

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMFORTER
Annual Meeting Minutes
November 12, 2023 at 9:00am Sanctuary

1. Welcome and Prayers (The Rev. Greg Brown)

- a. Fr. Greg welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayer.
- b. The parishioners working behind the scenes were introduced:
 - b.i. “MC” – Joyce Bott, Senior Warden
 - b.ii. Parliamentarian – Tom Fennimore
 - b.iii. Meeting Minutes – Niki Manke, Vestry Recording Secretary
 - b.iv. Minutes Review Committee: Kelly Sewell, Vicki Bott, Penny Crawford
- c. Vestry class outgoing: Ed Gash, Kirt Hibbitts, Natalie Parker, and John Snelsire
- d. 2024 Vestry Class: Joyce Bott (Senior Warden), Jason Evans (Clerk), Margaret Kahn and Carlyle Knox (Junior Warden)
- e. 2025 Vestry Class: Mary Amos, Anne Binns, Tom Cooke, and Bob Murphy

2. Introduction of Candidates for Vestry & Foundation (John Snelsire)

- a. Bios for the candidates are available on the website
- b. 5 candidates and Vote for 4. In order to vote, must be age 16 and a member of the church (confirmed and regular attendee and a giver).
- c. Vestry Candidates: Natalie Castro, Tim Cavins, Jacqueline Howells, Niki Manke, and Diana Smith

3. Vote #1

- a. Counted by Holly Williams and nominating committee. Certified by Jason Evans Clerk of the Vestry

4. Rector’s Update (The Rev. Greg Brown)

- a. Shared the necrology report of those who have passed in the last year
 - a.i. Teeny McCorkle
 - a.ii. Nancy Murray
 - a.iii. Polly Redd
 - a.iv. Karen Wilson
- b. Emphasized the Circle Model.
 - b.i. Lots of good things happening. Listed the various groups. All get together to do scripture and prayer as a part of the group. Invited everyone to join a group and “get on board.”
- c. Grateful for the 6 weeks to do the Camino in Spain
- d. Thank you to the Wardens for a successful year after a great deal of work.
- e. 2 English As A Second Language (ESL) Directors – Geraldine Ledesma and Maigualida Rowe. Met 18 times in fall and 18 in spring. Many come to dinner on Wednesdays.
- f. Eucharistic services every other month at Southminster, and Greg gets to see many folks from here who have retired there.

- g. 8 different clergy celebrated with us over the year. 3 different preachers.
 - h. Celebrates Eucharist at Matthews Glen the first Friday of the month.
 - i. Thursday breakfasts at Stacks. Great fellowship. Liturgy in that as well.
 - j. Quarterly leadership meetings involving 57 church leaders.
5. **Associate Rector's Update (The Rev. Cat Connolly)**
- a. 4 themes characterized her year:
 - a.i. Worship Services: Preaching, deaconing, Evensong, liturgy in Spanish, funerals, baptisms, cozy compline, many special services
 - a.ii. Circle Groups – Finance, Pastoral, Youth/Family
 - a.iii. The Broader View: Clergy Conference, convention, Episcopal start (a program that assists new clergy, a place for discussion of what's happening in ministry lives)
 - a.iv. Thanks – Away longer than expected on medical leave, Thanks to HoCo family, to clergy, Greg, and Joyce. Has truly experienced that Love Grows Here.
6. **Finance Report (Karen Crane, Treasurer)**
- a. Help of Finance Circle Group – Joyce Bott, Paul Durfee, Kelly Ryan-Smith, Jonathan Weathers, Jon Wells, Holly Williams (Parish Administrator), and Clergy
 - b. Review audit and parochial report
 - c. Meet monthly with administrator to review financial results and bank records
 - d. 2022 – ending with a deficit less than budgeted (\$110k vs. \$115k). Ended with cash reserves of \$797k.
 - e. 2023 – on target to achieve the budgeted \$52k deficit assuming all 2023 pledges are paid in full by December 31. Vestry intentionally approved an Operating Expense Budget of \$1.003k and a Revenue Budget of \$951k. Pledge Budget is \$818k. Year to date through October, we're operating favorable to our Operating Expense Budget by \$42k. Pledge revenue is behind target by \$24k.
 - f. In October \$86.5k went to Loaves and Fishes/Friendship Trays Capital Campaign
 - g. Strategic Modeling for Transformation group has been meeting to provide input for the timing and options of a balanced budget. Team consists of: Jason Evans, Sean Hogue, Bob Murphy, Pat Mynatt, Jonathan Weathers, Joyce Bott, and Karen Crane
 - h. Remaining balance of promissory note to the Foundation is \$71k which matures in November of 2024.
 - i. Intentionally making financial information more accessible.
 - j. Pledge revenue is important to impact our ministries.
7. **Foundation Report (Hank Schmulling, Foundation Secretary)**
- a. Secretary of Board reporting on behalf of Mitchell Wickham
 - b. Members: Outgoing this year are Joe Mynatt and Hank Schmulling year. 2024 Members are Mitchell Wickham (President), Elsie Garfield (Secretary), Connie Reid (Treasurer), David Pond, and Russell Weil.

