

Minutes of the Vestry Meeting
Emmanuel Episcopal Church
July 27, 2011

Present: John Albright, Carol Bowles, Butch Bush, Rob Byrne, Joe Clements, Curt Collier, Dee Forester, Debra Harden, Sean Hogan, Matt Humphrey, Sandy Jarrett, Marty Kemp, Mary Moore, Beverly Sligh, Father Robert Salamone

The meeting was called to order by Fr. Robert at 7:00 p.m. He introduced Mike Fitzgerald, Chair of the endowment fund board, thanking him for his continuing leadership and guidance.

Debra Hardin began the devotion by reading the Emmanuel Episcopal Vestry Covenant and concluded with a prayer.

Information/Discussion Items:

Fr. Robert began discussion by noting that individual ministries of the finance committee, including stewardship, the endowment board and the building project are ultimately responsible to and for one other. The endowment serves the parish and the endowment board serves the vestry. The endowment board's purpose is to preserve funds for the "common good" of the parish which is determined by the vestry. As we move forward in the next months with the building plans and begin to seek a project manager from a construction company, the financial aspect is most important.

Mike emphasized that the endowment board can be part of the solution for the campus expansion. While they have responsibility for maintaining the sanctity and respecting the guidelines and motivations of founders, they are eager to do what may be asked of them as it relates to financing aspects of the building project.

The fund currently consists of roughly \$7 million, \$2 million of which is restricted, original bequests to the foundation. Each person on the endowment board is in favor of the campus expansion and financially supports it.

Pledging money on foundations is common. Although the current account manager, State Street Bank, can loan, its rate is too high and structuring a loan locally would be better. The assets are positioned to allow a lender to give us what is needed. One limitation to taking out a loan would be that the endowment board would need to approach the vestry quarterly to get authority to take these monies out. A cushion must remain in place to safeguard the fund assets and continue to do outreach.

It would also be possible to borrow against the fund directly to pay project costs and return money from future pledges and donations by the congregation.

Options are available for borrowing depending on how much is raised through parishioner pledges. Eventually it would be the responsibility of the church congregation to resolve this. Solutions may lie in a combination of these assets.

Rob and Sean inquired about current commercial loan interest rates compared to returns on endowment fund assets. Mike feels the most important consideration is keeping the foundation intact and proceeding with the campus expansion.

Rob asked about the amount that is annually going to outreach that might be affected by borrowing from the fund. Several suggested that parishioners should be more involved with outreach, and the new facility will increase opportunities for doing that.

Finance Committee Report:

Butch explained that Emmanuel is obligated as a member of the Diocese of Atlanta to pledge a minimum of ten percent (a tithe) of our most recent three-year average total operating revenue which is \$901,140 for 2008-2010.

Though we voluntarily paid an additional one percent for the past three years, we increased our pledge last year to 11 percent which would amount to \$99,125 if we did so again for 2012. We are one of less than six of one hundred parishes to do this.

The finance committee recommends that we continue giving 11 percent. This action is also supported by the MEMC budget. When we dedicate \$40,000 to them for outreach, they give us back the additional support of one percent, so it doesn't actually come from the operating budget.

John noted that any year our budget decreases, it is reflected in our pledge to the diocese.

Vestry Administration Reports:

Debra indicated that the Raising Leadership Committee distributed forms to ministry leaders asking them to submit information such as the purpose, duties, benefits, structures and time requirements. A most important benefit is how such involvement would help us to grow in Christ through knowledge of our fellow communicants.

Our goal is to have handouts available to distribute to interested persons encouraging new membership in these volunteer organizations. Debra sees these as "living" documents which can be amended and used as recruitment tools.

As Martin shared at Lake Logan, it's all about relationships. Debra believes that we can't underestimate the value of getting to know people within and outside of our community. The more relationship building there is, the better our future will be.

Research is still proceeding on finding available properties for the Thrift House. Rental property is very expensive.

Fr. Robert has asked the committee to work with the charts developed at Lake Logan. Debra will facilitate this.

MEMC:

Marty asked the vestry for comments regarding the part-time social worker duties highlighted on the job description distributed via email. Discussion is continuing from the last meeting when Matthew Hicks presented his concerns to the vestry about the needs of the refugees in our parish.

It was generally felt that most of the tasks in the job description did not require the expertise of a social worker, but it's a big job that needs a point person to organize volunteers. Interest in the ministry appears to have declined during the past two years, and the parish may be unaware of the ongoing needs of the refugees. If these were brought to the forefront, perhaps someone would step up.

Fr. Robert suggested that we start small and grow as needed possibly hiring a coordinator paid for time spent which may vary week to week. There are also others in need in the parish that such a coordinator could assist. MEMC foresees this as a growing ministry with more commitment as time goes on.

The vestry is asked to forward names of possible persons to fill this position to Fr. Robert.

Wednesday Night Suppers:

Teams have enjoyed being with each other but participation has dwindled. Beverly reported that, as she envisions it, we may go to one Sunday a month starting in September and Wednesday night light suppers during Lent.

Six Holy Cooker teams are willing to cook on Sundays but they would have to cleanup themselves. William and Laurie are not available to help then but would be on Wednesday nights during Lent.

Some ideas were offered to help improve attendance at the suppers. Fr. Robert suggested having them thematic with folks sharing stories or having some fun activity. Butch noticed that some churches have signs out inviting students and visitors. We might include the homeless more often than only holiday meals. Rob suggested boxing individual meals with leftovers to take to shelters. Carol suggested having people make reservations which might encourage people to follow up on a commitment.

