

Episcopal Church of the Epiphany

Vestry Meeting Minutes

January 21, 2024

In Attendance:

Vestry - Bert Bender, Liefy Smith, Susan Ashmore, Sally Walker, Matthew May, Andrea Strahan
Attending via Zoom: Judy Jarady, Kaylie Gibbs, Lisa Daily, & April Maa
Clergy - Amy Dills-Moore
Ex officio - Randy Shearin, Sherry Wallace, & Erin Braden (attending by Zoom)
Visitors: Jordan Moody, Suzanne Yoder, Cristin Davis, Kay Lee, & Paul Bonner,
Absent: Paige Howell & Peter Dodge

Meditation:

Suzanne Yoder, chair of the Epiphany Racial Justice Group, led a meditation on the Christian Journey. She followed this by presenting the proposed racial justice statement updated by the Racial Justice Group. The vestry adopted this statement by a unanimous vote. Peter had reviewed the document earlier and sent his vote for support via email.

New Business, Part 1:

Interfaith Children's Movement Partnership:

Kay Lee explained the mission of the Interfaith Children's Movement ("ICM"), a multi-faith grassroots advocacy coalition that works to create a Georgia where ALL children thrive. They work on advocacy for or against legislative action. Epiphany would be the 25th member of this coalition. The Vestry offered their support for this movement. Peter had reviewed the letter explaining the mission earlier and sent his vote for support via email.

Consent Agenda

Approval of the November 2023 vestry minutes was included as part of the consent agenda. All voted to accept. Peter had reviewed the minutes earlier and sent his vote for approval via email.

Rector's Report:

Amy began by offering her gratitude to outgoing vestry members Liefy Smith, Lisa Daily, Peter Dodge, and Bert Bender. Bert will transition to the ex-officio role of Immediate Past Senior Warden for the upcoming year. She then introduced the nominees for new vestry members: Jordan Moody, Cristin Davis, Paul Bonner, and Carol Bartlett. Amy asked current vestry members to allow new members to shadow them as VPOD. She said the vestry retreat will be Feb 9-10.

Amy listed upcoming events in the life of the church: Annual Meeting next Sunday, Ash Wednesday on Feb 14, and other Lenten and Easter events.

Amy will be going on a retreat to the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky in April after Easter. Amy brought up general issues regarding facilities maintenance, the safety and care of our building. Points to consider include the possibility of hiring a facilities manager. April has volunteered to work on safety issues.

New Business:

Door system and Contract:

We have received a contract proposal from Georgia Security Systems to install door security upgrades. Bert motioned, "That Epiphany accept the proposal dated January 18, 2024, from Georgia Security Systems for door security upgrades. Funds to be allocated from 2023 Surplus

Restricted Account.” Liefy seconded and all voted in favor. It was noted that the 2023 surplus was \$81,582.

Parish retreat and contract:

The Parish Retreat is scheduled for Sept 20-22, 2024. Bert motioned, “That Epiphany enter into the Guest Confirmation and Rental Contract with The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center, as signed by The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center on 1/13/2024.” Randy has reviewed the contract and has stated that it is a fair contract. Sally seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Peter had reviewed the document earlier and sent his vote for accepting the contract via email.

Endowment Board Members Update: Karla Finnegan has agreed to be on the board. There is one more opening. Amy will ask a parishioner to fill the position. The grant submission period opens on January 28, 2024.

Due to family issues, Paige Howell is resigning from vestry. Amy is taking suggestions for names to fill the one-year term.

Old Business

Catherine D. Harvey Legacy Fund Grants Update

The \$2,000 grant awarded to Project Transformation North Georgia was returned. The ECW proposed that the funds be redirected to Gateway Center. Bert motioned, “That the \$2,000 grant to Project Transformation North Georgia which was declined by Project Transformation North Georgia be reallocated to Gateway Center.” Liefy seconded and all voted in favor.

