

Grace Episcopal Church
Amherst, Massachusetts
Vestry Meeting Minutes
May 19, 2026

A meeting of the Vestry was convened by the Rev. Tom Synan on May 19, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. in the Connector.

Present: Libby Maxey (recording), Tim Hampson, Gail Gnatek, Michael Gralenski, Peter Sikowitz, Patrick Kelly, Harold Norris, Charlie Tebbetts, and Tom Dougherty

Absent: Henry Maxey, Janet Durfee, Katie Schendel, Rebecca Grant, Rachel Blain, and Carolyn Collette

Charlie opened the meeting with a prayer, and then a meditation on his experience communicating appreciation to his high school students, whose appreciation in return felt like the Holy Spirit, the way God comes to us. He added that one of the things he has appreciated most about Tom is that Tom is a good teacher, in his sermons, and in his example.

Clerk's Report: Charlie made a motion to approve the April 21 minutes; Gail seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved. Libby revisited the need to elect a Vestry member as convention delegate. This year, the convention is scheduled for Saturday, November 7, at UMass (as far as we know). Since Gail was willing to serve in that capacity, Libby put forward a motion to elect Gail as Vestry convention delegate for 2026. Charlie seconded the motion, and Gail was unanimously elected. Libby reminded the Vestry that we have to be sure to make a decision about whether to continue with a Vestry delegate by this fall, so that we know who needs to be elected at the Annual Meeting next year. (It is no longer a requirement to have a Vestry delegate, but if we're going to send two non-Vestry delegates instead, they both need to be elected at the Annual Meeting.)

Treasurer's Report: Tim reported that he and Kitty Dougherty met with bookkeeper Christine (Chrissy) O'Connor, and they've decided to bring her on to help us upgrade Quickbooks and make the financials more legible. She'll be participating peripherally in the current audit, which will be helpful for next year. Pledge income is high for the moment, since pledges are coming earlier than expected. Mike made a motion to accept the treasurer's report, which Harrold seconded; it was then accepted unanimously.

Rector's Report: Since we last met, Carolyn Sharp was our guest preacher, for the second year in a row. (She was Tom's Old Testament TA in seminary!) Tom thinks it would be nice to invite her back next year as well. She would drive over on Saturday, and we would put her up in a hotel and give her a modest honorarium. We also had Bob Moran's memorial, and blessed a new processional cross in honor of Tom. Last weekend, we had "Singing Creation, Speaking Truth: Women's Voices, Earth's Gospel"—the second event of this kind that Kell has put together, this time with Mary Hocken's help. Tom S. is satisfied that these events have worked very well as something other than a service—something he doesn't have to lead, something that feels open to a broader community, a creative presentation. As he said at the party last Saturday, he'd be happy

to see the Grace Church Players someday, too. Tom blessed another icon—he has blessed well over twenty in his time here. He attended the annual clergy conference in Greenfield, NH; it was uneventful, but strange without Bishop Doug. This past Saturday, we had a reception for Tom at 4:00 p.m., and the upcoming Sunday is Pentecost. We'll have two baptisms, with the picnic following, and, of course, it will be Tom's last Sunday. He'll start clearing out his office the following week.

On May 27, Tom S. is meeting with Susan Schaffer, Gail and Rebecca about sustaining pastoral care. A particular concern is who will officiate when there's a funeral, and who will have the conversation with the family about what they want, what expenses are involved, what fits into the parish calendar, etc. This may simply be a matter of the office taking the message, and then putting out the call to the retired clergy. For the three weddings already scheduled for this summer, Tom had said he was willing to cover them, but the diocese would prefer that he not do so. Those couples will need to be advised of the situation (Tom D. is contacting them), and retired clergy will presumably need to step in.

