

**St. John the Evangelist Church  
Parish of Douglas and Nashwaaksis  
Parish Meeting October 6, 2019**

Rev. Paul Ranson opened the meeting with prayer. Ben Mersereau, Treasurer, chaired the meeting and explained what would be covered.

### **Financial**

Including the current year, we are projecting a \$15,000 deficit, and we have had a deficit four out of the last six years. He reviewed the results of the last few years. We have very little working capital to meet our day to day needs. Offerings can depend on the season. Expenses are always there. Ben showed a slide giving the breakdown of revenue and expenses. Vestry voted to transfer \$12,000 from the Rectory Fund to help with day to day operations. Offerings are about \$15,000 to \$16,000 behind last year.

The funds available for Stone Church maintenance were explained, as well as the restrictions pertaining to the Stone Church Trust Fund. Vestry looked into the possibility of accessing these funds. It is still inconclusive as to whether or not we can access them at this time, as we have not been able to obtain a definitive answer.

### **Questions and Comments**

The floor was opened to questions and comments from the congregation, summarized below:

**Barb Hawkins** - wonders if we are a “cash cow” for the diocese. She asked why we pay the diocese \$55,000 a year, and how are we assessed. Can that be changed? Ben explained that there is a formula in place that looks at the last three years of revenue stream. The more the revenue, the greater percentage of assessment. We don’t have any say as to how that is done, but there are avenues to apply for relief of the assessment. We have in the past had higher revenue.

**Dick Burgess** - In 2006 we did identify that there was a 20% shortfall that needed to be made up, and that never happened. All of these deficits have just been following along since then. Unless we address the problem, we will continue in this position. We need to address stewardship and numbers.

**Irene Adams** - A temporary relief system was instituted in 2014, and it was designed for parishes like ours that are in a crunch. You can apply for temporary relief, based on financial situation, how it will be addressed, outreach, etc. You do not have to repay it, but you can if you are in a better position in a few years. There are larger parishes than ours who have applied and received relief.

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**Lynda Wood** - This is an old story. There were periods of time when we didn't pay our diocesan assessments because we couldn't. She feels a lot of members have "walked out the door" in the last few years. It is a challenge to bring in new members. She feels it is time to try to rejuvenate.

**Irene Adams** - She asked how much does the general offering drop off in the summer? Mary said it could be \$1,000 per week.

**Louisa Rice** - She feels more people should consider the e-offering so their contributions are going in each week.

**Angus Hamilton** - He realizes that he hasn't increased the amount of his e-offering and that he should do it. He encourages people to consider this.

**Lisa Stewart-Munn** - Are the salary numbers reflective of shared ministries? John's salary is paid 60% by the diocese and is included.

**Harold Rice** - He commented that they have recently increased their e-offering amount. During the winter, they attend church in Florida and also give offerings there.

**Mary Robinson** - All you have to do is come in and sign a form to increase the e-offering amount.

**Barb Hawkins** - asked Mary if the forms could be made available and easy to find. They are on the grey shelves in the hallway.

**Lisa Stewart-Munn** - She prefers e-transfer instead of e-offerings, where it is automatically coming out of her account.

### **Stone Church Working Group Report**

Roger Schwartz gave a review of the Stone Church Working Group report. Members of the committee included Michael Clark, Steve Hart, Ben Mersereau, Jeanne Sayre, Kim Rickard, Bob Thomas, Dennis Williams and Roger Schwartz, with thanks to Clifford Hay and Angus Hamilton.

The committee consulted with a number of contractors and suppliers and had a lot of helpful data come back, although very broad. See the committee report as to what they mainly looked at.

### **Questions and Comments**

The floor was again opened to the congregation.

**Kim Rickard** - She asked if we ever heard back from Scott McLeod about a columbarium. Steve Hart said they approached him about interest in a columbarium, and he said he was interested. There has been no definitive answer given yet. Roger mentioned that it might be very difficult to build a positive business case for many reasons.

**Ben Mersereau** - He gave a clarification of costs on page 2 of the report. Some of the expenses listed might not be needed immediately, and some expenses might be lower than listed. We looked at the possibility of cleaning the building ourselves.

Roger said the roof on the back side of the building is in desperate shape. This would be at the top of the list of things that must be done. The stained-glass window above the altar - the storm window is rotting at the bottom and should be replaced. The dehumidifier did reduce the humidity rate and would prevent the growth of new mold. Heat pumps would also contribute to drying the air.