Scouting at Epiphany:

BSA Troop 18 and Cub Scout Pack 6 have requested that Epiphany be their Chartered Organization. Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church will continue to provide meeting space. A meeting with a Zoom link was held on December 6 with Troop 18 and Pack 6 representatives to explore this opportunity and answer questions. Bert proposed we agree to be the Chartered Organization for BSA Troop 18 and Cub Scout Pack 6, on the condition that Glenn Memorial UMC provide regular meeting and storage space under a Facilities Use Agreement. Sally seconded. All voted in favor. Peter had reviewed related documents earlier and sent his vote for approval via email.

Budget Review and Motions:

Bert led a discussion of the latest budget. After the discussion, Bert motioned

“That the Vestry approve the Budget identified and circulated as ‘2024 Budget and 2023 Operating Results with Restricted Funds Full Year’ (Ninth Version, January 20, 2024, with any “in meeting” updates as printed) as the Operating Budget for the 2024 calendar year.

In addition: The Vestry authorizes this reallocation of Restricted Funds from 8800 Capital Campaign GSF into Operating Budget Line Item 4945 (Capital Campaign 2016), part of “Restricted and Capital Funds Released”, to pay the Mortgage in expense budget line items 6900 and 6901. In order to achieve a cost reduction for property insurance, the Vestry authorizes Epiphany to cause the property insurer to amend the deductible amounts for “Named Storm”, “Windstorm/Hail” and “All Other Property” from \$1,000 to \$10,000.

The Vestry authorizes the approximately \$81,582 operating surplus from 2023 to be placed into a 2023 Surplus Restricted Account as created by the Treasurer and Bookkeeper with the approval of the Rector, such surplus to be applied and/or

reallocated to other Restricted Accounts or Operating Budget expense items as approved by the Vestry.”

Andrea seconded. All voted in favor. Peter had previously reviewed the budget and voted via email to approve the 2024 budget as updated through January 21, 2024.

Midday Prayer

The meeting ended with midday prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Sherry Wallace
Clerk of the Vestry

Vestry Reports

Parish Priorities — Lisa Daily

No Updates.

Membership + Newcomers — Liefy Smith

- The Fall Newcomer Gathering was well attended (11 newcomers).
- Our Spring 2024 Newcomer Gathering is scheduled for April 28th.
- Page Love Smith has volunteered to serve as Membership/Newcomer Committee co-chairperson with Liefy Smith for 2024.

Parish Life — Judy Jarady

Recent Parish Life activities were enjoyed by the people of Epiphany to mark Advent, Christmas and Epiphany Feast Day.

12/10 Lessons and Carols Reception

- PL offered an inviting and delicious charcuterie table with over 100 people enjoying food and fellowship.

12/4-1/8 Nativities Display

- PL members arranged a display of 58 beautiful nativities in the narthex and gallery to illustrate the birth of Jesus.

1/7 Epiphany Feast

- PL members hosted a delicious Tex-Mex potluck following our Sunday service that featured a wonderful Epiphany Pageant. Over 150 people enjoyed the meal.

We have a very hard working and dedicated committee led by Polly Nodine. Please note that PL committee's work brings many opportunities for our members to have meals together and strengthen meaningful connections in our parish.

Parish Retreat: The parish retreat committee and participants generally liked The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands, NC, and David Draper has received a new contract for September 20-22, 2024. There is a \$600 total deposit for a 40 person minimum and a maximum of 60. Contract circulated to Vestry with this Agenda. After Discussion,

likely Motion is “That Epiphany enter into the Guest Confirmation and Rental Contract with The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center, as signed by The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center on 1/13/2024.”

Community Engagement — Susan Ashmore + Sally Walker

No Updates.

Children + Youth Formation — Paige Howell

No updates.

Adult Formation — Peter Dodge

The 2023 Adult Formation Committee is headed by Paul Hinson, Chairperson, The Rev. Amy Dills-Wright and The Rev. Carmie McDonald (clergy advisors), with participating Members Labor Cadley, Evan Gibbs, Pamela Hall, Judy Jarady, and Patricia Price. Peter Dodge serves as Vestry Liaison.

The committee met intermittently mostly early in 2023 and serves in an advisory capacity to the clergy who largely lead and direct adult formation and respond/encourage individual interests among members who might want to teach or lead formation at Epiphany. Over the course of the year, Paul, Amy and Carmie also reached out to several long-term members to research what resources among our parishioners the Adult Formation program might be overlooking with regard to talents and interests.

