Minutes of Vestry Meeting, January 20, 2021
St. Brendan-the-Navigator Episcopal Church

On January 20, 2021, via Zoom, the vestry of St. Brendan's held its annual meeting with the Rt. Rev. Thomas Brown, Bishop of the Diocese of Maine. In addition to the Rev. Elaine Hewes, Priest-in-Charge, Senior Warden Nathan Dane, Junior Warden George Pazuniak, other vestry members Margaret Graham, Jane LaChance, William Scaife, Thomas van Buren and Curtis Flowers, present also were parishioners Miriam Antich, Lawrence Greenlaw, Elizabeth Ingoldsby, Josephine Jacob, Elizabeth Reardon and Daniel Reardon.

Pastor Elaine Hewes welcomed Bishop Brown and our additional parishioners, then called the meeting to order with two prayers, directing our hearts not only to the important business of our parish but also to the historical moment nationally.

The December minutes having previously been circulated and corrected electronically, Pete Dane moved their approval; Jane seconded, and approval followed. In consideration of the previous electronic submission of Reports from Ministries and of the best use of time with the bishop, Pastor Elaine called for meeting reports from ministries simply to give highlights.

Education & Spirituality Jane reported that the next offering of this ministry would be a Lenten study of Marcus Borg's *The Last Week,* beginning February 10. She then referred us to further proposed offerings listed in the filed report.

Worship In the time of COVID 19, this ministry, charged with organizing and directing regular and special worship services, has an extra demand for thoughtful, carefully adaptive, and innovative work. Pete characterized the ministry's meetings as engaged and having vigorous debate - with the result we all see at every service.

Outreach Skip Greenlaw's report highlighted the ministry's particular concern for the people on our prayer list and how careful contact is kept with them.

Welcome and Hospitality Jane announced the ministry's new storytelling event on Friday, January 22, and their effort to advertise events more widely through the newspaper and other venues.

Building and Grounds Josephine reported that focus at present was on maintenance and technological improvement and that bids were out on roof repair.

Finance Bill Scaife noted that commitment to setting aside $10,000 annually to assure a healthy Building Fund will add to current budget but that there is good reserve. Pete pointed out that St. Brendan's, unlike many parishes in the time of pandemic, has no need to apply to the diocesan Parish Payroll Protection loan program. Meg Graham added that recognition was due the Stewardship Committee for its fine work and to commendable congregational response. Both Pastor Elaine and Bishop Brown noted that some parishes have done well during the pandemic.

Pastor Elaine moved the meeting from ministry reports to continuing business by calling for an update on the parish effort to host the needle exchange program operated by Opiate-Free Island. George

replied that formal application had duly been filed with the appropriate state agency and presently we await their reply.

Pastor Elaine spoke of the proposal for a Dream Team to consider how we, as Christians of this present age, understand a need to dismantle what has become outworn in the faith and how we might bring in the new that is needed. She noted that efforts will begin with reading pertinent literature. Further, she suggested it would be good to work on this along with other congregations. An example of innovation - one the pandemic has brought - is the use of Zoom, that gives us, a congregation with far-flung membership, a new way to connect, one we will not wish to discard even when the pandemic has passed.

The meeting moved from ordinary parish business to a time for Bishop Brown to respond to parish questions of him and to his requests of us.

Bishop Brown addressed the following questions from parish ministries:

Worship and Music Ministry: Q. In light of COVID how is your thinking evolving about what Eucharist is and might be imagined as we go forward COVID and Post COVID?

Education and Spiritual Development Ministry: Q. 1. In the aftermath of the siege on our nation's capital and the signs "Jesus saves" that were carried by some of the rioters, what educational resources might you suggest to help congregations like ours wrestle with the question of how we as Christians might respond in the "way of Jesus?"

Q. 2. What are the most impactful programs/actions that you see other congregations doing in Maine in spirituality and education that might be a good match for St Brendan's and/or what would you personally like to see our small community try that we have not done already?

Pastoral Care Ministry: Q. In this time of COVID when we are unable to do in person pastoral care how are other parishes meeting their fellow parishioners needs? We currently do cards and phone calls. Have you heard of any innovative ways we could perhaps also meet needs?

Hospitality Ministry: Q. Have you identified specific and successful welcome strategies in churches similar to St Brendan's and in what ways can these help us improve our welcome activities in this particular time of COVID-19 and divisiveness?

Outreach Ministry: Q. What are the Maine statewide initiatives in social engagement and services that the diocese is focused on, and how might we be better integrated into them?

Elaine moved the meeting from the questions for the bishop to possible questions he might have for St. Brendan’s.

Bishop Brown responded first with a request to be invited back for another visitation, then continued with questions for us to think about.

Who are you at St. Brendan’s?

Why are you here?

What are you doing about it?

These, he said, were the driving questions of identity that must be asked and considered continually and that they should take some place in our vestry meetings or perhaps a retreat. A strategic plan, he said, was not possible without these three questions. Further he suggested the parish had entered a different chapter of its life, one of harmony more than conflict and pain, part of a life cycle that is rising.

The meeting ended with the Prayer of St. Brendan.

Respectfully submitted,
Curtis Flowers, clerk