

St. Aidan's Episcopal Church
Vestry Retreat – 22/23 February 2008
Minutes

Attendees:

Mary Kate Schroeder+, Chair
Dustin Berg+, Chaplain
Bill Kaempfer, Senior Warden
Warren Taylor, Junior Warden
Matt Clark
Karen DeSousa
Megan Hebbe
Nicholas Lee
Ben Prieb
Carol Rasmussen
Kevin Sanford
Sue Sassano
Andy Shaw
William Sweeney, Parish Clerk and Treasurer

Bruce McNab+, Facilitator

Friday, February 22, 2008

The meeting was called to order in the Parish Hall at 5:00 PM by Mother Mary Kate Schroeder, and a quorum was declared to be present. Mother Mary Kate led Evening Prayer and introduced Fr. Bruce McNab. The Vestry joined in a soup and chili dinner, and then traveled to The CU Center for Innovation and Creativity, where Bill Kaempfer had arranged for the use of a meeting room. The meeting was re-convened at 6:15.

After opening prayers, Fr. McNab reviewed the agenda for the Retreat. Then the Vestry developed these goals for the retreat:

- Set goals for the Vestry for 2008, including timetables
- Continue building community in the Vestry
- Renew or refine the vision\
- Answer questions about how the Vestry works and what is expected of members
- Continue the integration of new members
- Brainstorm and have enlightenment
- Recall and be recalled by Christ

Next, we engaged in ice-breaking exercises, answering questions about ourselves in brief conversations with our immediate neighbors.

Fr. McNab spoke briefly on the Passion of Christ and the passions that we as Vestry members may have for aspects of the work of the Vestry or the life of the parish. The role of a Vestry is to lead by example, yielding to the Holy Spirit's inspiration and passion.

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We then studied 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13 and worked on our individual answers to the questions printed below.

¹ *If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.* ² *And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.* ³ *If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

⁴ *Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant* ⁵ *or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;* ⁶ *it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.* ⁷ *It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

⁸ *Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.* ⁹ *For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part;* ¹⁰ *but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.* ¹¹ *When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.* ¹² *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.* ¹³ *And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.*

1. Think of the body of people (other than your family) which was or is the group (large or small) or the community (either secular or religious) to which you belonged at some time in your life and in which you felt the *most* loved, understood, accepted, appreciated, and secure. What went on within that group that caused you to feel that way?
2. In Corinth, people who spoke in tongues or prophesied were highly regarded, and the community of believers stood in wonder of those who could perform miracles of healing. Those are probably not gifts that are manifested much at St. Aidan's (at least not at the moment). What would you say *are* the gifts or abilities manifested in your congregation at the present which the members of the church admire or esteem most highly? Are such gifted/talented people also more loved than others are?
3. What kinds of behavior appear to be obstacles to mutual love within the community of St. Aidan's? Re-write vv. 4-6, substituting the negative characteristics that are evident in St. Aidan's for the negative behaviors that Paul observed in the church in Corinth (those listed after "not").
4. V. 7 says that love "*bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*" How can you, as a leader in the church, put 1 Cor 13:7 into effect in this congregation?

After working on our individual answers, we were divided into four small groups to discuss our answers, and then reassembled to report highlights.

Question 1:

- Non-judgmental
- Supportive

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- Commonality
- Common purpose
- Appreciation
- Unity and celebration of differences
- Non-competitive
- Spontaneous
- Outward directed
- Balance
- Mutuality
- Trustworthy
- Dependable
- Fun, laughter
- The necessary gets done

Question 2:

- Developing loving relationships in Christ is an end in itself
- Working to make the Vestry such a group

- Music
- Liturgy – leading in worship
- Teaching
- Preaching
- Time commitments
- Hospitality
- Altar Guild
- Buildings and Grounds
- Spiritual direction – leading by example
- Intellectual liveliness

- We love all without regard to gifts or talents

Question 3 – Negative behaviors:

- Pride
- Gossip
- Controlling
- Unfriendly
- Not inert
- Fear
- Doubt
- Self-centered
- Intolerant
- Rigid
- Absent, uncommitted and inconsistent; lukewarm

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Question 4

- Putting love to work when we lead by example

Mother Mary Kate led prayers and Fr. McNab passed out homework based on pages 72-75 of Beyond Business as Usual: Vestry Leadership Development by Neal O. Mitchell.

