

**All Saints' Beverly Hills
Vestry Meeting in Upper Sweetland Hall
September 28, 2021**

Attendees:

Vestry: Ted Dodd, Gary Roberts, Lisa Holguin, Marissa Flaxbart, Lance Harding, Gerrie Maloof, Lisa Schwab, Jeff Smith, John Tan, Kevin Yoder, Lonnie Hinckley

Absent: Bill Lincoln

Clergy and Staff: Michael Sahdev, Hallie Foote

Guests: Bishop John Taylor, Canon Melissa McCarthy, Ruth Loomis, Carl Anderson, Lynn Dodd, Jean Dillingham, Steve Fleenor, Debbie Winchell, Chris Winchell, Jon Bruno, Karen Ide, Susan Humphreville, Theresa Amy, Ruth Loomis, Colleen Dodson Baker, Chris Cook, Kevin Shrum, Dennis O'Hara.

Ted Dodd called the meeting to order at 7:08pm

Ted Dodd introduced The Right Reverend John Harvey Taylor, Bishop of the Diocese of Los Angeles and The Right Reverend Melissa McCarthy, Canon to the Ordinary.

Bishop Taylor offered a prayer.

Be it resolved: the Minutes of the meeting of the Vestry on August 31, 2021 are approved as circulated (Lisa Schwab moved; Gerrie Maloof seconded; unanimous consent)

Opening remarks by Bishop Taylor

Canon Melissa McCarthy will provide guidance and support for operations in the next few weeks. The process of identifying a full-time, experienced interim priest is already underway. It is the Bishop's feeling is that this person already had been anointed by God and it is up to us to figure out who that person is. He encourages us not to worry and to recognize that we have some time to work this out.

The Bishop led a participatory litany for Janet, our former Rector; Ted and Gary, our wardens; Naomi, who recently left; Michael, our associate Rector who continues; the Vestry; and all people at All Saints' Beverly Hills as well as those yet to come as guests and newcomers. He urges everyone to pray likewise.

The Bishop reflected on the existence of an active, creative, devious darkness in the universe that can make Christ's church act like the rest of the world. In that world, elites benefit from polarization, and we fall prey to demonizing people and looking for a scapegoat. He remarked that we are in a high-achieving culture and that, sometimes, we may rush toward solutions too quickly. In opposition to that, Paul, in I Corinthians 13 explains that love is kind, gentle and never insists on its own way.

The Bishop knows that smart people will try to figure out what happened here, and he indicated he sees no benefit in the pronouncement of a "verdict". He spoke about the involvement of a Mennonite group for St. James in Newport and the limitations of the current situation. Bishop Taylor encouraged all to take a month or two before proceeding with any work together about the recent events. He urged us strongly not to dwell on the past, but to seek guidance and to focus on what we have learned, and again, to ensure that all our actions reflect the ethos that love is patient, kind, and gentle. He counseled us that we are the vessels of the holy spiritual and the architects of ASBH' future and that with empathy, patience, and forgiveness, we will do fine.

Canon to the Ordinary Melissa McCarthy described the process and progress in identifying an interim priest for All Saints' Beverly Hills. The Reverend Canon Thomas Discavage is supporting All Saints' in this process. This is not a linear, typical process, but one in which the Holy Spirit will illumine the right person for All Saints' Beverly Hills. Meanwhile, All Saints' is not in a holding pattern. This is a time to restore and repair relationships. Reach out to one another including those you have not seen and build one another up in love.

Michael Sahdev is now the Senior Priest. He is a professionally trained, experienced, competent priest and pastor. He has conducted himself with great maturity and integrity during a difficult time. Ensure that there is preaching relief for him and that he takes days off. He is 100% all in, but he needs time off to be effective and to sustain his ministry among you.

