

**St. Francis Episcopal Church
November 18, 2025 Vestry Meeting**

The Vestry convened in person on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 7:30 p.m., Fr. Mark presiding. Members attending: Mr. Ruf, Senior Warden, Ms. Byam, Ms. Davis, Ms. Hurdle, Ms. Oleson, Mr. Tester, and Ms. Warren. Also attending: Mr. Smith.

Invocation

Fr. Mark offered an invocation.

Bible Study

Mr. Tester led the Bible Study on John 21:15-19. This scripture concerns Jesus's second appearance after his resurrection. Peter and the other disciples met Jesus at the Sea of Galilee where they were fishing. Jesus called Peter three times, asking him "Do you love me?" Mr. Tester asked us to consider the ways we serve God in response to his love for us.

Consent Agenda

Fr. Mark presented the minutes of the October Vestry Meeting and said one minor error had been corrected.

Rector's Report

Sunday School and Parish Life Coordinator

Fr. Mark thanked the vestry for their support for proceeding to hire Sarah Tester for the Sunday School and Parish Life Coordinator position without launching a formal interview process. This has allowed Ms. Tester to begin some training in her duties, which will allow for a smoother transition in January. The job description for the position has been updated after consultation with Kathy Herrmann, Pastor Allison, and Ms. Tester, and has been scaled for 28 hours of work per week.

Vestry Activities

As part of the transition to Ms. Tester's leadership of parish life, Fr. Mark has asked each Vestry member to serve as "champion" for a fellowship activity during the year. Ms. Tester will work with the vestry member to help promote and organize the event.

There was a discussion of how many events to schedule that would be manageable for Ms. Tester and the Vestry.

Glenolden House

Mr. Ruf, Dr. Schneider, and Mr. Tester reviewed the repairs and renovations the Glenolden House that are needed to be updated for the Testers to live there, and they will get bids on this project, which they estimate to cost approximately \$40,000.

Sounds Staffing Transition

Ms. Madison Hermann is resigning from editing *Sounds*, and Ms. Hurdle will assume them. The job description for the Communications Director position has been updated to reflect this and other changes since Ms. Hurdle assumed the position.

Livestream System

Fr. Mark thanked Mr. Peter Davis and Mr. Tester for their help with the Livestream Video System during about six weeks between Sean Smith's relinquishing of the coordinator role and the hiring of Noah Clarke for this position. This job description has also been updated, and the roles for the person prescribed by Zion have been added. Zion will pay Noah separately for the hours he works for them.

Ministry Fund

Fr. Mark said that the Ministry Fund (formerly the Women of St. Francis Fund) would be used to cover the first \$5,000 for fellowship and newcomers event costs. The vestry approved this method of financing this work several years ago and it has been employed consistently in our budgeting since then.

Security Cameras

Fr. Mark said Georgetown Hill Early Childhood School will pay for the installation of several security cameras in their classrooms and the parking lot. There have been no further incidences of thefts from cars in the church parking areas.

Stewardship Campaign

The Stewardship Campaign has received six more pledges since the report was compiled, and there has been a significant increase in the number of pledges for 2026 so far, with a number of new pledged. The projection for total pledges is similar to last year, as anticipated. Fr. Mark has asked each Vestry member to contact four church members to consider pledging this year, and distributed the rota for this.

Internet Connectivity

The estate of Hadi Bahar has donated \$25,000. The vestry could choose to designate this gift for a particular purpose, but for now it will be recorded as a non-pledge gift for operations.

Columbarium Plaques

The church is increasing the cost of columbarium plaques by \$25.00 – from \$350.00 – to \$375.00 due to an increase in cost by the supplier. Ms. Hurdle suggested looking into other firms who may be able to supply the same plaques at a cheaper price.

Fr. Douglas Kirby

Fr. Kirby, a retired army officer and Episcopal priest, has expressed interest in serving at St. Francis as an assisting priest. He has recently been serving in a similar role at Ascension and St. Agnes in Washington and has attended several services at St. Francis recently.