Stewardship Committee Report:

John reported two dates that need to be decided. Sunday, September 18 was suggested for The Kickoff Event and the Pledge Celebration Event when people turn in their pledge cards is scheduled for Sunday, October 23. We need to decide what activities will take place those days.

It is imperative to thank people on Pledge Sunday and continue to do so during the whole process. We need to be a thankful as well as a ministry-oriented congregation. If pledges aren't received within the two following weeks, contacts would be made by the stewardship team. Communication can be facilitated for these Sundays and year-round stewardship with bulletin inserts, news in the Tower, website, personal testimony witnesses, using Martin, and other means. We want to get our most immediate needs met and then plan for the coming years.

Should Faith Formation topics be reflective of a new stewardship ministry concept? This would change the culture of our congregation by valuing our worth not by our possessions, but by our usefulness in God's kingdom in thanksgiving to God for His generous gifts to us.

Ideas for suppers include presenting a short video series of topics for stimulating conversation. Shall we reach out to others by approaching the congregation as a whole, or in subgroups? Shall we have a "giving" goal for our campaign?

Joe and John informed the vestry of a wonderful, challenging book, Ask, Thank, Tell, by Charles Lane. They feel it is vital to read this, and Joe will obtain copies for each vestry person. It suggests a radical change in the concepts of stewardship. Rob added that ideas from this book will enhance our plan for year-round stewardship. He offered to join Joe and John to create a handout summarizing talking points from the book to give to visitation teams.

Visitation training will consist of three tiers: 1) vestry, 2) visitation teams, and 3) active consistent givers. Each vestry member will pick five persons who are actively involved at Emmanuel. These volunteers will be asked to participate in one training session scheduled for Sunday, Aug. 21, 4 p.m. and Thursday, Aug. 25, 7 p.m. Participants may attend either date.

This process will begin a conversation evolving into a year-round stewardship ministry. This initial visitation will not include contact with the whole congregation. By sharing our own stories about stewardship with this core group, we will begin to develop a new culture of stewardship. Pledge cards will be a separate part of the process.

Rob added that these visits with our friends should be a more comfortable way to begin talking about stewardship. Getting out there is the whole point of the exercise. Talking about it in the right way actually brings people closer to Christ.

Senior Warden's Report:

Butch reported on the status of the Huddle House property. They have notified us that they wish to stay in their current location as long as they are allowed, through Dec. 31 and then month-to-month. So, we will continue to receive that revenue.

The Atlanta Union Mission will stay through the end of the year although their lease ends Oct. 31.

After the 10:30 service on Sunday, Aug. 14, there will be an important presentation of Phase One plans by Hank Houser to the whole congregation. All vestry persons are expected to attend. The current plan for construction will be revealed.

A list of contractors will be interviewed soon and one of those will be selected as our general contractor.

Butch will be meeting with Mike Fitzgerald and the endowment board with one other vestry person and Fr. Robert on Aug. 3.

Junior Warden:

Marty reported that the fall fund raiser will be held at Hotel Indigo on Wed., Oct. 12, at 6:30-9 p.m. There will be a silent auction and the raffle winner will split proceeds 50/50 with the church. Marty will be distributing ten tickets each to the vestry to be sold for \$100 each. It is anticipated that the change in venue will encourage more participation.

Rector's Report:

Fr. Robert recently witnessed a large tree falling in the parking lot across Pope Street. When it was removed, the remaining three large oaks were examined by the tree surgeon who submitted a report. The tree nearest the church has been pruned, cabled and tied together over the years, but where the cable is attached to the tree is rotting and cabling is no longer a solution. Since the church building is in jeopardy, it will need to be removed.

Four fans will be installed high in the nave of the church to improve air circulation since the system is not adequate to cool the whole church.

Anyone dealing with people needs to complete "Safeguarding God's Children" and "Safeguarding God's People" training online.

The diocese is offering a stewardship workshop Oct. 20 at the cathedral from 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m. The church will pay the fee and transportation for anyone on the vestry wishing to attend.

Fr. Robert distributed a handout from a New York Times article, May 15, 2011, that graphs the percentage of college graduates, income levels, and religious groups.

Action Items:

Motion: Carol moved that we continue our Diocesan pledge of 11 percent for 2012. Matt seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Motion: Marty moved that we begin the process of hiring a part-time coordinator based on the job description suggested by MEMC. Carol seconded the motion. It passed with one against and one abstention.

Good of the Order:

Carol just returned from a trip with her grandson, Adam, to DC, Baltimore, Annapolis, and NC. Vanessa & Charlie will be coming through tomorrow for two nights.

Sean is bracing for school to start soon.

Matt surprised his niece and nephew with a family visit.

John spoke of Bo Harvey of Habitat for Humanity who passed away recently.

Dee has a new grandson born on July 14.

Joe's son, Sam, needed stitches yesterday as a result of an injury at football practice, but is doing fine.

Rob expressed gratitude for his blessings and he read a great book, Ask, Thank, Tell.

Curt has been appointed to the Georgia Civil War Commission by Governor Deal.

Reminders:

Fr. Robert closed with a prayer.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 24, 2011

Next Devotion:

Respectfully Submitted,
Sue Boatright, Clerk of the Vestry

Approved by: John Albright, Carol Bowles, Butch Bush, Rob Byrne, Curt Collier, Dee Forester, Debra Harden, Sean Hogan, Matt Humphrey, Sandy Jarrett, Marty Kemp, Mary Moore, Beverly Sligh