Episcopal Church of the Epiphany
Vestry Mid-Year Retreat Minutes
August 2026

In Attendance:
Vestry – In person: Kay Lee, Jordan Moody, Nick Theyrel, Beth Floyd, Kelli Gantt, Jacob Geiger, Tracey Laird, Paul Hinson, Cody Chafins
Clergy - Amy Dills-Wright
Ex officio - Sally Walker

Consent Agenda:
The June Vestry minutes were approved as part of the consent agenda; there was not a meeting in July.

Rector's Report:
This marked Amy's first meeting after her sabbatical, which she described as meaningful and restful.

She reported that Edie Brush and Tristen Webb were both in place as interim children's and youth ministers, respectively, for 10/hours per week.

Amy also announced that the Diocese wants to send a seminarian to work with us this year. Her name is Brittany Cole and she is in her second year at Candler, having previously spent a year living and working in an ecumenical community at St. John the Divine Episcopal Church in New York City. Amy noted that the diocese's continued interest in placing seminarians at Epiphany is a testament to the strength of the parish.

Amy reported that parents are interested in having Sunday School for children begin immediately after the service and that we would try that out this fall.

She also reported that the Christmas Eve service times will be slightly adjusted, with the early service beginning at 3:30 p.m. rather than 4 p.m. The later service will still be at 8 p.m.

Finally, she shared that Judith Cox, who partnered with Music Director Julie Ryder on the Bach-Biber project, would like to have the donated proceeds from the project benefit the Contemplative Practice. We are exploring the idea of building an outdoor labyrinth in the meadow.

New Business:
Delegates for Annual Council:
We discussed who might be among the four delegates we need to send to Diocesan Annual Council in November. Jordan and Beth both expressed interest in going, and we suggested Jacob Barber as an option. David Draper and Loren Williams have both gone in past years and likely would be willing to go again No vote was taken.

Epiphany T-Shirts:
Beth Floyd is working with her daughter on designing Epiphany t-shirts priced at roughly $20 per shirt. We will draw the initial expense from budget line 8700 Parish Activities Fund, with revenue

from the sales returning to that fund. After discussion, Jordan motioned to approve an order or 150 t-shirts; Tracey seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Path to Solar Plaque:
Beth raised, on behalf of Buildings & Grounds, the possibility of a plaque to recognize donors to the solar project at a cost of $943, which would be paid out of remaining solar funds. The group discussed whether it is appropriate to list the names of all donors, which Kay noted might feel off to some people. Cody suggested putting the names of the Path to Solar Task force members, and Tracey suggested we showcase the story of the work over individual names. Beth will discuss the matter further and return with an update at the September meeting.

Donut Den (Youth Room):
Liefy Smith, who leads the Art Ministry, is working with Jacon, Amy, and Tristen on a reimagining of the youth room. New washable carpet tiles will go over the existing floor, while Liefy will revamp the seating and floor plan by adding furniture. Funds from the Art Ministry's sales will pay for the seating and money from the Memorials Designated Fund will cover the cost of the carpet. The goal is to have this project completed by the start of the program year in September.
Jordan motioned that th eVestry approve up to $6,000 in furniture purchases paid for by the art ministry restricted fund and up to $3,300 in a carpet purchase from the Memorials designated fund. Kay seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Nick Theyrel Status:
Nick announced he is moving to Illinois in October. He will serve out the end of the year remotely and resign then. The Vestry will appoint someone to serve the remaining two years of his term starting in January 2027.

Old Business
Sewer Backup and Little Forest School:
The church sent a letter to Deb, the director of Little Forest, after Amy's return. The letter shared the result of the Vestry's vote in June to have Little Forest pay $5,000 toward the sewer backup costs, given our belief it was largely caused by the school. Deb replied to that letter with questions; Jordan and Jacob remain in conversation with her on the matter.

Children and Youth Conversation
The Vestry devoted the remainder of its meeting to discussing the long-term opportunities and needs in our children's and youth ministries. Kay shared information based on a series of conversations she's had across the parish over the past six months and noted that how we care for current families is how we attract new ones.

During a breakout discussion small groups discussed when and how we felt included at church when in middle school and high school and how we might invite youth to be more involved when they are so busy with other things in their life. We then had a group discussion on what was covered in the breakout sessions.

