

The Episcopal Church of St. John Baptist, Thomaston, Maine

Vestry Meeting, May 6, 2026

Members present: Ruth Anne Hohfeld, Carlton Winslow, Jan Gaudio, Mark Ranney, Carolyn Garratt-Reed, Mike Lindstrom, Gayle Elfast, Kathryn Turansky, Judy Laidlaw

The meeting opened with a prayer led by The Rev. Suzanne Roberts, Transition and Deployment Officer for the Diocese.

This meeting, and the main purpose of Suzanne's visit, was to assist the Vestry in creating a job description as required when seeking a Priest in Charge.

Following personal introductions, Ruth Anne presented Suzanne with an overview of the St. John's April 12th parish meeting led by Fr. Ambler. This provided a brief summary of where St. John's parishioners are now in terms of a renewed sense of positivity. Suzanne shared that Bishop Brown, aware of the reunification, fully agrees that St. John's is now ready for a Priest in Charge. The overall goal is to have one in place before the bishop goes on sabbatical at the end of June.

The first required step in this process is to create a job description that uniquely represents what St. John's parishioners are looking for in a Priest in Charge. Notes taken by Kathryn at the Sept. 12th parish meeting were reviewed. Discussion then surrounded attributes that the Vestry is hoping for in a Priest-in-Charge. These include:

- Focus on pastoral care, visits to parishioners – especially those homebound
- Lives near enough for availability in time of need
- Able to work a 30hr week
- Not to be micro-managed; understanding that parishioners want to participate, support, and lead wherever possible, leaving the priest to focus on serving in roles parishioners cannot
- Continue Vestry's efforts be to transparent and open about decisions made and actions taken
- Theological education, including but not only EfM
- Appreciation for the love of music at 10:00 mass
- Support working toward Nursery and future youth programs

Further discussion focused on compensation and benefits to be provided. Suzanne provided an overview of information on this, not only for a Priest-in-Charge, but also for a permanent priest. She noted that the current average tenure of a full-time priest is now only 7 years. The national average salary for priests is \$93,000, which includes cash compensation for housing. it does not however include health care benefits or pension contributions. Maine's average priest salary is less than the national average at \$65,000, not including benefits. Actual contracts are negotiated.

Suzanne's recommendation is for St. John's to seek a retired priest as Priest-in-Charge. Retirement eliminates providing health care monies as well as making pension contributions. Also, salary after retirement is capped at ½ the national average. She recommends that an 18-month contract be proposed. All contracts are negotiable to the satisfaction of both parties.

A committee was formed to create the initial draft of a contract for Priest in Charge. The committee includes Ruth Anne, Mike, Kathryn, and Mark. They will meet at 10:00 am on the 12th to form an initial draft. This will then be emailed to all Vestry members for review in preparation for May's regular vestry meeting on the 21st.

As Sr. Warden, Ruth Anne will create a letter to the parish as a whole explaining the process being taken by the Vestry in seeking a Priest in Charge. It will include a request for parishioner input as to what St. John's is looking for in a Priest in Charge. She will ask to be provided with what each sees as (2) priorities. This letter will be included in this week's emailed newsletter. Printed copies will be available at both Sunday services.

Jan announced that he is working on creating a security plan for St. John's. He hopes to mail an initial draft to Vestry members by Tuesday, the 12th.

Suzanne provided this meeting's closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Judy Laidlaw, Clerk