

Grace Episcopal Church  
Amherst, Massachusetts  
Vestry Meeting Minutes  
March 17, 2026

A meeting of the Vestry was convened by the Rev. Tom Synan on March 17, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom.

Present: Libby Maxey (recording), Rebecca Grant, Rachel Blain, Michael Gralenski, Peter Sikowitz, Tim Hampson, Tom Dougherty, Patrick Kelly, Katie Schendel, Carolyn Collette, Charlie Tebbetts, Steven Wilco

Absent: Harold Norris, Henry Maxey, Gail Gnatek, Janet Durfee

Rector Transition: Steven Wilco, Canon to the Ordinary, opened the meeting to discuss our transition after Tom S.'s departure. There are four basic phases to be expected: saying goodbye, discernment process, search process, and welcoming the new rector. We're encouraged to take the rest of the time we have with Tom to celebrate him—perhaps with more than one event. The diocese has some suggestions for going forward, first, that the retired clergy in our congregation collaborate to cover the summer. Steven hopes to set up a meeting with those clergy and Bishop-elect Miguelina soon. During the summer, we should plan to do a search for a suitable interim rector. Ministry is always evolving, so this is our chance to consider where we've been and where we're going in the next fifteen years. We need to put together an initial profile for the interim search, and create our parish profile, which will be posted on the official Episcopal Church website (searchable only by Episcopal priests); it will also be posted to the Episcopal News Service and the Transition Ministry Conference site. The latter will put the word out to ministers in the eastern third of the country. Then comes the deeper work of preparing to seek our next rector. The Transition Ministry Conference happened just recently, and Grace wasn't presented then, since we're not actively searching yet. Steven thinks that that event is less useful than it used to be in making matches, but if we were ready in March of 2027, it could be helpful to promote our search at that conference. The reality is that the world of the church is different than it was the last time we searched, so we won't have as many candidates as we would have had in the past. We'll need to create a search team, and we'll eventually have an opportunity to meet final candidates as a parish. Bishop-elect Miguelina has an interest in working with transition consultants for larger parishes—somebody who can help facilitate the discernment work. That would be an investment of \$3,000 or \$4,000.

Rachel asks if there's a distinct timeline; Steve thinks eighteen months ideally, probably not less, but it might be two years, all told. We'd hope to find our interim by September—November 1 at the latest. Katie wonders what we need to have in place before Tom S. leaves at the end of May. She also wants to be sure that we can draw on Tom S.'s experience when he was new to the parish, to make sure that we can learn from it and better prepare to welcome the next rector. Steven says it's absolutely appropriate to do a serious exit interview with Tom. We will also need to identify the areas that need to be covered in Tom S.'s absence: liturgical planning, pastoral care, supervising the staff of the congregation, etc. We'll need to make this list and figure out who's going to be responsible for essential duties. Patrick wonders if there's a template for the

church profile we have to prepare. Steven says that there is; he has just received the new one, which has seventeen different questions, of which we're invited to answer at least five to define our parish. He notes that our website is already reasonably up-to-date, and an asset in itself. Tom D. has asked Kitty and Mary Hocken to plan some farewell events for Tom—something at Pentecost, but hopefully something earlier, too. Steven would like to schedule a time to be with us on a Sunday after Tom's final Sunday. At this point, he's fairly free after June 7.

Tom S. will meet with Bishop Miguelina in May, to talk about potential ministries in retirement. He intends to bring up the fact that Bishop Doug recruited him, and he'd welcome her help in recruiting for Grace in a similar way. He believes the personal touch still serves an important role in the Episcopal Church.

Clerk's Report: Before the approval of the February 24 minutes, two changes were suggested. Mike made a motion to accept the minutes as amended; Rachel seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Libby reminded the Vestry that we're encouraged to participate in hospitality efforts after services. She will send out an email to that effect, particularly for the benefit of new members.

Treasure's Report: We have a \$37,000 surplus after two months, since pledge income is strong. This Sunday, the Finance Committee will meet to talk about the audit, who will take on the work Rich Spurgin has been doing with the financials, and the endowment process. (Somebody has contacted Tim about starting a restricted endowment fund, which is uncharted territory for him.) The committee also needs to talk about the cost of the rector transition and what needs to go into the budget to prepare for it. Rachel moved to accept the financial report, and Mike seconded the motion, which then passed unanimously.

Rector's Report: Around 250 people attended the bystander training we hosted at the beginning of the month. Tom S. thought that the LUCE representatives who ran the event were wonderful, and gave a very clear, forthright, educational presentation. They asked five questions at the beginning and the same five at the end, and Tom S. realized that he had learned to change at least two of his answers. The organizers checked in with him throughout to make sure that they were respecting the space. He thought it was a valuable relationship-building exercise. Holy Week is coming up in less than two weeks, and the reading of the Rule of St. Benedict ends this Sunday. We've started a crash course for confirmation, since we learned only about two weeks ago, somewhat at random, that Bishop Doug would be coming to Grace one last time before retirement. Rebecca is helping with the class, which includes three candidates. Cara Crandall's memorial is this Saturday at 11:00; there will be a memorial for Michael Corrigan (retired clergy, albeit not specifically connected to Grace) March 28 at 10:00; a memorial for Patricia Andrews, a former parishioner who had moved to North Carolina, will take place April 11 at 11:00; and a memorial for Bob Moran, Charlene Moran's husband, will take place April 30 at 11:00.

Every parish has six tickets for the consecration of the new bishop at the cathedral on Saturday, April 25, and perhaps a few more for another room where the event could be watched on screen. If Vestry members are interested, we should let Tom S. know. Otherwise, he'll reach out to members of the congregation who might want to attend. Pursuant to our discussion with Canon Wilco, Tom S. notes that he is in the habit of putting together a quarterly preaching schedule, and

the current one will go through June. He will resolve with our retired clergy who will take over putting together the schedule in his absence.

Senior Warden's Report: Tom D. met with the children's programming committee, and things seem to be moving a bit more smoothly after the first few weeks. He is going to request that the kids not use glitter in their art projects, since the Parke House rooms are covered with it, and it's being tracked into the church. The feasibility study report has given us four options for installing air conditioning: the first is probably not enough—adding AC to the current HVAC unit. There are only two areas where heat comes into the church (by the pulpit and by the lectern), and that doesn't seem adequate to cool the church. The second suggestion is to put a smaller unit outside and run ductwork in. The third is to add a larger unit outside; Tom D. is leaning toward that option because he wants to be sure we have enough cool air if we're going to go to the trouble and expense of installing a new system. The fourth option is to replace the whole HVAC system and do a lot of renovation to the church, which seems like too much. Tom D. will write up a summary for Grace Notes, and will work with John Robinson and Chris Freitag to prepare an update for the congregation. John Robinson asked our consultant if we would have condensation issues with the AC; the response was that, surprisingly, old stone churches often *don't* have problematic levels of condensation when AC is installed. Even so, Tom D. thinks it might be a good idea to do more follow-up study on that question.

Junior Warden's Report: Mike notes that there are garden clean-up dates set for March 23, at 8:30 in the morning, and also March 30. All are welcome to help!

Tom S. closed the meeting with a prayer.