

St. James' Annual Meeting Minutes
Sunday, January 23, 2022

Annual Meeting Agenda

1. Meeting called to order
2. Opening Prayer
3. Approval of 2021 Annual Meeting Minutes
4. Introduction of Vestry Members
5. Financial Report
6. Endowment Report
7. Retiring Senior Warden's Address
8. Comments from the floor
9. Acceptance of the 2021 Annual Report
10. Elections of Vestry and Deanery Members

Lori Walton called the meeting to order at 9:15 am.

Bill Hale led the opening prayer.

The budget meeting was held last Sunday, January 16, 2022. It was passed by the vestry at the January 13, 2022, vestry meeting, and was discussed by the parish at the budget meeting.

Approval of the 2021 Annual Meeting Minutes

- Motion was made to accept the January 24, 2021, annual meeting minutes as submitted. Moved by E.J. Hilliard, seconded by Dave Nelsen. Motion approved.

Introduction of Vestry Members and Deanery Representatives

- The continuing vestry members are Meg Amouroux, Bob Bynum, Janet Fischer, Samir Kalitta, Mary Frances Leopold, Greg Miller, Bev Mosier, and Jim McConnell.
- Jim McConnell is the new senior warden.
- The retiring vestry members are John Butterfield, Bob Doherty, and retiring senior warden Sylvia Ma.
- Sylvia Ma served as senior warden for the past two difficult years. Sylvia is also the only person in this parish who has served as senior warden a total of four years. The previous time Sylvia was senior warden was also a difficult time, when St. James' previous rector, Bob Honeychurch, was leaving.
- The Deanery Representatives are people who represent St. James' at the Diocesan annual convention.
- The continuing Deanery Representatives are Greg Miller and Elaine Miller.
- The three people who are cycling off Deanery, Scott Whitaker, Ken Trant, and Jim McConnell, have agreed to serve another two years.

Financial Reports – Bruce Roberts

- Thank you to Bruce Roberts who began as treasurer this year, after Lynn Locher retired after many years of service.
- St. James' ended 2021 with a \$30,000+ surplus, mostly due to assessment relief and pension relief. We also watched our expenses.
- For 2022, pledges have exceeded our expectations. Bruce wanted to give everyone who pledged a big thanks.
- We also hope to meet our unpledged and plate expectations as well.
- Our expenses are in line with cost-of-living increases and business increases.
- We are projecting a \$13,000 deficit for the year, but we expect to make it up as the year progresses.
- We will continue to be prudent with our expenses. We do have some funds to fall back on, such as Special Interest Covid Reserve funds and Future Staff funds.
- We hope to have a good year.

Endowment Report – Craig Gentner, Endowment Chairperson

- There is \$313,000 in the Endowment Fund, about half of which is in cash.
- Most of it is invested with the National Episcopal Church Endowment Fund, which is managed by State Street Investment Bankers.
- Our return was 7% last year.
- The fund was started in 2007, with about \$7000.
- The principal cannot be used for operations of the church. Only the earnings on the principal are used.
- The funds have to be used for capital projects or in case of serious emergencies.
- Of the \$313,000, \$235,000 has been donated, the rest has been earned.
- There will be no distribution of the funds this year because no one has requested a distribution.
- Lori stated that in the past a formal request has not been made. The Endowment Board would gather and vote on whether to make a distribution. The distribution would then be determined by the Endowment Board and presented. Lori suggested the board talk about it at their next meeting.
- The members of the board are Craig Gentner, John Butterfield, Mary Casas, Jino Joseph, and Tom Blalock.

2021 Retiring Senior Warden Address – Sylvia Ma

I am honored, again, to be your Senior Warden in 2021. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you. I am very fortunate to be able to work with a group of very talented and enthusiastic members of the Vestry to tackle a variety of issues. For example, in outreach, we approved donations to ABODE Services to end homelessness; to the City of Fremont Afghan Refugee Assistance program, and to Maisha Bora, funding two young women, Hope and Miriam, in their high school educations. I am grateful that parishioners of St. James' are very generous in donating time and money to specific programs in our communities. The Vestry also made some difficult decisions. The Vestry deliberated and decided that we could not approve to let cars

from condominium next door to park in our parking lot. We also decided that we are not currently able to participate in the City of Fremont Safe Parking program.

