

Vestry Meeting, 3 pm, February 19, 2026

Members present: Rev. Van Bankston, Ruth Anne Hohfeld, Carlton Winslow, Mark Ranney, Jan Gaudio, Henry Hoecker, Carolyn Garratt-Reed, Judy Laidlaw

The meeting opened with Van leading us in prayer.

Minutes from the prior meeting were unavailable. The current Treasurer's report was also unavailable at this time.

Van provided the Rector's report. He opened by directly addressing a letter recently mailed to Vestry members from parishioner Katherine Winslow. The letter asks the Vestry to immediately remove Van from his position as Interim Rector of St. John Baptist, and provides a number of reasons as to why she is requesting this. Review and discussion of points made within the letter led to recognition that it contains accusations of situations that Van is not responsible for. Other points involve judgements which the Vestry considers the result of a lack of explanation to the congregation as to why changes at St. John's have been made since Van became interim rector.

Discussion led to the following:

Motion: To approve that Van remain Interim Rector of St. John Baptist for the remainder of his current contract ending in May, at which time this can be readdressed if deemed necessary.

Moved by: Mark Ranney

Seconded by: Carolyn Garratt-Reed

Vote result: All in favor with one abstention; motion carried.

Further discussion surrounded how to best respond to the above letter, not only to its author, but to St. John's parishioners as a whole. It was decided, in the interest of complete transparency, to provide parishioners with a copy of the letter. The Vestry's response to its contents will be addressed in a letter to the congregation. A 2nd letter will be written directly to Katherine Winslow. Both letters will be drafted by Ruth Anne and approved by Van.

Continued discussion, led jointly by Ruth Anne and Van, focused on what can be learned, not only from this but also from other current situations.

With a united goal to move forward, it was agreed that Vestry decisions will be based on:

- Open transparency to parishioners
- "What is best for St. John's?"
- Providing the congregation with explanations when changes are needed
- Honest self-reflection on who we are as a church
- What, as a church, are we actually looking for?
- Seeing Christ's love and energy in everyone
- Treating one another as the children of God that we are

Vestry members expressed their commitment to work together, determined to overcome the division that currently exists within St. John's. This division has resulted in Bishop Brown needing to once again place a pause on our discernment process for a new priest.

Van proceeded with the Rector's report.

He announced that this year's Easter Vigil (April 4th) will take place at St. Thomas in Camden. St. John's will provide the Genesis reading. Tony Garratt-Reed has been asked.

Safe Church online training and paperwork needs to be completed by Vestry members. It was suggested to start with the portion "Power and Relationship."

The new Sexton, Tim Carson, is working out well. Along with his other tasks, all pews in the church have recently been cleaned.

Jr. Warden Carlton Winslow needs to be added as a check signer on the church bank account. Also requiring an update is signage for a safe deposit box at First National Bank, followed by its being opened for inventory. Larry Rotch and Trina (bookkeeper) will coordinate this.

Ruth Anne provided her report as Sr. Warden. She opened by proposing that during Lent St. John's discernment prayer be changed to a transition prayer, noting that our church is not yet ready for discernment. We must first, as a unified parish, determine who we are and what we are looking for. She is committed to working with Van toward this goal, agreeing that much of the conflict over change has been a result of reason and purpose for the changes not being adequately provided.

She also stressed that before St. John's is ready to call a new priest, trust must be regained between parishioners, the Vestry must be unified, and there must be complete transparency of information within the church as a whole.

Kathryn Turansky recently approached Ruth Anne about reopening the church nursery at least once a month. She has already started to clean and set up the original downstairs nursery area. Van reminded us that this is an example of an action which must first be brought to the church rector, that a new priest will undoubtedly expect this.

Jr. Warden Carlton provided his report. He has scheduled the church boiler for maintenance in March. He has discovered that dates have expired on the church's fire extinguishers and is immediately addressing this.

St. John's web page is in great need of updating. This needs to be completed before making the call for a new priest. Those in charge of different facets of the page need to take responsibility for updates. Judy noted that Outreach has made a start on this. It is understood that Wilhelmina Ulbrich and Nancy Baker have also made a start on recording church history. It was noted that all suggested write-ups and pictures need to be reviewed by Van, as rector, before being passed on to Gillian.

Vestry vacancies need to be filled, as does the position of church Treasurer. Suggestions were made for these positions; Ruth Anne will make contact.

Also discussed was the need for a church organist or pianist following Tony Antolini's retirement from St. John's on March 1st. A replacement has not yet been found, but Van has secured an organist to play on Easter.

The meeting closed in prayer led by Van.

Adjournment was at 5:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Laidlaw, Clerk