

Episcopal Church of the Epiphany

Vestry Meeting Minutes

September 17, 2023

In Attendance:

Vestry - Bert Bender, Lisa Daily, Peter Dodge, Kaylie Gibbs, Paige Howell, Susan Ashmore, Sally Walker, & Andrea Strahan

Clergy - Amy Dills-Moore

Ex officio - Sherry Wallace

Absent: Liefy Smith, Matthew May, April Maa, Judy Jarady, Erin Braden, & Randy Shearin

Meditation:

Amy led a meditation on creation and places where one feels closest to God.

Consent Agenda:

Approval of the August 2023 vestry retreat minutes was included as part of the consent agenda. Sally motioned to approve, Lisa seconded, and all voted to accept.

Rector's Report:

Amy reported that we have had a good response to the new formation time so far. We will continue to evaluate this during the fall. Amy is planning to offer space during the formation hour for Parent Connection where she will facilitate conversation and coffee for parents.

Last week's Final Affairs Fair was well attended. September going forward will be the month we highlight the Endowment Fund. In odd years we will offer a final affairs fair and in even years we will have a wine and cheese gathering for members of the Magi Foundation to celebrate those who have let us know that they have made provision for Epiphany in their estate planning. Amy reminded everyone that if you haven't made provision for your church in your estate planning, please consider doing so. Building up that fund is important to the future sustainability of the church.

Amy has been thinking about the theme of Belonging after our annual clergy conference this past week. It made her think about the ministry we do here and how we make the church a place of belonging for people in a world where that is harder and harder to come by. In the newsletter a few weeks ago, she cited a report by the surgeon general on loneliness. Amy urged us to think together, in our various areas of ministry, about how we make this a place of belonging. WELCOM, the new iteration of foyers, feels like another important place where this can happen.

Another thing that came up at clergy conference is how unevenly our resources are spread in this diocese. Some churches are resource rich and others are struggling to get by. We are not congregationalist in our polity even though we act that way. Amy was sitting at a table with two Hispanic priests who operate with very limited resources and it made her wonder if there's an invitation for us to partner with Hispanic congregations as part of our commitment to racial and economic justice.

Deep Dive into Vestry Liaison Areas:

Worship – A committee is reviewing our liturgy to see if it reflects our theology and aligns with our priorities. The hope is to have a trial liturgy with updated language within the next month or so.

Technology – The sound system has been adjusted so the choir can now hear in the choir loft. Julie has been working with the technology consultant. It has been determined that we need a new lectern mike, as people can't hear the speaker. The goal is to make it easier for people to engage.

Adult Formation – There are scholars available through Emory who can teach in adult formation. We may want to include this in the budget. Adult formation is gaining in depth, and we aim to have a wide variety of topics.

Pastoral Care – The Community of Hope has monthly meetings where they discuss how to improve the provision of comfort to those in need. We need to provide the parish with a better explanation of the healing station.

Parish Priorities – The various church committees have now met to discuss how to incorporate our newly established priorities into committee work. We will continue to put the priorities in the bulletin as space is available. The Vestry will revisit the priorities next summer.

Stewardship – The stewardship campaign theme “Many Voices, One Story” is a good one for this year. The committee will bring back some of the 150th anniversary photos to use in the campaign. Maybe storytelling can be blended into the WELCOM meetings. The committee wants us to consider a narrative budget this year. There was strong support for discussion of budget points at the annual meeting. We want to try to put a face to a ministry need. They will expand the pledge card to include time and talents.

Community Engagement – Jeanette Hanson has stepped up to reengage us with Holy Comforter.

Old Business:

Budget Planning and Goals - Bert reported that for the month of August we had a fiscal shortfall but are still ahead year-to-date.

New Business:

GaGa Pit – Vestry approved the Youth plan (advised by Emily Elder) to build a gaga ball pit adjacent to and uphill from the fenced storage area/corral near the composter where railroad ties are located. Youth Group will work to raise funds to pay for the materials and to provide labor to complete the project. Paige motioned to approve, Lisa seconded, and all voted to approve.

The Audit Report was presented. We can advise the treasurer to submit it to the diocese.

Discernment for Ordination – Emily Elder is in the process of discernment. Her committee has recommended that she move forward. The next step is recommendation from the vestry.

