

**St. Francis Episcopal Church
Potomac Parish
September 19, 2023 Vestry Meeting**

The Vestry convened online via Zoom on Tuesday, September 19, 2023, at 7:30 p.m., Fr. Mark presiding. Members attending: Ms. Tendall, senior warden, Ms. Bahar, junior warden, Ms. Byam, Mr. Feagles, Mr. Hudson, Mr. Jannotta, Mr. Maroulis, Ms. Oleson, Mr. Ruf, Dr. Schneider, and Mr. Whitlock. Also attending: Mr. Smith.

Invocation.

Fr. Mark gave the invocation.

Bible Study

Jannotta led the Bible Study. He asked the Vestry member to take turns reading verses of Psalm 73 “Truly God is good to the upright.” Mr. Jannotta pointed out the two phases of the Psalm, and welcomed vestry members’ comments the Psalm.

One member talked about the wickedness in the world and the Lord’s presence. Another member noted that people operate on instant gratification, but there is seems to be no reward for righteousness, and people are drifting away from spirituality.

The Vestry discussed how they experience their faith in quiet times during the day when there are few distractions, how they tried to help friends who were having difficulties, and how the quiet times helped them to tune out problems and the rudeness of people.

Consent Agenda (*previously circulated electronically*)

Minutes of August Vestry Meeting

Approval of the August Vestry Meeting Minutes.

Rector’s Report (attached)

Endorsement of Aaron Dunn for Ordination

Fr. Mark circulated a document for “Endorsement for Ordination to the Diaconate, Diocese of Washington” for parishioner Aaron Dunn. Each Vestry Member needs to sign the document, which will be placed in his mailbox in the work room. Fr. Mark said that each Vestry Member is encouraged to pick up a St. Francis polo or t-shirt to wear when they come to sign the endorsement document.

Interim Communications Director Proposal

Fr. Mark told the Vestry that the church is continuing to have serious performance issues with Treebranch Communications, which the church had hired earlier this year. Ms. Hurdle, who has experience with these duties, has offered to assume them. Fr. Mark would like the Vestry to approve Ms. Hurdle’s appointment as interim communications director, to be paid \$40 an hour, which is the inflation-adjusted form of the rate paid before Treebranch was hired. Fr. Mark said that Ms. Hurdle, as interim communications director, will work approximately 20 hours per

week. Fr. Mark also said that the church will pay the salary for Ms. Hurdle and Treebranch for a month or so during the transition. Ms. Hurdle would not have to resign from the Vestry at this time because this is an interim position.

Bank Account Signatories Approval

Fr. Mark said that there has been a delay in approval of the account signatories due to an issue with the wording of the agreement for the signatories on the church's bank account at PNC.

Charter Organization for Scout Troop 773

Fr. Mark said that following discussions with the pastor of Potomac United Methodist Church, Mark Whisenhunt, the committee chair of Scout Troop 773, and Matt Jillings, the troop's charter organization representative, he and the Wardens think unwise for St. Francis to accept responsibility for the scout troop, as it would entail funding liability insurance for the troop and assuming future responsibility and liability. This is especially risky because there is a regular changing group of leaders for the troop, and irregular support from the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) national organization in its dealings with local charter organizations.

Funeral Charge Amendments

Fr. Mark said that the St. Francis is changing its charges for funerals due to rising costs and an increase in the number of funerals at St. Francis for members of the parish who have been inactive for many years. The Wardens have approved a distinction in pricing between active members and inactive/non-members for some costs (there was a former distinction between members and non-members. The church will charge a standard Altar flower fee of \$400 (additional cost for extra arrangements) due to increased flower costs. The church is adding a Reception Coordinator fee of \$400 for families who choose to have receptions at St. Francis. This would be paid directly to the staff member who coordinates the funeral arrangements, e.g., arranging space, welcoming and assisting caterers, overseeing cleanup, etc. Fr. Mark said that these prices are in line with what other churches charge. Ms. Tendall said that the church would waive the cost for a reception coordinator for active members who have a plan to provide coordination with reliable volunteer support

Approval of the Consent Agenda

Dr. Schneider made a motion, seconded by Ms. Oleson, to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.

Motion to Approve Aaron Dunn's Candidacy to the Diaconate

Ms. Tendall made a motion, seconded by Dr. Schneider, to approve Aaron Dunn's candidacy to the diaconate. The motion was approved unanimously.

Motion to Approve Ms. Hurdle as Interim Communications Director

Dr. Schneider made a motion, seconded by Mr. Whitlock, to approve Ms. Hurdle as interim communications director to be paid \$40 per hour. The motion was approved unanimously.

Executive Session

The Vestry went into executive session to discuss a personnel matter.

Ratification of Online Votes

In accordance with the parish bylaws, the vestry ratified earlier decisions to approve Lease Amendment #3 of the lease with Georgetown Hill Early School and to extend Chris Stanton's contract for work on Phase 2 of the HVAC project in an amount not to exceed \$40,000. The ratification was moved by Mr. Feagles, and seconded by Ms. Bahar. The motion was approved unanimously.

Storm Drainage

Ms. Byam said that the church's storm drains needed removal of vegetation, drain cleaning, removal and replacement of gravel and straw, etc., to meet Montgomery County's Storm Drain Code – the county inspects storm drains every three years. She said the church had had this work done three years ago for \$5,270. She said that the company that did the work did a good job and recommended re-hiring them although the estimate was above \$5,000. The Vestry discussed this and decided that the church should get bids for this work, but to delay any action until Montgomery County had inspected the drains and issued a report finding that action was actually necessary

HVAC

Mr. Whitlock said that Chris Stanton had continued to plan for Phase II of the HVAC project, which includes the replacement of boilers and some parts of the controls system. The firm had provided a proposal for \$40,000 to finish the plan for Phase 2. This work should begin in 2024 and Phase 3 will be done in 2025 or later.

Stewardship Campaign

Mr. Feagles said that the church's stewardship campaign would begin in October, following last year's campaign – there will be speakers for the campaign for three Sundays and a brunch on October 29th in St. Francis Hall. Mr. Feagles said that the campaign was facing challenges with several donors having moved away, but he was encouraged by the number of baptisms and new members at St. Francis this year. Ms. Tendall asked for volunteers to help with the brunch.

Financial Report

Mr. Maroulis said that the church has reached its fundraising goal of \$60,000 for the organ renovation project, with \$54,000 raised through July. There is a \$48,000 increase in the church's net assets thanks to strong pledge revenue, giving St. Francis a positive change in net assets (net surplus) of \$205,000. Mr. Maroulis said that a surplus is forecasted through the end of 2023. The HVAC project is fully funded for Phase 1 – part of this project was funded by donor restricted gifts. The Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) of approximately \$70,000 has been delayed, and may be received in 2025.

Motion to Approve the August Financial Report

Dr. Schneider made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ruf, to approve the August Financial Report. The motion was approved unanimously.

Grant for Youth Programs

Dr. Schneider said that St. Francis has received \$6,000 of the \$12,000 grant for the parish youth program's speakers' series that will include various topics related to youth and their families.

November Lobsterfest

Mr. Jannotta said that the Lobsterfest will be held on November 4th.

Adjournment

Fr. Mark led the Vestry in the closing prayer:

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give thine angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for thy love's sake. Amen.

Les Smith
Clerk