

**MINUTES OF A VIDEO-CONFERENCE MEETING OF THE VESTRY
GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH, GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA**

CALL TO ORDER: The Vestry meeting convened on March 24, 2021, at 7:00 PM via ZOOM Conference. Stuart Higginbotham invited all to listen to “Amazing Grace” sung by Andrea Bocelli and Alison Kraus.

VESTRY MEMBERS/OFFICERS PRESENT:

Dan Scott, Senior Warden
Chaudron Gille, Junior Warden
Barbara Batog
Newsom Cummings
Dan Grizzle
Vance Holifield
JoAnn Manring
Sonja McLendon
Tom Rossi
Gail Sargent
Christy Wagner
Mike Whitmire
Callie Flack, Treasurer

STAFF PRESENT:

Rev. Dr. Stuart Higginbotham
Rev. Dr. Cynthia Park
Rev. Mary Demmler
Reba Page

ACTION ITEMS

- After viewing the Treasurer’s Report, Financials and Minutes from December were approved. Batog/Gille. Unanimous.

OTHER:

- Vestry training for Safeguarding God’s People and Safeguarding God’s Children: Reba and Jessica Voyles have attended a training, which has been updated from previous years. Vestry members, Sunday School & Pre-School teachers are required to attend if they haven’t been training within the last year. The Bishop is coordinating this effort for the diocese.
- PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) forgiveness process: we have submitted our request and are waiting for supporting documents from Ameris Bank. Grace received \$158,200 for payroll and utilities. We qualify for full forgiveness but are awaiting confirmation.
- Updating our technical platform: Since we now have people participating in our services from all over the world, we need to upgrade our capabilities to adjust to an increasingly diverse audience. Jeremy Landers and Cheryl Kelley are looking into the best platform that can be ready in the fall for spiritual formation/Christian education. This is a possible endowment opportunity.
- Discussion of worship frameworks and schedules:
 1. Eventbrite will be used for reservations and check-ins.

2. Beginning April 11, we can accommodate 75 people in the nave at the 8:15 service, 75 at the outdoor 9:30 service, and 75 at 10:45 if the soloist is behind a screen.
 3. Responsibilities of vestry members on duty: check-in and collection of offerings from the plate that will be on a podium in the aisle. Two will be needed to count and to place in safe. There will be a form available in the sacristy.
 4. There will be a sign outside with website information for those who have not registered for a service.
- There will be a vestry orientation meeting for new members on April 11 at 3:00PM. Sonja McLendon is going to bring a cake for all to enjoy.
 - Further conversations about parish formation and church development: Chaudron and Stuart have had conversations about the church as a whole and where we are heading. Is it time to examine different ways of formation? Chaudron and Cheryl Kelley are considering a working group to explore possibilities by listening to groups within the church, including a small steering committee of groups that have continued throughout the pandemic to see what worked well. What is it like to live a Christian life now? This discussion will continue at the next vestry meeting.
 - The meeting concluded with Rev. Mary Demmler's eloquent and thought-provoking ideas on the broad situation that the church faces: The pandemic has precipitated a conversation that should have happened much earlier. The church has needed to evolve and reform, given that we have operated as if we don't have instant communication and that we now compete with other churches such as mega-churches, etc. The temptation is to be a service provider the way things were in January 2020. We have not kept up with exponential change. Technology has changed the way our brains work. What does it mean to be relevant? Are we equipping people to be disciples or appeasing customers? Are we propping up something that is dying? What does it mean to be a community today? We live in a virtual world now—is that community? What is holding us back? Are we afraid of being disloyal, or are we afraid of being wrong? Are we afraid of losing comfort? We must be aware that the Spirit is moving and that there is no less desire to know God than there ever was before. She closed by referring to Richard Rohr's *Divine Dance* (God as Community...as Friendship...as Dance).

After thanking the vestry and staff for their hard work, Stuart invited Cynthia to close with a prayer at 8:30PM.

The next meeting will be April 28 at 7:00PM in the Parish Hall. Masks are required.

Minutes recorded by Susan Lahey, Clerk of the Vestry