- c. Nominees: Simms Doster and Brad Patterson
 - d. Purpose: manages funds of over \$900k. Funds have earned over 10% and they disperse 3-5% to serve 2 purposes: Missions and Ministry; and Building and Grounds. All spending is passed by Vestry and Foundation
 - d.i. Ministry & Ministry supports outreach supported by HoCo. Youth Pilgrimage, Genesis, Galilee Ministries, Roof Above Apartment project.
 - d.ii. Building and Grounds: supports maintenance of HoCo needs. Foundation of Van Every; technology upgrades, heat & a/c building maintenance, brick cleaning and sealing, Tiffany window repair, roof repair and replacement
 - e. In the coming year, the Foundation plans to focus on a Planned Giving program and encourage parishioners to include Holy Comforter in their end-of-life plans.
8. **Music Ministry (Dr. Patrick Pope, Organist and Director of Music)**
- a. Presented with Children's Choir in lieu of spoken report. The choir did a beautiful job singing a round of Dona Nobis Pacem. In the background a slide show played of their activities.
 - b. 8 Members strong
9. **Senior Warden's Report (Joyce Bott)**
- a. Thanked everyone for their support
 - b. In process of re-writing staff descriptions with the personnel committee. Last done before Greg's arrival. Updating the Employee Handbook to update from 2000.
 - c. Collaboration with Finance Committee – passed operating budget and have been posting our financials. Working to establish a group to work on a long-term financial sustainability plan for the parish. Reviewed the designated accounts and updated the descriptions.
 - d. Hosted Quarterly Updates – expanded it to be more than just financial but more of an overall update about what's happening around Holy Comforter
 - e. Vestry supported Genesis II project
 - f. Supported Concert for the Human Family, music for the sake of love. East Meck with Monroe Road Association, HoCo, and a third sponsor. The concert is an amalgamation of various music styles.
 - g. Successful Loaves & Fishes and Friendship Trays funding with HOCO name in lobby area of new L&F/FT space.
 - h. Led a group to conduct a search for new Children's Ministries and Youth Ministries leaders. Joyce thanked Amy McKee and Beth Hardin for stepping in to lead these ministries during the search process, including EYC Tammy Langley, Diana Smith and Drew Kirkland
 - i. Appointed diocesan alternates and delegates
 - j. Each Vestry member is a liaison to a circle group
 - k. Sunday morning roles to revamp who is doing what roles to prepare for services.

10. Junior Warden's Report (Carlyle Knox)

- a. We've had official clean-up days and some off the books. Many have shown up to help make our campus a beautiful place. "We are passionate about our perennials, militant mulchers, and courageous cleaners." If you have a passion for our building and grounds, you are invited to join the 2701 Circle Group
- b. Large project – the cleaning of the mortar and brick. Made a tremendous stride to waterproof the building and clean up where water had gotten in "the boat"
- c. Solar system – Whittled down many proposals. Looked at leasing vs. buying. Best path would be not to lease. NOT A DONE DEAL. The financing total \$118k, but It will likely be reduced to \$45,641 by eligible discounts, grants, and a \$37.5k rebate from Duke Energy (after \$3k interconnect agreement to supply excess solar power to Duke grid), and Creation Care money from diocese. Please see me, if anyone has a passion for grant writing to help make this happen.

11. Parish Life (Jessica Dunlap, Director of Parish Life)

- a. Parish Retreat, Coffee Hour, Community Dinners, Membership, Welcoming Newcomers
 - a.i. Jessica had attendees raise their hands for each event they were a part of and broke the events down by numbers:
 - a.i.1. 31 Community Dinners
 - a.i.2. 90 people attended Montreat
 - a.i.3. 10 confirmed at the Bishop's visit
 - a.i.4. 175 names to prayer list
 - a.i.5. Brenda Cooke won the chili kickoff for the second year in a row
 - a.i.6. 28 ministries were represented at the Ministry Fair
- b. Rooted in mission and life: invites everyone to join.
- c. Send in photos of things that have happened with you at Holy Comforter, no matter what it is, to show that "Love Grows Here"
- d. A huge thank you to everyone who came last night to the Oyster Roast and volunteered last night. Events like this can't happen without your help.

