

Notes on a Parish Meeting

March 25, 2017

Subject: Facilities and Mission

Thirty-three people met for nearly three hours Saturday morning to discuss how facilities at St. James are affecting the church's mission. (See list of attendees at the end of these minutes.) David Woodcock, professor emeritus of architecture at Texas A&M, led the discussion.

This is an account of that meeting. But we will “cut to the chase” at this point, listing the items the group thought the church should address now. There was no attempt to assign a ranking. But after a morning of discussion, this was the “to-do” list compiled by the group:

- Improve the heating and (mostly) cooling system in the sanctuary, along with lighting and sound system.
 - The sacristy needs to be more isolated, not a pass-through from the parish hall to the sanctuary.
- Expand and rethink the space for the activities now assigned to the parish hall: Sunday school/Bible study; socializing; choir vesting area; pre-school lunch and activities; Christian formation; meeting room for related activities, such as AA; storage for tables/chairs/everything else. There was a call for more/larger rest rooms. And there were reminders that we not lose the intimacy that our small space provides.
 - Currently, Pinky's house serves as an ad hoc part of the church building. Do we need a room that can serve as a preparation area for families?
- Expand/improve pre-school. The pre-school is now cramped. Its classrooms don't have real walls. Teachers lack storage for materials or work/planning areas. Bathrooms are inadequate. The school needs its own laundry facility. The school is the area with the largest number of constraints now.
- Safety issues: The HVAC system in the church bell tower presents a fire risk. Laurie's office in the pre-school is a hazard in a number of ways. The

steps are dangerous and there is no fire block between the school and the old church. The school doesn't have good ways for the kids to leave if there is a problem with intruders.

- The rector's office and church secretary's office need reworking. More space. More privacy.
- Storage: We need more of it, for chairs, tables, choir music, kitchen things, books....

These were the big issues identified at the end of the three-hour session. Here is how we got there.

Mission/Values/Goals

We began with a review of the mission, values and goals that were established when the church set out to find a new rector in 2014. As a reminder, our mission is "to be a welcoming worship community where God's presence is felt and from which we are sent to proclaim Christ's love and serve others."

We liked this mission of worship, fellowship and service while enhancing our church family and maintaining the historical presence of the 1855 building. We reviewed our 2014 goals:

- Improve and expand church facilities
- Increase the number of young families and individuals
- Increase Christian education opportunities.
- Continue involvement in hands-on ministry.
- Increase opportunities for spiritual growth and development.
- Maintain excellence in choral music.

When Woodcock asked the group is this "still does encompass who we are," there were a lot of nods around the room.

We discussed whether the pre-school was a "service." The response was that it was. School director Laurie Krupala said that part of the success of the school was its relation to the "church family." There was "a lot of interaction now, sometimes by accident," between church members and students.

At the same time, we looked at projections from the Texas State Demographer's office showing that 98% of the growth in population in Fayette county by 2025 will be among those 65 years or older. (A summary of the state's projections is attached to these minutes.)

There was a discussion of what the "vision" was for the school. What was the right size, the correct grade levels? Later, Laurie said the school board would present those goals and a vision to the wider church.

During the discussion of family needs it was noted that our youth members would enjoy some separate space, even as we want to ensure that they feel part of the 'family,' and we value their presence.

We took a break.

Our Facilities

After the break, Woodcock led us through a discussion of the church facilities.

He noted that the church now devotes more land area to parking than to any other function. The buildings are packed in tightly, he observed. "We've boxed ourselves in." However, it was noted that the parking is a valuable asset, and provides a drop-off/pick-up location for the Pre-School that is off the street, and that the BBQ cooks have a well-established traffic pattern for entry, sales, and exit.

We reviewed the functions of each part of the church and came up with a familiar set of issues, or, rather, problems. They are all contained in the summary of issues prepared in the last year by the master plan committee. (That document is also attached or can be obtained from Cathy at the office.) Here are the highlights:

Sanctuary The sanctuary is either too hot or too cold. The sound system is antiquated. There are safety issues having heating and cooling mechanisms in the bell tower. The choir often overflows its territory. The historic sanctuary **must** be preserved.

School There are serious safety issues related to having Laurie's office on the second floor. The school needs real walls and some soundproofing.

Storage is a problem. Bathrooms are inadequate. The teachers need work space. The school needs a laundry. (Laurie now takes stuff home to clean.) The classrooms are cramped. The pickup and drop-off area is not safe, nor is it ideal to have children crossing the parking lot to the playground. See the master plan committee report for a complete list of needs.

There was some discussion of alternative sites. The master plan committee toured Brendan Manor. The Farm Bureau has been approached about selling its building. The Presbyterians have shown some willingness to share its school facility. No action is currently being taken on any of these fronts.

Parish Hall It's crowded, yes, but we saw an advantage to that. Families live close together and part of St. James' charm is that we have managed to create a sense of intimacy. Nobody who enters the parish hall is left out. At the same time, there is too much of a good thing. We need space for a Bible class. Maybe there needs to be a separate room for this purpose and for community meetings, such as St. James' regular AA meetings. The kitchen works most times, but is overwhelmed during a big funeral/wedding. The bathrooms are often overcrowded. Signage is not great. Storage is always a problem. "We want space....but not too much."

Pastor's Office The pastor could use more room and more privacy. The church secretary's office is a throughway.

Sacristy The big problem is storage and that the work area serves as a pass through between different sections of the church.

After reviewing these constraints/needs, Woodcock asked what our priorities would be. We came up with the list that begins these minutes.

The next steps discussed at the meeting was wide dissemination of these minutes and notes and the pre-school will prepare a "vision" for its future since, as Woodcock noted, "The pre-school is the area with the biggest number of constraints right now."

Below are three attachments:

1. The people who attended the March 25 meeting.
2. The master plan committee survey of needs.
3. Notes from the state demographer's office on Fayette County's future population growth.

APPENDIX ONE: ATTENDEES

Rev. Eric Hungerford

David Woodcock

Audrey Wick

Susan Frondorf

George Frondorf

Julie Ardery

Bill Bishop

Glenn Calliotte

Chuck Gibson

Ursula Stephens

Linda Eastin

Terry Eastin

Dick Frenzel

Ann Campbell

Gerald Campbell

Betsy Anderson

Ken Berg

Marjorie Ettredge

Don Ahrendt

Tom Tracy

Pete Hamel

Martha Hamel

Eric Batchelder

Suzanne Batchelder

Laurie Krupala

Virginia Schoeder

Carol Helms

Georg Ulbrich

Sandra Duncan

Johana Nemeckova

Pinky Wilson

Susanne Glasscock

Richard Dixon

APPENDIX TWO: Notes from Texas State Demographer's population projections for Fayette County, 2015-2025

- The state demographer projects that Fayette County's population will increase 7.4 percent from 2015 to 2025, from 25,297 to 27,176.
- Almost all of this increase (98.4%) will be in the 65+ population.
- There is shifting among the age categories. Under 18 is projected to increase by 137 (2.6%). 18-24, by just 17 people. Those 45-64 will *decline* by 987 (-13.4%). Over 65, up by 1909 (32%).
- Anglo population will be virtually unchanged in this decade. Black population also shows little change. Hispanics will account for 89% of the population growth. And this growth is spread among all population groups.
- There is shifting among the Anglo age categories. Anglos 45-64 will decline by over 1,300. Anglos over 65 will gain by 1365.

Note: The demographer has three projections. I picked the middle.
Bill Bishop

APPENDIX THREE: Master Plan Committee Report
June, 2016. Updated March 2017

Committee Members:

Bill Bishop (Chair)
Ken Berg
Glenn Calliotte
Barbara Cauble
Carol Helms
Joe Jameson
Anita Meyer
Audrey Wick

Purpose

The purpose of the committee was to identify the current and future needs of the St. James Episcopal Church campus. In 2016, the committee met with those parishioners who were most directly involved in the spaces and ministries that use those spaces to determine the issues that they face in attempting to successfully function in their particular ministry. In February of this year, we asked for updates. That new information is incorporated in this report.

Our concern was not to find solutions (although many appear obvious) but to create a guide that will help set the boundaries for a parish-wide consideration of how our buildings support our mission(s). Upfront, we also affirm that the wonderful and historic church sanctuary is inviolate. Yes, perhaps there are some things that could be done to enhance this incredible space for worship, but it is one of the stated missions of St. James to protect the 1885 sanctuary.

The following are our findings:

Sanctuary

Batchelder and Bishop visited St. Thomas Church in College Station and were impressed by a new lighting system in the old church there. Ditto with a modern sound system (which would help us get rid of a huge sound box that is plopped in the middle of the alter guild work room).

Also, we all know that the heating and cooling of the sanctuary is spotty and often either way too cold or stuffy. (Regulars know to put a hymn book over the nearby floor vent to cut off the norther.)

Fr. Eric made the following observations:

- Lighting in sanctuary needs to be improved. Flood lights work poorly and maybe the large lamps could be cleaned and redone to provide better light.
- The bell tower room needs rethinking. Get the HVAC outside. Find a better way to illuminate the three stained glass windows on the sanctuary side of the room. Currently, this room violates fire codes

- Need a new sound system, both to make more room and to provide recordings of services.
- Overflow seating thoughts needed for southeast corner of sanctuary. Maybe permanent pews?
- The hanging behind the altar needs work – or replacement. (The church is now getting an estimate for repair.)
- The church history material in the cabinet and on the wall need to be placed where they can be seen and are out of the way of regular church doings.

Sacristy

- Space is good. “In a lot of ways, it does work.”
- This space needs to be protected from being a “thoroughfare.” Might even be able to close off this room entirely.
- Storage areas could be constructed to save space and tailored for specific functions.
- Remove fireplace??
- Get the safe and the big black sound system box out. Going digital will solve this.

Choir Areas

Choir Director Don Kirby thought choir should continue to rehearse in the sanctuary. The choir now can put about 25 people (maximum) in the space available. Don thinks choir could grow to 35-40 and would like to have space in the sanctuary for that number. Configuration is unclear, though he thinks that it might help acoustics if there were permanent risers put in. And he recommended that there be a portable riser for the Joyful Voices.

Choir needs more space for music storage (must be climate controlled) and choir should vest in a place where choir members don't interrupt other activities (Bible study or after church

socializing). This doesn't mean a separate choir room. But choir and choir goods (robes, music, binders) needs a closet of their own.

Parish Hall

- Fr. Eric stated we need a conference room for classes and meetings. This room could also serve for AA meetings. At times, church meetings have required that we cancel regularly scheduled 12-step meetings. (Maybe this room could be accessed from the outside and then locked off from the rest of the church, so that it could serve as a community room when one is needed without opening the entire church.)

Sunday mornings “are a challenge” with competing uses (choir robes, classes, social hour). And the lack of storage space “lends itself to clutter.” Chairs and tables, for example.

Virginia James emphasizes that the kitchen lacks storage space. No ability to buy things in bulk because there's not place to store the goods. Storage “doesn't have to be in here” (that is, the parish hall). The kitchen “doesn't have to go bigger,” though a warming oven “would be fantastic.”

- Eric: Need a separate meeting room that would hold 25-30 people, max. in addition to enlarging our parish hall
- Eric: Many churches have a foyer, a transition space between worship area and parish hall. This is the place for dispensing church information on bulletin boards, etc.
- Need to avoid traffic jams as classes, choir, worshippers go from place to place. Additional restrooms are required.
- Ideas: A covered entry where choir and others could wait for beginning of service. Maybe an interior courtyard.
- Signage is poor. People don't know where the bathrooms are. And people spill out of the front of the church and then have to turn around to go back into the parish hall. Need to reduce this “barrier” in order to welcome newcomers and old timers alike.

- Parish hall needs to be able to serve as an overflow for large events. Must be equipped for AV.
- Entire audio and visual equipment needs to be modernized, perhaps so that overflow crowds in the Parish Hall can view proceedings in the sanctuary on closed circuit television.

Secretary's Office

“I don’t want to be isolated,” church secretary Cathy Sterman said. She enjoys being in the center of the action – and realizes that being the first contact many people have with the church is an important part of her job.

Her recommendation is to make her office more of an office/reception area. That would require moving most files and office equipment to a nearby WORK ROOM. This would be a place where money could be counted after the service; where Don and Evelyn can do some computer work and copying; where others can collate programs, fold and staple. Maybe another computer station there, too.

Cathy’s desk needs more drawers and more convenient file drawers. And there needs to be a more comfortable feel for people who have come in to ask questions about the church or to see Fr. Eric.

Cathy thinks it is important for her to be able to see those coming and going – and to be close to Eric’s office.

Rector's Office

Fr. Eric admitted his office is “a little cramped,” which is an understatement. He needs a bigger desk, preferably one that faces out instead of facing the wall. He needs more file draws. He likes an open feel, including having a window open to the reception area.

He needs a separate “meeting” area in his office, however – a few chairs and a small couch. Maybe enough room for 4 or 5 people. And it would be best if this sitting area could be slightly hidden from view, so that people who come in to consult with Eric aren’t on display to others in the church.

This office needs to be sound proofed.

Eric (and other preachers/bishops who come in) could use a separate vesting area: a closet, maybe a bathroom and a place to change in private.

St. James Preschool

The St. James Pre-School recently expanded to a full day of classes and care. Director Laurie Krupala has been experimenting with the current school set-up for the past half year and now has a new list of needs. Laurie reports that the school (with 15-17 students) has been working on becoming self-sustainable. To that end, she believes changes in design of the school should take care of the school for the next decade.

But Laurie says the school has some needs. Here are the top three:

Space: The school could use more square footage. The state mandates 30 square feet per student and the 900-square foot school meets that requirement. But 30-feet is not enough for a high quality school. The school could use:

- A lobby for a safer drop off/pick up for students, even if it's just a little closing in the back playground. The mid-day pickup has been chaotic, creating a "huge safety concern."
- A workspace for teachers down stairs. (See note about out-of-code stairs.)
- Restrooms where the children can be supervised while a student goes to the bathroom. As it is, if one child has to go, the entire class has to sit outside the restroom so the teacher can assist the student in the bathroom and supervise the class.
- A technology center with two listening stations. It could even be a corner of a classroom.
- A library space where teachers can find books, etc. The school has books for teachers, but no room to store them.

Laundry: The full-day school has created more soiled nap sheets, blankets, rags and messy art stuff. Currently, Laurie is taking things home to wash. The school needs a space for a washer/dryer and a place for a big sink and mop/broom storage.

Real Walls: Even without more space, the school could use real walls between classrooms. The slide in/out “walls” just don’t cut the noise. And noise is a “major problem” in the school. Parents notice that the school doesn’t have “real classrooms.”

We would add a few more items to this list of must haves:

1. The stairs leading to the second floor do not meet any kind of code.
2. The attic space above the school goes to the main church. Any fire in the school would immediately go to the main building. Again, this is a clear violating of basic safety principles.

Laurie adds these thoughts that she says we should keep in mind as we think about the school and the church:

- Sunday nursery is held in the school. It would be best if the school did not have this dual purpose.
- The Diocese requires two adults to be with children at all times. The school needs to find out if this requirement extends to schools; and if it does, are there ways to comply that don’t demand an unsustainable expansion of staff. There may be a solution that could be accomplished through design.
- The playground now is dandy, but may not hold true if the school population doubled.
- The kitchen is adequate for now, but if the afternoon group expands (some students leave at noon), then the school will need more space and dishwashing capacity. But there is still room for growth within the existing setup. There are conflicts when groups like the ECW have a luncheon, but everybody is making do.
- Earlier Laurie talked about having an outdoor classroom. That is not a current need.
- The Parish Hall is adequate now as a room for music and activities that require a bit more space.