

Vestry Retreat February 3-6, 2023

Saturday

In Attendance:

Father Bill Terry, Bill Glew, Ed Collins, Rusty Downing, Lori Ranner, Susan Redick, Karen Judge, Jim McMillan, Luigi Mandile, attending via virtual link: Diana Haase. A quorum was achieved.

Guests: Dr. Cavin Davis, Vicki Terry, Kirk Toups, Krystie Eugene, Cairo Jackson

General Session 1 (+Anna's Place breakout group)

Father Bill called the session to order at 9:17 AM with Morning Prayer.

I. **Addressing Gendered Language in By-Laws**

All attendees/Vestry members were in agreement that outdated language in the By-Laws should be updated to be more inclusive, pluralistic, and representative of the St. Anna's community. Fr. Bill suggested that volunteers (in this case, Bill G. and Lori) begin the process of producing a new version. Both the old and new versions will have to be presented first to the Vestry for approval, and then to the parish as a whole at the next Parish Meeting in December.

II. **Vestry Responsibilities:** Financial matters, hiring a rector, certain committees are required of the Vestry such as the Financial/Stewardship committee, as well as unwritten expectations. The Vestry are leaders but also cheerleaders for the church. Attendance at church affairs (such as the "Down in the Treme" Music Series, etc.) as well as regular Mass attendance are important. Vestry members should be good listeners and ombudsmen for the concerns of parish members. Other responsibilities include endeavoring to keep a balance between transparency and confidentiality, and to foster conflict resolution. Fr. Bill suggested designating someone as a go-to mandated reporter for sexual abuse. Lori suggested that it might be helpful to articulate specific roles for individual Vestry members and church employees so that the channels of communication are clear for specific types of concerns. This process was added to action list for the upcoming year.

III. **AnnaGram:** Fr. Bill pointed out the high level of readership, and that its potential as a robust tool for communication. It is also a written history of our church. {attendees were strongly encouraged to submit reflections and articles to the AnnaGram.}

IV. **Church employees serving on the Vestry** was first allowed after Katrina because of the paucity of available members. It has continued up until today, with careful consideration for confidentiality and separation of interests. Father Bill pointed out that there is a sunset for the resolution that allowed for this practice, and that at some point it should probably be discontinued.

V. **Selection of a new Junior Warden.** Father Bill enumerated the responsibilities of the J.W. The office is required by canon law. Karen nominates Ed C. as the new Junior Warden, seconded by Jim. Ed accepts.

Break: 10:10-10:21 AM

- VI. A quick run-through of **existing Committees** and Church Ministries, their leadership, functions, and their responsibilities. Including: The (New Rector) Search Committee, Finance and Stewardship, Dodwell House Committee, Mission Fundraising Committee, Sexton Building and Grounds, Gracious Goodies, Altar Servers, Choir/Liturgical Music, Greeters/Ushers, Food Pantry, Altar Guild, Book Club, Christian Education.
- VII. The Vestry uses a methodology called a **Consent Agenda**, which means that documents are sent out via email ahead of time for approval at the meeting. Each month there should be a report from the Rector, Senior Warden, Junior Warden, and Finances sent out ahead, questions are fielded, and then the reports are filed.
- VIII. The meeting pivoted to a **presentation by the Anna's Place leadership**. Cavin Davis introduced his role, his background, and his aspirations for Anna's Place. He mentioned the importance of the relationship and common goal setting between the Vestry and Anna's Place. Anna's Place has 22 associates who can bring its mission into the community and advocate for its needs. Cavin stressed the need for teamwork. He introduced Christa Eugene, the program coordinator. She grew up in the 7th Ward, attended McDonogh 35, received her bachelor's and graduate degrees in management. She has over 25 years' experience in organizational management. Cairo Jackson has been at St. Anna's for about 4 or 5 months as Development Director. His mother is a Baptist minister and he grew up immersed in a spiritual environment. He graduated from New York Film Academy and later worked for them in publicity. He came to New Orleans for the requirements of that job and has been here ever since. He has seen the positive effect of attendance at St. Anna's on his life. He is in charge of grant writing for Anna's Place. He highlighted the many grants we are currently applying for, and also our participation in the upcoming GiveNola day. Our goal for that event is to raise 50,000.00. Darryl Durham is the founder of Anna's Place. Darryl learned the art of successful management during the early years of Anna's Place, and has continued to build on those early lessons in many different roles in the organizations. As the staff becomes more and more professionalized, Darryl stressed the importance of not losing the personal touch that was built into Anna's Place from the beginning, particularly because it was staffed largely by church members at that time. He mentioned that the leadership of Anna's Place has a reputation for honesty, caring intentionality, passion, and professionalism. Going forward, we have a tremendous responsibility to continue building on the successes of the past. Participation and buy-in from the Vestry, the parish, the community of kids and their parents are all crucial to the success of Anna's Place.
- IX. Ed Collins asked how many children does Anna's Place serve. Cavin said that the numbers fluctuate from day to day and season to season, usually somewhere from the mid-20s to the mid-40s. The Anna's Place team tries to attend the outside activities of the children, especially those who can't attend regularly. During the summer the numbers radically increase, but there are also many children from the summer return for the school-year sessions. There is a fee of 25.00 per semester for participation which can be waived in cases of financial need; private donors are able to pick up the expenses. Payments are also available on a sliding scale. Parental involvement in Anna's Place activities is highly encouraged. We have parental meetings and also ChopItUp, which is a group of dads who offer each other mutual support and discussing how to be a better dad. It draws men who are both parents of children in the program, and also from the community at large. The group draws on the mental health expertise of individuals involved in Anna's Place. Lori suggested that this group be featured in an upcoming Annagram.

