

VESTRY BUSINESS MEETING
Minutes for December 13, 2022

Present

Rector: Chad McCabe
Sr. Warden: Deb Heseck
Jr. Warden: Howie Gelles (via Zoom)
Treasurer: Mary Brown
Clerk: Cathy Terwedow
At-Large: Debbie Burke, Henry Terwedow, Jeff Turgeon
Guest: Stacey Paradise

Absent

At-Large: Jeannie Hebert
At-Large: Tom McDonald
At-Large: Janet Wilcox
At-Large: Ted Flanagan

Preschool Presentation. Stacey Paradise gave an excellent overview of the preschool program. Going forward, we would like Stacey to attend a vestry meeting once a quarter.

Enrollment & rates. Enrollment dropped during Covid, so it's taking time to get the numbers back up. That said, this year Stacey expanded to offer full day, as well as half-day, programs to cater to parents' changing needs. As a result, everyone stayed! Stacey kept all her families. She is now enrolling children for 2023-2024 from current families. In January, she will open enrollment to the public.

Stacey attends a local preschool directors' group every month to share what works and what doesn't as well as to compare rates and salaries with neighboring schools. Teachers should be paid between \$19-23/hour, depending on experience, so Stacey is working to increase pay rates. Nativity's preschool teachers do not receive benefits and they often work many unpaid hours each week. Tuition typically increases 3-5%/year but this year it will increase by 8-10%.

Challenges, hopes, and dreams. The playground fence is in bad shape. Having been installed by a volunteer, it wasn't installed properly from the beginning. Now, damage by the snowplow and tree limbs falling on it have caused it to lean. In addition, the gate doesn't close properly, leading to entrapment issues. The preschool tried to fix it themselves, but they were cited for it last year. The swing set has a crack in it and the shed was cited for rotting.

The preschool would desperately like new equipment. A parent volunteered to help write grants, but they'll need quotes and plans first. Ideally, Stacey would like to expand the playground and flatten it so that it isn't on a sloped hill. Falling branches and dead limbs and trees make it too dangerous to bring kids outside when it's windy. Which is more feasible: to move the playground or to remove the trees? Would grants cover tree removal?

What Stacey really would like is more space for bike riding, more permanent fencing, and an open area to the shed. Howie suggested that we consider asking Eagle Scout candidates to do work projects. The preschool installed a new floor this year; next needs to be the playground.

Stacey also spoke of the need to have indoor space to use for gym. The worship hall is a great space but there isn't room with the chairs in place. She's also uncomfortable using the hall because it's a holy space, with lots of religious materials. Chad pointed out that worship services will be moving back into the nave so the hall could become viable again.

Storage issues. Storage is always an issue. Even though they do a big purge every year there is a lot to be stored, especially since a lot of things only have seasonal use. To-date, they've been moving things between the preschool hallway and the workshop but that's not a compliant solution as the building inspector says shelving can't be kept in the preschool hallway and the fire inspector says shelving can't be in the workshop.

If the couch were moved out of her office, shelving could be moved there. Even better would be to replace the preschool kitchen countertops, cabinets, and oven, with more-suitable storage. Could the preschool use the church kitchen as needed? Another option would be to rent storage offsite but that would be expensive and very inconvenient.

Howie asked whether Stacey could get a rent-a-pod (~\$100/mo, according to Deb). Stacey said that would be convenient, but would the church want a pod on their property?

Connection. Everyone agreed that more connection between the church and the preschool would be beneficial. After all, the school is a part of the church. Stacey will begin copying Deb on all preschool emails, no matter how inconsequential. Stacey should also receive all Nativity's emails. Be sure they're going to her church email, not her personal email.

Preschool funds. We discussed the need for Nativity to raise the preschool rent \$500/month due to increasing costs. Stacey agreed, as there hasn't been an increase in rent since she has been here (5-6 years). The increase will go into effect on January 1, 2023. Cathy will send Stacey a letter formally raising the rent.

We also discussed any surplus that the preschool might generate. Years ago, the surplus was returned to the church. Stacey would like to retain the money to put it back into the preschool and staff. She said some of the funds already go back into the church building. For example, the preschool upgraded their flooring (\$9000) and spent \$2000 to take walls down and paint.

Vestry preschool discussion. The vestry continued discussing the preschool after Stacey left, with Chad pointing out that her ministry is a big part of what we do in the community. It fills a need. Having Stacey at the (vestry) table once a quarter, and/or meeting with the finance committee periodically, would improve communications, raise awareness of preschool issues, help prevent collisions over finances, and help all of us work to find solutions together (*e.g.*, Howie's Eagle Scout suggestion). There should be an annual review of the preschool budget. We will be better together by building a closer relationship.

To be considered in future rent conversations are the preschool's square footage and its impact on various church line items (*e.g.*, oil, electricity, copier supplies, maintenance contracts, snow removal, water/sewer/rubbish). Given the impact of this year's rent increase, we deferred a decision on the preschool surplus.

The goal is to integrate the preschool into the life of the church, not to gobble up their money. For example, the preschool surplus could go toward updating the playground which would benefit both the preschool and the church.

