

March 24, 2009
Meeting of the Vestry of Saint Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church
7:00 PM in the Chapel
Next meeting: April 28, 2009

Attachments:

Year to Date 2/09 Financials, 2008 Stewardship Summary

Vestry members present:

Brad Erickson, AnnaMarie Hoos, David Kincaid, Rick Storrs, Susan Abernethy, Paul Fromberg.

Absent: Jessica Anderson, Elizabeth Boileau

Also Attending: Leesy Taggart, Treasurer and acting Secretary for this meeting

I. APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY, 2009, MINUTES

February, 2009, minutes approved.

II. FINANCIAL REPORT

See YTD financials and stewardship summary, attached.

Financial results before the end of the first quarter (or Easter, whichever is later) are difficult to assess because of the variability of giving and expenses early in the year. February 28 fell on a weekend, so our monthly credit card run of about \$5K came into the account at the beginning of March. Correcting for that, giving for the first 2 months is down about 12% from same period last year. This is roughly the same trend we experienced in the 4th quarter, up until the last week of the year. Expenses are about 3% up over the same period, but we also carried some bills over from last year. All bills are current. The vestry will review financials in more detail after the quarter end.

Stewardship statistics for 2008 were encouraging in light of the economy and the leadership transition, but confirm that the church needs to give focused attention to expanding our base. Active pledges, annualized at year end, dropped 5% from 2007 on an equal number of pledging units. Regular giving (pledge and plate) was down 9.5%. However, fundraising nearly doubled, leaving our regular giving plus fundraising totals down only 2% for the year. Fundraising for operations will always be part of the church's financial health, but would like to increase the proportion of pledged giving, as this is more predictable.

During the year, most pledgers (69%) renewed at their existing levels; 18% increased and 13% decreased. There were 11 new pledges and 9 cancelled or abandoned. We have 10 'informal' pledges -- people who give regularly but who do not have a committed pledge. We reviewed the distribution of giving amounts and discovered remarkable stability, when one special gift is removed from the statistics. There are 22 members who did not give during 2008: 2 have started giving again, 6 are otherwise active in the church, and 14 are no longer active. Leesy and

Paul will follow up with the 20, hoping to bring all the active people back 'into the fold.' Most or all of the 14 inactives will likely choose no longer to be members.

Leesy reported that Alissa has requested that we move to an e-mailed version of the annual stewardship package, to reduce her production workload. There was extended discussion of the value and effectiveness of the hard copy, mailed package. Several suggestions were made for ways the work could be restructured to reduce the burden on Alissa, and vestry members volunteered to help or recruit help. They sent Leesy back to propose these changes to Alissa, in order to keep the hard-copy method.

III. BUILDING AND FACILITIES

The floors in the church were deep cleaned after Christmas and will be cleaned again before Easter by our regular janitor service. They look (and smell) beautiful. Spring Spruce-up will be 3/30, coordinated by Paul, and there will be a variety of clean-up/set-up days around Holy Week. There are no current capital or significant repair projects.

IV. VESTRY ORGANIZATION

Vestry had a retreat February 27-28 to begin looking at the current work of the church and how to reconfigure or expand the vestry to best support congregational life and governance. There was a vestry work day on March 21 to continue the conversation. This is still in formation and will be discussed further in upcoming vestry meetings. We agreed that the function of the vestry is two-fold: to hold and move the church's vision AND to manage the property and financial resources of the church. Over the past few years, the vestry has moved strongly into the first role, which was historically held more by the rectors. As our building has aged, we have begun to take more responsibility there as well, but have not figured out how to do it in an organized, systematic way. The vestry's job is to coordinate work, not to hold all the expertise and take responsibility for all the 'doing'. However, we have cut staff and the church's life has become increasingly complex, requiring more coordination. It is likely that the Vestry will expand by 1-2 seats as a result, and that particular areas of ministry will shift around among commissioners. One vestry member will likely be given explicit responsibility for facilities oversight.

A few matters of continued discussion before a firm recommendation:

1. It was clear from the parish profile and community feedback that we want to deepen our education ministry with a focus of 'life-long learning', including children, youth, and adults. We want to make sure to retain and deepen our engagement with service within this framework, and continue to see that learning and service are intimately connected. Each learning experience includes the question, "so what do we do with what we are learning?"

2. The broad umbrella of Finance includes both budgeting/cash management/bill paying AND development/stewardship/fundraising. Both have to do with money, but are very different in focus and skills needed. We look forward over the next several years to more significant capital costs and dream of expanding our building. It is unclear whether the current configuration of a Finance Commissioner on the vestry supported by a Treasurer is the best way to organize the

responsibility. It might make sense to have two vestry positions, split along the tasks above. Two Finance seats, however, might shift the weight of vestry's focus too far from ministries and community life.

3. How can we structure the vestry to be most responsive to the changing and growing needs of the community? Does that look like a single major change, or a series of steps?

Paul proposed that we permanently move the date of the parish's annual meeting from May/June to late January/early February. This lets the community review the year -end financials and the coming year budget in a timely way, and supports having the annual meeting be a substantive 'state of the parish' discussion, rather than a proforma coda to Chapter. In addition, since the Diocesan Convention is being moved to January, this will let our delegates serve for nearly a full year at the Deanery level before Convention, rather than coming in cold. After discussion about the relationship of the Annual Meeting to Chapter, and whether there is a strong reason to tie them together, the Vestry voted.

THE VESTRY VOTED TO AMEND THE PARISH BYLAWS TO MOVE THE DATE OF THE PARISH ANNUAL MEETING TO NOT EARLIER THAN THE 1ST SUNDAY IN JANUARY AND NOT LATER THAN THE LAST SUNDAY IN FEBRUARY.

The date of the next Annual Meeting was set for the weekend of February 5-7, 2010. Paul asked the vestry members whose terms expire this year to extend their service until that date. Both Brad and AnnaMarie agreed to do so, with the vestry's concurrence.

Chapter is scheduled for the first weekend of June.

V. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Susan reported 5 new members since the last vestry meeting: Dennis Szkotnicki (sponsor Liddy Clark), Bruce Bramlett (John Stansbury and Rita Haronian), John and Stasi McAteer (Judith Tucker), and Adin Eichler (Will Hocker). There are at least 3 additional new members in the pipeline. It seems that new members are welcomed into volunteering very quickly and easily.

VI. LEARNING AND SERVICE REPORT

Rick reported that Super Ministry Sunday was a great success and built upon the experiences of last year. Several people connected with new ministries, and representatives of the various groups also said people came away with a clearer picture of all the things that are happening around the church. There was a rich mix of 'internal' ministries like deaconing and coffee hour and community and service ministries 'outside the walls'. It was important to have the fair take place after both liturgies, and participation after the 8:30 service was excellent.

Rick is following up with the advocates of all our service ministry partners, for reports on congregational participation in their work. We have added two new ministry partners: Boys Hope/Girls Hope and St. Dorothy's Rest.

We are in the process of recruiting a new welcoming coordinator to replace Zach Finley when he moves to Canada. .

VII. COMMUNICATION REPORT

AnnaMarie reported that several projects are moving forward. The new format Nyssa News is well received and still working out some production and timing issues. The welcome brochure has been updated and reordered.

VIII. RECTOR'S REPORT

Easter planning is well under way. Holy Week has become so complex that Paul has broken the former Czar/ina position into 2-person teams for each liturgy: a deacon and a logistics person. He hopes that this will help each liturgy to get focused attention and priority, and that Holy Week leadership will be a less overwhelming task.

The liturgy of Renewal of Ministry and Welcoming a New Rector is scheduled for April 25 at 5 pm, with a potluck reception afterward. The offering will be designated for Paul's discretionary fund.

Paul presented the final draft of the 2008 Parochial Report, which is our annual report to the Diocese on membership, attendance, liturgies and finances. The financial report was previously discussed. Membership, which is measured more broadly for this report than we do internally, increased from 309 to 321, and average attendance at Sunday liturgies increased by about 4% to 165. We have added chairs to the seating area for the first time in several years. Paul asked the Vestry to accept and certify the report.

THE VESTRY APPROVED THE 2008 PAROCHIAL REPORT AND COMMENDED PAUL FOR HIS WORK AS INTERIM RECTOR, REFLECTED IN THE GROWTH IN ATTENDANCE, MEMBERSHIP, AND FINANCIAL HEALTH.

IX. CLOSING PRAYER

** meeting adjourned **