**Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church**

**Vestry Meeting Minutes**

**August 18, 2020**

**Vestry present: Vestry absent:**

Burdette Keeland, Senior Warden Shannon Westin

Kristie Van Arsdel, Junior Warden

Rita Justice

Barbara Hass

Gretta Boshara

Steven Killworth

Susannah Webb

Randy Byrd

Mike Murphy

David Robinson

Libby Spoede

Rand Key

Kelly Williams

Al Hergenroeder

**Clergy present**: **Clergy absent:**

The Rev. Neil Willard The Rev. Liz Parker

The Rev. David Wantland

The meeting started at 5:30 pm by Zoom and ended at 6:55 pm.

**Opening Prayer**: Steven Killworth “For In Times Of Conflict”

**Minutes:** The minutes of July 1, 2020 were approved.

**Committee/Council Updates:**

**Finance:** Overall donations were down $150,000 but Palmer ran a surplus of $63,000 due to PPP grant income. There were suggestions about reminding people to pay their pledges for this year.

**Communications:** The Communications Council met August 12 and had the following updates:

* We are sending out a mailing to parishioners at the end of August with programming plans for the Fall. Rally Day is September 13 and a form of Great Wednesdays will begin September 16 with online speakers monthly.
* Several communications pieces are happening around stewardship:
	+ A stewardship publication will be mailed out to parishioners at the end of September
	+ Short videos from parishioners prior to online worship, and as part of online worship, will appear September through possibly December
* The I Am Palmer series continues. Both Village News and the diocesan publication Diolog have run some of these pieces. Future articles for the series have been brainstormed.
* Serve Sunday is August 30 and Roger is putting together a video of ministries we serve.
* We are planning video versions of Neil’s weekly message in The Palmer newsletter to capture those who might prefer the information visually.

**Evangelism:** A written report was shared with the vestry.

**Stewardship:** Volunteers are giving their stories over a period of 12 weeks. The messages include reminders not to forget to pledge. There may be a recipe theme on the pledge card.

**Worship:** The Worship Council met August 11. There is little to report other than the potential that onsite services might not resume until sometime in 2021 and thus major events such as Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Covenant Sunday may be via Facebook and You Tube with the prerecorded services.

**Outreach:** The Outreach Council met via zoom in June and the following updates were reported:

* Ministry leaders are looking towards ways to adapt Palmer’s outreach virtually for the fall, including a virtual, donation-based Angel Tree. Star of Hope will make an Amazon wish list available so that we can continue to support them by donating school supplies.
* Palmer’s Outreach is forming a new Faith and Justice Ministry to complement our direct outreach. The group will be focused on advocacy and engagement on social issues and policies and is based on the baptismal covenant: “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?” Linda Shelton will be leading the new ministry.
* The next virtual Serve Sunday will be August 30. It was proposed to have one Sunday a month be a virtual Serve Sunday, each month targeting a specific ministry. This goes beyond, for example, handing out food and would extend to trying to assist with reducing the primary sources of hunger.
* There was discussion about how to further support Palmer’s hourly workers who may be struggling with reduced hours. Developing a Basic Human Needs Fund to support people struggling in our community was proposed.
* We are working to refresh the Outreach section of Palmer’s website with an updated list of Outreach Ministries.
* The next Outreach Council meeting will be in October.

**Buildings and Grounds:** Gretta Boshara.

* The chimney at the rectory has been removed and the roof repaired. A new gas line and electrical connection will be installed for the gas fireplace. The materials for the surround and the design for the mantel are being finalized. Dry wall repair work and paint both upstairs and downstairs will follow.
* Tara McConathy is coordinating a review of our indoor air quality at Palmer. She has identified multiple things that we can do to maximize air quality and submitted them to our clergy and junior and senior wardens for input to determine which strategies we will ultimately implement. We will update you on the process.

**Junior Warden:** Kristie Van Arsdel.

* Elite University is winding down for the summer and this will conclude our contract with them.
* The German Preschool made its enrollment for the fall. We have agreed to allow them to park in the south lot to ease their parking costs while we are away from campus.
* We have granted PDAP a lease waiver for two months since they are not meeting on campus.
* Archway is doing a hybrid model of learning to begin the school year. They are 100 percent online for the first nine weeks but due to the needs of some students they will meet in pods on campus in four groups of eight beginning September 8.

**Senior Warden:** Burdette Keeland.

There have been discussions about who owns the property on both sides of the church. Kirk Guilanshah from Memorial Hermann Hospital has been part of these discussions. The City of Houston owns both parking lots. There were discussions about easements.

There will be a new committee with a specific purpose of “growing the church”: increasing new recruits to Palmer. This will have a term limit of one year. The comment was made to try to not have this committee overlap with the functions of existing committees. There was no motion presented and no vote taken.

There was a suggestion about altering the election process to decrease the vestry by three members and/or to replace the current process of having a dual slate of 10 candidates for five positions with a nominations committee that will present the proposed slate of new vestry members and the congregation will vote on that. Neither system is perfect, however the existing system has resulted in candidates who were not elected being bitter. More discussion will follow. A motion was not presented for either idea.

There was discussion about when to open Phase 2 of the church for services. Burdette reviewed the results of the parishioner survey on regathering for in-person services:

1. 28 percent of the respondents said they would come back to live in-person services when the church opened
2. 33 percent said they would return within a few weeks after the church opened for live, in-person services.

The Texas Medical Center goals for community control are:

1. the number of new COVID cases in Houston (TMC goal is 200; as of this meeting it was ~ 1,800)
2. the percent of positive COVID tests (< 5%; as of this meeting it was ~ 13%)
3. the infectivity ratio (< 1.0 for 14 consecutive days; current rate is 0.8).

**Rector:** Neil Willard. Jack Karn has been hired as our new youth ministry; he will also continue to work with Jerusalem Peacebuilders.

**Associate Rector:** David Wantland highlighted Liz Parker’s neighbor to neighbor outreach initiative.