In addition to continuing to support individual interests in faith formation and lay leadership of classes, several new initiatives were identified. These were (1) drawing upon on-line educational resources made available and accessible through the Diocese of Atlanta; (2) identifying and inviting presentations by guest speakers from the Foundry program of the Candler School of Theology at Emory University; and (3) doing some programming using representatives of our parish’s community partners.

Sunday Formation series began with *Love one Another: Jesus, St. Francis & Earth Care* (Carol Bartlett and Marion Curry), *Contemplative Prayer and the Joyful Season of Lent: An Afternoon for Reflection and Soul-Nurture* (an afternoon retreat organized by Ann Fowler and featuring author Carl McColman), *Reimagining Lent* (Rev. Bobbi Patterson) and *Second Sunday Contemplative Practice* (ongoing presented monthly with leadership from Amy, Bobbi Patterson and others).

After our usual summer recess, additional presentations were offered beginning in the Fall, including: *Season Of Creation* (poetry, drawings, and music led by volunteer guest practitioner/instructors), *Expedient Ethics* (Dr. Nicole Symmonds, (Columbia Theological Seminary), *Bioethics Of Food* (Rabbi Dr. Jacob Craine, Emory University), *Reducing Human*

Impact On The Earth (Dr. Dabney Dixon, Georgia State University), *Why Studying The Bible Matters* (Dr. Elizabeth Arnold, Emory University/Candler Foundry), *Autumn Gospels: Women in the Second Half of Life* (Lalor Cadley), *Advent Mary* (Lalor Cadley, *Rediscovering Mary Magdalene* (Amy Dills-Wright, continuing).

Pastoral Care — Lisa Daily

The Pastoral Care Committee, the Community of Hope and the grief group assisted in The Longest Night service for people who experienced sadness or loss during the holiday season.

Together the **Pastoral Care Committee and the Community of Hope** sent Christmas cards to parishioners 75 and older and continues to send cards to parishioners on the prayer list. Members of the Pastoral Care Committee are Cecelia Democko, David Draper (Chair), Susan Moody, Nancy Thompson and Sherry Wallace.

The Community of Hope assembled and delivered Christmas gift bags for people we visit regularly.

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

Five Epiphanyites are participating in an online **Community of Hope** training January-May 2024.

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.

Worship — April Maa

No Updates.

Stewardship — Kaylie Gibbs

A huge thank you to everyone that pledged themselves and assisted the Stewardship Committee in making personal contact with parishioners on the status of their pledges. With your help, and the tremendous congregant response to the Many Voices, One Story stewardship campaign, we have exceeded our pledge goal of \$640,000 with 138 total pledges equaling \$654,370.

Endowment — Kaylie Gibbs

The Endowment Grant submission period opens January 28th. Grant applications are available online from the homepage and in the gallery tract rack and can be submitted beginning 1/28/2024. Grants may be for capital improvements; scholarships or grants to members; or community outreach projects. Applications must be submitted by the deadline of February 28, 2024 in order to be considered.

The specific guidelines for distributions, pursuant to the Epiphany Endowment Fund's Plan of Operation, are:

- Capital improvements, debt reduction, or the building program of the Church of the Epiphany;
- Scholarships or grants to members of the Church of the Epiphany for the purpose of attending college, seminary, nursing or medical school; for church-related camping or leadership conferences; or such other training which enables members of this congregation to grow in Christian faith and service to God's people;
- Outreach into the community including, but not limited to, grants to Episcopal colleges and seminaries, social service agencies, institutions and agencies to which this parish relates, and to special programs designed for those persons in our area who are in spiritual and/or economic need; projects of the Episcopal Church at home and overseas.