Bill G. asked about the mental health resources of Anna's Place for the children. There are two groups that meet with the mental health professional that are separated by age. There is also a group of high-needs students that meet with him individually as well. There is also mental health support available for the adults involved in the program. Cavin mentioned the primacy of addressing the mental health in children before educational opportunities can be accessed.

Cavin mentioned the current process of creating a community advisory council for Anna's Place to make sure all the voices of those invested in the mission are heard.

-adjournment for lunch 12:00-1:30-

X. Calling a New Rector Process

XI.

Father Bill discussed the process and its stakeholders with particular reference to the Vestry. The canon (representing the interests of the bishop), and the Search Committee (representing the interests of the Bishop) are chiefly responsible for undertaking calling a new Rector. Father Bill recused himself from the rest of this section of the meeting. Bill Glew picked up with the presentation, sharing information as co-chair (with Karen Judge) of the Search Committee with the rest of the Vestry.

Step One: online and printed questionnaire for parishioners and other stakeholders what are their priorities for a new rector. Bill pointed out that the Committee's responsibility is to represent the interests of the parish as a whole and to recommend one or more candidates to the Vestry. Diana has pulled together 189 questions from many other surveys to create a master list. The Search Committee has a meeting on the February 9 to discuss the construction and content of a questionnaire, which should be fifty questions or less and which will include a free response area. A much shorter online questionnaire for non-worshipping stakeholders will also be available. These may also be used for focus groups. The canon would like us to have the whole listening process defined before we send out the questionnaire. She said that she will come to St. Anna's to view and summarize the results of the parish survey as part of the process of making them public. The data-gathering process should be finished by late May, and the parish profile should be compiled over June and July. The announcement of the vacancy should be published sometime in August.

Luigi brought up the question of the feelings of any new Rector regarding current employees and deacons of the parish. Bill suggested that this issue be brought up in every interview.

Karen will give the parish an update of the progress of the search after Mardi Gras. We can't interview anyone until July 24, but we can have everything in place before that to expedite the process as much as possible. She assured the Vestry that the Bishop is as passionate as we are about picking the right person for St. Anna's. Darryl suggested a broad timeline be offered to the parish as part of the update.

Darryl asked how do we make sure we are getting an honest assessment of a candidate from their own parish. Bill said the canon is our advocate in this respect, and she will call her counterpart in the diocese of the applicant and ask for their opinions.

Karen asks if Rebecca Henley would be able to plan Father Bill's going away party. All Vestry members agree. She also urges all Vestry members to ask any and all questions they might have about the process.

XII. Discussing the roles of church personnel.

The four orders: laity, deacons, priests, bishops.

Bishop: the shepherd of the diocese elected by the diocese and approved by the whole church. The College of Bishops regulate themselves.

Luigi discussed the role of deacons and his own personal story.

He also shared the multifarious nature of St. Anna's engagement with the LGBTQ+ community.

XIII. Crafting a Vision Statement for St. Anna's

Since we already have a suitable Mission Statement, the questions arise: what do we want the Vision statement to look like, and do we actually need one? This promises to be an ongoing conversation as we get deeper into the search for a new Rector.

-meeting adjourned for chapel and dinner; reconvened at 7:30 pm-

XIV. Finances with Jim

Jim broke down the church finances into the following categories: General Fund, Capital, Anna's Place, Dodwell House, Food Pantry, and Extravaganza (including all fundraising). Numbers are all available on the financial statement for 2022. Jim pointed out that monies in all different categories are discrete and cannot be shifted. Only the Treasurer and the Rector have access to the Dodwell House fund, and the General Fund.