1. Is it important to you that the Vestry be “formed” as a small group of Christian sisters and brothers who love and care for one another? Why or why not?
2. What new behaviors do you think the Vestry needs to implement in order to achieve this kind of formation as a small, loving, Caring community?
3. Mitchell says “*Ministry is the overflow of community.*” (p. 74) If this is true, the more profound the *community* that is created in the Vestry, the more effective will be the ministry of the Vestry to the congregation and the more likely it is that ministry will be replicated in the congregation at large. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30.

Saturday, February 23, 2008

Mother Mary Kate Schroeder convened the Vestry at The CU Center for Innovation and Creativity at 8:30 AM and we shared a breakfast prepared by Sue Sassano. Father Dustin Berg led Morning Prayer. Father Bruce McNab reviewed the agenda and the goals of the retreat, and then turned to reviewing the responses to the homework exercise.

Fr. McNab taught briefly on the Christian meanings of “love” and in the discussion that followed, we noted that the modeling of a Vestry formed in Christian love would not include becoming a clique and that Vestry is often an experience that the models effective Christian leadership and that produces many Christian leaders who take their Vestry experience with them into other aspects of parish life.

A discussion began on the nature of “new behaviors” and how they can be contagious. A well-formed Vestry may be a source of “contagious” behaviors that eventually lead to substantial transformation or renewal of many aspects of parish life. This process may occur over many years. Examples of “new behaviors” included:

- Communicating our needs
- Using time intensely
- Pot lucks and other fellowship meals
- Study and worship
- Story telling
- Decision making process
- Listening with care and compassion

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- Agree on unity
- Engage as Christians, trusting the faith of each
- Commitment to community is greater than commitment to decisions
- Invite parishioners to attend meetings
- Check-in

Next a discussion of the concept of ministry as an overflow of community began. Clearly the Vestry and the parish have changed a great deal in the past two years, but we sense we are called to more change. We wondered if the overflow of the community of St. Aidan's might be symbolized in the ministry of Canterbury. The building of community, dinners, Lent programs, game nights, Fifth Sunday services might all be activities that strength the overflow into ministry.

Fr. McNab introduced the next exercise with a discussion of the faithfulness of Christians in the world: that Christ requires that Christians be faithful to Christ, to Christians, and to all creation. Christ has called us to the Vestry. What is the faithfulness we are called to in the Vestry? How will we be faithful to that call?

Scripture Reflection: "Fight the Good Fight of Faith." 1 Timothy 6:11-19 (NRSV)

¹¹ But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴ to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which he will bring about at the right time--he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. ¹⁶ It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

¹⁷ As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

1. Someone [i.e., Fr. McNab] has said: "What God wants from us is FAITHFULNESS, and if a given community of people really loves the Lord, is faithful to Him, and wants to be used by Him, the He will use them – in ways they cannot imagine." In view of what he wrote to Timothy here, how do you think Paul would have defined "faithfulness"? How would you define faithfulness in a practical sense for yourself?

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2. Timothy was a Christian leader. How do Christian leaders, such as Vestry members, acquire the character traits that Paul alludes to in vv 11-14?
3. How can Vestry members help a whole congregation develop these traits?
4. What do you think is “the good confession” Paul mentions in v. 12 and “the commandment” he mentions in v. 14?
5. What principals of stewardship does Paul assume in vv. 17-19? How do you teach these in a parish like St. Aidan's today?

After reading the passage and working on our individual answers, we formed small groups and discussed our answers. The groups then rejoined and reported their thoughts.

Some elements of faithfulness are:

- Keeping commandments
- Adhering to one's goals despite adversity
- Adhering to belief in the Word of God in spite of adversity
- Humbleness; recognizing God's part in our lives
- Perseverance
- Risk taking – not success, just faith / emphasizing the faithful process, not the goal
- Salvation – recognizing that the Kingdom is here and now
- If you don't feel it, fake it
- Faith is action, not feeling
- Doubt is the handmaid of faith
- The opposite of faith is not doubt but:
 - Apathy
 - Certainty
 - Control
- Faith is a chosen perspective on reality
- The Breastplate of St. Patrick
- Practical faithfulness for oneself:
 - Adherence to own spiritual discipline/rule of life
 - Remember the poor
 - Keep awake; don't slack off
 - Keep scripture in mind
 - Be steadfast in Christ
 - Be in constant prayer
 - Live life as a prayer
 - Practice the presence of God – “Brother Lawrence”
- Faithfulness at St. Aidan's
 - Regular worship, study, prayer, service
 - Opportunities and desires to participate in spiritual discourse / Christian conversation
 - Enthusiasm (“in-Godness”)
 - Joy