Consent agenda. The November minutes were approved after rephrasing the text about excess preschool rent coming back to the church. The text was adjusted to reflect that that had been the practice in the past.

Due to Linda Knopp, our previous bookkeeper, departing unexpectedly prior to the end of the year (and without any transition period), Mary is working overtime to sort out Nativity's financials. Mary will email the November financials when they are complete.

2023 budget. The finance committee continues to meet to work on the 2023 budget. It will be a tough year, as we are carrying a deficit from 2022 into 2023 and projecting an additional deficit in 2023. The budget presentation to the church will be on January 22, between services.

Mary continues to have a hard time getting admin access to Quickbooks. Linda Knopp has not been cooperative so Mary might need Chad to step in. We also need to get Linda's key back.

Pledge status. Here is the status as of 12/6/22:

	2022 pledges	2023 pledges
# Pledge Units:	69	51
\$ Pledged:	\$250,402.08	\$218,920
Goal budget:		\$338,269
% of Goal Budget:		65%
Pledge units compared to 2022 (%):		74%
Dollars pledged compared to 2022 (%):		87%
YoY delta:		-\$31,482
# of new pledge units:		1
# of increased pledges:		24
# of decreased pledges:		17
# of 2022 pledge units who moved/died/left Nativity:		4
Pledge dollars lost to moves/deaths/etc (2022):		\$9,508

Housing resolution. The vestry approved the following resolution regarding Chad's housing stipend, as required by the diocese.

Whereas, the Rev. Mr. Chad McCabe is compensated by The Church of the Nativity, Northborough, Massachusetts exclusively for services as a minister of the gospel; and

- *Whereas, The Church of the Nativity provides the Rev. Mr. Chad McCabe, with rent-free use of a church-owned parsonage as compensation for services that he renders to the church in the exercise of his ministry; and*
- *Resolved, that the annual compensation paid to the Rev. Mr. Chad McCabe for calendar year 2023 shall be \$55,372.04, of which \$15,000 is hereby designated to be a parsonage allowance within the meaning of that term as used in Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 as amended; and it is further*
- *Resolved, that the designation of \$15,000 as a parsonage allowance shall apply to calendar year 2023 and all future years unless otherwise provided; and it is further*
- *Resolved, that as additional compensation to the Rev. Mr. Chad McCabe for calendar year 2023 and for all future years unless otherwise provided by this board, Pastor McCabe shall be permitted to live in the church owned parsonage located at 59 Howard Street, Northborough, Massachusetts, and that no rent or other fee shall be payable by the Rev. Mr. Chad McCabe for such occupancy and use.*

Nave updates & AC. Chad met with Larry, and separately, with an outside contractor, to discuss AV requirements for moving the 10 o'clock service to the nave. The necessary work is not that difficult in and of itself. However, the execution of the job will be tricky (requiring scaffolding, etc.) and the contractor is too expensive. We don't have a resolution for that yet.

Cherie will hem the dossal curtain to the proper length. Howie made suggestions for dressing up the top of the dossal and framing the "screen" area on the wall.

For the AC, we're just waiting on a new quote. Donations continue to come in.

Hall rental. To better utilize our space, the worship hall will become a Community Life Center that could be rented out to generate passive income. Conference rooms could also be rented, as could be a "Scout Cave" which the Scouts would like for awards, etc.

Chad distributed a draft rental agreement for us to review. Based on a similar document used by another church, the document includes the terms of the agreement, the agreement itself, and the proposed rental fees. Chad said

the pricing is comparable to local rental halls. He asked that we provide feedback within a week. For example, how would day-use rentals differ from long-term rentals? How would we promote availability?

Christmas pageant. Ten kids are signed up. The camel costumes are too big for them. All the major roles are taken. Brad will narrate.

Miscellaneous.

- Where the kids go, the parents will go, so the Outreach team is hosting monthly activities such as Trunk or Treat and Advent wreaths to engage families. The goal is to get kids to *want* to come to church.
- The list of Christmas and New Year services is shown below.
- Nativity's new signage will list the Preschool and Community Life Center.
- The diocese says they're still working on filing for ERTC funding. Chad voiced his frustration with the delay.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Terwedow, Clerk

UPCOMING DATES:

- Dec. 14, 7PM: Blue Christmas
- Dec. 18, 11:15AM (after the 10:00 service): greening of the church
- Dec. 24, 4PM: Christmas Eve service with Christmas pageant
- Dec. 24, 7PM: Christmas Eve service
- Dec. 25, 10AM: one service only
- Jan. 1, 10AM: Carols & Lessons (one service only)
- Dec. 30, 11AM: Bob Roche's funeral
- Jan. 3, 7PM: Executive meeting
- Jan. 10, 6PM: Vestry discernment
- Jan. 15, 9:15AM (between services): Vestry discernment
- Jan. 17, 7PM: Vestry business meeting
- Jan. 22, 9:15AM (between services): Budget presentation
- Jan. 22, 11:15AM (after the 10:00 service): Community Gathering

RECURRING EVENTS:

- Sunday services @ 8:30 and 10; also on [Facebook Live](#) at 10AM
- Every Wednesday: Rachel Manley's bible study, 10:00AM
- Family Sunday: the third Sunday of each month