Janna is resigning as our bookkeeper for family reasons at the end of this month, and Terrie is retiring at the end of June, so we'll have even more to manage in the way of transition than we had initially envisioned. Tom S. wants to make clear that he's just a phone call away if there are concerns about where something is or how something works. Both Terrie and Janna have said they'll be involved in training their replacements, and Terrie is working on an administration guide to share with her successor. Tom S. has brainstormed a timeline doc to share with Tom D., with some recommendations of things to avoid and things to watch for. One pressing concern is that we need a parish Safe Church officer; Tom S. recommends that a Vestry member take on that duty. Molly Sherm is the diocesan Safe Church person, and she could help us figure out what modules people need to cover, and who needs to be trained.

Senior Warden's Report: Tom D. notes that we have a couple of summer parishioners who live in Pittsburgh, but who live in Easthampton in the summer. They want to donate solar credits to Grace, so he has submitted paperwork to Eversource for that. (Eversource allows a one-time transfer of such credits.) Tom D. helped the donors with a few details (our service address for Eversource is 18 Boltwood, which is different from our street address, for instance). Tom D. doesn't know what this will actually amount to, but it should lower our electric bill. The audit starts Wednesday with the help of a Springfield firm that has done other Episcopal church audits. Janna will work with them to make sure that the audit is done before she leaves, and as mentioned above, Chrissy will be an observer.

Tom D. has an agreement with the company through which we originally hired Terrie (Masis Staffing); although Terrie has been our parish secretary for ten years, she first worked for six months as a temp before we hired her for the full-time position. Tom D. hopes that the placement service will have somebody for us to meet in the next week or two. Katie Schendel will help with interviews, and Tom D. wants Noah, Dick and Dave the Sexton to have input as well. Terrie is willing to help with some training in July, even if we can't hire a temp by June.

Tom D. continues to resist the overcharging of Otis Elevator, and has registered a complaint against the company with the Better Business Bureau. The air conditioning project seems like it

will require a steep investment in preliminary studies before we can go forward with installation. We've already spent \$15,000 on a feasibility study. We requested additional quotes for next steps, it's estimated that a condensate (or envelope) study will cost us \$18,000; a schematic study would be \$18,000; a design study would be \$22,000. We need to set up a meeting with the parish soon to lay out these figures and confirm whether we collectively have the appetite to spend this much money just to determine the right system for the church, so that we can get a quote for installation. Chris Freitag and John Robinson, along with Tom D., are looking at working with M. J. Moran if we do go forward with this project.

Suzannah Fabing says Carl Vigeland is estimating \$6,000 to produce 125 copies of Ken Samonds's history of Grace Church, 100 of which we would sell to the parish (although she recommends an additional 10% for contingency, bringing us to \$6,600). If we sell the books for \$30, we could make back half of that cost. It's not yet clear where the rest would come from; Tim can look into which fund the money for the stained glass book came from. We need more time to consider this, however, with so much upheaval in staffing, and so many potential expenses on the horizon.

Patty Appelbaum would like to address the Vestry on the question of using the Parke House as affordable housing. The Vestry feels too overwhelmed to discuss this question at the moment, however, especially in the middle of a leadership vacuum. It was agreed to table any such conversation for the foreseeable future. Mike and Tom D. want to reconstitute a property committee (which we used to have), because we have a number of buildings-and-grounds issues that need to be addressed—for starters, some maintenance needs as basic as scraping and repainting the front and north side of the rectory.

Without Tom S., the Vestry concluded the meeting with a discussion of personnel issues. Tom D. reported that Tom S. will have an exit interview at 9:00 a.m. on May 27 in the Connector with Tom D. and Katie. We still need priest coverage for some Sundays in July and August, but the summer is substantially scheduled. With the help of Vestry members, Tom D. will see that our profile for an interim rector is completed and sent to the diocese by the end of May.

For the next (June) Vestry meeting, it's agreed that we'll meet on Zoom, but at 5:30 p.m., and we'll try for another in-person meeting in July (also at 5:30). If members are unable to attend, Tom D. asks that they let him know as soon as possible, at least a day in advance, to be sure we'll have a quorum.