Besides participating in monthly Vestry meetings, all Vestry members did wonderful jobs writing articles for the Window titled Growing Faith in a Changing World. Some of us helped in the drive-through Congregation Appreciation Day; some helped in the in-person St. James' Day Special Coffee Hour; some helped with the Vestry lunch with Bishop Marc in November; and some helped with the Special Annual Meeting Breakfast this morning.

On the Financial front, I am grateful for the forgiveness of our Personal Protection Plan (PPP) loan, and I am grateful for the assessment and pension relieves we received from the Diocese of California in 2021. I am grateful for Lynn Locher for being our Treasurer for so many years; and for Bruce Roberts for agreeing to be our new Treasurer. Thank you to Lynn and Bruce. I am grateful for Alison Saichek being our bookkeeper, reconciling our monthly reports, for so many years, and to Janet Fischer who helped us in 2021, and for Ron Cook who will be helping us going forwards. Thank you, Alison, Janet, and Ron. I am also very grateful for Marilyn Rose for agreeing to help with Account Payable going forward. Our 2021 year-end financial situation was very encouraging, and our 2022 budget is in a good place thanks to your pledge support for St. James'.

I am delighted that Jim McConnell will be our new Senior Warden. I am confident that 2022 will be a year full of hope and light for St. James'.

Appreciations

- Lori thanked the people behind the scenes who keep the financial machine going – Alison Saichek, who did our books, Janet Fischer, who took over from Alison, Ron Cook, our parish administrator, Jan Brandt, and Bruce Roberts.
- In March 2020, when we had to close the doors of our church, we had to figure out how to turn on a dime and make what happens here at church happen out there. This was not just for the purpose of glorifying God but also for the purpose of making sure that everyone felt connected and still attached to a place of belonging, and still had fellowship. That only happened because of Mike Scrutton and his knowledge, energy, and expertise. Meg and John Amouroux were part of the skeleton crew, along with Jan Scrutton and Lori, that assisted. Joining the technology team going forward is Greg Miller.
- Part of what made this effort so effective was the online fellowship through Zoom. Jennifer Ravera was totally responsible for that effort.
- Thank you to Dave Nelsen for helping to maintain the facility and making sure the buildings and grounds are kept in a healthy and beautiful way.
- The health of the congregation went beyond spiritual health. The health of the congregation moved to physical health as we tried to figure out the best ways to be together and still be safe. To address those concerns the Regathering Task Force was created. The members of the task force are Sylvia Ma, Jim McConnell, Jennifer Ravera, Mike Scrutton, and Jan Scrutton.

- As we moved into this new reality, we realized more and more the importance of our online social media presence. Thank you to John Wagas, with his graphic design skills and knowledge of social media, for doing all that beautiful work.

Comments from the Floor

- Lynn Locher mentioned that before the pandemic there was talk about doing work with the front park and the labyrinth. Will that project now be resumed? Lori stated that there is a Park Redevelopment Task Force that has been talking about demolishing the old labyrinth and installing a new one. There have been some snags, however, and we are now trying to reinvigorate that group. The task force has six people, but two are moving this year.
- Gregg Feeney stated the wristbands are a good idea, and that some people he works with were taking the idea to their own churches.
- Gregg also stated that the Abode Homeless Relief program is still active, but it is very difficult getting people housing right now because of the cost of housing in this area. Most of the people we are rehousing are ending up in Hayward, San Leandro, Oakland, and even out towards Dublin and Livermore.
- If you have household goods to donate, please contact Gregg, but he has the right of refusal.
- Jan Brandt said thank you to the people of the Altar Guild. Lori described it as one of the most blessed ministries of the church – they are literally creating sacred space for the gathered assembly.
- Elaine Miller represents the Southern Alameda County Deanery on Executive Council. The Executive Council just had their annual meeting. There is good news that will be forthcoming from the bishop. Elaine encourages everyone to subscribe to DioCal, the Diocese of California newsletter.

2021 Annual Report

- Motion was made to accept the 2021 annual report as submitted. Moved by Bud Spalding, seconded by Don Rose. Motion approved.
- Thank you to Janet Fischer for compiling the annual report.

