

St. Mary's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting - Minutes
May 26, 2026

MEETING HELD IN PERSON, Smith Hall

In Attendance: Shannon Cooper, Alec Thyrrre, Kaz Melians, Lily Freese, Rob Morris, David Noyes, Bob Oates, Wicker Perlis, Danielle Swann (Rector's Warden), Kathy Connolly (People's Warden), and including Father Joe (Rector), Father Christian (Vicar), Tony George (Chancellor), Melissa Zolla (Parish Administrator), Maureen Cotter (Treasurer) and Julie Sullivan (Clerk).

Absent: Taylor Nimmer, Emily Kiel

Chancellor, Tony George, Esq.

The Vestry heard from its Chancellor regarding the Estate of Richard Ross, and the many lawsuits related to the Estate.

The Vestry hereby RESOLVED THAT Maureen Cotter, as Treasurer of the Vestry, is authorized to join with the Chancellor, The Reverend Joseph M. Shepley, Rector, of St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Stuart, Florida, Inc. have the authority to sign all closing documents for the homestead property; 2440 SE Bahia Way, Stuart, FL 34996 related to the Martin County Estate of Richard M. Ross.

Rob Morris motioned and Danielle Swann seconded. All in favor.

The Vestry understands the signing of documents for closing on the Ross homestead property. This resolution authorizes Maureen Cotter to have continual authority to sign on closing documents for the Ross Homestead located at 2440 SE Bahia Way, Stuart, FL 34996, on behalf of the Vestry so long as she serves as Treasurer. If the litigation is not concluded when Maureen Cotter's term as Treasurer concludes, then the Rector or Chancellor is requested to update the Vestry and receive further directions.

Opening Reflections

Bob Oates led the opening prayer and reflection based on Charlie Kirk's book "Stop in the Name of God". Discussion and reflection followed.

Minutes

Shannon Cooper motioned to approve the April 28th vestry minutes. Alec Thyrrre seconded. All in favor.

Committee Reports

Missions – On Campus, Bob Oates: Written report provided prior to meeting. Filed by Title. Report to be posted to the website. The following points were discussed:

- **Mary's Kitchen:** Mary's Kitchen serves a hot meal every Wednesday, averaging over 440 meals per week. In 2025, over 20,000 meals were served, marking a 37% increase from the previous year. To enhance the experience for guests, two new initiatives have been introduced: decorated tables to create a welcoming atmosphere and a zero-cost raffle featuring a gift basket, adding an element of joy and community engagement to the evenings. Mary's Kitchen requests meal sponsors.
- **St. Mary's Bookstore:** Operating Monday through Friday, 9 am – 3:30 pm, with additional hours during Sunday services. Over the past two years, it has generated approximately \$8,000 in income. Most books are priced at \$2 or less. Traditionally, net revenue flowed directly into the operating budget. Beginning 2026, the bookstore contributes a yearly pledge of \$3,000 to the operating budget, with the remainder allocated to operational costs and outreach ministries. This year's expenses include:
 - Religious books for 21 **baptismal candidates**
 - Quarters donated to **Family Promise** clients for laundromat use
 - Monthly hygiene kits distributed at Mary's Kitchen
 - Books for training **Eucharistic Visitors**
 - "Welcome to the Episcopal Church" pamphlets for newcomers
- St. Mary's Bookstore requests a street sign when campus signage is updated to increase visibility.

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:

- Newness of life among us a sign of the Holy Spirit moving. In this report I want to focus on two of our missional pillars and the newness of life therein: "A Healing Oasis" and "A Mission Post for Youth" (next month I will focus on a "A Community of Praise").
- In our Healing Oasis, newness of life has come forth with our growing Stephen Ministry leadership, expanding caring ministries (e.g., grief support) and the various ways we bring God's healing touch to the hurting.
- Another sign of God doing a new thing is the Healing Center of Martin County (HCMC) calling their Executive Director, Reverend Tara, to a full-time role.
The hiring of a licensed, bilingual social worker, Cristina Ognik, serving as Community Care Coordinator in the HCMC in alignment with St. Mary's is another sign of life among us. The proposal to transform Meeting Room 1 into a new community care center where Cristina will serve will be part of our discussion at our May vestry meeting.
- In our Mission Post for Youth, our new hire, Sarah Turner, has invited us all to new and creative ways to minister to our emerging generation.
- This weekend, we celebrate Pentecost with five baptisms, one of whom will be Malinda and Trey's daughter, Rainey, with her grandfather (Malinda's father), Pastor Rains, officiating over her baptism.

- With our new “United at 10” service, new life will be revealed, including the commissioning of new leadership for Family Promise.

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:

The Monterrey Community:

- St. Mary’s continues to foster a meaningful and growing relationship with the Monterrey Community near Willoughby and Monterrey. Over the past eight years, we have intentionally worked to build trust, presence, and authentic community with our neighbors through outreach, advocacy, and relational ministry.
- Due to generous donations designated to support this work, the Outreach Stewardship Committee has elected to partner with Americans for Immigrant Justice in supporting the opening of a new Martin County office located at House of Hope. This office will provide a 24-hour hotline for immigration-related emergencies and a walk-in legal clinic for in-person assistance.
- We are especially grateful for our longstanding relationship with immigration attorney Marisol Torres, whose work has consistently proven to be compassionate, trustworthy and effective.

Breaking Bread:

- The interfaith “Breaking Bread” Lunch and Learn series continues to be well received, averaging approximately 200 participants per session. This session’s theme, “Angels and Demons”, has sparked strong engagement and thoughtful discussion. Darcy Weir has once again helped create a compelling and meaningful program.
- Attendance and participation have been especially strong this season, perhaps reflecting a broader cultural hunger to better understand themes of good and evil, light and darkness, Heaven and hell, and the role faith plays in uncertain times.

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:

Insurance Review & Risk Management

- A comprehensive review of the church’s Property and Casualty insurance policy (CPG) has begun. Don Davis is assisting with this matter. Meeting directly with the company’s representative will help us better understand our current risks, identify any gaps in coverage, and ensure we understand the procedures and expectations should a major claim ever need to be filed.

Lead Sexton Search

- After a short but extensive search for a new Lead Sexton, we extended an offer to a candidate who has accepted the position. The applicant most

recently served as Facilities Manager at The Savannah Club for the past 4 years. The search generated more than 50 candidates.

Offering Counting Procedures

- Two issues related to offering collection and counting procedures have arisen in recent weeks. These situations indicate the need for stronger guardrails and accountability within our collection and accounting procedures

Technology & Infrastructure updates

- Following the recent internet and phone outage, proposals are getting obtained for a new phone system, along with a redesign and cleanup of the server room infrastructure. After meetings with IT and our internet provider, it was concluded that the church's phone server was the source of the problem. The overall system configuration needs to be addressed.
- As our campus continues to grow busier and staffing increases, our current technology infrastructure is being stretched beyond its capabilities. Updating these systems is necessary to maintain a professional and reliable operation.

Rector'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:

- During the Vestry retreat, we engaged in the foundational work for the first St. Mary's Strategic Plan. Thanks were expressed to the vestry members for spending the time to identify the golden threads that was observed in the SWOT Report for each of the Pillars: Healing Oasis, Mission Post for Youth, Community of Praise. This phase of creating the first Strategic Plan for St. Mary's is complete.
- The next phase of the Strategic Plan will be the Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT) to hear feedback from the voices of the congregation. The CAT has been used for Strategic Planning and has been used in thousands of congregations.
- A second survey for Youth will be developed.

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

News From the Pews

- The Memorial Garden needs some attention. The niches are coming out of the enclosure on the right side facing the cross. On the left side the caulking is separating from the niches and holes are occurring. Several of the concrete pavers around the Memorial garden are cracked and need replacing.
- The Funeral Policy: Updated are underway by Melissa Zolla, the Parish Administrator. The Fee Schedule will be brought to the Vestry for review and approval at June's meeting.

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

- **April 2026 financial statements**

- **May 2026 Treasurer's report**

Danielle Swann motioned, and Kaz Melians seconded the motion to approve the May 2026 Treasurer's Report. The motion was unanimously passed.

No additional homework was given to the vestry members this month.

Old Business

SafeChurch policies, Melissa Zolla: topic tabled until June 2026 meeting.

New Business

Meeting Room 1, Renovation and HVAC Refiguration proposal, Kaz Melians

- The purpose of this proposal is to obtain approval for the renovation of Meeting Room 1. This work is needed to expand The Healing Center, improve space utilization, and address related HVAC requirements needed to support the revised layout.
- The scope of the work includes creating a new opening between the Healing Center and Meeting Room 1, installing double French doors, removing and replacing existing ceiling and floor finishes, constructing a small storage area, installing cabinetry and a sink counter, and reconfiguring the HVAC system to provide appropriate temperature control for The Healing Center, Lucido and Associates, and Meeting Rooms 1 and 2.
- The total estimated cost for the proposed renovation and HVAC modifications is \$59,200, based on the itemized costs presented in the project estimate. This total excludes furniture, which is identified separately and remains to be determined.

Wicker Perlis motioned to approve the proposed Meeting Room 1 remodeling project and associated HVAC modifications, to support expansion of The Healing Center and improve the functionality of the affected areas. Rob Morris seconded. All in favor.

Next Vestry meeting:

June 23, 2026

Opening Reflection: Shannon Cooper

Committee Reports:

Caring Ministries, Taylor Nimmer

Adult Spiritual Formation, Emily Kiel

Closing Prayer

The Closing Prayer was offered by Father Christian.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 pm.

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