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St Margaret’s Episcopal Church Vestry

Subject: Minutes for 18 October 2022 (Draft 1)

Attending: Peter Mayer+ (Rector), Patti Sachs (Associate Rector) Z, Kristen Berthelotte (Senior Warden), Paul Shurke (Junior Warden), Katherine Wiernicki (Treasurer), David Allen, Austin Canuel, Matt Chasse, Marti Engstrom Z, Alden Gross, Janis John Z, Elizabeth Kopack , Kathy Lang, Chris Prender, Susan Roberts, Dan Tootle. Ernie Tucker, and Jim Barnett (Clerk).

Not Attending: Elizabeth Radley (Director of Operations)

This meeting was conducted in Hybrid format (Zoom participants annotated with a Z after their names).

A Quorum was present.

1. Opening prayer was given at 7:00 pm by Matt Chasse.

2. The meeting was called to order by the Rector. The September 2022 Vestry minutes were approved.

The Vestry expressed their appreciation for the solo performed by the Senior Warden during Sunday services.

The Rector noted the outstanding leadership provided by the Associate Rector, lay ministers, and the Vestry during his absence this past summer.

**3. Submitted reports:**

A. **The Rector’s Report:**

There is no Rector’s report this month because it is all Stewardship all the time. That’s what’s been going on and all systems are go. We have 85 pledgers so far and just over $400,000 in pledges. We are hoping to get to 200 pledges, so we still have some work to do. While the “campaign” ends October 30th, we will continue to push after that. We need to follow up with several people. We have tracked new pledgers and that number is not as robust as in previous years. It is difficult to anticipate what people will do coming out of the Pandemic relative to returning to church and fitting their pledges into their family budgets. Some of the people we do not see returning to church, actually in the pews, do continue to pledge. Others we have not heard from.

The Church continues to do really good stuff.

**B. The Treasurer’s report (posted).**

Operating expenses through September 2022 are in excess of revenues, however, we remain ahead of last years budget loss for the same period. $6,000 was taken out of the Endowment to pay the Grants Administrator.

The Endowment is down about 23%, or $1,300,000 for the year. It would be a good idea to refrain from drawing from the Endowment.

From a budgetary standpoint this year we need to be realistic that 2023 may be worse than 2022.

We hope to have the budget finalized in January, but it is difficult to produce a draft without a better picture on the revenue side.

The Rector reminded the Vestry that the Church has done some amazing things. The staff will do their work and we will all have faith. No matter what happens we will do God’s work.

“It is what it is and it’s gonna be what it’s going to be.”

**C. Day School Report (posted).**

Kathy Lang introduced the new director of SMDS, Alisha Marshall, via zoom. Kathy then indicated that the transition continues to go very well, and the new director is making excellent decisions.

Alisha then spoke to her long history at SMDS: 13 years in just about every position for school mom to, now, Director. In addition, she has had a son and daughter graduate through the school.

She will continue to work with the SMC staff and Vestry to ensure success of both the Church and School.

The Rector reminded the Vestry that Vestry Visitation Day is this Thursday, 20 October and encouraged those present to take advantage to this opportunity to see how the school operates and to meet the teachers.

Kathy Lang asked if special needs opportunities continue to exist in the day school. The Director indicated that the school is working with various resources in the area to ensure that the special needs students are afforded the best opportunity to learn and prepare for moving forward in the world.

The Rector then asked the Director what her biggest challenge was in taking over from Trisha?

Alisha indicated that she and Trisha (the previous Director) were probably the two most different people on the planet. While our approach is different, she will walk that balance of working on Trisha’s coat tails. But she will be her own person.

The Rector indicated that he has been down in the school more than before to observe the transition. The new Director’s tenor is much more mellow, and the atmosphere is less intense.

**D. Formation Report (posted).**

Ernie Tucker reported that Formation was gaining momentum after the Pandemic slowdown.

Vacation Bible School had 43 kids and 34 volunteers.

The book study groups are running around 30-35 per week.

Faith and Formation on Monday nights is seeing around 40 every week.

EFM has 12 participants between SMC and St Luke’s.

Sunday school has about 50 kids every Sunday with 23 teachers.

Children’s Chapel now has 9 “leaders,” three of whom are new. We have experienced some registration problems of late, the Assistant Rector will reconcile the problem.

We are looking for more volunteers for the Fall Festival October 30th.

TRRTF Coffee Hour chats are going well with the Honorable Carl Snowden last month. We will have our next chat in January after the holidays.

**E. Security Task Force Report (posted and filed).**

Rector noted that the establishment action to set up this Task Force happened while he was on sabbatical. He thanked Dan Tootle for submitting the report as the Task Force chair. The report will be made part of the record.

