

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

St. James' Episcopal Church

Glastonbury, CT 06033

January 28, 2024

The Annual Parish Meeting convened at approximately 11:30 AM following Sunday service. The congregation gathered and brunch was served.

Opening Prayer: By the Rev. Matt Handi

Welcome and Greeting Message: By the Rev. Matt Handi. Matt expressed gratitude to all, especially the Vestry during the time of transition to a part-time Priest-in-Charge. Sunday services continued. Offered a round of applause.

Determination of a Quorum: 37 members were in attendance confirmed by Cheryl Turner, Clerk.

Approval of Agenda: Motion to accept the presented Agenda was made and seconded. Approval of the meeting agenda was unanimously approved by all those in attendance.

Approval of 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes: A correction to the January 29, 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes adding Joyce Reynolds, Assistant Treasurer, to the roster of Vestry Members was presented by Rev. Matt Handi. Motion to accept the Minutes of the January 29, 2023 Annual Meeting with correction was made and seconded. The meeting minutes were accepted and unanimously approved by all those in attendance.

Vestry and Convention Delegates Acknowledgement: Debbie O'Donnell, Senior Warden; Don Gardner, Junior Warden; Bob Dugger, Treasurer; Cheryl Turner, Clerk; Joyce Reynolds, Assistant Treasurer; Vestry Members: Ralph Urban; Mitch Chester; Alison Banker; Susan Wright and Marie Dixon. Dan Aramini and Becky Lee thanked for their services as Delegates to the ECCT Convention during the year.

Election of New Vestry and Delegates to Convention: Slate of new Vestry members presented. Thank you to Debbie O'Donnell, Senior Warden, and Alison Banker who will be rotating off of the Vestry for their service during the past year. Ralph Urban replacing Debbie O'Donnell as Senior Warden. Valerie Huestis will be replacing Joyce Reynolds as Assistant Treasurer. Joyce Reynolds will replace Cheryl Turner as Clerk. Cheryl Turner was thanked for serving 6 years as Clerk. Erin Perrelli joins Vestry replacing Alison Banker. Motion was made to accept the new Vestry members as proposed; the motion was seconded and accepted unanimously by the membership present. Motion made to accept Lisa Gleason and Dan Aramini as delegates to the ECCT convention, motion seconded and accepted unanimously by the membership present.

Prayer over Vestry and Delegates: Senior Warden: Ralph Urban; Junior Warden: Don Gardner; Treasurer: Bob Dugger; Clerk: Joyce Reynolds; Assistant Treasurer: Valerie Huestis; Vestry: Mitch Chester, Marie Dixon, Susan Wright, Erin Perrelli and Cheryl Turner. ECCT Convention Delegates: Lisa Gleason and Dan Aramini.

Senior Warden's Report: Debbie O'Donnell opened her reporting with, "we experienced a lot and came out on the other side" comparing last year's Annual Meeting to this year. "We held meetings and working groups, we came together and worked it all out." Debbie focused comments that followed on where the beginning of 2024 finds St. James' rather than reflecting on the last three years of her term. Worship on Sunday mornings is amazing with Rev. Matt Handi leading us along with the voices of our lay preachers. Dan Aramini, Mitch Chester and Jeff Lebert are guiding our children and youth during the services. We work to impact our town and region since we believe it is part of our mission as Christians. Debbie thanked the Vestry for their investment of time, dedication and completion of training for interviewing Priest-in-Charge candidates early on in the year. Debbie also gave special thanks to Jeannette Brown and Janet Donston for preparing delicious food and hosting many events throughout the year. She recognized the Alter Guild, Pat Goodrich and Cherie Cooper. Gave a special shout out to Ed Crowe, Fred Faulkner and Carl Benker for their participation in worship services throughout the year, and especially during the three Christmas services. Special acknowledgement was given to Jim Barry for administering the music program and his many talents. A special mention was made of John Korber's technical abilities and keeping the congregation connected virtually during the pandemic with live streaming Sunday services. A special thank you was given to Administrator Dawn Hardwick and Bookkeeper Joanna Rivera-Bremmer who worked in close collaboration with the Rev. Matt Handi to ensure all of the moving parts of St. James' were supported to carry out God's work. A goodbye to Alison Banker as she leaves the Vestry, thanking her for service as a Lector and especially for bringing a Boy Scout Troop to us allowing them to use our down stairs rooms to engage in robotics competition practice. In closing remarks, Debbie said she is confident that St. James' is a healthy, thriving parish as we begin 2024 and invited everyone to join our efforts to "be a church" and find their passion amongst our many missions, or suggest a new one. A big "Thank You" was expressed to all.