12. La Escuelita Weekday School (Lauren Cavins, Director of the Weekday School)

- a. Weekday School from the 50's, 60's and 70's. Long history of weekday school here. Preparing children for success in kindergarten.
- b. More diverse now with dual language. 100 Children between 1 and 5 years from 82 families.
- c. 9 classes
 - c.i. Two teachers in each class: one native English and one native Spanish speaker.
 - c.ii. Information presented in each language swapping days.
- d. Participated in Dia de Los Ninos
- e. Author came to visit
- f. Partnership with CMPL

- g. Qualified for two grants: Speedway Children's Charities and St. Peter's Outreach
- h. Annual fundraiser – February 9th in person!
- i. Personally thank Jessica and the board
- j. Thank you for supporting us for over 65 years

13. NC Convention

- a. Delegates: Karen Crane, Kathy Trotter, Sissy Poland, and Mary Monahan
- b. Alternates: Diana Smith and Simms Doster
- c. Recognized Tom Fennimore who still serves on the Diocese and Disciplinary Board
- d. Fr. Greg continues to serve on the Diocese Chartered Committee for Hispanic Ministries

14. Pastoral Care Ministry (Edie Livingstone)

- a. Very strong here at Holy Comforter. Rooted in love for God and Neighbor
- b. Greg and Cat are the spiritual leaders and about 40 parishioners fill the various committees
- c. Goody Bags (and flowers to homebound), HoCo at Home (remind our homebound members that they are prayed for and loved), Lazarus (assist the bereaved before during and after funerals), Prayer (most unique because it is performed by individuals within their own personal devotions), Embrace (major life changes), Eucharistic Visitors (6 who visit 12 consistently), Flower Ministry (small arrangements of altar flowers to parishioners for various reasons)
- d. Encouraged everyone who is interested to reach out to those who head the various groups or to her

15. Children's Ministry (Amy McKee)

- a. Amy and Beth have taken on a large share of what Sarah's job was
- b. Committed to providing a vibrant and fun time for the children here because it is vital to form a lasting faith in the lives of the young people.
- c. Actively looking for ministers
- d. Nursery care – 6 months to 4 years of age
- e. Children's chapel during the 10am service – 3 years to 2nd grade
- f. Children's formation – Exploring Sunday Morning Ministries - Kindergarten to 6th grade
- g. Treats for animals for the Blessing of the Animals
- h. Children's choir
- i. Active at Community Dinners offering prayer
- j. Active at Montreat
- k. Vacation Bible School – Changemakers (40 children participated)
- l. Fall festival
- m. Thank you to all of the volunteers

16. Youth Ministry (Beth Hardin)

- a. Beth started with 2 sentences: “The most important thing that we can do as followers of Jesus is to commit our lives, our time, our treasure, and our talent to growing into the full stature of Christ. In the way of love, as we have founded in the Episcopal tradition, and in this place, and to raise up others in this abundant life.”
- b. Video created by 6th grader, Clay Redder shown with music selection by Mary Taylor
- c. Drew Kirkland, Diana Smith, and Tammy Langley work alongside Beth to strongly support the youth group.

17. Adult Spiritual Journeys (ASJ) (Vicki Bott)

- a. Covering for Mitzi Alexander who is recovering from shoulder surgery
- b. New group that started this year about nurturing adults on their spiritual journeys through programming developed and offered by lay members. They also work with Jessica Dunlap to coordinate with programming led by clergy or staff.
- c. ASJ and Jessica have coordinated a quarterly planning schedule to resolve scheduling requests.
- d. Meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month after Community Dinner in the parlor or on Zoom at 7:00pm.
- e. Members are Mitzi Alexander (leader), Vicki Bott, Chris Bates, Ian Binns, Tom Cooper, Jennifer Worsham, and Steve Bondy.

18. Pathfinders/Genesis II (Vicki Bott)

- a. Guide the parish in how they are called to “be church” in these times.
- b. Episcopal process called Genesis II. Journey, not exercise. Rely on all of us to participate.
 - b.i. Reflection of the Month – encourages us to practice spiritual questioning and listening
 - b.ii. Neighborhood Exploration
 - b.ii.1. Not a typical neighborhood church. Most of HoCo come from outside the neighborhood church. New and expanded opportunities to work around the area and expand the ministries
 - b.ii.2. Upcoming activities:
 - b.ii.2.a. 90-Day micro strategies
 - b.ii.2.b. Holy Hikers
 - b.ii.2.c. HC Saints & Stories
 - b.ii.2.d. Spiritual Autobiographies & Essential Values
 - b.iii. Senior Warden, Joyce Bott, reminded us that its ok to try new things and sometimes “fail forward”
 - b.iv. Members include: Vicki Bott, Mary Lindsay Evans, Beth Hardin, Kirt Hibbitts, and Diana Smith