Kesner Ajax will be in Atlanta and will preach on October 22.

The meeting ended with noonday prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Sherry Wallace
Clerk of the Vestry

MISSION STATEMENT

The Episcopal Church of the Epiphany is an inclusive community called to seek and follow Jesus Christ. We welcome all people in the Eucharistic fellowship of Christ's Body. We receive strength and encouragement at the common table to carry out Christ's work of reconciliation in our broken world. Nourished by worship and witness, learning and teaching, fellowship and service, we strive to live out the Gospel's radical values with gladness of heart.

PARISH CORE VALUES

Faith in God. Our belief in a loving God is foundational to our faith. Faith brings us together for worship and sends us out in the world. We recognize everyone's faith journey as unique – wherever you are on your journey, there is a place for you here.

Love in Action. We are called to engage with the wider community through the life and teachings of Jesus. Together, we work toward environmental, racial, gender, LGBTQ+ and economic justice and equity.

Transformative Relationships. Through God's grace, we seek to embody God's love in our care for each other.

Intentional Welcome. We are an inclusive community that strives to seek and serve Christ in all people. We believe God loves you - no exceptions.

PARISH PRIORITIES

- 1) Make necessary changes to attract families with children and youth to our church
- 2) Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to reach new people and incorporate them into the life of the church.
- 3) Work toward environmental, racial, gender, LGBTQ+ and economic justice and equity.
- 4) Develop ministries that work toward healing those broken by life circumstances and those living on the margins of society.
- 5) Create more opportunities for people to form meaningful relationships (for example, small groups, nurtured friendships, shared meals, etc.).

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Vestry Reports

Worship — April Maa

Looking at language that suits our church and may change the language a little bit

Technology — April Maa

Created a checklist for volunteers to help reduce human error.

Retraining the AV team each Sunday.

New sound consultant has recommendations for microphone and sound issues, received price estimate for new mixer and cables (\$896.49), and purchase has been approved in accordance with financial procedures.

Adult Formation — Peter Dodge

As is my practice, I am incorporating *verbatim* as my monthly report the following detailed remarks composed by Adult Formation Chair Paul Hinson and (beginning this month) The Rev. Carmie McDonald.

I should first note that I have forwarded the draft 2022-2023 Operating Budget to Paul for review by his Committee and his initial response is included below.

Peter J. Dodge, Liaison

Paul Hinson, September 3, 2023 to Committee

"Hi Friends,

While details are still being worked out, we now have a schedule of offerings for adult formation which will take us through the end of the year. We also have several options we're working on for 2024 before our summer break, and even some ideas for next Fall. So I thought I would take this opportunity to update you on our progress. Amy and Carmie have worked hard on putting this together so I'm forwarding to you what I received last Thursday from Carmie.

Please feel free to share with me any ideas or responses you might have to these offerings or other ideas for offerings. You may also share your preferences among several options outlined below for the first part of 2024. We can of course have a zoom meeting to discuss this further if its consensus of the group but I'm also available to hear your comments via email.

SUMMARY. We have a real variety of programming on tap for the Season of Creation (Sept 10 - Oct 15) the first two Sundays of which will focus on creation through the lens of music and art, followed by two Sunday mornings where we'll have scholar-led presentations/discussions focused more on our relationship to the creation (topics detailed below). Later in the year, I'm especially excited about the fact that we'll be incorporating scholars and programming from the Candler Foundry for the first time (<https://candlerfoundry.emory.edu/>). This is brand new for us here at Epiphany. The Foundry is an initiative of the Candler School of Theology which utilizes their rich array of scholars to bring their expertise out of the academy and into churches and other public settings. I'm also excited that we hope (this is still in process) to bring Nicole Symmonds back, this time to perhaps help us through the trauma of another election cycle and

all the things that brings up for us. Our civic life together across differences becomes particularly fraught when justice seems out of reach for populations that we care about. When those populations are politically persecuted and legislated against how do we respond in a manner that serves justice yet remains true to our identifies as followers of Jesus?

How do we add more light than heat to those public discussions? Nicole will help us through those issues. That's still in the process of being worked out but that's one of our hopes for this coming season. If Nicole isn't available there are options among Foundry scholars who might be brought in. There are many other opportunities detailed in the more comprehensive report below. Each of our adult formation offerings also represents a time for us to connect and deepen our relationships with each other *regardless* of the topics at hand."

