

A Recent History of the Progress of the All Saints Church Vestry

And What is Needed Next

Our new Vestry could be helped by a review of where we have been in the recent past and where we might need to be headed this year. The review below is offered to help, but it is mostly in the context of the operations and management the Vestry needs to address. What is lesser addressed below are the overriding and paramount concerns of ministry and mission, which are the subjects of other discussions and efforts being made among the Vestry, the Clergy, the Staff, and the Congregation. The point here is to be sure that no one might think that our leadership is more concerned about management and finances than Gospel ministry. In fact, the opposite is true. The management and finances are merely some of the resources needed to fuel fruitful ministry, recognizing that the Holy Spirit, prayers, and our sacrificial service are the most powerful and blessed resources of all!

The All Saints Church Vestrys serving from 2011 through 2013, under Senior Warden Todd Miller, each made their marks upon the expansion and faith of our congregation and ministries. It was a time of spirited newness and enthusiasm that brought a clearer identity and cohesiveness to our parish family. However, the amazing achievements of those Vestrys presented huge ministry, management, and financial challenges, if we were to produce optimum fruit of it all for our Lord Jesus and His Gospel mission.

A sharper focus for each Vestry began in 2013 upon the completion of the 2013 Strategic Plan, which was formulated under the leadership of Stuart McFarland and several other church leaders. The execution of all but a couple of the action items of that Strategic Plan took two years and were the focal points of the 2014-15 and 2015-16 Vestrys, under Senior Warden Richard Ranger. This was also a time of deepened prayer, discipleship, and mission emphases that substantially impacted the hearts and faith of God's people. These were hard and sacrificial efforts that provided the foundations and structures necessary for most of the huge strides that have since followed, as partially mentioned below.

The 2016-17 Vestry, under Senior Warden Richard Miles, built upon the Strategic Plan momentum and substantially updated and reformed, for decades to come, the way the Parish does business. It was likely the most industrious Vestry year in All Saints' history. The impetus was fueled by the 3-month volunteer tenure of Todd Miller who led us to study, create, or recast our personnel manual, preschool personnel manual, employment contracts, pension plan, health insurance plan, short term disability plan, property insurance, parish endowment,

accounting procedures, building engineering studies, long-range physical plant maintenance schedules, parish bylaws, columbarium operational policies, and much more. A herculean effort by all involved.

Upon prayers and listening for the Holy Spirit's direction in this stream of preparation for future mission, the 2017-18 Vestry continued working under Senior Warden Richard Miles to accomplish the greatest financial stabilization and strengthening strides the parish has ever experienced. Jonathan Stroebel once again led our annual giving initiatives producing the highest parishioner pledges in our 120-year history, by God's grace. We are approaching \$1.6 million dollars of pledges alone for 2018, almost double where we were just seven years ago. Giving above pledges takes our annual totals above \$2,000,000. As if that were not blessing enough, the Eshelmans and Espys have prayed, created, and led our new capital efforts. This amazing ministry effort is so successful in mid-stream, by God's grace, that our Gospel mission, building rehabilitation, and endowment fortification are all advanced and already assured of some of the major impacts prayed for before we began. The expansion of our local and global mission work, recent addition of new clergy, and the completion of our first new roof in 96 years, are huge – yet only the first tastes of the blessings to come, all to our Lord's glory and honor.

Today we have our new 2018-19 Vestry under Senior Warden Jonathan Stroebel. What might we prayerfully discern to be the Holy Spirit's calling upon this Vestry, in the unfolding and ongoing blessings and work God is providing through us?

The prayers, listening, and discernments of the Rector would suggest the list of needs, initiatives, and goals below. What is needed next is for the Vestry to pray as well, for the Senior Warden to take the counsel of the Senior Wardens before him, for the Vestry to have a short retreat to come to a vision consensus, and for goals and delegations of authority to be set for the year ahead.

Here are the Rector's insights, opinions, and suggestions, in no particular order.

1. The principal theme of the 2019-19 Vestry should be Management.
2. While our Gospel mission imperatives, strategic planning, Kingdom Campaign completion, building and grounds initiatives, and many other activities will swirl around us, what All Saints needs most is to finally come to grips with its management fine tuning.
3. Our management continues to lag behind the velocity and voltage of our ministries, activities, pastoral needs, growth, and operational challenges. While we have made huge strides and have many ongoing improvements underway, we need an orchestrated, focused, and comprehensive effort to sharpen and discipline our management across the board.
4. The call upon this Vestry is to not neglect or squander, but rather to gather and utilize every drop of the fruits of the Vestrys immediately preceding us. Those fruits include our prayer, discipleship, and mission advancements, our 2013 Strategic Plan achievements, the two-dozen new operational changes provided by Todd Miller, our building and grounds accomplishments, the momentum of our annual giving, and the once-in-a-generation blessing of the capital contributions God's people are providing to the parish.
5. In order to make the most of it all we need many points of focus, with the Vestry to determine how it might best aid the process of each.
6. **Financial Management**. We need to do several things here.
 - a. **Finance Committee**. We need to make the Finance Committee strong and active. Our wonderful Treasurer, Cary Buckingham, has too much upon her alone. Even more, we simply need structure, policies, oversight, and direction. Too many decisions and budget concerns are handled informally. This is critical.
 - b. **Audit Committee**. Dan Dever, as Chair, did major, vital, and even heroic work shouldering our first audit since 2008 (actually a compilation rather than an audit). That audit/compilation was

for 2014. Annual audits are essential. They are also required by the canons/regulations of the Episcopal Church and our Diocese. Yet, many (most?) churches don't do them, so we're hardly alone. We need to permanently raise up an active Audit Committee.

