim priest. There is a new director at the Friendship Center. Epiphany's turn to provide a meal will be in September.

What are the growth opportunities and what can we start doing to create renewed energy?

We're seeing new and renewed energy around our Refugee Ministry and are excited to deepen connections with other community partners, including St. John's Lutheran Church and their Freeze Shelter, Church of the Common Ground, and Episcopal Relief and Development. We welcome your prayers as we continue discerning where God is calling us in this season.

Refugee Ministry-

Alix Janke is chairing the ministry and will coordinate ministry with the Inspiritus Group. As Federal and State resources have funding cuts in the areas of health and nutrition services, the Ministry is reimagining services and needs to refugee families.

Other Partnerships

Inspiritus (Refugee Group)

Freeze Shelter at St. John's Lutheran Church

Church of the Common Ground

Episcopal Relief and Development

Earth Guild and Racial Justice

While the Earth Guild and Racial Justice groups are no longer meeting regularly, our commitment to justice in these areas remains steadfast.

We are deeply grateful to Kay Lee for her leadership as we continue working to integrate our core values and parish priorities into the life and identity of our community. In particular, the work of these groups resonates with Epiphany's core values of "love in action" and "transformative relationships." Likewise, we named it a priority to "work toward environmental, racial, gender, LGBTQ+ and economic justice and equity."

What is redundant, no longer necessary, or no longer generating energy that we can stop?

Changes in lay leadership and shifts in some of our partnership organizations have prompted us to reassess the effectiveness of ongoing collaborations with DCM, the Haiti Partnership, and the Interfaith Children's Movement.

DCM, Haiti Partnership, Interfaith Children's Movement

What resources and support are needed to continue to make this work successful?

We need volunteers to make our ministries work and also need to make our community aware of the work that is being done.

Community Engagement Newsletter-

The next newsletter highlights projects done by the ministry groups and is shared with the larger parish community.

Ministry Fair

All of the committees are looking into ways to connect volunteers to the ministries. The Ministry Fair gives us an opportunity to use pictures, food, and other displays to capture the attention of future volunteers.

Core Values – Kay Lee

See separate Core Values report.

Endowment — Jacob Geiger

The paperwork for the new Enduring Light Operating Endowment was completed in July, and the \$160,000 bank transfer was successfully executed the week of July 21. Thank you to Susie Boyko and Shelle Bryant for helping Amy, Randy, and I make these final steps happen.

In early August the church received an unrestricted \$40,000 bequest from the estate of parishioner Floyd Parker, who died in March 2024. These sorts of unexpected, unrestricted bequests are exactly the sorts of things that we, in my opinion, should be putting into the new operating endowment. To put it in mathematical terms, this bequest, if endowed, means we will always receive \$2,000 a year from Mr. Parker, with the amount received rising to match inflation as the value of the investments grow.

It is my intention to make a motion during the August meeting that this \$40,000 bequest be added to the new endowment.

Note: I am still in agreement and support of the idea discussed earlier this summer that annual budget surpluses or other unexpected revenue such as the IRS employment tax credit should be treated differently, with some being used for current needs and some being endowed for perpetuity.

Finally, we are in the midst of organizing the Final Affairs Fair, which will take place on Sunday, September 7. Amy and I have discussed having me make short remarks about the new endowment and its purpose, and I will be available to answer questions if any parishioners have them. On my to-do list between now and then is working with Amy to be in touch with current members of the Magi Society to begin a conversation on whether they prefer for their eventual gift to Epiphany to go into the original grant endowment or into the new operating endowment.

Finance — Andrea Strahan

The August Finance Committee meeting was postponed to August 18, so no report at this time.

Membership + Newcomers — Cristin Davis

No updates at this time.

Parish Life & Pastoral Care — Judy Jarady

Past Events

Parish Picnic: The parish picnic went well with good attendance, 150 people were served.

Extended Coffee Hour: Parish Life sponsored the first of the season with a good turnout, 80 people were served.

Upcoming Events

Welcome Back Lunch: August 24

Plans were made for the lunch: Menu items, Parish Life will provide Publix chicken, attendees will sign up for side dishes, desserts, and clean up duties.

Parish Retreat: Sept.19-21

Sign up is almost full which is around 60 people.

Ministry Fair: Sept. 28

Parish Life will help with this event.

No Pastoral Care updates at this time.

Stewardship — Jacob Geiger

Jacob had a brief conversation with Pam Tipton in mid-July before he left town, and it sounded like she's homing in on a theme for the fall campaign. Next week Jacob will be in touch with her to see how he can best support her during the fall stewardship campaign. He will put in the early plug that we, as Vestry members, should be prompt in returning our pledges as soon as the campaign kicks off!