

Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church
Minutes of Vestry Meeting
April 25, 2017

Vestry Present

Neil Willard, Rector
Jim Key, Sr. Warden
Ellee de Groot
Ruth Davies
Victor Lamas
Jim Lober, Clerk
Jennifer Macia
Allison Marek
Jim Mercurio
Priscilla Plumb
Linda Sylvan
Steven Vaughan
Marie Wehrung
Trent Williams, Jr. Warden

Vestry Absent

Will Denham
Courtney Daniell-Knapp

Clergy Present

Alexandra Easley
Linda Shelton

The meeting commenced at 5:30 p.m.

1. Opening Prayer--Given by Rev. Linda Shelton.
2. Concerns and Thanksgivings—Those in attendance shared their prayers and Thanksgivings.
3. Approval of Minutes—Motion to approve made by Marie Wehrung;; second by Victor Lamas. Motion carried.
4. Financial Reports—
 - a. Budgetary status—Jim Mercurio reported on the downward trend of the available cash balance. The balance is currently \$225,000. Due to a contribution from the Endowment (discussed below) and other gifts and pledges the 2017 pledge balance is approximately \$70,000 short of the amount needed for a balanced budget. The Palmer Endowment (“Endowment”) has previously contributed \$100,000 to Palmer operating fund, which amount is already in the 2017 budget. The Endowment recently received a generous trust gift in the amount of approximately \$1.4 Million. The Endowment typically makes an annual gift of 3%-5% of the Endowment corpus to the Church, and has provided additional funds in the amount of \$50,000 to Palmer’s operating fund in 2017, which has made a significant contribution to resolving the pledge shortfall. The long-term solution to the shortfall is an increase in annual givers. The Endowment has also agreed to pay for installation of two new air conditioning chillers, in the approximate amount of \$200,000, which are scheduled for installation in October. Dick Sylvan is in

the process of speaking with some ministries concerning the possible use of their restricted funds when necessary. The Great Wednesday dinner expenses are \$500/week in excess of receipts and we are looking at solutions for the Fall, including the preparation of the meal by volunteers. We are looking for someone to supervise the program, including the purchase of the groceries.

b. Stewardship—Ellee de Groot noted that with a recent pledge, there have been 292 pledges toward the 2017 campaign. Ellee will speak to the Parish on May 7 to make a final appeal requesting that members to make a special contribution or an additional pledge to assist in closing the budget gap as we are close to meeting the 2017 pledge campaign budget of \$1,700,000. That presentation will conclude the 2017 stewardship campaign

c. Insurance Premiums—Next month the vestry will look at the premium expense and get input concerning the appropriateness of the respective coverages and premium amounts.

5. Reports & Updates

a. Communications—Priscilla Plumb is the Vestry liaison to the church staff group (Tara McConathay, Roger Hutchison, Dustin Jesudason and Sue Howard) who meet weekly to discuss communications and calendar. Helping Priscilla are Vestry persons Jennifer Macia and Victor Lamas. Priscilla will meet with the staff group once a month, prior to the monthly Vestry meeting.

b. Evangelism Council—This council is chaired by Kamron Masumi. Rev. Liz Parker provides clergy oversight. The council has been working to make the parish more inviting to new members. The first Sunday of each month, newcomers can speak with active parishioners about Palmer's work and ministry. Welcome bags were made in connection with the Rector's Forum which takes place on the third Sunday of each month. On March 27, there will be a diocesan roundtable to discuss what parishes are doing in order to invite, welcome and connect with prospective and new members. Kamron Masumi has recently visited a church in Memphis, TN at his own expense to observe a successful program involving new member outreach.

