

Grace Episcopal Church
Amherst, Massachusetts
Vestry Meeting Minutes
April 21, 2026

A meeting of the Vestry was convened by the Rev. Tom Synan on April 21, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom.

Present: Libby Maxey (recording), Henry Maxey, Gail Gnatek, Rebecca Grant, Rachel Blain, Michael Gralenski, Peter Sikowitz, Patrick Kelly, Katie Schendel, Charlie Tebbetts, Janet Durfee, Suzannah Fabing, and Tom Dougherty

Absent: Harold Norris and Tim Hampson

Michael opened the meeting with a meditation on a book he read with a Grace Church group, *The Book of Joy*, which taught him to take the time to breathe deeply, to be truly present, and to find joy. Endings and beginnings are intertwined, and he invited us to pray that we will be open to God's quiet work in our rector transition. He honored Tom S. for being our anchor point at Grace, and for giving our community so much that we'll carry into the future.

Grace Church History: Suzannah Fabing joined the meeting on behalf of Ken Samonds. Back in 2016, Ken became the church's historian. Over the course of our sesquicentennial year, he wrote a series of articles for *Grace Notes* about the founding and early history of Grace (the first 25 years, up to about 1890). Ken proposes turning those pieces into a book. He wants to write two more chapters as well (one on the music program at Grace), but Suzannah isn't sure he'll be able to do that, given that he no longer lives in the area. It might require collaboration with somebody currently in the congregation, who's willing to go into the archive. (Janine Kelly and Anne Homme oversee our archive, which is kept in the Parke House (first door on the right after you turn right at the parish hall). Suzannah worked with Ken as editor on *A Slant of Light*, his 2022 book about the stained glass windows of Grace Church, and she has been asked if she'll work with him on the new book, to be called *Stamped with the Seal of Grace*. Bonnie Vigeland's husband Carl has his own imprint; he published the windows book, and although he wants to hear more about the new project, Suzannah thinks prospects are good. The new book would probably be the same size as *A Slant of Light*, although it would have comparatively few illustrations (only 33 images, mostly 19th-century photographs). We would use the print-on-demand model, although Suzannah doesn't yet have a cost estimate. She wonders if the church would be interested in seeing this book published, and in putting money behind it. Ken just had his 84th birthday, and Suzannah's is approaching, so they would like to see this through sooner rather than later. For reference, the previous book cost \$4,400 up front, which came from the Shepherd Fund. Today, the same project would probably cost \$5,000-\$6,000. Tom D. appreciates Ken's unique talent, and thinks we should go ahead with the project. Janet is enthusiastic, as a relatively new parishioner, to learn more about the church through this book. The Vestry unanimously requests that Suzannah prepare a budget for the project.

Clerk's Report: Mike moved to accept the minutes from the March 17 meeting as submitted; Katie seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: With Tim absent, Tom D. reported that the Finance Committee (Mark Leonis, John Robinson, Sarah boy and Kitty Dougherty) have been working on how to process the financials now that Rich Spurgin has retired from that duty. Kitty has taken the lead looking into new software that would help us turn Janna's data into something more readable. Tim will send us what Kitty has produced, although Tom D. notes that there are some bugs that will need to be worked out. At the moment, our income puts us well ahead of our budget (by about \$50,000). We'll approve the March financials at the May meeting, along with the April financials.