We also discussed the language in our parish priority about families and youth and how we might update it. The group agreed to the following language for a modified priority: "Offer and adapt compelling opportunities for children, youth and families to experience belonging–just as they are–in every aspect of our faith community.

This work will be discussed at a September 6 parish meeting, which will also be an opportunity for us to discuss the financial changes that would be needed to hire a full-time employee to lead this work.

The meeting ended with Afternoon Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Jacob Geiger
Junior Warden

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.).

Vestry Reports

Adult Formation – Paul Hinson

I know I have to be brief here — not my strong suit ;) — so I'll mostly just "list" what we've done and where we're going. Our adult formation programming heading into the summer break was generally well-attended,

and we video-taped sessions where appropriate, and those recordings received a high number of views on our YouTube channel.

Looking back first to January, we offered a five-part Sunday morning series presented by Candler scholar Ryan Bonfiglio on the Bible and Poverty. Following that series we engaged the parish in a five-part Sunday morning Lenten series presented by Amy, Carmie, Suzanne Yoder and myself based on John Dear's book "Walking the Way" in which we followed the nonviolent path of Jesus through the events of Holy Week. Also during Lent — as a small group experience — Carmie and Chris Miller led a mid-day bible-study series which utilized Bishop Wright's 2026 Lenten video curriculum with readings of scripture examined using a group lectio divina approach. The Thursday morning Contemplative Book Group met beginning in January with Richard Rohr's book "The Tears of Things," followed by a study of Christine Valtner Paintner's' book "A Midwinter God," and then Elizabeth Oldfield's "Fully Alive." Before summer break we concluded the Thursday morning book study with A.J. Swoboda's book "Subversive Sabbath."

Periodic Sunday afternoon contemplative practice gatherings have also continued, led by Bobbi Patterson and Amy Dills-Wright and others. Finally, we just completed our second Summer Film Series in which we showed on the Parish Hall 140" screen the films "Love, Simon," "Hamnet," and "Wake Up Dead Man," followed by theological reflection on the themes of each film.

Looking at formation going forward, Carmie has been working hard on looking at the 2026-27 calendar and scheduling formation around our various one-offs like the ministry fair. We've booked Dr. Ebby Arnold for a return visit to present her "Women of Advent" curriculum beginning Sunday, November 8 and continuing for six sessions. For Spring of next year we're looking at various Candler Foundry options. I think all these efforts help create a good faith-based underpinning for developing and clarifying what motivates us to work

out in the world for social justice and for the kind of lasting peace that God seeks for a world transformed from fear and division, to a world of peaceful well-being.

Building and Grounds – Beth Floyd

MidYear Highlights

- Jason's increased responsibilities as Facilities Manager
- New flooring installed in fellowship hall
- New blinds installed in fellowship hall
- Kitchen floor replaced
- New kitchen refrigerator installed
- Plumbing issues resolved (kitchen, restrooms and main sewer line issues)
- Front Door Intercom System replaced
- Cedar shingles replaced on courtyard lychgate, back entrance lychgate replaced and third one repaired/stabilized
- Second floor painted

July Ongoing B&G

- Jason working on fixing (getting parts) for gallery light
- Jason working on clearing out/updating donut den; found some moisture issues due to outside drainage, and he is working on solution
- Jason getting estimate for replacing doors to playground

Children + Youth – Kelli Gantt

This has been an exciting summer for our children and youth. July featured two of our Summer Saturday VBS programs and the Youth Pilgrimage to Camp Mikell work camp! Both of these events represent a change to our previous style of programming that has been both supportive of our families and sustainable for our volunteers.

On July 11, thirteen students, half of whom were Epiphanites, met at St. Luke's for a summer Saturday. We learned the story of the good samaritan, packed care packages for Church of the Common Ground, and explore what it means to be neighbors.

On July 12, our Epiphany HTP water olympics night was rained out, but 8 of our youth still enjoyed a craft and game night indoors.

July 12-19, seven Epiphany youth attend Camp Mikell work camp. This year, through the generosity of our Epiphany family, we raised over $2,000 to support our youth at Camp Mikell. Taylor trekked to Camp Mikell for a visit and a meal with our campers.

Our last VBS of the summer took place on July 25 at Holy Trinity, where 10 students, 4 of whom were from Epiphany, enjoyed water day and learned the story of Pentecost. We learned that the Holy Spirit helps us be the Church, the Holy Spirit helps us love God and love our neighbors.