Paul H.

Memo by Carmie (incorporated into Paul's September 3 report):

"Dear Paul,

I hope you are doing well. I am writing today to provide an update on where things stand with adult formation planning. As I mentioned in our conversation last week, we've had to do a bit of rearranging based on the speakers' schedules but have been able to group things in a way that I hope feels cohesive. Please find an overview of the proposed offerings below. I've also attached a spreadsheet in case it is helpful to see the schedule.

September 10-October 15 will focus on the Season of Creation. The courses offered on September 10 and 17 and October 1 relate to celebrating creativity and will feature poetry, drawing, and music. There will be a break on September 24 for the parish retreat.

October 8 and 15 also fall under the umbrella of Season of Creation, but with more of a focus on the environment and our relationship to it. Both of the speakers we've consulted were recommended through GIPL and I think will appeal to the Epiphany community. The presentation on the 8th is by Dr. Jacob Crane, an Emory bioethicist who is also a rabbi, who will be sharing about the relationship between creation care and ethical eating. On the 15th we'll have a presentation on reducing our impact on the Earth by Dr. Dabney Dixon, a Georgia State professor and friend of Carol Bartlett.

Dr. Elizabeth Arnold (Ebby) from the Candler Foundry will present a four-part series that will run from October 22-November 12. Her proposed title "Why Studying the Bible Matters" is being re-worked, and I'll share her brief write-up as soon as I have it. It was recommended as a good overview course and Ebby is working with us to tailor it to meet the needs of our community. She felt that there was a good tie-in to offering it during Stewardship season because she explores themes of the Bible as our inheritance and asks questions about how we can be stewards of this resource. She's also thinking about it in terms of our "One Story/Many Voices" stewardship theme. Amy and I will follow-up with a class on November 19th where we can reflect on the class material as a community.

We'll have a two week break for Thanksgiving and an Advent wreath workshop and then resume formation on December 10 and 17. Amy is planning to approach two of our young adults about

leading an Advent-themed course those weeks before we take a break over Christmas. I'll keep you in the loop once we hear back.

We've got three good options for the spring and are in conversations about getting them slotted on the calendar. One course is "Seeking Shalom" by Ryan Bonfiglio (the Zoom video I sent a few weeks ago), the second is Ebby Arnold's exploration of the four different resurrection stories featured in the gospels, and we are still trying to find dates to get Nicole Symmonds back to talk about accompaniment with a particular focus on "bringing light and not heat," as you stated so well, in this election year. Looking ahead to next fall, we are interested in exploring the tree-based curriculum you shared with a possible tie-in to Deepdene.

I know this is a lot of information, but I hope it is helpful as you prepare to meet with the committee. Please let me know if you have questions or need any additional information. "

Peace,
Carmie

E-Mail to P. Hinson from P. Dodge and P. Hinson response (both September 8, 2023)

Paul-- Attached is Bert Bender's commentary vis-a-vis the current (early) working draft of the 2024 Operating Budget. His comments are self-explanatory and encourage each committee or sub-group entitled to funding to contribute insights and advocacy as to its visualized needs.

I am sharing this with you in my capacity as Vestry Liaison to Adult Formation and am offering to accept any useful role in promoting the objectives and mission of AF as the budgetary process moves toward informed refinement for final approval several months from now.

Best, Peter

Thanks Peter. I'll take a look at this and give you my feedback. I know that going to the Candler Foundry for some of our classes will cost us as I recall \$250 per session (so for example if we offer a four meeting series the cost to us is \$1000). If Nicole Symmonds is available to return we'll again need to compensate her. My impression is that adult formation expenses such as these will come from a draw down of the targeted bequest for formation we received not long along. So funding for adult formation will (I think) come from that source. I'm not sure if those expenses are scheduled in this budget or accounted for elsewhere.

Just fyi, I donated two additional Owls for hybrid classes just because the price on them was just too good to pass up. I plan on continuing to be around as technology resource for our presenters. Paul H.

Pastoral Care — Lisa Daily

The Pastoral Care Committee continues to send cards to parishioners on the prayer list.

