

St. Mary's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting - Minutes
January 20, 2026

MEETING HELD IN PERSON, Smith Hall

In Attendance: David Noyes, Jacqueline Lorr, Lilly Freese, Emily Kiel, Kathy Connolly, Bob Oates, Bob Brown (Rector's Warden), Kristin Fecko, Wicker Perlis, Danielle Swann (People's Warden), Taylor Nimmer, Kaz Melianz, and including Father Joe (Rector), Father Christian (Vicar), Melissa Zolla (Parish Administrator) and Julie Sullivan (Clerk).

Attended via Phone: Maureen Cotter (Treasurer)

Absent: Taylor Nimmer

Father Joe called the Vestry meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

Opening Reflections

Kristin Fecko led the opening prayer and reflection titled "Ring out the Old, Ring in the New", a topic about bells. Discussion and reflection followed.

Minutes

Bob Brown motioned to approve the December 16th vestry minutes.

Kathy Connolly seconded. All in favor.

Committee Reports

Worship, Emily Kiel: Written report provided prior to meeting. Filed by Title. Report to be posted to the website. The following points were discussed:

- Altar Guild: Christmas: The Altar Guild operates quietly away from the congregation and priests. Our members lovingly give of their time before each of the seven services per week, and many more during Christmas and Easter. They polish the silver, clean, mend and properly lay out vestments and dress the altars and credence tables with reverence and respect. The linen clean and folded, the wine and wafers replaced and prepared. Smith Hall was prepared as a winter wonderland for overflow and last, but not least, all was cleaned up after each service.
- A/V Team: There continues to be a desperate need for help in that area.
- Choir: The choir has blessed us these past months with Choral Evensong, the performance of the Magnificat, Lessons and Carols, and the debut of Cherith Reynolds-Clarks' pieces for Christmas. Her arrangement of Silent Night was described as "glorious" by Brandon. Needs: Brandon wishes for more parishioners to be present at the Concert Series events, in order to reach out to people unfamiliar with the church, and connect the musical worship to St. Mary's.

- Flower Guild: The Flower Guild did an amazing job this Advent season, adorning the sanctuary and in the process reflecting the beauty and value of God. They worked hard to make the decorations change almost overnight, which takes a great deal of planning and long hours.
- Online Curators: The Saturday 5 pm and Sunday CFW services continue to have a live online curator. As of October 2025, with the clergy's input, we no longer have online curators for the Sunday Traditional Services.
- Praise Band: Since Tom Winter's departure, they have experienced a few technical challenges related to sound balance and clarity. Pat Channing has been giving thoughtful consideration to solutions that would be both effective and cost-conscious. Camie Buell and Richard Page have been wonderful additions, bringing both musical excellence and a joyful spirit to our ministry. Camie, in particular, did an outstanding job at the Christmas Eve Courtyard service. The feedback from the congregants was overwhelmingly positive.
- Ushers: We had such a great need for ushers for the traditional Christmas services that the team had think outside the box to provide. CFW has three new additions to the CFW Usher team.
- Worship Assistants, Acolytes, and Vergers: We are thankful for a number New acolytes and chalice bearers undergoing training in the traditional services.
- Final Notes: Our Christmas attendance was up 7.3% over last year for a total of 1388 attendees, with a significant increase in the courtyard Christmas Eve service.

Stewardship, David Noyes: Written report provided prior to meeting. Filed by Title. Report to be posted to the website. The following points were discussed:

- The Stewardship committee consists of the following members: Tim Cotter (chair), Father Joe, Father Christian, Lon King, Kaz Melians, Jill Britt, Steve Strickland, Lawza Glover-Famiano, Barry Marsh and Melissa Zolla.
- The committee formulated a plan by early December 2025 for the 2026 Stewardship Season which is currently in progress. This included Father Joe's Thanksgiving and Christmas letters and the production of testimonial videos. Expanding the Kingdom is the theme, utilizing the Parable of the Mustard Seed.
- The Heritage Society thank-you event will be held in Smith Hall, February 15, 2026. The Heritage committee members are Tim Cotter (chair), Danielle Swann, Jay Lovett, Tom Shumaker and Steve Strickland. Father Joe is an ex-officio member.
- The Volunteer recognition event is scheduled for March 1, 2026 in the St. Mary's courtyard.

Rector's Report, Father Joe: Written report provided prior to meeting. Filed by Title. Report to be posted to the website. The following points were discussed:

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- We are off to an inspirational start in this new year, between the Alpha course, new members joining, and cresting numbers of worshippers each weekend.
- In the midst of our stewardship campaign together, “Expanding The Kingdom,” we have witnessed powerful testimonies from our lay readers each Sunday this month with the themes of “Dignity”, “New Life”, “Radiance” and next weekend, “Belonging”.
- As we say goodbye to our outgoing vestry members, please accept our deepest appreciation for your service in bringing us through a vital era in our life together.
- Soon we will welcome our new vestry class and engage a strategic plan focusing on how to be faithful stewards of, among other things, personnel, property and finances. There is a rising sense of the need to be listening to precisely where God is leading in this next year as we deploy our resources. I join with you in taking prayer very seriously in this regard. Private prayer is a public power, meaning every action we take must be first surrendered in listening to and seeking God’s heart for who we are to be, and where we are to go as God leads us.