Treasurer's Report: Bob Dugger's opening remarks emphasized that last year presented a new set of challenges as the Church transitioned with our new Priest-in-Charge. Bob then reported 2023 Highlights: Every Member Canvas resulted in 2023 pledges of \$201,950 from 65 pledge units and a 13% decline from pledges of \$232,431 and 78 pledge units for 2022. The monthly lease with Whole Foods was approved by the Diocese that increased the monthly lease amount from \$2500 to \$3500. With the market uncertainty outside of year-end, we were fortunate again to be able to avoid a withdrawal from endowment in 2023. The balance of the St. James' loan with the Diocese was \$47,200 at 12/31/23 at a rate of 3.5% that is being paid over 60 months and provides working capital flexibility. Withdrawals from the Joining Jesus Campaign for 2023 were used to pay the diocesan loan interest and the Joining Jesus fund balance was \$169,300 at 12/31/23. St. James' Vestry approved an operating budget with total budgeted expenses of \$280,800 down from \$302,600 for 2022 due to a planned reduction in compensation and benefits mid-year for the part-time Priest-in-Charge. "We're in pretty good shape" at year-end announced Bob, and we were fortunate that we had some cushioning. The government funded PPP loan forgiveness provided funding to sustain our budget and operating expenses for the year. We budgeted \$210,000 in pledges vs. \$208,000 that came in pretty close. We did well in terms of actual pledges. The parking lot lease with Whole Foods was an important source of revenue. The Finance Committee approved the purchase of Treasury Bills. On the expense side, we spent much less than anticipated. The bookkeeper's hours and compensation came in less than projected, lowering the overall salary expense for the year. On the income side, 85% of Joining Jesus pledges have been received. During the early part of the year, the Director of Christian Education position was eliminated, realizing a savings on salary expense. The Finance Committee together with the Vestry will be looking

closely at upcoming repairs and improvements to the church and facilities under Don Gardner's leadership. In terms of pledges for 2024, pledging is down by \$31,000. Therefore, we expect the financial picture for 2024 to present a challenge, and the short fall in funding will not be sustainable in the long term. But we have time to brain storm on ways to make up for the short fall, using part of the endowment to help bring the deficit in line with revenues. Bob thanked the Finance Committee for their dedication and gave special recognition to Valerie Huestis who joined the Committee towards year-end, applying her accounting expertise to help reconcile the books in time for year-end reporting. Bob recognized Joyce Reynolds who coordinated the team of counters, preparing their bi-weekly schedules.

Rich James asked what we've done to raise funds. Bob replied, "lease income from Whole Foods, considering rental opportunities of facility, holiday party, interest income and the Invisible Fund Raiser initiated by Jeannette Brown." Gail Lebert suggested a process on how to use the Joining Jesus money, "let's talk it out, money just sitting there and that was not the intent, this is a good year to use it." Bob replied "yes, good point, we will look at possible uses for the Joining Jesus money" and Don Gardner agreed.

Jill Monsarrat asked if a new lawn mower could be purchased for Nick Monsarrat's use in maintaining the grounds. The present mower breaks a lot and is costing money and time to fix. Motion was made to buy a new law mower, motion seconded. Treasurers report generated lively discussion by those in attendance.

Priest-in-Charge Remarks: Matt again took over the meeting. Announced that Valerie Huestis will fill the Assistant Treasurer role and said "You are a blessing" thanking her for getting the books in order. Matt told the group that he had been working three jobs, along with St. James', St. Lukes and ECCT. He has since resigned from his position with ECCT and is looking forward to spending more quality time with the people of St. James'. Thanked us for our welcoming ways, and support; and that he is looking forward to what 2024 brings. Matt added "and we will find a way to spend the Joining Jesus money and fulfill our promises".

Parish Forum: This is Your Parish: Taking Ownership in Ministry, Stewardship, Facilities Management, and More: Rev. Matt Handi opened conversation on ways to fill the budget deficit. We will be okay for year 2024 as a surplus was carried over from 2023. However, we cannot give up and "turn the lights off. Our mission is to share God's love through ministry to the world, outreach and stewardship." Matt then referred to our facility as an asset. Matt then asked the attendees to break into discussion groups, to write their thoughts down on their table notepads and "take an ownership of the parish". What mission do you want to see? How can we love community, were the two questions asked to get the groups thinking. Before closing, Ralph Urban, Senior Warden, asked Matt "Do you need more from us?" Matt's answer "Just keep walking forward". Treasurer Bob Dugger was asked for his opinion on fund raising. Bob responded by saying "from past experience serving with the Glastonbury Rotary Club, I found that the investment of time and other resources did not yield good results to make the effort worthwhile".

Closing Prayer: By the Rev. Matt Handi.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:00PM.

Respectfully Submitted by Joyce Reynolds, Clerk