c. Deacon's Report on Refugee Resettlement—Rev. Shelton is the Diocesan liaison to Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM). 99% of EMM funding comes from the federal government based on the number of refugees EMM sponsors for resettlement. Due to policy changes and proposed suspensions and cuts to the refugee program by President Trump, it is believed that the number of immigrants admitted to the United States will be substantially less than previously allowed, and both EMM and local affiliates such as Interfaith Ministries in Houston who actually do local casework are suffering funding cuts. Congress and the President will determine the

allocations for migration in September 2017. Linda indicated that Texas has had the second largest number of resettlements, behind California, so this is an important concern for our church and communities. The number of resettlements has substantially declined since the election and the emphasis for EMM and all refugee ministry is advocacy and fundraising at this time. EMM is one of nine volunteer organizations who partner with the US government to resettle refugees, and 6 of the 9 are faith-based.

d. Worship Council—Victor Lamas (Vestry liaison) indicated that the Worship Council will meet next month. The council will discuss the Easter services and any changes needed for next year. The Easter services were very well attended.

e. Outreach Council—Steven Vaughan is the Vestry liaison—Main activity currently is Serve Sunday, next scheduled for April 30. The goal is to make this activity more “lay person driven”. Kelly Williams has agreed to chair Serve Sunday.

f. Youth—Jim Key expressed his delight with our older youth and their taking part in Palmer activities. Jim asked Marie Wehrung if she (the mom of two of our outstanding young women), was aware of any issues of note. Marie noted that funds for mission trips are not available, and expressed hope that next year the Shrove Tuesday dinner might be prepared and served by the Youth as a fundraiser. The Clerk notes that two of your young people, Nina French and Olivia Wehrung had an important role as tally clerks in the January parish elections.

6. Junior Warden’s Report given by Trent Williams—Tara is working dealing with a variety of maintenance issues, including repairs to a leak related to the fire sprinkler system, irrigation of the plantings, and air handler issues with the HVAC. Palmer will be for bids for the AC chillers, based on designated specifications. Trent hopes for bids to go out in June, with an October replacement of the chillers.

7. Senior Warden’s report—Jim Key

- a. The vestry retreat will be held on May 13 at Betty and Jim Key’s bay house in Galveston. The retreat will begin at 9:00 a.m. and last until 3:00 p.m.
- b. The May meeting of the Vestry has been cancelled due to the proximity of the retreat date.
- c. Initiatives in Adult Christian Formation for the Fall—Neil Willard and Bet Hunter are lining up speakers for the fall around an education theme.
- d. May 14 will be the Warden’s Forum at the 10:00 am hour and all Vestry are expected to be there if possible.

8. Clergy reports
 - a. Rector—Neil Willard was extremely excited to the response of Palmers to the Palm Sunday Festival Day. Parish photographs are forthcoming. April 26 is the last Great Wednesday dinner of this school year until the Fall. There will be a cookout. Palmer will have an intern this summer, from the Yale Divinity School. Stuart Kensinger has arranged this. Neil described a variety of projects we hope to commence which will improve the campus, such as a new church sign, painting, improvement to the airflow in the front of the church and re-design of the Narthex stairs.
 - b. Associate Rector—Jim Key noted that the Living Compass program is starting now, with two classes, one led by Liz Parker and one by John Wallace. The program will continue in the Fall.
 - c. Curate—Alex noted that April 30th is Serve Sunday. The Bishop of Costa Rica, Rev. Hector Monterossa will be with us then. 10 People have signed up for the mission trip to Costa Rica and funds have been raised for that mission. Alex noted that the Community of Hope now has trained lay ministers. Wendy and Bill Robertson, together with Gretta Boshara are leading that ministry.
9. Unfinished business—None
10. Call for new business—

Neil noted that a German language immersion program pre/elementary school is downsizing to a pre-school only, and is in discussions with using Palmer about using some of our space on a rental basis. Tara McConathy is in discussions concerning this development. Jim Key recognized the work that Kathy Herrin has done with the Turquoise Center, which is hosting a post Ramadan dinner on May 31. The Vestry and Clergy are encouraged to attend. The event is free and is open to all.
11. Adjournment—at 6:56 p.m.