Finance — Andrea Strahan

December 2023 Finance Report

	December 2023 - Budget	December 2023 - Actual	Overall 2023 - Budget	Overall 2023 - Actual
Income	\$57,256.42	\$93,062.28	\$687,077.00	\$753,803.47
Expenses	\$57,749.00	\$64,897.52	\$692,988.00	\$672,221.41
Net	(\$492.58)	\$28,164.76	(\$5,911.00)	\$81,582.06

December 2023 had MTD revenue of \$93,062.28 and MTD expenses of \$64,897.52, resulting in a MTD surplus = \$28,165 and bringing the 2023 YTD surplus to \$81,582.06. Available operating cash for 12/31/2023 was \$221,081. For comparison, 2022 operating results were a \$10K deficit at the end of the year.

The finance committee welcomed new member-at-large, Jacob Geiger, at our December meeting.

At the January 2024 meeting, the finance committee discussed the draft budget, including approaches to staff compensation. Thanks to Bert for his efforts and leadership on the budget!

After Discussion of Budget, including finalization of Clergy and Staff compensation increases, **likely Motion** is “That the Vestry approves the Budget identified and circulated as “2024 Budget and 2023 Operating Results with Restricted Funds Full Year” (Ninth Version, January 20, 2024, with any “in meeting” updates as printed) as the Operating Budget for the 2024 calendar year. In addition:

- The Vestry authorizes this reallocation of Restricted Funds from 8800 Capital Campaign GSF into Operating Budget Line Item 4945 (Capital Campaign 2016), part of “Restricted and Capital Funds Released”, to pay the Mortgage in expense budget line items 6900 and 6901.
- In order to achieve a cost reduction for property insurance, the Vestry authorizes Epiphany to cause the property insurer to amend the deductible amounts for “Named Storm”, “Windstorm/Hail” and “All Other Property” from \$1,000 to \$10,000.
- The Vestry authorizes the approximately \$81,582 operating surplus from 2023 to be placed into a 2023 Surplus Restricted Account as created by the Treasurer and Bookkeeper with the approval of the Rector, such surplus to be applied and/or reallocated to other Restricted Accounts or Operating Budget expense items as approved by the Vestry.”

Building and Grounds — Matthew May

These are actively in progress:

- 1) **Front Door Lock** - As most of you know, the front door keypad unlocking mechanism is not dependable now. We will get it repaired or replaced.

Update from Senior Warden/Rector: Shea received an estimate on the improved door code system and having a security camera installed at the front door, along with a panic button for her desk. See below.



GEORGIA SECURITY SYSTEMS, INC.
 73 Lawrenceville Street
 McDonough Ga 30253
 404-761-0694

Members Georgia Burglar & Fire Alarm Association
 Members National Burglar & Fire Alarm Association
 Local 24-Hr. Monitoring / Central Station
 Local, Family-Owned Since 1968
 www.georgiasecurity.net

DATE January 18, 2024

NAME Episcopal Church of the Epiphany PHONE # 404-373-8338 Acct # 0709/9-2338
 ADDRESS 2089 Ponce de Leon Avenue Atlanta, Georgia 30307 DeKalb County

QTY	EQUIPMENT DESCRIPTION	EACH	TOTAL
1	XR 550N Control Panel (intrusion/access)		\$ 1125.00
1	1100XH Wireless Receiver		395.00
1	724 DMP Access Control Module		325.00
1	Essex Environmental Keypad		495.00
1	Hikvision 4 channel DVR		995.00
1	Hikvision 5MP/Tur/2.8MM Camera		295.00
1	1142 Wireless H/U Button		95.00
1	Wire. Misc		195.00
	Sales Tax Material Sub-total \$ 3920.00	.089	348.88
	Installation/programming		900.00
	Total Investment		5168.88
	Access Control Remote Mgmt via PC & Smartphone App \$30 per month		

Contract of this size (over \$2,500) requires Full Vestry Approval and Treasurer (if from Restricted Accounts). After Discussion, **likely Motion** is "That Epiphany accept the proposal dated January 18, 2024 from Georgia Security Systems for door security upgrades. Funds to be allocated from 2023 Surplus Restricted Account."

- 2) **Flower Guild Room Improvements** Huge progress on the countertop, sink, and plumbing, and most of the floor patching complete – next steps: final floor touch ups, select and install flooring.



- 3) **Playground** Preschool is working through a list of things on the playground they would like improved/fixed. They are going to work on what they prioritize. They had a safety inspection done that they shared with us.
- 4) **Roof Repair** Need to escalate priority and make progress. We need to go back to the vendors because scopes of work were very different. John Yntema will coordinate when he can fit in unless we have other volunteer. Attempting to do maintenance only and get scope under \$5,000 and fix rest with volunteers.
- 5) **Solar Roof** Earth Guild has taken over the solar project. They are moving forward with selecting two contractors to do physical site visits and propose on the project. Earth Guild considering an April Earth Day launch for the fundraising project.
- 6) **Work Days** Gaga Ball work day Jan 27. Q1 Work Day March 23rd before Palm Sunday.

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

Water Main Main building shut-off water valve needs to be replaced.

Outside Youth Room 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. The installed coat racks down there for little kids in the brick vestibule could also come down I think. Inquiring about this being the next B&G youth work project with a painting/mural by one of the youth. Sketch requested for review.

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.

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

Nursery Repaint window sill.

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

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?

Parking Lot - Earth Guild is endorsing a semi-permeable parking lot vs paving option whenever that comes up for discussion.

Tankless Water Heater and Repairs Earth Guild has interest in moving to tankless water heater eventually. ALSO The water heater in the Tables and Chairs room has a little condensate drain. It was never run all the way to the floor drain. You can see it on the right. It just ends. It is next to a copper tube that runs to the floor drain. Just a bit of water comes out whenever the water heater is firing. The water on the plywood got there when the plumber shook it. It's apparently been slowly leaking water since it was installed in 2004. Just enough to stain the floor and rot the edges of the plywood board that the water heater is set on. We need to cut a path along the copper pipe to the floor drain and extend the plastic drain tube to it. Mark McDonald expressed interest in doing carpentry stuff. I would like to see if he is interested. This was spotted by the "civilized plumber" guys who came to assess whether a tankless water heater is feasible when our water heater dies. He is going to check to see if there exists a water heater that can supply hot water as fast as is now available from our current water heater. If not, dual water heaters might be necessary. And very expensive.

Various Inside Projects

There were also a lot of little paint drips on the floor - including the bathroom that could be cleaned up.

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:

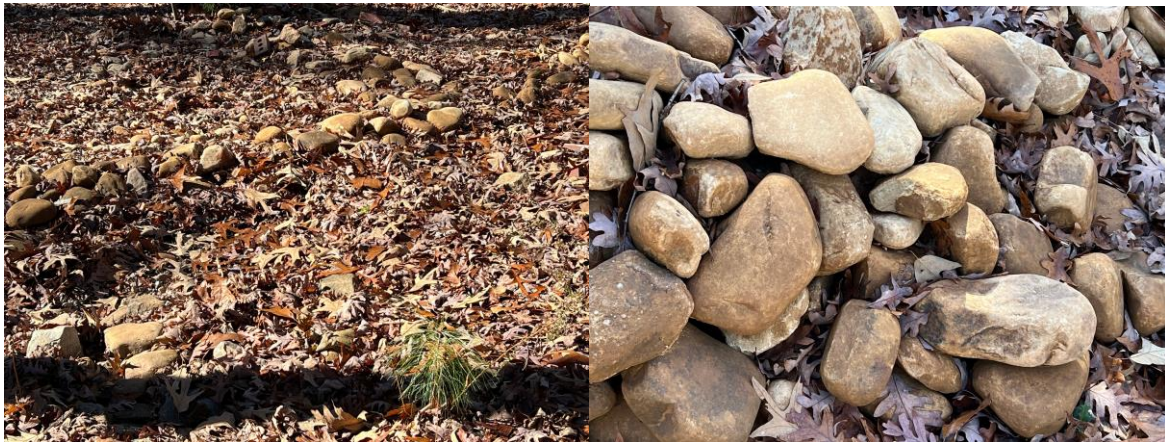
Courtyard Fence installed - lots of plans for the future



Gaga Ball Court Third level added to structure - next steps erosion control, leveling within structure, and creating a path to the structure from the basketball court. Work Day scheduled for Saturday January 27.



Erosion Control 3 tons of stone were ordered and are being placed to attempt to remedy the erosion issues in the 4 locations identified previously.



