

Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church Vestry Meeting Minutes September 21, 2021

Vestry present:

The Rev. Neil Willard
David Robinson, Senior Warden
Shannon Westin, Junior Warden
Gretta Boshara
David Candler
Melanie Fahey
Steven Killworth
Danna Kurtin
Mike Murphy
Jim Rosenbach
Posey Saenz
Libby Spoede
Susannah Webb
Kelly Williams
Lam Yu

Vestry absent:

Rand Key

Assisting Clergy present:

The Rev. Elizabeth Parker

Assisting Clergy absent:

The Rev. Ryan Hawthorne

The hybrid in-person and Zoom meeting started at 5:31 PM and ended at 6:43 PM. Roger Hutchinson was present to assist with the hybrid technology.

1. **Opening Prayer.** Neil opened the meeting in prayer.
2. **Community Sharing.** David encouraged community sharing.
3. **Minutes.** The August 17 minutes were tabled for the next meeting to allow time for the vestry to review the minutes as concern was expressed that there was inadequate time to review the meeting documents.
4. **Vestry Introduction to JHP- Brian Keith, AIA.** Prior to Brian getting on the call, David R. said that the project development task force will dissolve and the vestry will take over the potential property development. David also recommended meeting again in 2 weeks. Brian introduced himself as a planner and architect in the firm JHP in Dallas. Brian stated his goal is to analyze the proposal and help the church and various councils with visioning a potential plan. Brian could also help with modeling and/or rendering. He has been involved with St. Matthew's Cathedral development in Dallas. He shared his role with the cathedral and their project, mainly affordable housing.
 - a. **Proposed Facilitator for Potential Property Development.** David R. said the goal is to reach every member of the Palmer community. Brian envisioned meeting both in person and virtually to reach the entire community. He said his goal is to gather the information from the community sessions and compile the information for the vestry.

b. **Questions from the Vestry.**

- i. One question was about how to manage the emotional connection to the campus and a potential project. Brian said that currently with the Cathedral, that hasn't been an issue. However, he said in general, there is concern from the community surrounding a project about change and understanding what is possible.
- ii. Another question was as Brian meets with the groups, what is the thought process for obtaining the information and help us vision what is possible. Brian said sometimes people like to brainstorm on paper, other times it is using physical models to gather ideas, or keywords that continue to pop up. Evaluating needs vs wants, absolutes vs possibilities, etc and then narrow it down to key values or concepts that form over time. He said that he would likely develop a series of exercises to gather information.
- iii. One question/request was to obtain comparable sized lots and what is located on those areas. Brian said that would be possible, both in Houston and in other cities.
- iv. One concern that has been expressed is what Palmer may lose (such as choir room, elevators, etc). Brian said he will try to ask questions and then help try to show what Palmer could get back with the potential development.
- v. Shannon stated since the vestry received the documents late, then perhaps the vestry could have time to review the documents and meet again for more discussion and Brian left the meeting. A question came up as to the source of the funding for Brian's fees. Neil said that is currently under discussion if the fees would be covered by Palmer or a donor. A question also arose regarding a church centering/visioning process that is done either before or in conjunction with the project visioning. There was another question about how this will be clearly communicated to the congregation, with the various parties and their specific roles.

5. **Council Reports:**

- a. **Finance Council.** Posey said that we are ahead of schedule on a year to date basis, but are slightly behind for this past month. The endowment has approved their second payment. For expenses, the energy bill is the significant outlier. The new contract was received today and will prevent significant price fluctuations in the future due to ancillary fees. The rectory capital project came in under budget. Posey mentioned there continues to be healthy dialogue between the Finance and Endowment Committees.
- b. **Worship Council.** Steve said changes continue with COVID. The 9am service has moved back outdoors. There is also acolyte and reader training has happened and will continue in the coming weeks.
- c. **Outreach Council.** Kelly said that outreach is meeting next week to decide what to do with the remaining budget for the year. Linda Shelton is the contact for asylum seekers and is a very active part of the ministry right now. Kelly said that next year the budget may need to be increased to reflect the current needs. Liz announced Kate Jackson will head up Palmer Place Apartments.
- d. **Evangelism Council.** Lam reported he has been working with Roger on a pilot program on Rice campus. Lam invited Roger to have dinner with his college as a community associate. He said there are 11 colleges on Rice campus and reflected that community

associate relationships may be a good opportunity to get back to our roots with our connection to the Rice community.

- e. **Communications Council.** Susannah said the big focus will be on stewardship for the next several weeks, including bulletin inserts and videos. Fall programming has resumed.
- f. **Stewardship Council.** Mike said that the committee is small and he plans to reach out to the vestry individually to see what each person is able to contribute for programming. His goal is for vestry members to reach out to groups they may already be participating in, or reach out to people individually. The theme from Roger is "Lift Up Your Hearts".
- g. **Building and Grounds Council.** Gretta said bids are being obtained for having the campus power washed vs specific locations power washed. Gretta said there has been damage from vandalism and insurance coverage is being evaluated. A question came up if cameras could be installed on campus to deter vandalism. The monument sign may be repaired as well. The rectory has been power washed in addition to the porch repairs, all of which have been completed and came in under budget.

6. Warden Reports:

- a. Senior Warden. Deferred.
- b. Junior Warden. Deferred.

7. Membership Task Force Report. Neil said that the report is being finalized and then the task force will be invited to speak to the vestry with their findings and recommendations.

8. Clergy Reports:

- a. The Rev. Neil Willard – Rector. Neil said that October 17th the bishop will be present for confirmation. There was a question if the healing service will return. Neil said that a mid-day service may come back to coincide with the bible study.
- b. The Rev. Liz Parker – Associate. Liz said to be aware that with several funerals and internments over the past few weeks, it can take a toll on the clergy and staff and to be mindful of this.

9. Closing Prayer. Neil gave a blessing to close the meeting.