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- Faithfulness in the (or a) Vestry
 - Constant striving to achieve spiritual ideals
 - Trusting God lead us to make right choices for Christ and the congregation
 - Discipline, attendance and adherence to norms and process
 - Commitment to unity
 - Fearlessness
 - Visible and available
 - Accountable
 - Leading in love
 - Acting as a vestry concerned for the love of Christ and not primarily with costs, habits, traditions, politics
 - Foster a culture of mindfulness or awareness
 - Be ready to say, “Let’s stop and pray”
 - Be God’s agents before we are ourselves
 - Be good listeners
 - Break the trail while holding the vision

The conversation turned to how we might acquire or strengthen these traits.

- Constant prayer, study, worship, and service, alone and in groups
- Paul and timothy knew Christ: know Christ as much as possible
- Practice constancy: in season and out of season

How can we work to spread these behaviors?

- Constantly sprinkle our conversation with our own struggles and revelations
- “You’ve got to come out of your shell.”
- Have higher expectations of people
- Make people aware that you notice/value them
- Proclaim your identity and Christ’s
- Practice the great commandment: Love one another as much as I have loved you

How will we develop stewardship?

- Lead by example
- Be “Rich”
 - Rich in faith, hope and love
 - “The chief end of man is the enjoyment of God” (Westminster Confession)
 - Generous offering of our resources, trusting in God’s supply
 - Stewardship is learned, not innate
 - Is there a tension between managing an endowment and doing outreach?
 - How we treat the homeless among us is an example of how we live stewardship

The Vestry then took time for lunch. After lunch, we began to work on Vestry goals for 2008. First we brainstormed on goals:

- Outreach / parking income

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- Stewardship
- Vestry committees
- THE LIST /deferred maintenance
- Revival/Renewal
- Increasing membership,
- Church growth
- Incorporating/collaborating with other churches
- Focusing on young adults/ campus
- Events worthy of Daily Camera coverage
- Income producing events
- Plan for Canterbury House
- Fellowship programs
- Building a loving and caring community
- Spiritual development/ discipleship
- Centering prayer
- EFM

By a process of voting and discussion, the goals refined and combined, until there were four goals, with a broad understanding of their meaning, and a committee of Vestry members who each committed to develop a definition of their respective goal for the Vestry meeting of 11 March.

1. THE LIST / Deferred Maintenance / Canterbury House / Improvements
 - Reviewing, prioritizing, and planning for the care and renewal of our buildings and grounds
 - Warren Taylor, Matt Clark, Karen DeSousa, Ben Prieb
2. Realistic steps to revival/renewal: Spiritual Development and Fellowship
 - Planning and developing programs to continue the revival and renewal of the parish
 - Megan Hebbe, Nicholas Lee, Carol Rasmussen, Kevin Sanford
3. Subcommittees
 - Developing and structuring committees similar to the Finance Committee that will involve Vestry and non-Vestry parishioners in planning and working in some of the following areas: Buildings and Grounds, Governance, Stewardship, Communication, Outreach
 - Bill Sweeney, Andy Shaw
4. Church Growth
 - Planning and developing programs to attract more members to the parish
 - Bill Kaempfer, Sue Sassano

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We then discussed long term directions – these are distinguished from the four goals, because they are not easy to measure and they may extend over along period of time.

- Unity in the parish – community and connectedness
- Every member in parochial ministry – membership implies responsibility for our common life
- Embrace and understand our campus ministry – our history, location, mission
- Move toward tithing -- a culture of generosity and reliance on abundance

Fr. McNab reviewed the goals for the retreat and we agreed that they had been accomplished. Mother Mary Kate led the Vestry in prayers, and adjourned the meeting at 2:30 PM. The four goal-oriented groups then met separately to discuss their respective goals.

Respectfully Submitted

William Sweeney
Parish Clerk