**Dick Burgess** - He said it looks like vestry needs to spend at least \$20,000 on upgrades this year.

Roger said we might not be able to get anybody to do the roof this late in the year. Dick said the stewardship is part of the problem, and we might need to find new sources of revenue. Roger said it would be approximately \$15,000 to take the building down.

**Sandy Meikle** - What is the need for a second building? Roger said that is a question for the congregation and not for him.

**Irene Adams** - She asked how can we talk about spending \$20,000 on a building that needs significant upgrade when we are having problems paying our operating costs?

**Isabel Martin** - She asked where is the money that was given for church repairs? Why can't it be used for that? Ben said there is a separate maintenance fund that has accumulated to \$70,000. Some thought this could be used for repairs on the stone church. In the past, there was much disagreement about this, so vestry needed a resolution to the issue, did some work with the diocese on trust funds, and parameters were set up. Only half of the interest per year can be used, and the principal cannot be accessed until \$100,000 is attained. We have sought legal advice as to whether we could get around this, and we have not gotten a clear resolution. It can be used for the new building if the stone church is demolished.

**Bill MacKenzie** - What is the likelihood of us reaching \$100,000? Are we 12 to 15 years away from achieving this? The building will be crumbling and falling down before we can use the money in the maintenance fund.

**Angus Hamilton** - He feels there is a need to keep the stone church with a view to trying to

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increase our numbers, and that it would cost much more to build a new sanctuary. He is willing to contribute significantly to stone church repairs.

**Dick Burgess** - What does it take for a motion to legally access the \$70,000 fund? Ben thought that because vestry established the parameters that vestry should now be able to change them, but the legalities are not clear. There has been no clear legal advice that we can do it.

**Lisa Stewart-Munn** - She doesn't have an emotional connection to the stone church, but she does have an emotional connection to the congregation. The building is not accessible, not large enough for growth, and it means children have to be moved across the street for Sunday School.

Roger said the idea of a broad campaign was brought up at their meeting. This would be something to think about.

**Cynthia Gullison** - why can't we have a vote as to whether we can take the money out of that fund to repair the church? This has already been covered regarding legality.

**Kim Rickard** - She clarified that it is a legal problem as to why we can't access that money. Since she joined the committee, several people she has talked to in the community said they would contribute to a fundraising campaign.

**Tim Rickard** - Is the \$70,000 only for the stone church? If someone gave \$30,000 could the money be accessed? The answer is no.

**Clifford Hay** - There are a number of people in the congregation and in the past who have given money toward the stone church, and he has a problem using any of that money for demolition. Is there a possibility that the church could borrow from the fund with the intent of reimbursing the fund in the future?

**Isabel Martin** - She feels we are getting away from why we are here. She feels the congregation needs to decide what the building would be used for in the future before deciding to take on the repairs. Roger feels there might be a market for a small chapel.

**Jackie Meikle** - Would this be a one-time fix of the stone church, or will we still be bleeding money in the future to keep it up?

**Kathleen Chambers** - She was here at a meeting a year ago, and she then asked what the purpose was of leaving the stone church and coming here, and she has heard very good reasons. Why are we holding on to the building? We are here to glorify the Lord, not a church.

**Irene Adams** - If you have money in trust, vestry cannot approve withdrawal from a fund with

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parameters. She doesn't think it would be a good idea to borrow from the fund, as it could affect our charitable status among other things.

Rev. Paul reiterated that we are here to ask questions, not make a decision.

**Harold Rice** - He feels there are only two solutions to the problem of the stone church - demolition or turn it into a columbarium.

**Rev. Canon Bruce McKenna** - thanked Ben and Roger, and the Stone Church Working Group for all the work they have done. It is disheartening to know the financial position we are in, but it seems that some ideas are being brought forth to remedy this problem.

**Kimberly Ranson** - The cost of accessibility doesn't seem to have been addressed in the report. Roger said it would depend on how the building would be used.

**Lynda Wood** - There have been discussions that St. John's might be the primary Anglican Church on the north side because of shrinking congregations. That is one reason why we built a new building. We need to be able to accommodate more young families.

**Barb Hawkins** - She thinks we should all be ashamed of this situation, and that we are talking about getting rid of a church that was built in the 1800's. She thought one reason for the new building was to bring in more people. Are we too proud to tell people that we are having problems financing a building, let alone a little stone church?

Rev. Paul closed the meeting to questions and comments. He asked the congregation to hold hands, and we recited The Lord's Prayer and The Grace.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Jones, Vestry Clerk

