

Minutes of Special Vestry Meeting 10.5.21

Taken by Debra Spencer, Junior Warden

Vestry Members Present: Francis Bayaca, Kathy Butler, Bart Coddington, Benjamin Davis, Alliee DeArmond, Win Fernald, Michael Hudson, Joanna Phillips, Chris Rowen, Debra Spencer, Mother Tracy Wells Miller (Rector)

Vestry Members Absent: Nancy Shephard

Officers Absent: Nelson Crandall, Treasurer & Acting Clerk

Guests Present: Jack Alotto (consultant), Tom Butler, Sherrie DeWitt, Charles Greenleaf, Karen Greenleaf, Tina Grubbe, Jerry Henry (consultant), Bill Kell, John Melvin, Dee Roe, Jon Showalter, Chelsea Souza (consultant), Thomasjohn Wells Miller

Presentations from two consulting firms who help non-profits discern how to proceed with their future.

Alexander Haas Firm, represented by Jerry Henry

- a mid-size consulting firm for non-profit agencies nationwide
- 20+ years experience
- flat fee for each phase of discernment--no obligation to continue to other services
- feature openness, transparency, ethics
- data-driven approach, customized strategies, good results with Episcopal parishes
- work in teams: lead counsel, CEO, project director
- member of Giving Institute, which monitors effectiveness of non-profit consulting firms

Jerry's slide show began with what they know about our process so far in building our current church and what we have of a development plan for the next building phases, then laid out their process for helping us with discernment:

1. Assess Internal Readiness

- review existing planning documents
- examine history of giving records
- look at policies and procedures
- conduct individual interviews with staff, parish
- evaluate campaign support functions

2. Ask Why do this now?

- make case summary document, give samples of campaigns. use as core document in discernment process
- how will new buildings help our ministries

3. Develop Strategy

- inform/assess constituency (parish) using town halls, polling, focus groups on ministries, house meetings (safe space for disagreement)

4. Analyze Donor Base

- number of donors in major gift range

- affinity ranking by level of engagement in St. John's
 - arrive at figure feasible to raise
5. Price: \$6000 per month, for estimated 2-3 months, plus travel expenses
- can be ended any time
 - can use Zoom or in-person contact

Questions and Answers

Q: Since we haven't been in the buildings we have for almost two years, is this a good time to talk about building more buildings?

A: Good question, asked by many. Discernment process could help with aspects of future other than new buildings.

Q: How do you predict giving levels?

A: We have an algorithm to develop a giving pyramid and a predictive model of giving toward project.

Q: So, you help us discern, then plan, then raise funds?

A: Develop feasibility study first--could have fewer interviews (I missed the rest of this-- maybe you can fill in?)

Essex and Drake Firm, presented by Chelsea Souza and Jack Alotto

This was the firm St. John's worked with when we were deciding whether to move and build. Chuck Cole worked with us then (retired now). No slide show--just talked.

- local to Bay Area; work on preparation for capital campaigns
 - want to be thought partners (partners in thought process)
 - assess external and internal readiness
 - like to customize to a parish's strengths and abilities; consider St. John's a volunteer-based parish
 - big on ethical fundraising, social justice (they consult pro bono)
 - community-minded, are drawn to us because of our outreach programs
- Chelsea's opinion (at first) that we don't need a feasibility study
- go straight to planning study, which is appropriate when you know you're going to build
 - figure out who will donate, who will lead campaign, how to organize campaign, train leaders, coaching from firm
 - after planning study, firm would help with execution but would stress planning study
 - campaign plan: gift chart with different levels, campaign budget, time line.
 - after readiness, may not need help from them
 - 12-24 donor interviews, depending on size of study

At this point, Mtr. Tracy told Chelsea that we're not sure we want to build right now and asked her to tell us more about the feasibility study phase. Chelsea assumed that since we have a 3D model of the buildings that we were ready to build. Mtr. Tracy said we planned to use the 3D model to open the conversation with the parish, and that we need to redo discernment.

Jack clarified that we need someone to work with us to have safe conversations about our future. Mtr. Tracy said yes, we need a neutral third party.

