

All Saints Episcopal Church – Hilton Head, S.C.

Vestry Retreat Minutes

March 1, 2025

Present: Rev. Denise Trogdon, Rev. Katie Presley, Charlie Forbes, John Gilbert, Anita Hill, Howard Coonley, Dana Duncan, Judy Cote, Nancy Tillinghast, Bryce Edwards, Cristina Giroux, Ron Niclas, Irene Pedersen

Absent: Joyce Emmett, Bobbie Helbig

1. Senior Warden Charlie Forbes called the meeting to order at 9 am; he indicated that the Vestry would receive information and discuss both long and short range issues.
2. Rev. Denise Trogdon then lead the group with a reflective opening prayer entitled “I Arise Today” written by John Donahue.
3. Rev. Katie Presley then lead a book discussion with reflections on **“The Book of Forgiving.”** First, she handed out a schedule of the year’s reading assignments for each Vestry meeting.
 - Then Denise explained that the purpose of these Vestry readings is “to bring our thinking into spirituality even though this is a business body. We need to frame our work in terms of best spiritual practices.”
 - Next, individual Vestry members addressed the question of “Why Forgive?” in the Introduction and Chapter 1; each offered a personal thought about a statement or concept that was significant to them. Personal rock choices were also explained.
4. Denise then reminded all present that that they were the “leadership of the church, a lay governing body that sets priorities, implements both vision and mission, and takes a strategic long range view of all plans.”
 - She then distributed a compendium of graphics and key phrases that provided a broad overview of What a **Vestry Is** and how it functions, elaborating on the following content:
 - What the Vestry Does
 - Who the Vestry Is
 - All Saints Leadership
 - How the Vestry Works
 - 5 Things Every Vestry Member Should Know
 - Nuts and Bolts
 - Value of Being a Vestry Member
 - Vestry Member Selection and Onboarding
 - Denise then distributed a printed sheet entitled Vestry 101- Best Practices; the highlights that she discussed included:
 - Recruitment of new members
 - Building a monthly agenda
 - Healthy mission focused meetings.

- Best practices: Vestry Retreats
- Our mission at All Saints is: to be a channel of God's love

A short discussion then followed about whether to conduct in person, ZOOM, or hybrid Vestry future 2025 meetings. The group appeared to lean toward the latter hybrid format.

5. Junior Warden John Gilbert then led a brainstorming discussion for Vestry members to offer ideas about present and future: **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats** to the church's success. The following ideas were offered under each category:
 - Strengths: welcoming, being an inclusive community, financial stewardship per pledge, the music program, CDC, active community outreach beyond check writing, our growth, adapting to many seasonal members, offer three services, our leadership.
 - Weaknesses: In polarized past times, our Inclusiveness related to considerable membership loss from schism with others viewing us negatively, a declining pledge base, three services tend to segment the church population, demographic challenge, condensation & compression of church activity into a narrower calendar (since MAY-OCTOBER is affected by some member's seasonality).
 - Opportunities: More personal invitations for involvement and participation in ministry and mission at all three services, fuller utilization of the E-blast and bulletin, new families' engagement, recognition of those working in mission and church ministry, better awareness of the opportunities for Legacy Giving, such as Pelican Society and donations.
 - Threats: Burn-out of volunteers, Age demographics with frequent parishioner deaths, (both of these leading to loss of experience and expertise), Mother Nature's storms, Aging building infrastructure, everyone's vision and self-perception has to evolve from being a small parish church to the program/mission driven church All Saints is now clearly becoming, Limited Clerical resources.
6. Charlie then asked Vestry members for **A VOTE** on the following items:
 - *A motion was made and seconded that the Vestry minutes of January 28, 2025 be considered for approval. All members present voted to unanimously support this motion.*
 - *Another motion was made and seconded that the Vestry minutes from the Annual Meeting on January 26, 2025 be considered for approval. All members present voted to unanimously support this motion.*
 - *Next, a motion was made and seconded to approve the membership of Barbara Colegrove as a new trustee of the Foundation Board. All members present voted to support this motion unanimously also.*
7. Denise then outlined three **Goals** made five years ago that now have become foundational at All Saints. She also gave and solicited a few examples of specific implementations of each goal that are active within All Saints:

- Increase of Spiritual Growth opportunities: Sacred Ground, Book Studies, Advent and Lenten spiritual growth groups, Bible Study groups, Prayer vigils
- Increasing Ministry Engagement remains an ever present need. More & different strategies could better empower lay leadership; these could include new programming, a succession plan model, a promotion model, and diversifying participation among services.
- Reaching Out to Neighbors (Community Outreach): CDC, Circles, Cold Shelter help, Senior Center worship, possible new pathways for former Garden tour recipients

In light of these past foundational goals, Denise solicited new 2025 priorities from Vestry members. From these, New 2025 Goals were formed. Using spiritual growth as a foundation and recent priorities vocalized, the **top level GOALS for 2025** we will be to:

- I. Develop an Infrastructure Strategy upon which a Capital Campaign can be based and with which the Foundation can work (also simultaneously promoting the Foundation and developing long range views and plans)
 - II. Develop an Engagement Strategy for young families.
 - III. Develop Communication/Marketing techniques to expand volunteerism and participation in the many ministry areas of the church.
8. Charlie next explained that when multiple All Saints HVAC systems became incapacitated late last year, the idea of a **Capital Campaign** came to the fore. He handed members a color-coded sheet depicting the status of disrepair for each of the eighteen units as well as estimated replacement/repair costs; the breadth this and other needs is an encompassing concern. A few units have already been fully replaced, such as the CDC's, which were paid for fully by a state grant given to the school. At the Annual Meeting, a generous donor contributed a sizeable amount toward repairing and replacing the most impaired units. In addition to the future HVAC repair, there are many other infrastructure repair/ replacement needs around the church. With only \$10,000 of the donor gift remaining available, it is clear that a Capital Campaign will be needed in the near future.

However, before beginning to plan the campaign, Charlie felt a full **Asset Inventory Review** was in order. He has already begun a list that is a full page long; this likely will be expanded this week when other Vestry members walk around the grounds and the building with him to identify future needs.

Denise noted that it was Government COVID funds that helped to: replace the roof and woodwork, paint portions of the exterior, and repave the parking lot. "Our pledge money only funds programs, staff, and every day running expenses."

Charlie then reminded everyone that though the new Columbarium construction will eventually pay for itself in the distant future, All Saints initially will need "to front the bulk of the money." The building time limit, once approved by the town, is only six

months, so everything has to be in order before construction commences. Vestry discussion then followed over the architect's two plan options: one costs about \$220,000 for 80-90 niches, the other was about \$300,000 for 180 niches. Vestry member Ron Niclas suggested that a small amount of funding might come from relatives of deceased members already present in the Columbarium, reasoning that an improvement in overall appearance of the entire area would likely be welcomed by them.

Charlie also felt an escrow Fund for Infrastructure was needed to fund present and future repair or replacement needs around the church. Only \$1500 monthly is now put aside for such needs, so seed money needs to be put aside as a reserve fund. The next step, however, is to determine what elements should be proposed to the congregation for the capital campaign.

9. **Open Forum Short Discussions** on a variety of topics followed.

- Vestry member Nancy Tillinghast relayed to the Vestry that "There is a wealth of information that could be a resource to help us, and it is contained in the **Diocesan Website**." She urged members to access it. Then Howard Coonley suggested that a link could be placed in our E-Blast, so all have an "opportunity to be in tune with the goings on in our diocese and even national church."
- Denise then agreed that this site could be a resource for many of us because it contains so much information. She also commented that a recent discussion with our bishop revealed that **\$2.3 million in diocesan loan debt**, accrued at the time of the Schism several years ago, was all forgiven by the National church.
- Katie reminded members to please use the correct **Vestry list** when sending in reports next time; the older single aggregate email has not been correctly updated. Charlie suggested that each member make their own list. Anita added that they could also copy and paste either Charlie's or her list of names in the "To:" section of the monthly emails.
- Denise informed the group that Tessa has changed All Saints directory information to the **Shelby Next Directory** system. Right now, she has a small group of individuals testing it out. Jessie and Tessa are also working on step-by-step instructions for parishioners to transfer this information. Denise said: "We are within a few weeks of totally changing over, and we hope it will be ready by Easter."

10. Katie then offered a closing prayer.

11. Charlie thanked members for their attendance; he adjourned the Retreat at 1:04 pm.

12. The next Vestry Meeting will be on Tuesday, March 25, 2025, at 7 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Anita L. Hill

Chief Clerk of the Vestry