Election of Vestry and Deanery Members

- Every year new members are elected to serve on vestry. Our bylaws state we need a minimum of 10 people serving on vestry. Ideally, we would have 12 people.
- As of today, we have two people who are standing for vestry, which is not enough.
- The commitment is once a month plus some other duties. The vestry helps the leadership run the church in terms of finances, building and grounds, etc.
- Nancy Castaneda nominated herself for vestry.
- The other two people standing for vestry are Vivienne Paratore and Peter Maina.
- It was noted that most of the people on presently on vestry have served on vestry before. Mary Frances Leopold said it was one of the most fulfilling things you can do for the church.

- Next year we will need 6 people to run for vestry.
- Motion was made to nominate Vivienne Paratore, Peter Maina, and Nancy Castaneda by acclamation to vestry for 2022. Moved by Jan Pearson, seconded by Lynn Locher. Motion approved.
- The continuing Deanery representatives are Greg Miller and Elaine Miller. There are three 2-year slots open. The three people who were Deanery representatives, Scott Whitaker, Jim McConnell, and Ken Trant, have agreed to continue serving.
- Motion was made to elect Scott Whitaker, Jim McConnell, and Ken Trant by acclamation as Deanery representatives. Moved by Bud Pearson, seconded by Ralph Locher. Motion approved.
- Sally Morgan agreed to continue as alternate to convention.

This portion of the meeting adjourned at 10:00 am.

Thank You's to Staff

- During the service, Lori thanked the church staff –
- Jan Scrutton, our Children & Teen Minister and so much more
- Jennifer Ravera, who keeps us singing
- Bill Hale, who has stepped into a wonderful pastoral role in this congregation
- Ron Cook, our parish administrator
- Ingrid Jacobson, our intern

Rector's Address – Lori Walton

This item served as both the Rector's Annual Meeting Address and Homily for the Holy Eucharist service.

Imagine an occupying force entered Fremont and we were banished from our house of worship. Imagine we were scattered, flung to the outer edges of the region, broken apart, no longer able to gather together. Imagine that after a long drought, we were able to return to our spiritual home, the place where our heart resides, where we lift our voices in prayer and song in praise of the one who meets us in the sanctuary, and yet also the one who was with us in our exile, the one who is not regulated to a time and place, but is eternal, changeless, never-ending.

I could be talking about ourselves in the year 2020 or 2021. I could be talking about the occupying force of a pandemic and our own exile from our common worship to something more far-flung. I could be talking about us. But I'm not. I'm talking about the story told by the prophet Nehemiah when he paints a picture of the Hebrew people being forced into exile by an occupying force.

Not 2021, but 597 before the common era. Not St. James', but the people of Israel. Not banishment to our homes, but to a faraway land called Babylonia. Not a pandemic, but violent force headed by the warrior King Nebuchadnezzar.

We enter the story not in exile, but in the return to Jerusalem after a long separation. After being forced to leave many years earlier, the Hebrew people are finally able to enter

Jerusalem, back to their home, but when they return, they find that things are not the same. Things have changed. Their temple has been destroyed, there is no building to gather in. The city is in ruins, smoke rises up from the destruction. While the walls are crumbling, the people are divided. All that they knew, all that held them together – the temple, the worship, their common identity as Israelites – all of that has been compromised, battered about, deconstructed.

So they gather at the city's water gate, the place where the water enters the city, a symbol of truth and life for the Hebrew people, and while the world seems to be collapsing around them, the scribe Ezra collects the book of the law of Moses, the holy Word of God, and brings it to the center of the gathering, stands above them so all can see, opens the book as the people stand and lift their hands and he begins to read, and the people bow their heads, some prostrate on the ground, and they answer "Amen, Amen" for the Lord has come alive in the reading of the Holy Word and the people recognize their God as they are told, "do not mourn or weep. This day is holy to the Lord your God."

This day is holy to the Lord your God.

As Anglicans, we center our worship around two pillars – the liturgy of the table when we celebrate Holy Communion, and the Liturgy of the Word when we hear the Gospel broken open and set free from the page, from written word to the Living Word, the Logos, Christ who dwells amongst us in the revelation of holy scripture.

Like the Israelites, we've returned from exile. The doors to the church have opened and we have been drawn back to our spiritual home. Like the Israelites, we find that things are not as they used to be. While our temple still stands, the Body of Christ looks different. We're a bit smaller than we were. Some have moved. Some have died. Some have not yet returned. And new faces have arrived, joining our journey post-pandemic, not knowing how we were before this all began. And like the Israelites, we center ourselves around God's holy Word, the familiar language, the stories that have fed us for centuries, and we know, when we hear the words "The Gospel of the Lord", we know that we have returned home.