The Community of Hope continues to visit parishioners who have requested visits, take Communion to homebound parishioners and meet monthly.

In July Chris Miller led COH in a discussion about hospital chaplaincy.

COH discussed Parish Priorities at its August meeting:

- COH discussed the importance of making people feel welcome and at home and consciously practicing hospitality by for example introducing people to each other.
- We discussed how it is in relationships that we heal, we give ourselves to each other and we heal and we are healed.
- This work enriches our lives, deepens connections, is healing and rewarding. We experience God through other people. The work helps us embody who we want to be.
- We want to strengthen ties with the Pastoral Care Committee. We plan to work together on a Gift Bag project in November.

Members of the Pastoral Care Committee are Cecelia Democko, David Draper (Chair), Susan Moody, Nancy Thompson and Sherry Wallace.

Community of Hope's Leadership Team is comprised of Jessica Burns, Lisa Daily, David Draper and Ann Fowler. Additional members are: Barbara Belcore, Laura Gary, Lisa Gray, Paul Hinson, Chris Miller, and Annie Strahan.

Parish Priorities — Lisa Daily

Notes from August 20 Vestry Retreat relating to Parish Priorities:

Community Engagement

What's Working

- Summer coffee hour
- Quarterly meetings
- Sharing across ministries
- Focus On Parish Priorities

What to Work On

- Lack of Participation—Racial Justice and Holy Comforter need leads
- Web site needs revising
- Low budget vis a vis Parish Priority
- How to make work more known among parish/how to tell the story

Finance

What's Working

- Engaged, knowledgeable passionate, consistent monthly meetings
- Citizens Trust Bank relationship

- Reactive to Proactive/crisis management vs long-term planning

What to Work On

- No conversation yet about Parish Priorities
- Need input on next year's budget by Committees/Vestry
- Cuing up new members

Building and Grounds

What's Working

- Matthew, Bill Graves, John Yntema and other volunteers
- Wish List/Laundry List being worked through: A/C, Flower Guild room remodel, solar assessment, erosion control in meadow; tree watering
- Quarterly work days

What to Work On

- No Committee (is one needed?)
- Paralysis/size of facility/
- Facility is underutilized
- Educating parish about costs for upkeep and improvements
- Use children's choir parents to do jobs during choir rehearsals
- "Jesus" jobs jar

Children and Youth

What's Working

- EMILY!!!!
- Confirmation
- VBS
- Youth trips
- Consistency and content of weekly newsletter to children/youth/their parents (sweet and thoughtful)
- All about relationships

What to Work On

- Full-time position needed?
- More volunteers
- Parent-focused events at same time as youth events
- Opportunities for adults without children to interact with children
- Communication, especially about volunteer needs
- More day trips
- Announcements during service

Membership and Newcomers

What's Working

- Greeters

- Welcome Bags
- Newcomer bios
- Small gestures make a big difference

What to Work On

- Name Tag coordination

Parish Life

What's Working

- Children & Youth: Help youth with pancake supper; youth involved in nativities
- Keeping events economical-- usually charge under \$10 per individual; events not used as fundraisers; casual attitude toward paying
- Asking people to help with event set up and clean up, gives time to mix and mingle and work as a team

What to Work On

- Offering children's tables at more events
- Yearly sit down meal with newcomers/ have ministry leaders available to answer questions
- Look for ways to decrease waste, less plastic, recycle, compost
- Will support but not lead "foyers"

Stewardship — Kaylie Gibbs

Stewardship season will be kicking off soon. Ministry Fair coming October 1. The theme for this year's campaign is **One Story, Many Voices**.

Endowment — Kaylie Gibbs

Endowment Committee sponsored the *Final Affairs Fair: Older but Wiser* on Sunday, September 10th.

Community Engagement — Susan Ashmore + Sally Walker

The Community Engagement Committee has not had a meeting since last month's report.

Finance — Andrea Strahan

August 2023	Budget	Actual
Income	\$57,256.42	\$38,397.69
Expenses	\$57,749.00	\$64,622.11
Net	(\$492.58)	(\$26,224.42)

August 2023 had MTD revenue of \$38,397.69 and MTD expenses of \$64,622.11, resulting in a MTD deficit = \$26,224 and bringing the YTD surplus to \$33,061. The August shortfall in Pledge giving of \$22K and \$4500 of audit expenses are the main factors in the MTD deficit. In 2022, the YTD was a deficit of \$16,125. The 2023 YTD surplus (versus the 2022 YTD deficit) is still mostly due to not having an Associate Rector for five months in 2023.

