

Grace Episcopal Church
Amherst, Massachusetts
Vestry Meeting Minutes
April 29, 2025

A meeting of the Vestry was convened by the Rev. Tom Synan on April 29, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Mike Gralenski, Rachel Blain, Patrick Kelly, Cara Crandall, Tim Hampson, Nate Marino, Carolyn Collette, Katie Schendel, Donna Devine, Sarah Chadwick, Kathy Glime, Peter Sikowitz, Joe Hazlip, the Rev. Tom Synan and Tom Dougherty (recording)

Absent: Libby Maxey

Rachel Blain, who has been “tagged” as the “prayer person” at Eaglebrook School at their Sunday evening program, gave us insight as to what some of her student’s thoughts are regarding spirituality; many of them pray every night. She read a short poem by E. E. Cummings (1894-1962).

Clerk's Report

March minutes: approved unanimously with no recommendations (Rachel moved, Mike G. seconded). Tom Synan mentioned that the Vestry meeting minutes will be in Grace Notes as a link going forward. This link will connect to the most recent Vestry meeting minutes. If parishioners need to view more meeting minutes, directions would be included in Grace Notes for going to the main web page and clicking a link there. If further notes are needed parishioners can contact the office. A recent copy of the minutes will be posted in the Connector as well.

Tom also mentioned that he will direct Terrie to notify the congregation that we are initiating a new directory with pictures of our parishioners. The last one was done in 2022, and we have many new faces. Sara Chadwick mentioned that with the new directory, it is a good time to update phone numbers and email addresses as many of these have changed. Parishioners will have the option of using their old picture or submitting a new one. We will check with parishioner Doug Moore to see if he is available to take photos for newer parishioners or those who want an updated photo. We are hoping to start the process ASAP, to have a new directory ready for Fall 2025.

Finance Report

Tim reports that after one quarter we are in good standing. On May 10 there will be an informational meeting about setting up our church audit with parishioner volunteers. The financial reports were accepted and reviewed with no recommendations (Rachel moved, Katie seconded).

Rector's Report

Tom S. reviewed a list of events during the past month: Margo McMahon’s memorial service held at Grace Church, Randy Wilburn’s memorial service at Immanuel Lutheran Church, which both Megan and Tom vested for. Tom mentioned that Randy was the interim Priest before Tom arrived at Grace Church. Randy served at both Lutheran and Episcopal churches throughout Massachusetts when needed. He was a man of boundless energy and grace.

Throughout Lent, Megan led Monday Meditations while Tom reviewed the book *How We Learn to be Brave* by Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde with interested parties. The Haiti fundraiser for constructing a new classroom raised 13K.

Easter week went very smoothly thanks to help from many parishioners. Guest speakers were Caleb Ireland, the Rev. Raisin Horn, and the Rev. Dr. Carolyn Sharp. Bishop Doug presided over our Maundy Thursday Service. We had a mishap in the Columbarium during our Vigil service on Saturday night; a parishioner fell, due to no lighting and the small height of the various steps throughout the Columbarium. Mike Gralenski came to aid our fallen parishioner. Tom S. asked to form a small committee to be made up of Mike Gralenski, Sara Chadwick, and Helen Drake (who tend to the Columbarium gardens), Tom Dougherty, and our sexton, Dave Goodhind to report back in May what we might do so this does not happen again. We'll consider increased lighting or other visual assistance for navigating steps and dark areas. The church looked great throughout Easter and into the following week when Grace Church hosted the Bach Festival, which had two concerts: one on Saturday and another on Sunday.

As we were having our Zoom meeting Grace Church was hosting a Gospel concert to benefit Amherst A Better Chance.

Upcoming events at Grace Church include Venetian Vespers, a concert by the Arcadia Players on Saturday, May 3 at 7:30 p.m.; tickets must be purchased. On Saturday May 10 at 4:00 p.m. Kell Julliard will host a celebration of Hildegard of Bingen who was a writer, composer, philosopher, mystic, visionary, and a medical writer and practitioner during the High Middle Ages. She was ahead of her time.

A memorial service for Dee Dee Niswonger may be held on Saturday, July 5.

Senior Warden's Report

Kathy is back after a five-week visit with family, traveling back and forth between Phoenix, Palm Springs and LA.

We hope to plan an in-person Vestry meeting, possibly a potluck sometime in July.

Initiating a new directory for this coming fall is a great way for newcomers to get to know the people at Grace Church and for long-term parishioners to get to know newcomers.

Junior Warden's Report

Tom D. reports deficiencies found during the town fire inspection of the Grace Church campus have been corrected by David Goodhind, our sexton. Fire Equipment technicians were in on Monday, April 28 and inspected the sprinkler system, suppression system on our kitchen hood, our antifreeze in the sprinkler system, and fire extinguishers, and they changed over two fire monitoring controls.

A bank of niches for the Columbarium should arrive next week, and we will then schedule a time to install them with supervision from Rob Baker of Matthews Niche Company. Mike Gralensky and Tom D. will be assisting the Garden Ministry this Saturday, May 3 from 9:00 to noon on the church grounds. Mike mentioned that Vestry members are welcome to help.

Tom D. has not heard much about adding an outdoor compost area to the church campus grounds.

AGI, the energy savings company, has been in contact with Tom D., despite our original contact, Rafael, moving on to another place of employment. Our new contact at AGI is Ruy Frago and he will update us shortly on the current status of our plan to add insulation to the Rectory attic and basement.

Tom Synan closed the meeting with a prayer.

Next meeting: Tuesday, May 20th on Zoom.