



**Minutes of Trinity Cathedral Vestry Meeting
December 16, 2025 – 5:30 p.m.**

Present:

Vestry Members: Beth Billings, Jr. Warden; Mark Biddlestone; John Chapman; Marie Curry; Kim DeNero-Ackroyd; Martin Hermes; 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; Megan Allen-Miller, Priest Associate; Dan Hout-Reilly, Controller

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

Guests:

Absent: Jeff Spiess, Sr. Warden; Diane Hexter; Cheryl Williams, Director of Development and Community Programming

- The Vestry meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m.
- Beth Billings led Vestry in the opening devotional.

Formation

- Mission Team Update: Worship, Art & Music

Beth Billings provided an update from the Worship, Art & Music (WAM) mission team. The mission team has received the finished score for the hymn in honor of Todd Wilson, the premier performance will be in spring 2026. The bell choir continues to be established. The cabaret fundraiser is scheduled for February 2026. WAM-derings are being highlighted at the back of service bulletins. These are offerings where Trinity members are visiting other Cleveland region liturgical musical offerings.

- Dean's Report – Dean Owens
 - Communication Staffing – Lisa Galek has been on the job for about two weeks. She is having responsibilities phased in, due to the scope of the position.
 - Feasibility Conversations – Dean Owens continues with the conversations in the “silent” phase of the capital campaign.
 - Ginger Bitikofer Retirement – With the impending retirement of Ginger Bitikofer, Associate for Membership and Congregational Life, the cathedral staff has been in conversation and planning for the various responsibilities she performs. There is a culture change as part of her retirement in that many of her responsibilities are performed by church members in other congregations and Trinity will rely a lot more on the membership to volunteer. A January 25, 2026, from 2:00-4:00 pm.

Fiduciary Work

- Adoption of Consent Agenda
 - November Meeting Minutes
Kim DeNero-Ackroyd moved, “to adopt the consent agenda.” Cynthia Ries seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- Treasurer's Report

Melody Hart, Treasurer, submitted the monthly financial reports. Trinity Cathedral revenue and expenses are both favorable. Trinity Commons revenue and expenses are also both favorable. The additional capital draws approved by Vestry at the November 2025 meeting have been drawn. The Finance Committee recommends Vestry adopt a Contract Approval Policy with the goal of maintaining controls while allowing for swifter movement on contracts for budgeted expenditures, unbudgeted

expenditures, and emergency expenditures as well as addressing contracts for sales (i.e., weddings, space rental). A policy was presented to Vestry. Vestry will consider approval of the policy at the January 2026 meeting.

Melody also provided updates on Cathedral Hall financing. She mentioned that grants and financing for historic buildings are available and a recommendation to talk to Marous Brothers would be beneficial, as they may have better familiarity with the programs. Clarifying questions were asked on all items shared.

After the update from the Property & Sustainability Committee, Melody presented the proposed budget for 2026. Dan Hout-Reilly shared the summary of changes to the proposed budget since the November 2025 Vestry meeting. The additional draw was decreased, owing to stronger congregational support and additional facilities rentals. After discussion and clarifying questions, **Toni Ponzo moved, “to approve the proposed budget for 2026.” Mark Biddlestone seconded the motion. The motion passed.** Appreciation was expressed for the work contributed by all the individuals involved in drafting the budget, especially Dan Hout-Reilly, Controller.

- Property & Sustainability

Mark Biddlestone provided the monthly Property & Sustainability Committee report. He provided the updated spreadsheet of prioritized capital projects and expected capital projects. He provided detailed information on the projects and the determination of priorities for projects. Mark also provided an update on the stained-glass restoration in progress. Clarifying questions were asked.

- Stewardship Update

Cynthia Ries provided the monthly Stewardship Dashboard update. A pledge total as of December 15, 2025, is \$423,318 from 164 households. The goal is \$430,000. Stewardship pledges count until Easter. The average pledge is up from last year. There are also 20 new pledges. The culture of philanthropy continues to be cultivated. Cynthia also encouraged members of Vestry to consider joining the Legacy Circle. The inaugural group will be established up until the Annual Meeting. She also highlighted the attendance and interest in the Dean’s Forum about legacy planning. The Campaign Committee continues to meet.

- Nominating Committee Update

Martin Hermes and Kim DeNero Ackroyd provided information from the Nominating Committee. The biographies and photographs for the slate of four seats with six candidates was shared with the members of Vestry. Through conversations with individuals, future leadership development opportunities have been discovered. Toni Ponzo and John Chapman volunteered to assist at Stewards for the election at the annual meeting.

- Clergy Housing Allowance

In advance of each year, the Vestry is tasked with approving a clergy housing allowance. The housing allowance is what clergy is permitted to claim on their taxes when filed. **Beth Billings moved, “to approve a housing allowance of \$55,000 for Dean Owens, and \$50,000 for Canon Koch.” Marilyn Valencia seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

- Archiving Vestry Minutes

Dean Owens discussed the need to archive minutes from Vestry meetings. Currently, two years’ worth of minutes are kept in the Vestry Dropbox. Dean Owens is recommending archiving them in an electronic format so that he and Doreen Hughes, Executive Assistant to the Dean, can access and provide copies to individuals that request them. He framed the request with a desire to be able to read minutes from past decades, but discovering that many of them are missing.

Generative Work

- Capital Campaign Update

- Feasibility Update – Dean Owens provided an update on the conversations he has been conducting. He has discovered an enthusiasm for legacy gifts. Capital projects are receiving significant interest and support. The Campaign Committee recommends continuing the work of silent campaigning as the conversations continue. Discussion occurred and additional questions were asked. Dean Owens stressed taking the campaign a step at a time and not to get too far ahead in the process. Cynthia Ries elaborated on the process through the lens of her experience with



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capital campaigns. **Mark Biddlestone moved, “to initiate a capital campaign that allows for fundraising for stained glass windows and Cathedral Hall.” Toni Ponzo seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

- Cathedral Hall
 - Design Development Approval – Discussion occurred over timing of approving the next phase of design development with Marous Brothers. **Audrey Hudak moved, “to request design documents from Marous Brothers in the amount of \$100,000.” Toni Ponzo seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

Closing Prayer

Beth Billings led Vestry in a closing prayer.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Next Vestry Meeting: January 20, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darrell Lausche", is written over a horizontal line.

Darrell Lausche, Clerk of Vestry

