

September Vestry Meeting
October 21, 2008

Attendance: J. Blanchette, J. Perry, E. Patches, G. Creaser, M. Rita, P. Counihan, L. Phillips, K. Huhn, C. Palmer, N. Dymond, S. Gormley, A. Tripp, H. Soweine, E. Lutz, J. Pickering. Guests from the Stewardship Committee: A. Hamilton, M. Wright. Absent: S. Gormley.

Opening Prayer: M. Rita opened the meeting with a prayer.

Minutes: A motion was made and accepted to approve the minutes from September.

Sr. Warden's Report:

G. Creaser waived the reading of his report in the interest of time.

Jr. Warden's Report:

Bangor Gas Easement – Bangor Gas is requesting an easement onto the back of the church to bring natural gas lines to John Bapst. They will also bring a gas line up French Street to allow St. John's to have gas service. Furthermore, Bangor Gas will allow St. John's to extend the sixty-day hookup deadline for gas conversion. L. Phillips asked if St. John's would still be able to increase parking behind the church in the future if the easement were granted, and requested that a stipulation be put in the easement to allow the removal of the lines in the future if needed. Jeff did not think this would be a problem. M. Rita suggested that this should be discussed with Bangor Gas. E. Patches expressed the opinion that the lines do not need to be installed at this time because oil prices have gone down. Jeff answered that this easement would help John Bapst and other families on French Street. A. Hamilton stated that it is unlikely that oil will be cheaper than gas in the future and that it is sensible to convert to gas as good stewardship for our resources and an opportunity to save money in the long term.

Boiler Conversion – The cost will be approximately \$32,000. Jeff recommended that without the hookup deadline St. John's should put this project on hold until funds are in hand.

Energy Audit Update – An energy audit was performed by Efficiency for Maine. They recommended that the best way for St. John's to reduce its consumption of oil is to insulate the attic or the ceiling of the church; this could save up to 3,000 gallons of oil per year (approximately \$12,000) at the church alone. Jeff will look into the cost to do this and the effect on the acoustics. In addition, eliminating exit signs, replacing older electrical fixtures, etc could reduce electric consumption. Finally, they recommended that the boiler be replaced.

A motion was made and approved to move forward with granting the easement to Bangor Gas. The motion was abstained by K. Huhn and E. Patches due to a lack of information. A motion was also made to empower J. Perry to negotiate the terms of an easement and for the officers and Rector to sign documents if the terms are favorable. Jeff is to inquire about the future possibility of expansion and make sure that this is still possible with the easement. The motion was approved with E. Patches opposing and K. Huhn abstaining.

In addition, since the Vestry voted last month to invest in conversion to gas, it was decided that the Vestry should move forward with the pursuit of conversion to gas, but that the same time deadline of conversion by November does not apply.

Conversion Group Report:

John Pickering reported that due to the fact that conversion to gas will not take place in November, the Conversion Group has been put on hold at this time. E. Patches said that she felt that because of the lack of information regarding the cost of conversion and the lack of funds to pay for it, that perhaps it should not be part of the stewardship appeal. A. Hamilton said that he feels that it is important for the Vestry to finalize and accept the budget before an appeal can be made to the church. As a part of this budget the conversion to gas can be fluid and transforming as information develops, but it should be part of the stewardship project so that a message is sent to parishioners that we are trying to save money in any way that we can. Mary Wright also gave positive remarks about the amount of information that has been gathered regarding the conversion and savings.

Fundraising Report:

Nancy Dymond reported that the group still needs more time to meet.

Budget Revision Group:

Gary Creaser reported that the group met and has made some recommendations. They feel that income was overestimated by \$20,000. They also advised cutting approximately \$1,500 by reducing the hours of the office assistant in the fall, making fewer color copies, timing lights, turning off the tower light at 11 PM, and moving activities to 234 French Street so that the church does not have to be heated as often, including for morning and evening prayer. E. Patches asked if keeping the heat off would affect the tuning of the organ. M. Rita said she would discuss this with Travis. This still makes the budget short, which could be taken up by fundraising and/or an application to the Diocese for emergency funds. The Bishop also recommends that St. John's apply for aid. This would help St. John's to expand outreach by such things as making Evensong a more important part of our outreach. However, if the Diocese gives aid to St. John's, it will technically become a mission parish, making the Bishop the head of the local parish, and the Rector a Vicar of the Bishop. Right now 1/3 of Maine congregations receive this aid from the Bishop. H. Soweine suggested that this information should be made known to the congregation. A November 16 parish meeting was proposed to discuss the budget needs with the parish.

G. Creaser said that he did not feel that a budget could be passed today because the Vestry has not seen a new budget including the proposed changes. M. Rita said that a new budget will be supplied to the Vestry as soon as possible. With the changes suggested by the Budget Revision Group, a 20% increase in pledges, and fundraising increased, the budget can be balanced. If a 20% increase in pledges does not occur, a meeting will be proposed with the parish to discuss how to make up the shortfall. The Vestry supported making these finalizations.