The audit is complete and ready for Vestry review. There were no issues found, but auditors noted depreciating assets (similar to past audits).

Building and Grounds — Matthew May

These are actively in progress:

- 1) **Flower Guild Room Improvements** Need to figure out flooring, reno needs to do official measurements, cabinets installed, wall and cabinet construction by Bill on old doorway, finally move stuff back.
- 2) **Solar Assessment** All 3 of 3 proposals are in. We are meeting with the consultant on Sept 28 to determine next steps and bring more information to vestry.
- 3) **Gaga Ball Court** After assessing the options, the Youth are interested in adding a gaga ball court to the grounds – they would like to build and self fund (through fundraiser or other means) the project and use the railroad ties on site in the same location those rail road ties are already being stored on the other side of the dumpster. They would like to start building 9/30 on the work day.
- 4) **Chronic AC Issues** In general trying to move AC installation to maintenance mode.
- 5) **Playground** - We will probably transplant some Tulip Poplar from the upper Byrd area to the playground for more shade cover.
- 6) **Courtyard** Susan Williams has stepped up to lead the effort. Proposed timeline Sept - An article in the newsletter describing the revamp, gather fence estimates; Sept 30 - some things can begin to be removed at the workday. Susan will be there with plans for the courtyard for people to see and ask questions; Oct 8 during coffee hour. - another info session for anyone who would like to see the plans and hear about how it connects to our values around creation care/native plants, etc; Later in October - stump grinding of the things that couldn't be dug out; Oct/Nov - shrub and tree planting begins; Late winter/early spring - filling in with perennials and other herbaceous plants
- 7) **Q3 Work Day** Scheduled for September 30. Get your wish list items in (email thetechcpa@gmail.com) and invite your friends to help!

These are not actively in progress or are waiting on a volunteer or prioritization:

Water Water Everywhere The storm cellar continues to have gallons of water get into it from under the wooden stairs when it rains hard. But there was also some water at the other end of the storm cellar.

The exposed ductwork in the choir suite is dripping water again. Presumably condensation. Julie has to make sure that the piano is in the right place to avoid the dripping. The water allows mold to grow on the pipes.

Stream of water coming down the bricks by the name tag towers in the gallery. This is, of course, where it usually leaks whenever there is a driving rain and is where the 2004 renovation meets a wall that used to be outside.

Roof Repair Getting Quotes were wide ranging from \$1,000 - \$7,500. we are going back to the vendors because scopes of work were very different. John Yntema is coordinating. Attempting to do maintenance only and get scope under \$2,500 and fix rest with volunteers. Good news existing roof will last 8 more years. If you have comments on this, email thetechcpa@gmail.com

In our roofing estimates there were several gutter issues we can address with volunteers.

Kitchen Sink Issue There appears to be an occasional leak when draining multiple sinks likely associated with a drain clogged somewhere. Need to redesign the drainage – potential plumber issue.

Nursery Water Fountain Not working

Front Door Physics Something happening here. Various parties looking at conundrum of the front doors: sometimes doors gap, sometimes doors stick. Next? Better door code security system (video)?

Choir Room Wall Repair - need to repair and repaint choir room wall from water damage

Nursey Repaint window sill.

Vents check for mold inside (for vents cleaned by the preschool)

Maintenance Contracts (Inventory of Systems) Will be updating HVAC list after McKenney's Punch List labeling is confirmed.

AC Off 1 of 4 HVAC systems for the Parish Hall is currently not running.

Asphalt Patching Comment: shouldn't we patch cracked asphalt parts at entrance and exit drives, maybe starting with temporary volunteer fix?

Sexton Services Is informal volunteer sexton approach for identifying maintenance issues, handling minor repairs, coordinating minor contractors sustainable?

Landscaping Company Doing work but not sending invoices to anyone.

Erosion Control There is an erosion issue on the East Lake embankment affecting some of the plants that are not being fixed by normal triage from volunteers.

Courtyard runoff (which comes out by East Lake) needs to be evaluate how to remedy Byrd property close to our Ponce neighbor needs evaluation.

Embankment by new GA Power building on the Ponce embankment, no plants to stop erosion because of the construction.

Various Inside Projects

The brick vestibule outside the lower level classroom got a rather bad first coat of paint a few years ago. It could totally do with a better job this time around and a second coat.

There were also a lot of little paint drips on the floor - including the bathroom that could be cleaned up. The installed coat racks down there for little kids in the brick vestibule could also come down I think. The right hand recessed light in Amy's office seems to come on and off, but mostly stays off.

In the kitchen by the little sink, the plastic screen guard installed to keep the walls dry have trapped bugs which Can the whole thing be removed, meaning the walls would probably need to be repaired and then painted.

Soap dispenser in upstairs bathroom

Semi-gloss touch up needed on baseboard leading to playground.

Wall in parish hall needs repainting

General touch up/painting plan needed.

Recurring Indoor Needs

Cleaning the interior windows and window sills on both floors and the lower level classroom.

The seams in the church floor always collect debris and dead bugs. Screwdrivers are used to loosen the debris up then vacuumed up.

The floors and cushions and sometimes even the pews often get candle wax on them - someone could scan for that and try to get it up.

Replenishing the Epiphany pens in the pews - pens live in the usher closet.HVAC filter replacements on a regular schedule

Recurring Outdoor Needs

Fertilize blueberries

Freshen up mulched areas

Off the list/projects completed:

Flower Guild Room Demo- Floor demo complete

Kitchen Sink Issue Ran a snake through the pipes and it seems to have helped temporarily.

Upstairs Water Fountain Repairman came out.

HVAC Issues Room 203/205 Three new issues with the air conditioning system in these rooms. Appears to be working again – whack a-mole every month it seems.

Children + Youth Formation — Paige Howell (Emily Elder)

Since the last vestry meeting in August (on 8/20), the Children's & Youth Ministries at Epiphany have had several kick-off events and have gotten back into the swing of our regular weekly programming.

For the Children's Ministry Kickoff on August 20 (our "Sundae Sunday"), there were **13 families** represented, with **21 children** in attendance. We ate ice cream, played some water games, and talked about what families could expect for the year ahead of them at church. Last Sunday (9/10) we kicked off Sunday Morning Children's Formation, which is happening this fall from 8:45-9:45 AM. Our Godly Play class had **5 children** in attendance, and our Surveyors of Scripture class had **8 children** in attendance, 4 of whom were not regular attendees last year. We also continue to host Children's Chapel on a weekly basis, and the average attendance for that during August and September has been **6 children** per week.

For the Youth Ministry Kickoff on August 27 (our "POP-luck" event), there were **7 families** represented, with **12 youth** in attendance. We welcomed **4 sixth graders** into our youth group and played games and ate pop-corn and popsicles. Since then, we've continued to have weekly youth group, with an average attendance of **8 youth** each week during August and September. This fall in youth group we'll be talking about relevant issues such as social media, bullying, vocation, etc. Weekly Sunday Morning Youth Formation also began last Sunday (9/10), which will be led by our seminarian, Peter Waggoner. **4 youth** attended last week.

As of right now, we have enough volunteers for our weekly Children & Youth offerings. There was a Children's & Youth Ministry Volunteer Orientation on Sunday, September 10, led by Emily Elder and Christen Erskine. **12 volunteers** were in attendance (out of **19 regular volunteers** in total), and we talked about how our focus this year is on relationship-building (between the children/youth, but also between the volunteers as a group and the volunteers and the children/youth) and creating an environment that encourages and welcomes newcomers.

Some things to look forward to: Children's & Youth Choirs will start up again on September 26 (with **8 children/youth** registered so far), followed by our first Family Eucharist Service of the year. The youth have also expressed interest in building a Gaga Ball court, so this is something we're looking into starting at the end of September.

Membership + Newcomers — Liefy Smith

Parish Life — Judy Jarady

Parish Life Committee hosted Welcome Back picnic on August 27 with very good response. The turnout was much higher than the signups reflected.

The committee is planning for upcoming events:

- Oktoberfest 10/7
- Nativities during Advent
- Advent Lessons & Carols reception