Jack outlined a feasibility study:
lead safe-place group discussions and
conduct individual interviews about how building might affect current ministries

Q: What steps are needed to get to planning stage?

A: It's great you're so inclusive. Firm would facilitate hearing everyone's ideas, what would everyone's roles be in the future. Firm would help develop a management tool for the planning phase.

Q: Price?

A: \$200 per hour. Probably \$20,000-40,000 but would make a formal proposal.

Q: Time frame?

A: 3-4 months. But 12-24 interviews would not cost as much or take as long.

Q: This process isn't just about money but it's about developing a shared vision of the future. We need a process to move toward that. How can you help?

A: Money comes from a shared vision. You're asking us to facilitate finding your shared vision. We'd create safe spaces to explore vision and values (and a 3rd thing which I missed). When people share vision and values, the money comes from that.

A: First interviews help create buy-in. We're a disinterested third party to help with that.

Q: Not sure we can do this work on Zoom. Should we wait till we can be back inside, face to face?

A: On Zoom, we could still ask open-ended questions and get people to talk.

Core Capital Campaign, presented by Linda Buskirk

Back in July, Linda presented her firm's slide show, which is available on DropBox. Mtr. Tracy announced that the vestry will meet in two weeks to decide on hiring a consulting firm.

Comments from Vestry and Parishioners

Comment: Two weeks until the vestry make a decision? Why so fast? Shouldn't the parish be included in the decision?

Response: The parish won't be included. The vestry would decide if a professional firm could help in talks with the parish. If the vestry feel we're not ready to hire anyone, they may decide not to vote.

C: Two weeks is not enough time. This should be a parish decision. I'd like time to deliberate with the whole parish.

R: The vestry are the elected officials of the parish. Talk to the vestry members about your concerns.

C: The Communications Task Force is going to acquaint the parish with what's going on and feels a consultant could help. Linda Buskirk understood us best and would help.

C: The pandemic has made us gather on Zoom--an easy way to lose contact with each other. Groups on little squares is not the way to find out how we feel or where we're going. We must take this into consideration. Until we can be off the screen we won't arrive at consensus.

C: We may need help to figure out where we want to go. Even if meeting face to face, we may take a long time to arrive at discernment. So we should start right away, in a variety of ways: face to face, Zoom, whatever.

C: That's right. It took us seven years to find this property, then the rector died (Fr. Larry). Then Fr. Steve came--another five years to restart the conversation, then longer to break ground. A consultant would be very helpful (Linda would be a good choice). This is the right time to hire one.

C: One third of the people in the current directory are new to St. John's and new to this whole conversation. The new Communications Team could bring these people along before we hire a consultant. If the consultant could help with that, let's hire one. If not, let's wait.

C: The Communications Team is the first step. Sherrie's made a good outline [which she read to us]. We should wait to hire someone until the Communications Team has done its work.

C: Sherrie's outline will appear in the Enews. It could work in parallel with a consultant.

C: The whole parish will never be on the same page. Phases 2&3 was one reason why Mtr. Tracy and Thomasjohn came here. We should get started. Jerry Henry looks good. The vestry should decide; don't wait for everyone to be on board. Make a leadership decision in a businesslike and spiritual manner.

C: Hire a consultant; it's time. Favors Jerry Henry. Thought Jack and Chelsea danced well.

C: Fond of Linda--first choice. Last choice Jack and Chelsea. But we should wait--we're not in a position to discern about building.

C: Was on the search committee for Tracy; never said that we had decided to complete the building project.

Mtr. Tracy: Got the impression most people at St. John's wanted to go on with building but knew it wasn't decided.

C: When the parish says we're ready to build, that's when we do it.

C: Linda's price was \$8400, total.

Report Out to Parish

Tell the parish we're beginning the work of defining what our next step will be.

We saw presentations from two more consulting firms. The vestry will discern when we *might* hire, and if so, who we *might* hire.

Add statement from Communications Team from Enews.

How'd We Do?

informative, a collegial investigation, needed, helpful, we worked as we need to go on--it's a discussion, it was pretty good.