Chronic AC Issues New maintenance contract executed with United.

Electric Bill Increasing The electric bill is well over historical levels (>\$1,000/month), we think the most recent McKinney visit has resolved, thanks to George.

Men's Room The men's room toilet farthest from the door had 2 problems. The shut-off valve will not shut off the water. It appears that the water flows into the tank faster with that valve completely shut! Also the toilet tank is filling very slowly. Problems are likely related. Plumber came out and fixed.

Mailbox Door came off and has been repaired.



Playground - We bought a Tulip Poplar and preschool planted for more shade cover.

Landscaping Company Doing work and now sending invoices.

Various Indoor Projects The right hand recessed light in Amy's office is fixed, also light bulbs replaced elsewhere.

Technology — April Maa

No Updates.

Catherine D. Harvey Legacy Fund Grants

From Laura Keys: “Dear Senior Warden and Vestry: I am writing to you on behalf of the ECW about the Harvey Fund at the behest of President Robin Hairston. We had the unprecedented experience this year of having one of our grant awards returned to us. Project Transformation North Georgia is shutting down. That leaves us with \$2,000 undesignated. We would like to direct it to Gateway instead. They had applied for a grant and we had not made an award to them originally just because they have a large budget, many donors, and we have limited funds. It is a ministry that we think is worthy and one that we already have an association with through our feeding ministry. Please approve this change in disbursement.”

The Senior Warden moves:

That the \$2,000 grant to Project Transformation North Georgia which was declined by Project Transformation North Georgia be reallocated to [Gateway Center](#).

January 14, 2024

Dear Vestry,

In the Fall of 2023, the Racial Justice Group (ERJG) began re-forming with a table at the Fall Community Engagement Fair. A small group gathered in November and December to begin discerning the group's direction and to brainstorm desired activities for 2024. We are thankful for the racial justice wisdom and experience within our circle. Participants are Peter Dodge, Katharine Hillard-Yntema, Judy Jarady, Kay Lee, Chris Moser, Carol Moser, Carmie McDonald, and Suzanne Yoder. There are a few others who have indicated their intention to join us in the new year.

Using the [2023 Vestry Statement on Racial Justice](#) as the basis, the group agreed to focus this year on collaborating with Epiphany and community partners in the following areas:

- Education: Issues of racism in history and everyday life
- Formation: Personal and communal anti-racism
- Action:
 - Collaborate and build personal relationships within Epiphany groups whose focus intersects with anti-racism
 - Partner with external organizations that are advocating for racial justice or are current partners with Epiphany
 - The initial criteria for seeking new external partners are:
 - Programs that are actively in place - stable, proven, and effective,
 - Faith-based,
 - Multi-racial focus,
 - Leadership is multi-racial, and
 - Plug in, not lead, and learn from them.

As we continue to seek the Spirit's guidance, our work will be the discernment of ways to refine our objectives and actions in the following areas:

- Understanding that racial justice is a personal and community journey, seek to offer multiple entry points that welcome people of all ages, allow for varying time commitments, and honor where they are on this journey,
- Collaborate with Epiphany's already established internal and external partnerships,
- Remain open to seeing how Spirit is working among us as new opportunities arise.

We covet your prayers and invite your participation in the journey of joining God in the work of bringing about a more just and equitable world. In that spirit, we request that the Vestry renew their commitment to the [2023 Vestry Statement on Racial Justice](#) as we move into 2024.

Prayerfully submitted,

Epiphany Racial Justice Group

January 15, 2024

Dear Vestry,

Epiphany has been invited into partnership with the Interfaith Children's Movement ("ICM"). This letter asks for the Vestry's support of this relationship, including that support being demonstrated by every retiring, continuing and new Vestry member writing an ICM "Have a Heart" Campaign card to a legislator (as explained below).

Since September of 2001, ICM has been building a multi-faith grassroots advocacy coalition that works to create a Georgia where all children thrive. At the end of 2023 ICM boasts 24 advocacy and congregational partnerships of many faiths. Being in partnership with ICM means supporting the mission of ICM and its programming and identifying avenues for mutual collaboration. Please feel free to visit ICM's website at www.icmgeorgia.org – however, that site is under reconstruction as I write this, so you might look at this 8 minute YouTube recap of ICM's work in 2023 here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDPoowGcgH0 or on their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/InterfaithChildrensMovement/ or in [this summary from First Baptist Decatur](#).

While it advances advocacy programming throughout the year, a major focus is advocating for or against certain proposed bills impacting Georgia's children during the annual Georgia Legislative Session.

In the role of liaison with ICM, utilizing our weekly newsletter and Sunday bulletin, I will inform Epiphanyites about opportunities to collaborate with ICM on its advocacy work. For example, I hope to inform the church about ICM's priorities during the 2024 Georgia Legislative Session (which began January 8th). ICM is advocating **for** the following bills:

- **HB 3 (Opportunity Weight in Education)**: This bill would create budget considerations for education and provide grants by the State Board of Education to local units of administration to support students living in poverty.
- **SB 668 (Students Living in Poverty)**: This bill would add a program for students living in poverty to the table of quality basic education instructional programs with weights and student -teacher ratios.
- **HB 462 (Raise the Age)**: This bill would raise the age on nonviolent offenses so that 17 years olds are not prosecuted as adults.
- **HB 520 (Mental Health)**: This bill includes funding for supportive housing, treatment and county-based mental health coordinators to work with police.
- **HB 264 (Noncitizen Students)**: This bill provides that noncitizen students with certain refugee, special immigrant, or humanitarian parole status under federal law are classified as in-state for tuition purposes.
- **Advance Connecting Family Legislation**: A bill that will make jail, prison and youth detention facility communications free in the state of Georgia.

ICM is advocating **against** the following bill:

- **SB 233 (School Vouchers)**: This bill will give \$6,500 to families of Georgia public school students in the bottom 25% of schools who pull their children out of class to attend private school or study at home.

Last year, as part of its legislative advocacy efforts, ICM created a campaign entitled “**Have a Heart**” wherein different faith communities hosted parties during which their congregants (from children to seniors) wrote valentines to legislators in support of, or discouraging support for, certain proposed bills. ICM representatives collect those valentine messages and deliver them to legislators on Valentine’s Day. They are running the campaign again this year. In that we are new to this relationship, in lieu of one card writing party, I will be (i) asking Epiphany groups meeting between now and February 10th to take a few minutes of meeting time to write a card, and (ii) asking (via the Epiphany newsletter and Sunday bulletins) for individual parishioners to participate in the campaign, delivering their cards to Epiphany on or before February 10th. Our goal is to deliver 60 cards to ICM for the Campaign. We hope to have a larger parish-wide card writing party in 2025.

The advocacy during the legislative session is just one example of ICM’s work. ICM collaborates with its coalition partners to engage people of faith and communities of faith in advocacy education opportunities throughout the year. They advised that in past years, they have conducted service projects such as providing meals to children in underserved communities on weekends or over the summer and a luggage donation program for children in the foster care system. In 2023 such collaboration included the 3rd Annual multi-faith Blessing of Beloved Community Prayer Session, an Advocacy Day during the annual Children’s Sabbath weekend (part of the Children’s Defense Fund’s national celebration and observance), youth advocacy internships, a “Prayers for Peace and Positivity” Youth Program, a Children’s Sabbath Weekend, and multiple advocacy workshops. In 2024 they are kicking off a “Rise & Vibe” Youth Alliance program described as a *“chance for change-minded young people to get together, get excited, and get ready to transform our world! ... This special event will also feature food and a listening session for young people from a number of different religious backgrounds.”* The program welcomes youth grades 7 -12.

Lastly, as part of our church’s growth, ICM has offered to explain the mechanics of the Georgia Legislative Process at an Epiphany Adult Formation class in the fall (in preparation for the 2025 Legislative Session).

This ICM partnership promises many wonderful opportunities for collaboration between Epiphany and its many Community Engagement groups and ICM, as well as other communities of faith. And it is a relationship that meets our Core Values; Faith in God, Love in Action, Transformative Relationships and Intentional Welcome.

I welcome any comments or questions you may have.
Thank you in advance for Vestry support.
Kindest Regards,
Kay Lee