Volunteers from HTP, Epiphany, St. Luke's, and St. Bart's all participated to make this a meaningful experience for our children.

On July 26, parents of children and youth hosted a coffee hour in honor of Taylor Irwin's last Sunday with us. Taylor served as the CYF director for 2 years and her position will now be taken up by Edie Brush for children's ministry and Tristen Webb for youth ministry.

Tristen and Edie are already hard at work planning this fall's events, including youth tubing the Cartecay which took place on August 9, and Little's Dinner scheduled on August 21 and Putt Putt for the youth on August 23.

Community Engagement Partnerships – Kathy Corcoran and Tracey Laird

Lunchbag Service Project Reflections

- **Community Connections & Impact:**
  - Engage with the wider community through the life and teachings of Jesus.
  - Keep the presence and essential needs of those served central to our mission.
  - Recognize how outreach acts as a transformative experience for both recipients and givers.
  - Foster deeper connections among different generations and parish groups through active engagement.
- **Project Enhancements:**
  - Improve logistics and oversight, including providing more tables, clearer directions, and more guidance
  - Incorporate personal elements like handwritten notes and blessing our bags and offerings.
- **Future Ideas, Goals & Resources:**
  - Implement a quarterly service project held on Sundays.
  - Have a book club reading about people experiencing homelessness. Book Suggestion: *There is No Place for Us: Working and Homeless in America* by Brian Goldstone.
  - Provide support bags for men at Gateway outside of the holiday season.

Ministry & Outreach Updates

DEAM Expansion

DEAM will be voting on an initiative to expand Service coverage into South DeKalb to support individuals with a "Decatur" mailing address. Starting in September, the pantry will open one Saturday each month, which may require additional volunteer support.

Episcopal Church Women (ECW)

The ECW is seeking new members as the current participants age. The group gathers on Tuesday mornings and is exploring ways to build stronger community ties and connections.

Art Ministry Initiatives - Parishioner Art Show (Sept 1 – Oct 31, 2026)

Parishioners are invited to submit artwork for the upcoming exhibit. Additionally, cameras will be provided during the parish retreat for participants to take landscape photographs, which will also be displayed in the show.

Upcoming Meetings & Events

- **Holy Comforter Dinner:** Scheduled for October.
- **Next Community Liaison Committee Meeting:** November 4th at 3:30 PM.

Communications/ Newsletter
Lynda Smith will be assisting with newsletter production.

Core Values and Parish Priorities – Kay Lee

Please see separate "2026 MYR CV Report"

Endowment – Jacob Geiger

We conducted a successful grant cycle in January, but the process raised questions from those serving on the committee about how we might develop a stronger way of evaluating the competing merits of grant applications in years when the amounts requested exceed how much is available for distribution. This issue has been fallow in the first half of the year but is something I hope to work on with the committee in the fall.

Finance – Cody Chaffins

July MTD operating results = deficit $4,092, bringing the YTD surplus to $11,071. July 2025 YTD surplus was $46,308.

The difference YTD is mostly in total revenues: 2026 YTD total revenues = $487K; 2025 total revenues = $515K, a difference of $28K. About $12K of that is due to variance in Pledge giving; $4K to Parish Life Event revenue; $5K to decrease in MMA interest. 2026 YTD total revenue is, however, short of budget by only $9K.

MTD total expenses = $58,890 vs budget of $70,853, a positive variance of $11,963. 2026 YTD total expenses = $475,943 vs budget of $495,970, a positive variance of $20,027.

2025 YTD expenses = $468,590. The difference in 2026 and 2025 YTD expenses is mostly in Lay Staff and Benefits: $15K more in 2026. Epiphany discontinued its contract with an outside sexton and increased the Facility Manager's responsibilities (and hours), shifting the cost from Building and Grounds to Lay Staff and Benefits. The $10K charge in 6820 Outside Sexton Services was payment to the previous outside sexton for work done in 2025.

Membership + Newcomers – Cristin Davis

We've had lots of new faces at church lately. The greeters continue to make newcomers feel welcome with personal greetings and welcome bags.

This fall the committee has decided to offer a Newcomer's "light lunch" instead of the usual afternoon/evening gathering. It will be Nov 15th after the service. The committee will meet in late October to hand write invitations to all who have officially joined or transferred their membership to Epiphany since this spring.