A question is raised about significant shortfalls in the categories of Gen. Fund and Anna's Place - together 300,000.00 in debt. Jim replied that any of the differences get ironed out and equalized through our reserves. These numbers only represent the 2021 expenditures and incomes. Any current year deficits are covered by reserve funds held by the funds. Starting in 2023, we are going to allocate a significant proportion of operating costs to Anna's Place and Dodwell House that have previously been charged to the General Fund.

Our Assets include the Church campus, the Dodwell House, and the Fairy Playhouse (Stewart Butler's House). Our liabilities include the construction loan for Dodwell, for 2.1 million dollars of which 684,000.00 is still outstanding. The loan is interest only until the end of 2023, and afterward it is spread out over 30 years. The rate is 3 1/4 %. We have donors that are going to cover the first few years of payments. Once the person who has usufruct of the Fairy Playhouse moves out, the house reverts to St. Anna's. Our fundraising network is wider than it has ever been. Particularly with the grants we are going after, our bookkeeping is going to get more complicated and may result in more dedicated responsibilities for the Finance Committee of the future.

XV. Mass shootings in worship spaces

Father Bill said we will notice him beginning to remark the exits in church at the beginning of mass.

Father Bill suggested an active defense training day for Vestry members and Ushers. Father Bill will put together this event and advertise it in the Annagram and possibly open it up for other parishioners as well.

-meeting adjourned until 10:22 AM Sunday morning.

XVI. Stewardship Committee Report

Karen and Rusty presented on the work of the Stewardship Committee. She said that every other month we would like to have a brief coffee talk about various kinds of stewardship. We will also be sending out a survey at some point regarding peoples' interests. A time and talent survey will also be sent out after the Search Committee questionnaire to give people as sense of what they might be able to contribute. The Pledge Drive will kick off in October. Carl will submit articles quarterly for the AnnaGram on giving-related subjects. We will also have live testimonies during mass regarding giving. The emphasis in all of these will be on the personalization of giving. Father Bill suggested having a "club fair" for all the different ministry activities, with a contest for the best display. The winning ministry will receive 500.00 for their work from the discretionary fund. We could also have "aspirational" displays, that seek interest for ministries that don't yet exist, but could.

- XVII. Father Bill discussed the **renovations of Maginnis House**. One of his suggestions was that after Anna's Place moves to Dodwell Place, to move the Rector's office downstairs for purposes of accessibility. This move will entail money, time, disruption, and inconvenience because of the way that the computers and telephones are hooked up. He suggested making this move part of the next capital campaign, which may be several years away. He also suggested in the meantime, moving the Food Pantry into the Choir Room, which has a back door and would make for easy accessibility. It also de-clutters the hallway. The hallway can be fixed up as events overflow space. The upstairs space can be made available for multiple uses, including but not restricted to space for the DAWN program, so that the adolescents in Anna's Place can have a separate space from the smaller children.

Father Bill suggested one potential ministry that can use this space is a youth group. Which can also be a connector between Anna's Place and the parish. Karen is interested in the expenses for moving the offices. Jim said we need to do a comprehensive investigation of what kind of general renovations need to be done in the building as a whole. Karen suggested we leave it to the new rector to decide where they want to have their office. Bill G. suggests two feasibility studies, one for the moving, and one for the whole building needs.

XVIII. Mission Funding

Cairo spoke about his fundraising for the continuing upkeep and missions of Dodwell House which is not only Anna's Place. GiveNola on May 5 is the current push, we have eleven grants currently submitted. We can support this work by spreading the word of the needs of St. Anna's and the opportunities to give. Cavin encourages us to all pitch in with distributing signs and flyers. Social media posts can be reshared. Also consistent announcements at these endeavors at church. Father Bill invited Cavin and Cairo to attend a March or April Vestry meeting to give further specific suggestions. Cairo said we want to leave no stone unturned, so that we can break 50,000.00 on GiveNola day. Cairo suggested each member thinking of ten people with disposable income that he can then send a packet to of information regarding giving opportunities.

- XIX. A firm commitment was made to discussing the concrete next steps for the development of **an active Adult and Youth formation program**, including a **Youth Group, Sunday School, a Nursery Attendant**

for Mass, and other opportunities. This will take place within the next few months, in the context of a Vestry meeting.

Meeting was closed at 11:35 AM.

Final note by Fr. Bill: *The retreat actually started on Friday evening. During that time reflections of who we are and how we are informed by our faith were shared. It was a time of fellowship and prayer. At the end of each evening, we spent time getting to know each other. One of the most important things to come out of this three-day weekend was that strong relationships were started and built upon. Anna's Place faculty felt much more a part of the church and the church felt much more connected to Anna's Place team. It was fun to watch folks hanging out and having a little relaxation time together after long days of listening and contributing. It was one of the best retreats ever.*

With gratitude

Fr. Bill+