19. Blessing, Gratitude, Generosity (Kirt Hibbitts)

- a. Relatively new circle group and is known in many churches as the Stewardship committee. As said in the Episcopal church Stewardship is how we share God's generosity by the way we share our resources of time, talent, and money.
- b. It is not a giving campaign.
- c. God has a lot to say about money. 20 years since we have focused conversations on money and finances. Introduced "FreedUp" which is a 6-week course that is app based using a phone or tablet. Standard cost is \$99 per household but Holy Comforter made a special commitment from a designated stewardship budget fund so the cost is now \$19 per household. Look for more information on the website. Overview class during the hour on Jan 7th. Groups will begin January 28th.
- d. "When you recognize our blessings, gratitude naturally follows, and leads to generosity with our time, talents, and treasure." – Fr. Greg
- e. Members include: Kirt Hibbitts, Carlyle Knox, John Elder, Vicki Bott, Drew Kirkland, Sheena Anderson, and Luke Ivey

20. Annual Giving (Jonathan Weathers, Co-Chair)

- a. 4-week campaign to fund our operating budget. Pledges typically represent 85-90% of our operating budget.
- b. Currently have 111 pledges and \$577,762 (at 68% of goal)
- c. Goal is for 200 pledges for \$850,000
- d. How can you help?
 - d.i. Pledge
 - d.ii. Increase your pledge
 - d.iii. Ask someone else if they have made their pledge
- e. Fr. Greg reminded everyone that for every \$1 your pledge is increased, he commits \$10 of his HC Rector's Discretionary Fund and \$1 of his personal money to a charity which this year is Episcopal Relief & Development's Middle East fund.

21. Approval of 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes (Tom Fennimore)

- a. Review committee from last year was: Vicki Bott, Gail Fennimore, and Kathy Trotter – reviewed and approved last year's minutes
- b. Previously mentioned committee will be doing it for this year.

22. Open Floor: Comments and Questions

- a. Jonathan Wells commented that the choir rehearsal room is still not ADA-accessible although that's been a request for two years given some choir members have limited mobility.
 - a.i. Senior Warden, Joyce Bott noted that the difficulty with accessibility of the rehearsal room is two-fold, with the cost of making the current location ADA-accessible being one, and the lack of alternative spaces that are ADA-accessible that could house the rehearsal room, the extensive music library, and Patrick Pope's office being the other. She also noted that given other needs, this request has unfortunately been a low priority

- b. When will Vestry Minutes be made accessible on the HC website or posted on the Vestry bulletin board outside the acolyte vesting room in Atkinson?
 - b.i. Senior Warden, Joyce Bott responded that the Vestry's commitment is to make minutes available through both those ways as soon as the approved minutes are redacted for any confidential discussions, and that always takes time. She committed to having them posted by mid-December.
- c. When are we going to get a deacon?
 - c.i. The Vestry had a frank and confidential conversation with Bishop Sam Rodman when he was at HoCo for confirmations at the end of October. The problem is the scarcity of deacons local to our area. For context, it was noted while there aren't candidates for the diaconate in Charlotte available to be assigned, by contract in the Triangle area deacons can be as signed right away. Your Vestry challenged him to think of the diaconate in a new way. Has ideas but hasn't solved it yet. He is aware we need someone.

23. Announce New Vestry & Foundation Members (John Snelsire)

- a. New Vestry Members 2026: Tim Cavins, Jacqueline Howells, Niki Manke, and Diana Smith

24. Thank You & Closing Prayer (The Rev. Greg Brown)

- a. Special thanks staff of HOCO for "killing it" in 2023.
- b. Holly and Jessica's work in the Community Dinners. They need help and its coming. Requesting that Circle Groups to get into the habit of helping once a quarter.
- c. Trish has done an outstanding job with the website.
- d. Patrick has done a wonderful job with the choirs!
- e. A thank you to Sarah for her past service and help.
- f. Cat is BACK!!!! Thanks you to assisting clergy: Ed Pickup, Reggie Payne-Wiens, Earnest Graham, Barry Vaughn, and the Bishop, Sam Rodman.
- g. Thank you to the receptionist team in the office led by Penny Crawford!
- h. Delegates to the diocesan convention Karen Crane, Kathy Trotter, Mary Monahan, and Sissy Poland. And to alternates Simms Doster and Diana Smith
- i. Amy and Beth – a big thank you for youth and children
- j. Leadership quarterly meetings – thank you to Diana keeping us on track
- k. Gail – Anti-racism/Social Justics; Vicki and Mitzi Alexander – ASJ
- l. Patricia Hatch – new member and leader for Outreach Ministries Circle Group
- m. Edie Livingstone – Pastoral Care – largest group and we are all a huge part
- n. Paul Smith and the shofar
- o. Cathy, my wife – thank you for standing by Greg during all these crazy years
- p. Spiritual Director – Rosemary Hagan