Parish Life – Nick Theyerl

- Welcome back luncheon: 8/30
  - Fried chicken from Publix: $350
  - 50 sides, 30 salads, 20 desserts made by parishioners
  - For 100 attendees
  - 16 round tables with food down the middle
  - Set up on 8/29
- Parish retreat:
  - We have 43 registered (we need minimum of 40)
  - We can have up to 60
- Ministry fair: Sept 27
  - Stewardship sets up the Saturday before
- Oktoberfest: Oct 3
  - Starts at 4:30 or 5:00?
  - Joel may be out of town, but Edward Bauer & Patrick Bryant have volunteered to do brats
- Idea for the meadow: Dig out a pig roasting pit or build an oven out of cinderblocks
  - pros:
    - easier set up/take down instead of bringing the grill out
    - larger grill capacity
    - suitable for bbq smoking and other seasonal events (marshmallow toasting?)
    - drama of pig roast
  - cons:
    - dedicates a piece of ground permanently
    - esthetics, especially for an above-ground option made of cinder blocks
    - costs (potentially a few hundred dollars)
    - not portable.
- Seat cushions for the parish hall?
  - People were complaining about sore butts at the movie event.
  - Perhaps we could at least announce when events are likely to take 90 minutes or more. Then we can remind people that the chairs might get uncomfortable and they might like to bring a cushion.

Pastoral Care – Paul Hinson

Pastoral care continues throughout the parish and I observe it everywhere — during coffee hour, before services in the gallery, really simply everywhere. Its something we all participate in, and I'm encouraged at the way we take care of each other with conversations, phone calls, emails and off-campus support.

The Community of Hope continues to meet monthly and provide pastoral care through home visits, phone calls, and communion for homebound parishioners. Gatherings begin with prayer and include reflection on pastoral encounters and discussion of Joan Chittister's Illuminated Life: Monastic Wisdom for Seekers of Light. In July, Suzanne Yoder shared a prayer from Kat Armas's Liturgies for Resisting Empire. Members are Barbara Belcore, Jessica Burns, Lucy Davidson, David Draper, Laura Gary, Paul Hinson, Chris Miller, Carol Moser, Nan Ross, Annie Strahan, Nick Theyerl, Nancy Thompson, Larry Wilcox, and Suzanne Yoder, with Ann Fowler and Lalor Cadley serving as co-facilitators. Several members attended the COHI Regional Retreat Day at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in July, where Carl McColman led Tending the Wisdom of the Heart: Nurturing Your Soul with a Personal Rule of Life. Upcoming activities include hosting a dinner and providing support following the All Souls' service in November, assisting with the Service of Light in December, and participating in a pastoral service project at the end of the year.

The Pastoral Care Committee continues to provide targeted support also working with clergy and Community of Hope. The eight members of the pastoral care committee are Rick Day, Cecilia Democko, Susan Moody, Nan Ross, Mary Ann Schneider, Nancy Thompson, Sherry Wallace and David Draper. They have continued to send cards to parishioners asking to be on the prayer list and to set up and/or to share information about Meal Trains at the request of parishioners. The committee, along with The Community of Hope, will send Christmas cards in December to parishioners on the prayer lists and to senior members.

Stewardship – Jacob Geiger

After a quiet first half of the year, we are gearing up for the annual stewardship campaign that will launch at the end of September and culminate with in-gathering in late October. We have identified a tentative theme along the lines of "We Belong to Each Other."

As I look toward the rest of 2026 and then beyond, two things are on my mind:

1. Hiring a full-time youth and children's leader will require ~$40k above what we currently spend on the position (going from part-time to full-time salary, and then offering health care). Add that to normal growth income growth needed to account for inflation and we are likely looking at the need for an increase of 7-8% in pledge revenue. Is the Parish capable of reaching that mark through pledging in one year? We saw substantial year-over-year growth of that size in the pledge drives for our 2023, 2024, and 2025 budgets before eking out a much smaller increase for this year. If we can't get there in one year, what options might we have to meet this need?
2. We're blessed with a very talented Stewardship Chair, Pam Tipton-Thierry, who does a great job leading this work for the Parish. When she decides to step back from this ministry at some point in the future it will leave big shoes to fill.