Vicar’s Report, Father Christian: Written report provided prior to meeting. Filed by Title. Report to be posted to the website. The following points were discussed:

- January has begun with extraordinary momentum, with the clearest sign of this has been the launch of the Alpha Course. Opening night welcomed 118 participants, supported by 20 dedicated team members. The response exceeded all expectations.
- Alpha: There was a sense of curiosity, joy and genuine connection. The culture of welcome and hospitality is the heart of the experience.
- Kate Abate is Father Christian’s co-lead. Her leadership has been instrumental in training and assembling an outstanding Alpha team. We are now engaging Stephen Leaders to help provide ongoing care and pastoral support for participants.
- The Hospitality team, led by Noreen Perez and John Norris, was a highlight of the evening. Each table was beautifully decorated by Noreen, including wrapped and ribboned Jesus Calling pages for participants to take home.
- Beyond Alpha, weekend attendance continues to reflect significant growth. On January 10-11, we welcomed nearly 600 people across services. We need to notice them, connect with them, and help them feel seen, welcomed, and invited into the life and programs of St. Mary’s.

Parish Administrator, Melissa Zolla: Written report provided prior to meeting. Filed by Title. Report to be posted to the website. The following points were discussed:

- Updated Expense & Check Request Process: A new form is now in use parish-wide, improving documentation, reinforcing internal controls and strengthening audit readiness.

- Vendor Documentation Standards: All payments now require a formal invoice that meets standard documentation requirements, including payments to musicians. This ensures consistency and accuracy within the accounting system.
- Stewardship & Staff Engagement: Melissa has met individually with each staff member to reinforce the importance of budget awareness and shared responsibility when planning projects or programs that involve parish resources. Going forward:
 - Staff will receive monthly budget updates.
 - Financial stewardship is being emphasized as a shared ministry responsibility and extension of our commitment to honoring donor trust.
 - Money Counters: Bob Brown has joined the Monday morning money counters, strengthening continuity and support for this important stewardship function.
 - Staffing Updates:
 - Yvette Odom, Welcome Coordinator (full-time with benefits), now staffs the front reception area, enhancing hospitality and parish communication.
 - Sarah Taylor, Assistant Youth Coordinator, (part-time 20 hours per week), will increase to 30 hours during Melinda's maternity leave, providing continuity in youth programming.

Rector's Warden Report, Bob Brown: Written report provided prior to the meeting. Filed by Title. Report to be posted to the website. The following points were discussed:

- We are blessed to have exceptional clergy in Father Joe and Father Christian with us. The fruit of their labor is expressed in our over 50 ministries. Their leadership, Pastoral Care, Spiritual Formation, and inspired preaching continues to provide us with excellent fruit for our individual and collective spiritual journeys. Bob is thankful for their Holy Spirit led leadership.
- We are blessed for the dedication of our many volunteers who have exhibited with their time and talent in support of St. Mary's. We continue to live into Jesus' great commission found in Matthew 28:16-20.
- "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

People's Warden Report, Danielle Swann: Written report provided prior to the meeting. Filed by Title. Report to be posted to the website. The following points were discussed:

- It has been Danielle's honor and joy to serve as your People's Warden during 2025. St. Mary's is truly a "Community of People" that continues to Expand the Kingdom through our growing congregation. We are truly a magical community.

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- Thank you to the retiring vestry members who have shared their gifts over the past three years. Each one of us helps us to be a better version of ourselves, collectively serving Him.
- During this past year, I have observed many “Views from the Pews”, and the golden thread is that the Holy Spirit continues to be fiercely at work on our treasured and blessed campus.

Treasurer’s Report, Maureen Cotter: Written report provided prior to meeting. Filed by Title. The report covered the following topics and discussion followed:

- December 2025 financial statements
- January 2026 Treasurer’s report

Emily Kiel motioned, and Kaz Melians seconded the motion to approve the Treasurer’s Report. The motion was unanimously passed.

Old Business

New Business

- St. Mary’s Heritage Fund, Amended Policies and Guidelines DRAFT
December 23, 2025

The requirement of approval of amendments to this policy requiring two-thirds approval of the Vestry at two consecutive, regularly scheduled meetings is found on page 6, item 13 of the 2012 policies. This requirement is found in the same place in the amended document. Given the importance of the Heritage Fund, the amended document maintains such a requirement. The detailed Vestry review/discussion will occur at the first meeting. If that goes well, the focus should be on the formal second vote.

Heritage Fund policy vote, part 1 of 2 parts:

Kathy Connolly motioned to approve the updated Heritage Fund Policies and Guidelines, dated December 23, 2025. Danielle Swann seconded. All in favor.

Next Vestry meeting: February 14, 2026

Closing Prayer

The Closing Prayer was offered by Father Christian.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 pm.

*** Written reports and detailed financial reports are available upon request. ***