In our Gospel story, Jesus has returned home, to Nazareth in Galilee, and he enters the synagogue and like Ezra opening the Law of Moses, Jesus opens the words from the prophet Isaiah, and reminds those who have ears to hear that God's purpose through Jesus Christ is to bring good news to the poor, to bring release to those who are captive, sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, and through our hearing this Word spoken out loud, the truth of what is said is fulfilled. The Word is spoken and heard, and as followers of Jesus Christ, it is for us to bring it forward and out.

In other words, the Gospel, the Good News, does not end here in the sanctuary, but takes on a new life in our hearing, because once we have heard the Good News, we must then act on the Good News. As Church, our purpose is God's purpose. Our reason for being is not to look inward, but to always look outward, to make real what we hear Jesus teaching – feed the poor, clothe the naked, release the prisoner,

This sermon serves as the rector's annual address, which is meant to cast a vision for the upcoming year. Not an easy thing to do when the landscape before us is so uncertain. It's hard to know what tomorrow will look like, let alone the next 12 months. But here is what I do know. Like the Israelites, like the Jews in the synagogue in Nazareth, we gather around the Living Word, not just for our own edification, but so that we can have some sort of clue as to

what God is asking us to do. We come here, not just to make our own lives better, but so that we can have some small part in making the lives of others better. We gather so that we can disperse. We try to make this place as close to the Kingdom of God as possible so that we might have a part in creating the Kingdom of God elsewhere.

Now, that can look like many things, and while we have been limited this past year in being together physically, we have still done some important work to prepare us for what's next. At the end of 2020, about 30 of us met over zoom for an 11-week study of the history of racism in our country, and we learned a lot about the American sin of slavery of all kinds, and more importantly, we learned a lot about ourselves. Then, at the end of 2021, about 20 of us met to look at racism in the American church, and again, we learned a lot. And now, we need to put what we've learned into action.

One of the best outcomes of this past year has been the creation of our Social Justice Task Force under the excellent leadership of Mary Frances Leopold. If you aren't already, pay attention to this group. Better yet, join the group. The whole congregation should be considered a Social Justice task force.

If are interested, talk to Mary Frances, or Sally Morgan, Bruce Roberts, Diane Morninglight, Bob Bynum, Jill Buono - all members working to educate and motivate the congregation towards a more just society. In February there will be a documentary and a prayer gathering. In Lent, we will take steps to repair some of the damage done by slavery by donating money to a just cause in honor of the African American Spirituals that we often sing. At some point, the vestry will be asked to consider that we occupy Ohlone land and what kind of reparation needs to happen there. There is some really good work happening in this group and it should be more widespread.

Along with social justice, I challenge us to look further and deeper as to how we can minister to our community. We are a church who has a heart for the homeless. We show this with our annual candlelight vigil for those who have died on the street, through our support of Abode Services, through supporting people who are moving from the street to a home, and through our blessing bags that are given to people on the street (and if you haven't given one out in a while, grab one on our way out).

But we could do more. We could strengthen our relationship with Abode Services, we could create a new team to prepare meals at Sunrise Village, we could see how we might assist the City of Fremont in their efforts to combat homelessness, we could partner with other agencies doing this essential work, we could think of ways we can share our buildings and grounds with others.

We are just getting our footing as we regather, but let us use this time of new beginnings to think of ways we can start something new that ministers not to ourselves but to others. Talk to those who are doing or exploring this work, see how you can help – Gregg Feeney who helps rehouse people through Abode Services, Lynn Locher who has a team to feed people at the homeless shelter (she may not have room on her team, but she can tell you how to create a new team), Mary Frances who is leading us in social justice efforts, Kimberly Patton or Jasmine Reynolds who are exploring how to help the City count the homeless population, a member of the vestry if you have a new idea we can plug into.

Here is what I want for us – to be a place where all belong, where each person knows their value, where God is so real, that we raise our arms and bow our heads and shout “Amen,

Amen!” when the Word comes alive. And then what I want for us is to take that energy, that beauty, that life-giving Good News, and use it to change the world, one step, one person, one prayer at a time.

Reach out. Seek justice. Care for the disenfranchised. The Spirit of the Lord is upon us. Let us not waste it.

And the people said Amen, Amen.

The slideshow of the events of 2021 was presented at the end of the worship service.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Hart
Clerk of the Vestry