- c. **Accounting Changes**. For quite some time, the Vestry and other leadership have desired substantial changes in our accounting reporting systems. Last year, Frank and Company, CPAs, were retained as consultants to the parish and still serve as such. The idea is to add accounting personnel and to make our systems more in line with our needs. Enormous work has been done already. But we need to see this to a proper resolution.

- 7. **Personnel Committee**. Our personnel management has been handled executively and, in the past, it was at times folksy in nature. Our parish bylaws and good management practices call for us to formalize how we do business. Our payroll is our largest financial feature. Our staff changes have been a constant scramble because of growth and new activities. While the Rector is in charge of all personnel under church canons, a Personnel Committee would be an enormous benefit to him. We also have the problem of adding new clergy and other workers under a budget that is already in a deficit. Though the church is debt free (except for a monthly mortgage payment on our second rectory), we still wish to add new employees responsibly as a financial matter.
- 8. **Committee Work**. We have a roster of existing parish and Vestry management committees and their memberships. The roster will be emailed to you separately. Our committee structure should be examined and improved to ensure that these are accountable and productive working committees.
- 9. **Our Preschool**. The All Saints Preschool is a wonderful ministry of the parish, owned by the parish, and operated by the Vestry through a Preschool Board whose members are approved by the Vestry. Likewise, the budget of the Preschool is under the Vestry's authority. The Preschool is not a separate entity and has no federal identification number of its own. The devoted and selfless employees of the

Preschool are under the Rector's authority, as are all employees of any parish. For much of the 8 or 9 years since our Preschool was established, there has been a lack of togetherness and cooperation between the school and the Vestry. Instead of the Preschool being in full harmony with the Vestry, the two have operated rather disjointed or independently at times creating problems and relational difficulties. Salaries of Preschool employees are not in line with church office employees, lines of authority get confused among leaders, mistrust and resentments keep popping up over financial management, and other problems come up regularly. A "we/they" sense of relationship has grown over the years and it must end. Our Vestry needs to take the lead to bring things to a good, proper, sustainable, healthy, holy, and trusting condition. Don't misunderstand, there is no hostility or war here. Everyone loves one another and the Preschool is near and dear to the Rector and all of us. But it is a marriage in need of a new day and understanding.

10. **Parish Growth.** We have an interesting dynamic at hand. Church membership and giving each increase substantially each year. We are wonderfully blessed. However, our weekly attendance does not grow in proportion to membership and giving. Our Staff has been holding workshops and discussions about the matter and seeks to implement changes. Our 7:45 service is steady, our 9 O'clock service is growing nicely, but our 11:15 service is trending downward each year for the last 3 or 4 years. We're currently compiling hard statistics to get a better handle on this.
11. **Building and Grounds.** Bill Garner, our Facilities Manager, is a superstar. What Bill has done, together with regular assistance from our truly extraordinary Building and Grounds Committee, Stuart McFarland, and the good counsel of Todd Miller, is inspiring. The most enormous of all church needs is now done – we have a new roof! It is paid for and will last some 3-digit number of years. Whew! But there are huge projects ahead, not the least of which will be the complete refurbishment of our heating and air conditioning system, window replacements, organ console replacement, stone wall reparations, and rectory purchase(s).

12. **Rectory Purchases.** Rectory purchases are critical to our long range financial well-being. Paying our clergy huge housing allowances to give to third party landlords is like carrying 18% interest charges on a credit card. When we own our own rectories, our payroll goes down in the long run, our equity/asset ownership raises substantially, and we can attract the best clergy. The maintenance costs of owning rectories is a drop in the bucket in comparison. Our Vestry needs to study these Building and Grounds matters and make the most of the millions we are about to spend, if we are blessed to have sufficient funds from the Kingdom Campaign or otherwise.
13. **Annual Giving.** Jonathan Stroebel has done spectacular work with our annual pledge ministry. But he is now our Senior Warden. We must immediately raise up new leadership for this coming stewardship season. Understand though that, while the giving discipleship of our people is a vital part of their faith lives, the growth of our annual giving has also come from the huge number of new members we have been blessed to receive. In the last 6 or 7 years we have gone from about 1,100 members to 1,850 this year. Increasing church membership will go alongside our giving discipleship training.

There are many other considerations I could provide, but this is plenty I'm sure!

GOD BLESS OUR NEW AND WONDERFUL VESTRY!