Stewardship Report:

A. Hamilton reported that the budget needs to change further if our mission is to be poised for growth. Energy conversion, outreach, and Christian Education should be priorities of the church, and they should be priorities in our budget. In addition, A. Hamilton asked about going to those who funded the capital campaign project to fund another year of the capital campaign so that the debt payments are not part of the operating budget. Therefore, Andy and Mary are looking for a unified voice from the Vestry supporting the final budget for their stewardship efforts. Mary also reported that of those pledges that have come in so far many have been increases.

M. Rita stated that in the current proposed budget there is funding for approximately half of the energy conversion, and asked Andy Hamilton if he was suggesting that the budget should be bigger. Andy replied that particular areas of the budget should be grown, that allows the church as a whole to expand. He is concerned that the current budget does not allow for that growth. He would like to add back into the budget funding for the energy conversion, outreach and Christian Education, not by increasing the budget, but by looking for savings in other areas. M. Wright agreed that the capital campaign debt should not be part of the operating budget and the stewardship campaign, but that there should be a separate initiative after the stewardship campaign to extend the capital campaign to get rid of the debt and move on to help the church grow.

A. Hamilton stated that he thinks that we need to increase education by \$13,000, \$23,000 for the heat project, and \$3,500 more for outreach. He suggested that a budget needs to be understood by all and passed prior to the November 16 parish meeting. In addition, all pledges by Vestry should be in by stewardship Sunday (November 2), with all members trying to approach a 20% increase as much as possible. M. Rita suggested taking the \$20,000 that is being used to pay the capital campaign debt for education and outreach. Andy and Mary agreed, and others added that an appeal should be made to the church to retire the capital campaign debt independent of the operating budget, and then the church would be out from under a huge amount of debt. L. Phillips asked that the church try to move forward with the energy conversion of 234 French Street and insulation of the church, with planning for the energy conversion of the church next year.

The Vestry will be meeting on October 28 at 6:00 to discuss the budget again.

Finance Report/Treasurer's Report:

K. Huhn left the meeting early and so the report was postponed until October 28.

Old Business:

Sacred Places Training – This has been cancelled.

Evensong – The donation was \$179 for Spruce Run. Proposed groups for the remaining Evensong services for this year are: Manna Ministries, Bangor Fuel Fund, Community Health and Counseling Services, Shaw's House and King's Daughter's Home, Meals for ME, and Bangor Area Homeless Shelter. A motion was made and approved to add these groups to the Evensong outreach.

Maisons d' Naissance Fundraiser: This is October 25, from 5:30 – 8:00 at J. B. Parkers.

Fall Cleanup: Saturday, October 26, 2008.

New Business:

Emergency Aid Request – This will be tabled until October 28.

Winter Hospitality – The suggestion was made to offer a warm place this winter for community people when the office is open. The Vestry was also asked to consider how St. John's should respond to the community needs this winter. This will be raised at the October 28 meeting.

Liz's Departure – A reception will take place on November 6. M. Rita suggested that the Vestry present Liz with a stole and/or a contribution to her discretionary funds. It was suggested that an appeal be made for funds to purchase a stole for Liz. A motion was made and approved to use Liz's November and December discretionary funds as a gift for her new discretionary fund in Texas.

Ministry Areas – M. Rita asked if the Vestry is comfortable in moving the parish in the direction of being organized around areas of ministry rather than being organized around individuals, this was generally agreed, but it was recommended that there be further discussion. M. Rita was encouraged to make changes in the directory.

Leadership Pledges – M. Rita asked that Vestry pledges should be in by the end of the week.

Vestry Nomination Process – The Vestry needs to begin thinking about the nomination process. This will be discussed on October 28.

Rector's Report:

Newcomer's Reception, Archdeacon Visit - The newcomer's reception went well, as did Archdeacon Cooper's visit.

Parish Directory, All Saint's Day - 100 people have participated in the directory photos already, with 60-70 yet to have their pictures taken.

All Saint's Day - There will be 2 Baptisms on All Saints Day (November 3). This will also be a youth Sunday.

As an aside, Hal Wheeler has ended his affiliation with St. John's and was ordained as a priest in another church. He passed on his affection for St. John's and his assurance that this decision was based on his desire to become a priest.

P. Counihan asked about who will take over Liz's duties. Ann McAlhaney will be ordained as a Deacon in two years and will most likely focus on outreach issues. Mary Ann Taylor will make visits to our homebound along with lay Eucharistic ministers.

Restricted Gifts - L. Phillip and J. Blanchette each presented St. John's with two separate restricted gifts, one for gas conversion and one for paying down the capital debt. A motion was made and approved to accept the restricted gifts.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM.