

**St. Mary's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting Minutes
August 25, 2026**

Meeting Held in person-Smith Hall

Meeting commenced at 6:31 pm

In attendance: Shannon Cooper, Taylor Nimmer, Kaz Melians, Wicker Perlis, Lilly Freese, Alec Thyrrre, Bob Oates, Emily Kiel, Father Christian Anderson (Vicar), Melissa Zolla (Parish Administrator), Kathy Connolly (People's Warden), Danielle Swann (Rector's Warden).

Attended via Zoom: David Noyes, Maureen Cotter (Treasurer).

Absent: Father Joe Shepley (Rector), Rob Morris.

Opening Reflections

Kaz Melians led the Reflection based on The Song of Moses (Exodus 15). Discussion and reflection followed.

Minutes

Shannon Cooper motioned to approve the June 23 vestry minutes. Danielle Swann seconded. All in favor.

Committee Reports

New Member, Alec Thyrrre: Written report provided prior to the meeting. Filed by Title. Report to be posted to the website. The following points were discussed: Alec discussed upcoming new member event "Blue Table Conversations" planned for September 13 following the 9am CFW and 10;30 am services. Refreshments will be served. Alec is very grateful for Yvette Odom and Genie DuPell. Currently 85 new members compared to 70 this time last year.

Breakdown of new members:

Members already in a lay ministry 20

Members who are children 20

Members in prayer 13

Members who report they are not ready 22

Members who have not responded to outreach 13.

Worship, Shannon Cooper: Written report provided prior to meeting. Filed by Title. Report to be posted to the website. Attendance and engagement at CFW continue to be strong. A small group has been formed to take a closer look at the worship portion of the CFW service, with a particular focus on music. Our goal is to make sure music is, first and foremost, a ministry and that everything about how it's planned and led reflects that. It's an intentional and non-partial

look at things like rehearsal practices, song selection, and how the team is spiritually supported and led among other areas.

As part of this evaluation, the group is also gathering direct, non-partial feedback from the congregation asking families and individuals when during worship they feel God's presence, what they connect with and what they don't. They are conducting interviews with a cross-section of members, different ages, family situations, and backgrounds. The group is interviewing approximately 30 families roughly 70 people total, with interviewing ongoing. The intent is to make sure we are hearing from a broad range of voices.

Traditional Service – the choir has been on break for the summer and will be returning this fall.

Youth Spiritual Formation Rob Morris provided a written report that will be further discussed at the September meeting.

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: This past Sunday Father Christian kicked off a sermon series – "3C's" Confession, Cross, and Community. This follows Matthew's progression from Pete's confession of Jesus as the Messiah, to Jesus 'call to take up the cross, and finally to Chapter 18 and Jesus 'teaching on life together in Christian Community.

Pastoral Needs of the Congregation

Thank you for the care you continue to give to the ministry leaders who fall under your liaison ship. Please check in with your team via phone call, text, or email. Please continue to let the office or clergy know if you are aware of someone in the hospital or experiencing a pastoral need.

Children and Youth

Looking for additional volunteers to assist in our children and youth ministries.

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:

Donna the manager of the thrift store has stepped down from her position.

Continuing to look to fill youth part -time position that works with Malinda.

Work has begun on the 2027 budget. Internet is doing well.

Kaz is getting quotes for the youth building – glass for above the exterior door. Kaz is also getting quotes for the Smith Hall windows.

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

Strategic Plan is in the works with a possible 4th pillar.

Holy Cow survey coming hopefully in October. Vestry will need extra time to review.

Targeting results in January.

200 additional copies of the St. Mary's coloring book are coming, with proceeds to Youth. Printing costs were covered by a donor.

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

1. After the Traditional services offer Stephen Ministers to pray with parishioners in the court yard.
2. New Members 4 Your – Four couples – 2 new couples to the church and 2 couples who have attended St. Mary's and are knowledgeable about the church gather together for a time to get to know each other. Suggestions for gathering dinner at a home or out a restaurant, meeting for coffee, going to the theater or other event. This let the new couples feel more comfortable at church since they now have a connection.
3. Home Communion – gathering at a parishioner's house and inviting neighbors to join in communion which would be home baked bread and wine.
4. In CFW service use the NIV Bible as much as possible instead of the Message.
5. Have ministry fairs more frequently or a way to better educate the church on ministries.
6. Helpful easy online instructions to get on and view the services via You Tube, Facebook, or churches website.
7. Fix the audio at the CFW streaming so the band and the sermon are the same sound level. People who view have commented that the band is very loud and that the sermon is very hard to hear – the viewer is constantly having to adjust the volume.
8. Have Pastor Elker and others from East Stuart churches come over and sing.
9. Increase Youth leadership opportunities.
10. Occasionally vary musical instruments – have a special guest with different instrument than is seen regularly with the band.
11. Encourage children's participation during the last hymn -with the streamers up front (like Rev. Patsy did).
12. Ensure visitors and new members get a list of the ministry guide describing all available groups and ministries.
13. Focus on hospitality and community. Members should intentionally welcome new members, build personal relationships, and encourage participation in ministries and life groups. Personal contact is far more effective than simply providing printed information.
14. Involve the children and youth in worship, particularly through serving at the altar. This experience helps young people develop a lifelong connection with the church.
15. Traditional service - encourage people at the Peace to go all around the church including the back of the church greeting people.
16. Occasionally have services outside somewhere -park or Beach?
17. Clarity needed regarding life groups, small groups, and Parish groups. Parishioners want to know the difference.

18. Explain what Pathway's is and the future plans.
19. Parishioners are having a hard time find the Good News Daily on the Website. Does anyone else have this problem?

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

July 2026 Treasurer's report

August 2026 Treasurer's report

Taylor Nimmer motioned and Kaz Melians seconded the motion to approve both Treasurer's Reports. The motion was unanimously passed.

Old Business

The Treasurer provided a brief update on the Ross estate litigation.

New Business

Seacoast Line of Credit - written report was given to the vestry prior to meeting. After thorough discussion, Danielle Swann motioned and Shannon Cooper seconded the motion to approve the following resolution which was unanimously passed.

The Vestry of St. Mary's Episcopal Church approves establishing a \$500,000 line of credit with Seacoast National Bank. Authorized signors for the agreement and any related loan documents are The Reverend Joseph M. Shepley, Rector and Maureen Cotter, Treasurer.

Next Vestry Meeting: September 22, 2026

Opening Reflection: TBD

Committee Reports:

Communications, Wicker Perlis

Caring Ministries, Taylor Nimmer

Closing Prayer

The Closing Prayer was offered by Father Christian

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.