The Department of Homeland Security has set up a special fund for safety at places of worship that is being administered by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Maryland Department of Emergency Response (MDES). Furthermore, during the Pandemic DHS set aside a appropriated allocation to individual states. Maryland was allocated $250,000 which can be further allocated as grants. To date, not all the funds have been awarded. There is the potential that this appropriation will continue in the 2023 annual appropriation. To qualify for these grants SMC would need to request an assessment from the Department of Justice who can look at more in-depth things that can be done which are then provided to SMC within an assessment report. SMC can then apply for grant funding from the MDES to pay for security enhancements that have been recommended by the DOJ assessment. These funds could be applied against the findings of the filed report. It was recommended that the Task Force move forward with DOJ and request an assessment.

A question was asked regarding “strings attached.” No, this is government grant funds with no payback but there may be reporting requirements. We hope that there is sufficient time to obtain the assessment and apply for the 2022 grant funds but if not, w can reapply for 2023 funds. DOJ is striving to make the process as less onerous as possible. There was a question regarding liability against identified shortfalls that may not be remediated. The Task Force will continue to look at this and other issues as we move forward.

The Safety Committee was advised to contact one of the non-profit organizations who had received a security enhancement grant to ascertain any required reporting of other post award actions by MDES of the DOJ.

An issue was raised regarding cyber security of SMC financial records. This was not included in the report but will be looked at.

Some of the recommendations in the report have already been completed.

It should be reminded that the usher volunteer group is small and continues to look for additional members. The ushers do a good job of monitoring the parking lot during services. The intent is to deter anyone with sinister machinations from carrying out nefarious acts when they see that we are serious about deterrence. The visible presence, signage, and observer windows in the church should help to mitigate risk. Being an open campus comes with inherent risk but this should be manageable and acceptable. We are carefully walking the line of practicality. It should be noted that the Rector declined a parishioner’s offer to provide armed escort during services.

**MOTION: Request DOJ perform an assessment of the security of the SMC campus that may predicate the submission of a grant for remediation.** Passed unanimously.

**F. TRRTF Report (posted).**

We are working with a group from Mulberry Hill. They are transitioning to a nonprofit status with the IRS and that should facilitate our work with them and their submission for Grant’s support.

Peter Wiernicki is listed as a “consultant” to the Task Force for his legal expertise. We find it helpful to run things by him.

The Task Force is looking for new members. We need more of a cross segment of the congregation to ensure we are hearing from all viewpoints. If we are going to move forward, it has to be as entire congregation. This issue may not be as important to some as to others, but we need to know that as well.

The Task Force has existed for 2 years, and some have stepped away. It takes a long time to change these kinds of things.

Has the mission of the Task Force changed or evolved? What is the expectation and what are our objectives.

We are now focused on relationship building and have had two meetings with groups in our community. We hope to define better what our partnership will be. The Rosenwald school is a big deal and there is room for partnership there. We will be working with them and the Brownwood neighborhood to outline their needs and get them engaged with the SMC Grants process. We have been careful about how we discuss our Grants process and certainly said nothing promissory.

We have developed a budget line for consideration in the 2023 budget build. This will be further discussed when the budget is reviewed by the Vestry.

The Rector expressed his hope to have the draft out in the next week or two. The Treasurer was not comfortable sharing the draft budget until more is known on the income side.

**D. Junior Warden’s Report (posted).**

The September Workday on campus was fabulous. We are working to identify a date and time in October. Workdays will be better publicized in the future.

The leaves will begin to fall soon and anyone who wants to learn how to use the backpack leaf blower please see the Junior Warden.

There has been some discussion regarding the need for a dishwasher in the kitchen in the Parish Hall. They run about $3,000 and are a capital expenditure. The Junior Warden will look further into cost possibilities that will fit our needs. Evidently, we had one in the past but sold it to acquire a new ice machine.

**E. Senior Warden’s Report (posted).**

We continue to work on stewardship.

There is a music workshop this coming weekend, 21 October. It is a community event but SMC parishioners are encouraged to attend.

November 12th we will dedicate our new Organ with a recital and other relevant events.

Monday Night Faith and Fellowship continues to be a success and new members are encouraged,

**For the good of the order.**

There was an applause for the Mission Fair last Sunday. Our various missions are one of the things that keeps people in our congregation. It tells the whole story of our church.

The Junior Warden did a fantastic job replacing the 3 metal grates that had become a hazard with flush wooden grates that really look good.

The Rector reflected a story from his previous church as a cautionary tale.

4. The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 PM