

CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY
Northborough, MA

VESTRY BUSINESS MEETING
Apr. 21, 2020 Minutes

Present on Zoom

Sr. Warden: Deb Hesek
Jr. Warden: Howie Gelles
Treasurer: Janet Wilcox
Clerk: Cathy Terwedow
At-Large: Sally Kazarian, Cindee Morin, Sean Nelson, Aaron Ting

Absent

Rector: Chad McCabe
At-Large: Ted Flanagan

Consent Agenda

The March minutes were discussed and accepted in principle, with approval pending one update. The final minutes were approved via email on 4/24/20.

Janet presented the March financials, noting that the preschool rent has been paid through May. Although the PPP loan secured by the diocese did not include rent, meaning there won't be any more rent income for the rest of the school year, we'll lose only one month of rent. The preschool credit card bill has not been paid yet but it's accounted for and will balance out. On page 3, the miscellaneous charge of \$1646 will be reimbursed, less 10%, for our cancelled Easter mailing. The altar guild is over budget due to the approved purchase of candles and communion cups.

Rector

Coronavirus update. Chad described his National Guard duty. Duty times change from week to week but are currently 11am-5pm M, T, Th and W evenings. He conducts short funeral services and ministers to guardsmen. Chad noted that it's really important to him to do both jobs, Nativity and the Guard (keeping up services, giving sermons, holding a weekly story time, etc).

Hall updates. Howie will unscrew the bookcases; Deb is doing the trim. We could use more help though. We also discussed the need for the huge black speakers since they're only used occasionally. Could we get smaller speakers, maybe for a couple hundred dollars per speaker. It would be good to get professional advice. Perhaps Glen knows someone at Bose who could help.

Men's ministry. The men's Palm Sunday hike was postponed due to weather.

Extensive lineup of online events. We have lots of ways to stay connected. See the list at the end of these minutes. Sunday's service (4/19) was recorded for broadcast on Northborough's cable channel (Mon & Thurs). If this becomes a regular thing, we'll need to publicize it and improve the recording. Larry is handling all our streaming services.

Following up on last month's vestry minutes, all of Nativity's Holy Week services were held online. There were no in-person services. Instead, we delivered palm leaves, communion cups, and service bulletins to all parishioners' homes; a practice that we have continued throughout the church shutdown.

We are getting good visibility for our online services. Thanks to Gary Mott, Nativity was included in a WGBH article. We were also featured in a *T&G* article and Chad was interviewed by *Community Advocate*.

Average Sunday Attendance (ASA). The Bishop sent out guidance for how to record online ASA; his choice is to count the highest number of viewers during the service; not the total number of views over time. There are a

number of drawbacks to this approach, including that it doesn't count multiple viewers/home. [[One source](#) (found after the vestry meeting) stated that the industry standard for counting a live online audience as 1.7 people per counted live view.] Janet will find out how the ASA affects diocesan contribution over time.

Treasurer / Pledge Treasurer

College scholarship fund – A decision was made and approved to accrue \$125/qtr (\$500/yr) to fund a scholarship for graduating students. Janet will talk with Sabina and cc Chad regarding how to handle it on the financial reports. Qualification criteria will be determined and an application form created. We have three high-school seniors this year

Pledge donations – Q1 closed out slightly ahead of plan due to prepaid and one-time 2020 pledge payments. Q1 pledge statements went out on April 8. Including envelopes in recent communion packets and enabling online payments (Paypal & credit card) is proving to be successful. Many people who were behind on Q1 pledges have made an effort to catch up in April.

	Q1
Total Pledged:	\$287,189.80
Budget:	\$97,500.00
Actual:	<u>\$101,889.42</u>
Over/Under:	\$4,389.42
% Received To-Date:	35.48%

EFT and pledges are low for a second month in a row (masked by pre-paid and one-time pledges). Deb stated that some people are confused about pledges and online activities so we need to do better/more communication. Cathy will write an email about how to stay current with your pledge and make donations and ask Sabina to send it out. Topics will include being a good steward by setting up BillPay (automatic payments) through your bank. It's easy to set up online and you can choose how much to send, how often to give, and when you'd like the money withdrawn. Best of all, there is no charge to Nativity when using this method. EFT (Vanco) and Paypal both charge fees. For example, Paypal donations cost us \$67 for the last two weeks. Use BillPay through the bank. Church is charged a fee for EFT and Paypal.

Sr. Warden

CARES Payroll Protection Act – Deb's 4/7/20 notes from the Diocesan meeting with Jr. and Sr. Wardens captured the situation very well. Payroll, health and retirement benefits are covered, as are housing allowances. The preschool will be covered. The diocese filed a single application (utilities not included) on behalf of all the parishes in western Massachusetts on April 6. The loan has since come through so, fortunately for Nativity's bottom line, our next payroll will come from the loan. Deb will continue participating in diocesan Zoom calls to discuss ideas with other churches' Sr. and Jr. Wardens.

