

Grace Episcopal Church
Amherst, Massachusetts
Vestry Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2025

A meeting of the Vestry was convened by the Rev. Tom Synan on October 21, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

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

Absent: Cara Crandall

Kathy opened by sharing the Litany for the Restoration of Peace in the Holy Land, which appears in Grace's "What's Happening this Week at Grace Church" e-newsletter. The prayer comes from the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.

Clerk's Report: Libby encourages Vestry members to add their names to the hospitality volunteer spreadsheet. Approval of September minutes: Rachel moves to accept them, and Carolyn seconds; the motion passes unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Revenues are ahead of budget, and expenses are down, so, as has been the case since the summer, so we're still in good shape. Rachel moves to approve the Treasurer's Report, and Carolyn seconds: the motion passes unanimously.

Rector's Report: Since we last met, we had the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels, with a picnic following, which seemed to be a success. Tom D. notes that the Brother Lawrence Guild has some new members, and others helped out at the picnic as well (Sandy Muspratt chipped in with cleanup). We set places for 111, and they were all used. Tom S. commends Kathy Glime and Katie Schendal for helping to coordinate some extra welcome for newcomers at the picnic. We concluded the season of creation care with the Feast of St. Francis, on which occasion we commissioned Climate Action, the Garden Committee, the children's choir, *and* had a blessing of the gardens at/after the Oct. 5 service. The children's choir's first performance was quite impressive; they'll sing again for All Saints Sunday. We have concluded the Not Bread Alone food drive, and now we're moving on to our annual collection of Thanksgiving stuffing for the Survival Center. We will have a baptism this coming Sunday. Last Sunday, Susan Schaeffer presided and James McDonald preached while Tom was away; this coming Sunday, Susan will preach and Raisin Horn will preside. Tom spoke to Megan recently, and it sounds like she's doing well, but is, of course, mired in both her own classwork and grading student work. Arline Wright's memorial will be on Nov. 3 at 11:00 a.m. On Saturday, Nov. 8 at 4:00 p.m. we'll have the Harvest Concert, a fundraiser for the organ fund. The first week in November there are meet-and-greets scheduled with the three candidates to be our new bishop—two from Connecticut, one from New York. One meet-and-greet will be in the Berkshires, one in the Pioneer Valley (Nov. 6:00 p.m. at the Cathedral), and one in the Worcester area. Tom will go to the one in the Berkshires, and anyone else is welcome to attend. The next time we meet as a Vestry, a bishop will have been elected. Donna Devine and Nancy Lowry will be our delegates to

the Diocesan Convention; Tom S. will be there, and Chris Freitag is our alternate. Charlie Tebbetts has agreed to take over chairing the stewardship committee; pledge materials are set to go out in the coming week. Bruce Stebbins will still help, but wanted to step down from chairing. The children's choir has made a tree which we're thinking will be displayed until Advent. Mike wonders if we could get together for a potluck as a Vestry before the holidays; Tom D. notes that the executive committee thought we might do that in January, after the holidays.

Senior Warden's Report: Kathy will send out an email poll to see if the Vestry prefers to meet in person before or after the holidays. October is the month when she washes and irons the linens from the Sunday service, and she encourages others to get involved with this work, which is precise, but meditative. The Altar Guild would love to have help! Washing the linens is an unusual process that involves putting them not in the dryer, but in the refrigerator for two days, *then* ironing them.

Following up on the work of the recently formed art committee—Jane Wald, Sandy Lillydahl, and Suzannah Fabing—Kathy has sent around the new policy for art donations, along with a checklist for the decision-making process. Kathy and Tom S. note that aside from new art donations, we should also assess what we have on the walls throughout our campus, and consider why things are where they are, and whether we still want them there. The Vestry needs to vote to approve these documents. Tim moves to do so, Mike seconds, and the motion passes with one abstention.

Kathy invites Sarah to update us on the work of the Communications Committee. She and Patrick met with Vicky Ix, particularly because of concerns about privacy with the debut of the children's choir. We do livestream the service, but we're not allowed to post images of children to the internet, including Facebook/Instagram, without parental permission. (Arianne did secure that permission from parents of children's choir members in advance.) The Communications Committee has been quite active promoting things like the children's choir—posting flyers in the local library, putting an event announcement in the Gazette, including an ad for the children's choir on social media, but Vicky suggested that it's not a good idea for churches to post ads. Patrick notes that these activities are by request; the Communications Committee promotes because they're asked to promote. But they don't want others to be concerned about what they're doing. Tom S. thinks that promoting ministries of the church should be fine; that's a matter of encouraging people to come and participate in Grace Church. If something is not a ministry of the church, we shouldn't promote it. If the committee were unsure, members could check in with Tom and/or the Vestry for guidance. Vicky was adamant that we shouldn't leave the church directory out at the bazaar or on a table in the connector, since directories can be picked up by scammers for unscrupulous purposes.

Patrick says it's a policy of the diocese that we're supposed to notify people that they'll appear in the service livestream; we could put a notice in the bulletin, in the seasonal booklets in the pews, by the doors to the church, etc. Sarah and Patrick have drafted some language for this. Vicky also said that we should be sure to let people know that they can choose not to appear; ushers can direct people to sit in non-visible places and to take communion in the back if being filmed is a concern. Sarah and Patrick have drafted a waiver based on diocesan regulations, which we can make available in future. We also have to consider whether we have the right license to post a

service on our YouTube channel that includes a copyrighted choir anthem, as it would remain there after the livestream. Tim wonders if we should have some legal counsel to direct us in these matters, rather than trying to figure things out for ourselves. Tom D. notes that we are guided by the diocese in this. Rachel notes that if filming the congregation is problematic, we don't have to film communion. Tom D. says that the livestream already has a number of different views, most of which focus on the altar, but we could add another—perhaps a close-up of a stained glass window—to use during communion. Sarah and Patrick have prepared a ten-point list of things for us to consider so that we can make sure we're managing our media use appropriately. Since most of us haven't yet seen this list, Tom thinks we should take this up in the longer conversation at our November meeting. Sarah will forward the document to Libby to share with the Vestry.

Looking ahead, Kathy notes that it will soon be time to think about new nominations for the Vestry. Donna and Cara will be leaving the Vestry in February, but Tom will check to make sure of who else is stepping down.

Junior Warden's Report: We have two feasibility study quotes; a third has been solicited, but it might be another week before we have it. We're in the realm of \$10,000 for the study alone. Tom D. attended the recent Climate Action meeting; they meet every other month, and he may ask another Vestry member to fill in if he can't attend. They were encouraging church members to support the Amherst Farmers Market, before it stops for the season. We need to spend about \$7,000 from the maintenance budget to replace a safety panel in the Rectory, and it would be prudent to take care of that before the end of the year. The new fire notification box won't need the two phone lines, so replacement will save us some money over time. Rachel moves to approve the expense, and Tim seconds: the motion passes unanimously. When Tom S. is back from NYC, he and Tom D. will take a look at some options for a central railing to support those climbing the four steps that lead up to the altar. Tom D. is mindful that aesthetics matter, but it's very important the ushers and all parishioners feel comfortable climbing those stairs. The special pads we need to buff the sanctuary floor between the pews never arrived, so we still need to acquire those before we can work on the floors. Sexton Dave is still keen to do this work. Meanwhile, he and Tom D. rented a machine to clean the carpets in the church, parish hall, etc. The church carpets cleaned up nicely, but there are a number of stubborn stains in the parish hall, and we may need to think about carpet replacement there.