

St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting
Via Zoom Videoconference
Tuesday, June 15, 2021, 6:00 p.m.

Present

Rev. Canon Allisyn Thomas, *Associate Rector*
Costa Dillon, *Senior Warden*
Susan McCormick-Davis, *Junior Warden*
Polly Getz-Enos, *Chancellor*
Amy Adome, *Treasurer*
Akiko Tamano, *Clerk*
Larry Burgess
Mark Davis
Jim Oakes
Nancy Peterson
Margie Polishuk
Lauren Sleeper
Will Smith
Rev. Canon Gwynn Lynch

Excused/Absent

Rev. Mark McKone-Sweet, *Rector*
J.D. Cowart, *Vice Chancellor*
Bill Angus, *Assistant Treasurer*
Terry McCune, *Assistant Treasurer*
Rachel Blankenship
Jerry Blanton
Shinobu Horne

1. Gather Together

The vestry checked in. Jim Oakes opened with a prayer.

2. Consent Agenda

Susan McCormick-Davis

The consent agenda included the following items:

- (a) Approve the June Treasurer's Report.
- (b) Approve the May financial reports.
- (c) Approve the May 18, 2021, vestry meeting minutes.
- (d) Approve the May 27, 2021, special vestry meeting minutes.
- (e) Approve the June 1, 2021, special vestry meeting minutes.

A motion was made to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

3. Group Discussion

3.1 Interim Rector Search

Costa Dillon

Costa Dillon introduced the Rev. Canon Gwynn Lynch. Canon Gwynn offered reassurances and prayers that St. Bart's will hold on to its faith in God during this time of transition. The constant guidance of the Holy Spirit will enable St. Bart's to continue doing God's work and sharing God's love with a world that desperately needs it.

She then explained that the process of calling a new rector will probably take about 18 months. In order for the next chapter to make sense, the congregation first needs to ensure it understands its past and its current identity; this will take some time.

The following steps should be started immediately:

- Work with Canon Allisyn to arrange for shorter-term clergy assistance over the next couple of months, particularly during Canon Allisyn's time off in August. Canon Gwynn has the names of several people to consult with.
- Call an interim rector. Canon Gwynn has a list of several good candidates, but this is an opportunity for the vestry to take the lead in thinking about where St. Bart's wants to be at the end of the interim period. That reflection will form the basis for a meaningful interview process for the candidates. Canon Gwynn asked the vestry to consider who might serve on a vestry subcommittee to get the interim rector process started. It will likely be September at the earliest before the interim rector is called.

The vestry can then start to pray and discern where the congregation should go next. The diocese can assist by doing a business and HR review using assessment tools such as the Church Assessment Tool (CAT). In the near future, a call committee will be formed, and a parish profile will be written stating who St. Bart's is, where it has been, and where it wants to go next. Canon Gwynn will provide support and assistance throughout all of these steps. She also indicated that St. Bart's is fortunate to have Canon Allisyn, who can contribute some real knowledge and wisdom to this process, on staff.

Canon Allisyn stressed that interim rectors are trained to do this specific work; they are not simply priests nearing retirement. Canon Gwynn added that an interim rector is not a placeholder—their role is to help the congregation celebrate and grieve the past, understand who they are now, and begin to move in a new direction. It is their calling to hit the ground running and help the congregation learn, grow, and continue to flourish. The three people she has in mind are all experienced interim rectors who have worked with congregations similar in size to St. Bart's.

The vestry discussed how communications regarding Fr. Mark's resignation should be handled. Key points are summarized below.

- Canon Gwynn stated that it will be a tightrope; the vestry cannot violate confidentiality, and to a certain extent, even if the congregation was told exactly happened, some people still might not believe it and create an alternate narrative.

- Lauren Sleeper shared that she and Courtney McWilliams met via Zoom with the youth CREW and explained that rectors are like coaches and move around to different parishes as needed; this is common and regular, and the congregation doesn't always know why. It is important not to talk too much about Fr. Mark and his family to the incoming rector. Adult parishioners should look at it in the same way.
- People have an emotional commitment to their priest that they do not have to their employer. It is therefore important that the interim rector help promote calm within the congregation before moving ahead to call a new rector. This will require time and space, which is partially why the process takes 18 months.
- One of the best things the vestry can do is to not show anxiety and reassure people that St. Bart's will be okay. Rectors come and go, and this process is normal (the average time a rector stays with a congregation is 7 years).
- At the services this past weekend, although there was a sense of gravity, there was also a calm assurance that, although St. Bart's does not know where it is going, the congregation is going together. That kind of message should be reiterated for the next couple of months.
- A recent visitor to St. Bart's mentioned that all the churches she has visited lately are going through some sort of transition. St. Bart's is not alone in experiencing change during this time.

The vestry also discussed whether there should be any concerns regarding Fr. Mark's participation in services on June 26–27, and whether it would be compassionate to put him through that. Key points are summarized below.

- Canon Gwynn stated that it is very much recommended that Fr. Mark be permitted to say his farewells to the congregation; he is a professional who loves St. Bart's, and he will not do anything untoward. While it will be painful, and people may be sad or angry, an opportunity for a healthy goodbye is critical. It will help the congregation welcome the new rector in a healthy way.
- Canon Allisyn indicated that she has had a lot of conversation with Fr. Mark, and he would really like the opportunity to say thank you and speak to the future. To not be able to do this would be horrible.
- It will be difficult for Fr. Mark to envision a future that he had not planned on, and this kind of event/service is part of his process for coming to terms with this; he should be given that space to grieve. It will also provide closure for the congregation, as well as Fr. Mark and his family.
- Costa reminded the vestry that this is a difficult situation, and the vestry will hear many comments, some of which will be untrue. Despite not being able to speak freely on this matter, the vestry should remain confident that, as leaders of the church, they made a decision that they believed was in the best interest of the church.

Canon Gwynn concluded that St. Bart's is in her prayers, as well as the bishop's, and assured the vestry that she has seen some really exciting calls happen. She will be working with Canon Allisyn, Costa, and the vestry subcommittee to move forward with securing both short-term clergy assistance and the interim rector. In the meantime,

the vestry should feel free to reach out to her at glynch@edsd.org or (858) 254-6374 (cell).

Lauren Sleeper asked if it would be possible to have a meeting with the clergy, vestry, and staff to foster a sense that everyone is part of the same team. Because these groups generally do not meet together, there is a feeling of disconnect, even though people are trying to work toward the same goals.

Canon Gwynn responded that it would be a worthwhile goal, and she will give it some thought. She asked that Lauren email her a reminder, as well as the coach analogy she shared earlier. Canon Gwynn, Canon Allisyn, and Costa will then see what they can put together.

3.2 **Parishioner Response to Rector Announcement** **Susan McCormick-Davis**

Susan McCormick-Davis opened the floor for discussion of what the vestry is hearing from the congregation in response to the announcement of Fr. Mark's departure.

Vestry members made the following comments:

- A former parishioner reported that people were coming to her and saying that this is about the conservatives taking over and pushing out the progressives, and they did not know if St. Bart's could remain their parish home.
- While vestry members cannot share with the congregation full details of what occurred, they can avoid being defensive and focus on the positive instead. The following are possible talking points:
 - Fr. Mark's departure is related to a personnel issue and is not political. The "All Are Welcome" sign is not coming down, and ministries that Fr. Mark helped put in place, such as Honor Faith, Build Future and Invite Welcome Connect, will continue.
 - If people trust Fr. Mark, they should also trust what he wrote in his letter to the congregation. No illegality was involved, and he was not fired but resigned. Parishioners should understand that he made his decision after discerning with his family and others, and respect his privacy.
 - It is completely appropriate for the vestry to express sadness and gratitude for Fr. Mark's time at St. Bart's. They can also ask parishioners to help dispel vicious rumors, focusing instead on the church's mission.
 - Over the past 30 years, St. Bart's has had four rectors—it is not unusual to have turnover in the Episcopal Church. St. Bart's has survived in the past and found great rectors. People should stay calm, keep the faith, and see this as a doorway.
- Canon Allisyn suggested that the vestry develop an elevator speech (two or three sentences about what is happening) so everyone is on the same page and sharing the same message. This would be helpful for both vestry and staff. Susan noted that Costa had sent her an excellent response that could be shared with the vestry; Canon Allisyn felt it was not enough in and of itself.
- The Episcopal Church is not a megachurch that is dependent on a charismatic leader. It is not about the rector; people are part of the Episcopal Church because they love the church.

- The more St. Bart's can stay focused on welcoming people and sharing the love of God, the less Fr. Mark's departure will matter.

4. Regular Discussion Items

4.1 Vestry Operations Teams Update

Costa Dillon

Costa indicated that he had received a report from the salary review team and asked for an update from the other operations review teams. Several teams indicated that they are still working on their reports.

Costa noted that the vestry does not supervise the staff. The vestry is responsible for gathering information and identifying issues that should be corrected. At some point, it will be someone else's responsibility to implement changes to the organizational structure. These changes will likely not be made right away, but the information collected will be useful in the future.

Costa requested that each team compile one report to be submitted together, rather than each individual sending a separate report. The reports should be forwarded to him as soon as possible.

4.2 Parishioner Phone Calls Update

Susan McCormick-Davis

Susan asked whether the vestry is ready to resume phone calls to parishioners, which have been on hold during the past couple of weeks. There are various issues that could be broached with parishioners, such as the poll on worship times that recently went out. The vestry discussed whether to resume calls and made the following comments:

- Canon Allisyn cautioned that, while it is important for the vestry to be in touch with parishioners right now to address insecurity about St. Bart's future, the congregation will be polled frequently in anticipation of calling the next rector. The vestry therefore needs to be strategic about what it asks of people so they do not develop poll fatigue.
- Susan responded that the calls could be simply to check in with people, rather than to make a specific request. There is concern that the vestry is perceived as being asleep at the wheel and not showing enough care. Communication has been a major issue; should the vestry be more intentionally communicating in a systematic way, or is it too much work right now?
- As people are emerging from the pandemic, it might be advisable to make time and space to celebrate being back together for several months before asking them to commit to volunteer. However, there is a line to be walked since certain ministries—especially those involving the children—need volunteers to run.
- The second set of calls did not get quite as good a response, which may be indicative that they occurred too soon after the first set of calls. It might be best to space out the calls a little more. However, the ministry fair is a good alternative as it allows people to take the initiative to volunteer.

The vestry discussed how to create more enthusiasm about coming to in-person services and attending the ministry fair. The following comments were made:

- Donuts and coffee are a good idea; the presence of food signals a return to normality.
- Videos showing various aspects of the church would be useful both as a historical record and to get people excited about returning to campus.
- Those who are already attending in-person services could look around and see who is not there, then call/communicate with those people to say they are missed and ask if they are coming back.
- The vestry's new orange name tags provide good visibility, which will help parishioners more easily identify vestry members who can field questions.
- Several people in retirement communities have been waiting for bus service to St. Bart's to resume.
- Nancy Peterson mentioned that one retirement community, Casa, has recently resumed bus service to St. Bart's. Canon Allisyn asked that Nancy notify Casa that there will be only one service this Sunday, June 20.

Canon Allisyn emphasized that it is important for lay leaders to be at the ministry fair and asked that the vestry be present if they are comfortable attending in person.

5. Action Items

- 5.1 **MOTION: Be it resolved that, upon the recommendation of the finance committee, the Vestry hereby authorizes the spending of up to \$38,000 to upgrade the lighting in the sanctuary and to execute the appropriate contract with JJH Construction to accomplish this. Funding will come from the long-term maintenance account.**

Mark Davis explained that the lighting system in the sanctuary is the original system installed in 1980, which was developed with technology that is now obsolete. A year or two ago, an attempt was made to upgrade to all LED lights, but the current lighting system was not compatible.

Will Smith investigated what could be done to make the system more functional for St. Bart's current and future needs. He reported that a design has been proposed for a new lighting system incorporating some existing light fixtures. The new system will be installed on the wall, so the box protruding from the floor will be removed, thus increasing the open floor space.

Three quotes from wholesalers were requested for the main equipment, an ETC controller system; Show Imaging provided the lowest quote at \$9,589. JJH Construction provided a quote for the labor and installation, as follows:

Electrical and lighting	\$9,500
Drywall repair	\$10,000
(not to exceed; to be billed based on time and labor)	
Profit, overhead, general liability insurance	\$4,972
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$24,472</i>

Mark Davis explained that three contractor bids were not requested because JJH Construction and the electrical subcontractor did all the sanctuary work last year, so they have intimate knowledge of the sanctuary's electrical system. Their history and experience with the building uniquely positions them to do this project. Working with a contractor that is familiar with the building will make it easier to determine the budget for options that arise as construction progresses.

Total costs for the lighting system upgrade are as follows:

JJH Construction	\$24,472
ETC controller system	\$9,589
10% contingency	\$2,977
<i>Total</i>	\$37,038

The cost, including a 10% contingency, falls under last year's \$45,000 budget for lighting. The finance committee recommends that the vestry approve this expense.

The vestry asked which fund this money will be taken from. Will indicated that the funds will come out of long-term maintenance, as this work is to update an existing lighting system that can no longer be repaired.

A motion was made to authorize the spending of up to \$38,000 to upgrade the sanctuary lighting and execute a contract with JJH Construction. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

5.2 MOTION: To approve a temporary pay raise of \$500 per week for the Rev. Canon Allisyn Thomas, retroactive to the week of April 26, 2021, and continuing until an interim rector is called.

Costa Dillon explained that this pay raise is to compensate Canon Allisyn for the extra work she has taken on due to Fr. Mark's absence. Since she does not do the full job of the rector, the personnel committee has recommended an amount halfway between the rector's salary and Canon Allisyn's current salary.

The vestry discussed whether an additional expression of appreciation, such as a spa day, could be provided to Canon Allisyn. Susan McCormick-Davis indicated that she would raise the possibility with the finance committee.

A motion was made to approve a temporary \$500 per week pay raise for Canon Allisyn. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

5.3 MOTION: To create a courtesy resolution to offer thanks to Fr. Mark from the vestry for his time and service at St. Bartholomew's.

Polly Getz-Enos explained that in parliamentary procedure, a courtesy resolution can be made to express appreciation to clergy. The vestry discussed creating courtesy resolutions for both Fr. Mark and Canon Allisyn to thank them for everything they have done for the parish. The courtesy resolution for Fr. Mark could be calligraphed in the memory book that is being prepared for him.

A motion was made to create a courtesy resolution to thank Fr. Mark for his time and service at St. Bart's. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Polly indicated that she would forward to Costa some examples of courtesy resolutions.

The vestry agreed to take up a courtesy resolution for Canon Allisyn at the July vestry meeting.

6. New Business

6.1 Formation of HR Committee

Costa Dillon

Costa indicated that a number of personnel issues have come up lately, and it has become clear that St. Bart's does not have a process in place for dealing with HR issues. To address this need, it has been suggested that the personnel committee be reformed as an HR committee. This would involve the following:

- Devise a committee charter that specifies the committee will function as an HR department
- Revise the employee handbook to explain how the committee functions and who to go to with HR issues
- Have an HR law firm on retainer to advise the committee

The vestry agreed that this is a good idea. Costa stated that he would work with Dan Crane, the personnel committee chair, to develop the charter, revise the employee handbook, and look into options for having an HR law firm on retainer.

6.2 In-Person vs. Virtual Vestry Meetings

Costa Dillon

Costa raised the question of whether the vestry should resume in-person meetings. The consensus was that the vestry should continue to meet via Zoom, with periodic (possibly quarterly) in-person or hybrid meetings.

Although the vestry usually does not meet in July, it was agreed that, because the church is in transition, it would be advisable to meet in July via Zoom. The vestry can revisit the issue of in-person meetings at that time.

7. Announcements

7.1 Fr. Mark's Farewell Reception

Susan McCormick-Davis

A farewell reception for Fr. Mark will be held on June 27 after the 11 a.m. service.

Polly Getz-Enos noted that when a significant staff member leaves, it is a common practice to provide an opportunity to collect a purse for that person. The vestry discussed this possibility but did not feel comfortable making a specific ask. Parishioners are welcome to contribute individually if they wish.

7.2 Upcoming Events

Canon Allisyn

- (a) St. Bart's Weekend: August 28–29 (depends on when construction is done)
- (b) "All You Need Is Love" Gala / Outreach Fundraiser: October 23
- (c) Stewardship Season: September
- (d) Diocesan Convention (St. Bart's Host): November 12–13
- (e) Bishop Curry: December 2–4
- (f) Bishop Susan Brown Snook Visitation: April 3, 2022

8. Closing Prayer

Jim Oakes closed the meeting with a prayer.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

10. Future Meetings/Events/Key Dates

June 20	Campus open house
June 27	Fr. Mark's farewell reception
July 20	Vestry meeting
August 17	Vestry meeting
August 28–29	St. Bart's Weekend (pending construction completion)
September 21	Vestry meeting
October 19	Vestry meeting
October (date TBA)	"All You Need Is Love" gala (Outreach fundraiser)
November 12–13	Diocesan convention (St. Bart's hosting)
November 16	Vestry meeting
December 2–4	Bishop Curry revival visit

Respectfully submitted,

Akiko Tamano
Vestry Clerk