Fr. Kirby would celebrate the Eucharist regularly on Sundays, and occasionally preach and lead adult forums. He could also be the regular supply when the Michaels are away for Sunday services and pastoral care needs, and he has interest in helping with some non-member funerals.

Fr. Mark said it would be fair to pay him the standard honorarium for preaching, leading classes, and providing Sunday supply, and the Vestry concurred.

Motion to Approve the Items on the Consent Agenda

Mr. Tester made a motion, seconded by Ms. Byam, to approve the items on the Consent Agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

Budget

Motion to Approve the revised Sunday School and Parish Life Coordinator Job Description

Mr. Ruf made a motion, seconded by Ms. Warren, to approve the updated job description for the parish life coordinator. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion to Approve the revised Livestream Coordinator Job Description

Mr. Ruf made a motion, seconded by Ms. Warren, to approve the updated job description for the livestream coordinator. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion to Approve the revised Communications Director Job Description

Mr. Tester made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ruf, to approve the updated job description for the communications director, with a minor amendment of a typographical error proposed by Ms. Hurdle. The motion carried unanimously.

2026 Budget

The Finance Committee recommended St. Francis's 2026 pledge to the Diocese of Washington should remain at its 2025 level (\$58,500) because an increase in pledged giving is not expected in 2026.

The Vestry moved to Executive Session to discuss the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for Fr. Mark and Pastor Allison. The Executive Session ended.

Motion to Approve a 3% Cost-of-Living Adjustment in the 2026 Church Budget

Ms. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ruf to approve a 3% cost-of-living adjustment in the 2026 church budget for all staff (including the diocesan-recommended step increase for the clergy). The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Tester, treasurer, said the church revenue stream is approximately \$25,000 above last year's revenue at this point. He then went through a detailed explanation of the line items in the proposed 2026 budget and answered the Vestry's questions. He said the expenses for any repairs and maintenance costs, other than those listed in the budget, are uncertain. The Finance Committee is still discussing the budget's capital expenditures

Motion to Approve the Draft Budget

Ms. Warren made a motion, seconded by Ms. Oleson, to approve the Finance Committee's 2026 draft budget. The motion carried unanimously.

Conflict of Interest and Vestry Service

The Vestry moved to Executive Session to discuss whether the employment of Ms. Hurdle and Ms. Tester constituted a conflict of interest that should require Ms. Hurdle and Mr. Tester to resign from the Vestry. The Executive session ended.

The Vestry decided that any potential conflicts of interest for all Vestry members should be disclosed and that Vestry members should recuse themselves from voting on matters where they have such a conflict, as has been our consistent practice. They do not believe that Ms. Hurdle or Mr. Tester should resign and noted that St. Francis has a long and successful history of hiring parishioners as church employees.

Motion to Increase in the Columbarium Plaque Fee.

Ms. Warren made a motion, seconded by Ms. Oleson, to increase the columbarium plaque fee from \$350 to \$375. The motion carried unanimously.

Christmas Services

Fr. Mark said the schedule of Christmas services will be posted in *Sounds*.

Financial Report

Mr. Tester said the \$528,000 in 2025 pledged income was \$137,000 below the \$391,000 collected during the same period in 2024. However, the church's operating income increased \$109,000 compared to last year, largely because of the three Employee Retention Tax Credits (ERTC) payments, totaling \$53,000; and license agreement payments from Zion Church, totaling \$18,000. St. Francis has also received gifts and other offerings totaling \$80,000, which was \$3,000 above such gifts from 2024.

Motion to Approve the October Financial Report

Ms. Warren made a motion, seconded by Ms. Davis, to approve the October Financial Report. The motion was carried unanimously.

Motion to Adjourn

Mr. Ruf made a motion, seconded by Ms. Warren, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

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.

Respectfully submitted,

Les Smith
Clerk