

Grace Episcopal Church
Amherst, Massachusetts
Vestry Meeting Minutes
January 20, 2026

A meeting of the Vestry was convened by the Rev. Tom Synan on January 20, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. in the Connector.

Present: Kathy Glime, Libby Maxey (recording), Rachel Blain, Donna Devine, Michael Gralenski, Sarah Chadwick, Peter Sikowitz, Tim Hampson, Tom Dougherty, and Patrick Kelly

Absent: Carolyn Collette, Nate Marino, Joe Hazlip, and Katie Schendel

Peter opened the meeting with a meditation about loving the stranger, recognizing the image of God in every person, and remembering that all believers are considered foreigners in this world.

Clerk's Report: Tom D. motioned to approve the December 16 minutes; Tim seconded the motion, which then passed.

Treasurer's Report: The 2026 budget is not ready for approval, so we've set a meeting date to approve it online next week (Tuesday, Jan. 27 at 7:00 p.m.), before the annual meeting. Tim will be in touch with Rich to settle financial details. We have 140 pledges so far, roughly \$536,000. We came in within \$10,000 of budget for 2025, but did *not* end with a surplus as we had assumed we would. In 2026, we're budgeting for some new hymnals (Voices Found, see Rector's Report below), and for increased heating expenses. Approval of the report: Michael motioned, Rachel seconded the motion, and the report was approved.

Rector's Report: Since our last meeting, we've had Advent suppers/brunches, a successful Messiah Sing, Lessons and Carols with Bishop Doug (which raised \$3,000 raised for Human to Human), and our usual Christmas services. The 4:00 p.m. pageant service continues to draw in the most people, but attendance seemed to be down this year; the other three services (8:00 p.m., 11:00 p.m. and Christmas morning) all had higher attendance than in recent years. There has been some talk in the past of cancelling the 11:00 p.m. service, but Tom S. has felt very strongly about not disrupting people's traditions by cancelling a Christmas service. We had about 70 attendees at this year's 11:00 service. Tom S. thinks that we should consider doing Epiphany Lessons and Carols on the last Sunday of Epiphany in future, so that people can enjoy singing those hymns as they did at the anomalous Epiphany L&C service on January 4. Noah has requested that Voices Found be added to the hymnals in the pews; we've sung some pieces from that hymnal already, printed as inserts. The hymns are more contemporary, with lyrics composed by women. A gift of \$1,500 has been offered toward the purchase (total cost expected to be under \$4,000). Tom D. wonders if this one-time purchase could come, in part, out of one of our little funds, if they're not restricted.

We're in need of Safe Church training, with new childcare workers on the promises. Tanya Wallace used to run these sessions live, but she has left the area; the rest of the Diocese has long

been going through the training via webinars. Tom S. has reached out to Bishop Doug to see if we can be connected to the same Safe Church training outfit that others are already using.

Senior Warden's Report: Kathy, Sarah, and Donna have been working on nominations for new members; Cara has been less involved because of her health. There were more interested people than open Vestry positions this year, but some weren't ready to commit, given other obligations. Those who were relatively new to the church were flattered to have been nominated by someone in the congregation. The nominees for the Vestry are as follows: Charlie Tebbetts, Gail Gnatek, Harold Norris, and Janet Durfee (2-year term); Tom Dougherty will become senior warden, Mike Gralenski will become junior warden, and Tim and Libby are staying on in their current roles. Donna will remain a delegate to the diocesan convention; we'll have to nominate a second person as well. Henry Maxey is nominated as the youth rep.

The Parker Room is already morphing into a more kid-friendly space in response to the new plan to limit nursery care to those under 4 (4 at the oldest). Heidi Erickson is still seeing to recruiting and hiring staff for the nursery; we'll now be offering \$25 per hour to make sure that we can retain reliable staff. We need to have two adults in the space at all times, and we'll need two other adults in the Parish Hall to handle liturgical arts activities for the older children during the Liturgy of the Word. We're also following through on the experiment of moving children's supplies to the south corner at the back of the church, so that children are less likely to wander out of the sanctuary (although caregivers are expected to be with their children in the church at all times). Tom has spoken to all the groups impacted by these changes, including groups that will move their meetings from Parker Room to Fireplace Room (i.e., Climate Action and the Men's Group). Sunday, February 8 will be the first day for the new children's program. Sarah suggests that some cushions be made available near the new location of the children's bookshelf, since caregivers and children do sit on the floor while perusing materials.

Junior Warden's Report: Tom D. is helping the Brother Lawrence Guild prepare for the Annual Meeting; they'll set up for 112, since we had about 100 last year, and we'll expect a large turnout if the weather isn't a deterrent. All the usual food and drink will be offered. John Robinson and Chris Freitag had a meeting with the company performing the air conditioning feasibility study last week, so the study is now underway. Tom D. share any information as soon as it's available.

Vote to approve the slate for the 2026 Vestry: Rachel moved to accept the slate, Michael seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Tom S. acknowledged Kathy for two years of service as senior warden, and Sarah, Nate, Joe, Donna, and Cara for their contributions over the years to the Vestry. He also announced that he has decided to retire this year; Pentecost Sunday will be his last, since that seems like an appropriate transition moment. He'll send a letter to the congregation tomorrow, so that the full congregation is aware of his intentions prior to the Annual Meeting. He'll have been here 13 years, and will have turned 65 before he retires. He is excited to see what's to come for this parish, and he's planning to stay in the area, although he'll step away from Grace for a time, to allow space for the discernment process. Tom D. notes that we'll probably start a search in the fall, and may have an interim priest for around a year. We expect the new priest to be involved in

hiring a new priest associate to fill Megan's position (which we'll continue to include in the budget).

Addendum:

On Tuesday, January 27, 2026, a dedicated session was convened to review and formally vote on the proposed budget for 2026. The following individuals were present:

Joe Hazlip, Katie Schendel, Patrick Kelley, Peter Sikowitz, Rachel Blain, Rebecca Grant, Sarah Chadwick, Tom Dougherty, Kathy Glime, Tim Hampson, and Tom Synan.

During the meeting, Mr. Tim Hampson, who had previously circulated the budget documentation via email, presented the financial plan. Ms. Katie Schendel helped to facilitate the discussion by sharing the document online.

Mr. Hampson reported that the Finance Committee had conducted a thorough review and subsequently approved this budget prior to the meeting, recommending its acceptance. Various line items within the budget had been carefully adjusted to accurately reflect the actual expenditures of the current fiscal year and projected areas of increase were added.

Following a discussion and consideration, Mr. Tom Dougherty put forth a motion to accept the budget as presented. This motion was then seconded by Ms. Rachel Blain, leading to its unanimous adoption.

We appreciate the diligent efforts of all involved in preparing and reviewing the financial plan.

Additionally, a unanimous decision was made to approve Grace Church's partnership with LUCE to cosponsor bystander training. We have also offered our facilities for any additional training sessions needed. This is an important step for our community.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Glime