



**Minutes of Trinity Cathedral Vestry Meeting
August 19, 2025 – 5:30 p.m.**

Present:

Vestry Members: Jeff Spiess, Sr. Warden; Beth Billings, Jr. Warden; Mark Biddlestone; John Chapman; Marie Curry; Kim DeNero-Ackroyd; Martin Hermes; Diane Hexter; Audrey Hudak; Cynthia Ries; Marilyn Valencia; Antoinette Ponzo

Staff: The Very Rev. Bernard Owens, Dean; The Rev. Canon Adrienne Koch, Canon for Mission and Transformation

Appointed Officers: Melody Hart, Treasurer; Darrell Lausche, Clerk of Vestry

Absent: Cheryl Williams, Director of Development and Community Programming

- The Vestry meeting was called to order at 5:39 p.m.
- Marilyn Valencia led Vestry in the opening devotional.

Formation

- Dean's Report – Dean Owens
 - Sabbatical Recap – Dean Owens thanked the Vestry for allowing him the opportunity to take a sabbatical. His approach was to take time as it came and trust that it would connect to the various facets of his ministry. He will present a forum soon to share his experiences with the congregation.
 - Staffing – One receptionist is still on medical leave. John Silvas, Operations Manager, has been assisting at the front desk. As facilities continue to be scheduled, logistic needs have been discovered. A clear intake form has been created with three staff members being the only people to manage the schedule. A hospitality specialist would be useful in helping to make and maintain connections with the community. Dan Senger has been hired on a provisional and part-time basis. Additionally, John Silvas has been given the charge to hire for the half-time Steward position.
 - Priest Associate – Questions were asked about welcoming the newly hired Priest Associate, Reverend Megan Allen-Miller in October. Dean Owens asked for Vestry volunteers to work with staff members on a welcome plan. The question is how the leadership can help her integrate into the spiritual life of Trinity Cathedral.
 - Episcopal Parish Network – Dean Owens attends the conference once a year as part of his continuing education. He encouraged Vestry members to review the conference and weigh if they may find aspects of the conference useful. He is recommending that membership in EPN should be incorporated into the operating budget, instead of the Dean's budget.

Fiduciary Work

- Adoption of Consent Agenda
 - June Meeting Minutes **Toni Ponzo moved, "to adopt the consent agenda." Marie Curry seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**
- Treasurer's Report

Melody Hart, Treasurer, provided an update on the finances for both Trinity Cathedral and Trinity Commons. Both are favorable to budget overall. Trinity Commons and Trinity Cathedral income is lower than budget, but with favorable operating expenses. Cash flow was also presented. There are contracts that have not been signed as of the Vestry meeting. Some of the expected capital projects have been pushed back into the fall. The Finance Committee is recommending a \$200,000.00 additional draw on the endowment in August 2025, with a potential draw in September 2025. **Jeff Spiess moved "to approve the recommendation of an additional draw on the endowment of \$200,000.00 in August." John Chapman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.** Marilyn Valencia will present the September 2025 financial report in the upcoming absence of Melody Hart.

- Cathedral Ministries Committee

Dean Owens and Canon Koch both discussed the impact of budget cuts on The Friendly Inn and their need to shut down. Canon Koch and Paul Herrgesell are in contact with their staff and will be getting more specific information about their needs. **Marie Curry moved “to utilize up to \$5,000.00 of Trinity’s A Place at the Table (APATT), or area of greatest need grant, to support The Friendly Inn.” Cynthia Ries seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.** Clarifying questions were asked during discussion. Cleveland State University (CSU) has agreed to be the backup distribution location for produce grown at the Urban Farm if The Friendly Inn is unable to accept the produce.

Kim DeNero-Ackroyd reported that Mission Teams need to submit their leadership information by September 7, 2025. Vestry members are tasked to contact the mission teams in which they are the liaison and ascertain if they are having challenges launching into the new program year. Mission Teams must also report on the leadership length of terms for each person to ensure there is a rotation of leaders beginning and ending their terms. Discussion also occurred about the spring timing of the Mission Team retreat. Vestry members shared updates from their Mission Teams and the supports that they may need to be activated for the program year.

Vestry Retreat has been scheduled for February 27-28, 2026. A tentative agenda was shared, based on previous retreats. A question was raised about whether the retreat should be held at Bellwether Farm or not, especially as the budget process will begin soon.

Kim also raised the question about what will be planned as the retirement of Ginger Bitikofer, Associate for Membership and Congregational Life, draws near. Suggestions were offered by members of Vestry. Dean Owens recommended a small team from Vestry form to plan.

- Property & Sustainability

Mark Biddlestone provided updates from the Property & Sustainability Committee. Façade work continues and is progressing well. The parking lot has been sealed and restriped. The heat pump replacement is complete. The stained-glass windows are all reinstalled. A team from Trinity Cathedral is meeting with Whitney Stained Glass to gather more information about their capacity to continue the restoration work, so priorities can be made. The medieval window by the baptistry is scheduled to be restored next. Cathedral crack monitoring is ready to have the proposal signed in the next week or so. The door project is still being worked through with the goal of finishing the project this year. Mark stressed the need to address the cathedral garden on the corner of Prospect and East 22nd Street to improve safety through select tree removal, trimming of shrubs, and proper lighting. Discussion also occurred regarding the fire alarm on Sunday, August 17, 2025.

- Stewardship Update

Cynthia Ries presented a document prepared by Cheryl Williams, Director of Development and Community Programming. The goal is set as \$430,000.00. The theme is Growing and Giving, and the campaign begins on September 28, 2025, and the public wrap up is October 25, 2025. Giving across the nation has been lower in recent years. Cynthia encouraged members of Vestry to pledge as early as possible. Fall Clean Up Day will be on Saturday, October 4, 2025. She also reminded the Vestry members that August is Estate Planning Month. A follow-up forum will be offered on November 16, 2025.

Generative Work

- Diocesan Convention Delegates

Jeff Spiess, Senior Warden, discussed Vestry’s role in selecting three delegates and three alternates for Diocesan Convention on November 14-15, 2025. Volunteers or recommendations need to be submitted by the end of August 2025. There was discussion about having a rotation of delegates from year to year.

- Vestry Check-in Calls

Audrey Hudak provided a summary of the check-in calls. Some members replied via email and others were contacted by phone. She shared some insights based on her conversations and stressed how important it is to make personal connections with ministry offerings to the member interests. Other Vestry members shared their experiences making member contacts. A recommendation to communicate the results of the contacts at the Annual Meeting was made.



Strategic Work

- Major Gifts Campaign

Cynthia Ries reported that the campaign committee is meeting on August 20, 2025. On August 24, 2025, Marous Brothers will present tentative plans at 9:00 am and at 11:10 am. The presentation will be recorded for members that are not able to attend. A focus on the history of Trinity Cathedral, Cathedral Hall, and the Charles Schweinfurth architectural drawings will be a part of the presentation. The committee continues to meet to review plans, budgets, and fundraising possibilities. Cynthia highlighted her appreciation for the work that Dave Miano has done to keep the work moving forward. An additional Vestry meeting has been tentatively scheduled for September 30, 2025, for presentations from the Major Gifts Campaign Committee. Clarifying questions about the feedback received by members of the congregation were asked.

Closing Prayer

Marilyn Valencia led Vestry in a closing prayer.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Next Vestry Meeting: September 16, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Darrell Lausche, Clerk of Vestry