Bible study – We discussed the possibility of offering a Bible 101 class as a follow-up to the five practices we discussed during Lent, bible study being one of the five. Topics could include: how to approach and read the bible; a look at the different aspects of the bible (poetry, history, law, prose); the 'Bible as a book' vs the 'Bible as theology'; the relevancy of context; and how the bible is applicable to today. Are there online course that we could take together? Diocesan resources?

Zoom church services discontinued – It wasn't unanimous but we voted to discontinue Zoom for Sunday services and stick with Facebook only. There just weren't enough people using Zoom and it was a headache to manage multiple platforms. Zoom is good for groups where you want an interactive, collaborative environment whereas Facebook is excellent for presentation formats where you're speaking one to many.

We discussed additional ways for maintaining connections using Zoom but ultimately decided that our current activities are sufficient: Zoom coffee hour after church, and Storytime with Chad and Ethan.

Maintaining connections – Deb, Cindee, Cathy, Sally, and Janet will write notecards to all parishioners. Vestry phone calls to all parishioners should continue. People really seem to appreciate the communion packets, calls, and cards. It was suggested that we throw a huge party to celebrate getting back to the building when the threat of the virus has passed, but it will probably be a long time until everyone feels comfortable enough to come back (even after the CDC, diocese, and governor say it's okay to reopen).

It was suggested that Chad write to the leaders to encourage them to keep in touch with the members in their groups.

Vestry retreat – Planned for Sept. 26 at Sally's home. The goal will be to plan for 2021.

Jr. Warden

Options for streaming broadcast services – We've come a long way since we first started broadcasting services using Chad's cell phone! Should we start thinking about a professional camera? Lighting? A platform? Local cable? A better camera, available in a wide range of prices, would give us higher-quality sound and picture and wall-mounted cameras could pan and do closeups, so that viewers could see the reader, not just the altar.

A small interest group could research options for the future (e.g., Howie, Aaron, the Sweetwater Christian technical group). Consider church services in both the hall and the nave.

Spring cleanup & church-repair working document – We still want to have a spring cleanup day but the Boy Scouts aren't available this year and it's unlikely that we'd be allowed to get a group together before Memorial Day. Howie reviewed and categorized Aaron's church-repair document. From it, he will create a list of tasks that could be done piecemeal, by individuals. The labyrinth needs attention and Chad also wants to clear out the brush in the Back 40. The budget will allow up to \$2000 in total expenses for supplies and easy repairs. Cathy will create a volunteer mailer using Signup Genius.

Howie fixed the Nativity mailbox. It looks great but it might need to be raised up. We'll see whether the post office has any issues with it. Howie will also create a list of projects that require a plumber, electrician, etc.

Security issues – Sabina is very concerned as we've had break-ins in the past and she can't see people enter the building until after they've passed her office. Is it a camera issue or a computer issue? The existing cameras rely on wifi and are too time-delayed to be worthwhile; they would need to be hard-wired to eliminate the delay. Larry says we have a new computer which would help with viewing, but it needs to be set up.

What happened to the doorbell? People without keys should be buzzed in. Would a Ring® doorbell be less expensive than a camera? Sean said hardwiring a camera would be cheaper. The decision was to set up the new computer and see if it works. Then check the delay. After that, we could hardwire a camera for the red doors.

AC unit in hall – We need an electrician who specializes in HVAC. Howie knows a guy who can submit a bid. Sabina has a list of two local people who could quote. The vestry agreed that three attempts at getting a bid count even if we don't get three bids.

Children's Ministry

JAM update – J.A.M. is going well. Two of the kids can do Zoom; two others are on the phone. A girl from Bolton joins occasionally. Jenny brought each child an *Adventure Bible* as a gift from Nativity. They love them. Children's lessons are included with their family's communion packets and are delivered by Cindee. Sabina and Chad have been helping Cindee copy materials. Deb offered to help as well.

Women's Ministry

Women's retreat – Sally had no updates to report but she has concerns over the virus situation. Lots of women are interested in going but will we be allowed to meet? Will women be comfortable getting together in November? Will Grotonwood even be open? We already signed a contract for 25 people. If we have to postpone, could we get credit toward a future date? Sally will give them a call to start the conversation.

The meeting opened and closed with prayer. We adjourned at 9PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Terwedow, Clerk

Upcoming Dates:

- All events can be viewed on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/pg/NativityNorthboro/videos/>. Sabina will also promote them on Patch.
 - Every Sunday:
 - Facebook online service, 10:00AM
 - Zoom virtual coffee hour, 11:00AM (Deb Hesek emails the link each week)
 - Every Tuesday: Facebook "Tiny Desk Concert," 7:00PM
 - Every Wednesday:
 - Zoom Bible Study, "Walking with Luke," 10:00AM (contact Rachel Manley for the link)
 - Facebook story time, 11:30AM
 - Facebook noonday prayer
- May 5: Executive meeting
- May 19: Vestry business meeting