Rector's Report: Before Easter, we had memorials for Cara Crandall, Michael Corrigan, and after Easter, a memorial for Patricia Andrews. Tom S. was very pleased with how Holy Week went; it was especially nice to have our bishop-elect preach on Maundy Thursday, which set the tone nicely for the week. Her sermon probably encouraged more people than usual to have their feet washed. We baptized a brother and sister the week after Easter, and this past Sunday, we had three confirmed by Bishop Doug, making the last visitation of his career at Grace. Roughly three quarters of those in attendance accepted Bishop Doug's invitation to reaffirmation, and the music was wonderful. This coming Saturday, Miguelina Howell will become our new bishop. This Sunday, Rev. Dr. Carolyn Sharp from Yale Divinity will be with us again as guest preacher. The historical society has asked if bells throughout the town could be rung at noon on the Fourth of July. We'll need to find somebody to do that. Janna needs to update the list of people with the authority to sign checks for the church. Terrie and Tom S. are the only people currently on the list; Tim isn't permitted to do it because of his job, but Tom D. and Libby are willing to have signing authority. Rachel moved that we add Elizabeth Maxey and Thomas Dougherty as signers; Mike seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Senior Warden's Report: Our elevator failed its annual inspection back in December because of a low emergency battery (down in the elevator room, on the basement level) and a failed key switch. We were supposed to have repairs made in March, but the Otis technician who came didn't come with the battery or the key switch. He came back with a battery the next day, but it wasn't charged. Tom D. had to open the church Saturday for the battery installation, but the technician still didn't have the necessary key switch. The repair was ultimately made, ahead of our reinspection date, but we were billed \$4,700, which is quite a lot considering that the hours worked reflected poor preparation. Tom D. has pushed back on that bill. The inspection was passed in March, but we had to have more repairs done this past week, since Dave the Sexton got in the elevator and found that the door wouldn't close. There really aren't cheaper outfits we could work with, but after this experience, Tom D. is tempted to switch companies regardless. He and Mike will be working on this situation.

Junior Warden's Report: The Garden Committee has cleared away a compost pile, and is looking forward to the May 9 garden sale.

Rector Transition: Tom S. left the meeting so that Tom D. could discuss Tom S.'s departure. Tom D. has asked Mary Hocken to help organize a party for Tom S. On May 16, we'll have a 4:00-6:00 p.m. gathering, with wine and hors d'oeuvres, as well as music, readings, etc. We need to help remind people to RSVP to Terrie if we're able to come. The committee will hire three or

four people to help serve hors d'oeuvres, and help with set-up and clean-up; it will be a four-hour shift, with setup and cleanup, at \$25 per hour. We should let Mary or Tom D. know if there's anything we'd like to share at the gathering. Tom D. and Katie S. are currently trying to set up an exit interview with Tom S. Eliot Moss, Susan Schaeffer, Heidi Dale, John and Raisin Horn, and James McDonald have stepped up to cover the summer Sunday services, and there are only a few dates in August that still need coverage. Eliot helped Steve Wilco put together the rota. Tom D. will be in touch with Janna to make sure that their pay covers mileage. Some of the priests asked if they could have a say in the hymn selection; Tom D. will run that request past Noah. The Wednesday noon service will go on summer hiatus after the first week in June.

Gail asks how we will handle pastoral care going forward. Ray Webster will be available to help with that, and some of the other retired clergy will be as well. The clergy would like the Vestry to take over making the announcements that Tom S. usually does on Sundays. If we're willing to help with that, we should let Tom D. know, and let him know which summer Sundays (after May 24) we'll be present for. [Addendum: Libby is compiling this rota.] Katie thinks it's a great idea to have the Vestry make announcements, to help people remember who the members of the Vestry are. Terrie is retiring in July, which makes things additionally complicated in this transitional period. Next week, Tom D. will start the process of hiring a replacement for Terrie; he'd like to have the new person overlap with Terrie for at least two weeks, so that Terrie can oversee training. Stewardship season, Christmas and Easter/Holy Week are high-pressure times in the office; Terrie also prepares the bulletin every week, and puts together *Grace Notes* as well. Janna, Terrie, and Dave the Sexton will help with interviews, and Tom D. would like input from Dick and Noah as well, so that all the parish staff are included. Katie would like to help Tom D. if he needs any assistance with this process.

As a Vestry, we need to fill out a profile for an interim rector. Tom D. wants to get some guidance from Steve Wilco on what we would be expected to pay an interim rector, but the rest of us are asked to focus on what we're looking for in an interim rector. When we form a search committee, the members will come up with a profile for a new rector, but for now, we're focusing only on an interim. Steve would like this before our next Vestry meeting, so Tom D. will send us the form via email, so that we can weigh in (focusing on the second, third, and fourth pages of the document). Steve Wilco will circulate the call, once we complete the profile. Rebecca adds that our stand-in clergy won't be making decisions in a rector's absence; they will turn to the Vestry, rather than functioning as priests-in-charge.