All Saints' is not alone in this experience. Other churches have experienced this as well. In the absence of the Rector, the Bishop becomes your Rector. He is the person with authority to delegate. He is delegating the authority for day-to-day operations to Fr. Michael Sahdev. This means that he is in charge of liturgical things, acolytes, rooms to be used, and day-to-day operations. The Vestry's work at this time is to reconnect with one another and to build one another up. Work on your relationships. You have to be working well for the Vestry to serve the church well.

Vestry members and guests ask questions and the Bishop and Canon McCarthy answer them. Some people weigh in with comments.

Among the answers shared by the Bishop: apologize to anyone to whom this is needed. The difficulty comes if we decide this needs to be reciprocal to be a success, that is, if we have an expectation that the other person will likewise be in a place to say, "I'm sorry, too." Please, reduce your expectations of people and attend to your own penitence.

Eventually, you may want to have conversations in a controlled way, not a debate or argument. This is a complex, wounded system and for the past two years you may have felt like billiard balls knocking against each other. Now it is the time to be like marshmallows. Lower expectations for what other people need to do. Canon McCarthy reminds us that the point of compassion is building one another up in love.

Bishop Taylor counsels people to stop using email for communications and instead to pick up the phone and talk to one another. Nobody can reverse what happened, but we all deserve to be listened to. This includes many members who did not have "a dog in the hunt". Good listeners should call people and listen. Don't argue with people who simply need to be heard. The practical fact is that Janet Broderick is no longer at All Saints' Beverly Hills, and we are here. The point is to listen to each other.

The Bishop replied to a query about the consultant report by saying that the Vestry and Wardens have a responsibility--a contractual, moral, and ethical responsibility--to control content that might be interpreted as negative. So, he recommends that we instead think of the stresses that occurred in our church family system and carefully draw up a list of values and principles that we have learned, as a result of this conflict and through the listening sessions. The goal is to be aspirational rather than accusatory. This will help priests, vestry, and wardens to discern what to aim for in creating a profile. The Bishop indicated that he fully trusts that God will bring an ABUNDANT future to All Saints' Beverly Hills.

After that, Bishop Taylor, and Canon McCarthy leave.

Michael Sahdev calls the Vestry meeting back to order. He reflects on the Bishop's message about LOVE and says that he knows well that it is easy to believe that we love one another until we really have to do it. So, this is where we get to experience the work of the holy spirit among us!

He passes around Josh Paget's documents to be signed by the Vestry for Endorsement for Ordination to the Diaconate and Endorsement of Candidacy for the Priesthood.

Warden's Report (Ted Dodd)

A motion came from the Executive Committee that All Saints' Beverly Hills donate to the music program in Santa Ana in recognition of the *pro bono* work done by Chancellor Nancy Whitehead over the past several weeks.

Be it resolved: All Saints' Beverly Hills will donate \$5000 to the music program of Episcopal Church of the Messiah in Santa Ana in honor of Nancy Whitehead's service. Approved by unanimous consent.

Buildings and grounds committee

Ted thanked Tom Fleming for his helpful emailed report. Lonnie Hinckley volunteered to join the committee.

Vestry Nominating Committee

Ted again asked for suggestions for the Vestry Nominating Committee to be sent to him as soon as possible.

Vestry Code of Conduct and Communications Policy

Ted circulated the Vestry Code of Conduct and Communications Policy that still is in force. He discussed the importance of confidentiality. He offered his appreciation to Kerrin Clark for reminding the Vestry of the code's existence.

Benevolence Fund Report (Kevin Yoder/Marissa Flaxbart)

We have discovered that the need in the community is not only related to COVID. Rather, there are many needs that help good people move forward in their lives at strategic moments when resources make an enormous difference.

Personnel Committee Report (John Tan)

John discussed accountability processes including clear job descriptions and annual assessment in relation to success on the areas outlined in job descriptions, with raises based on that success. He also showed planning around needed roles (not positions). Michael Sahdev is leading the search for a new Youth and Family Ministries Director. Craig Phillips hired a part time assistant organist and choir director. Michael Wilson has taken on the tasks of three full time positions and so a key hire will be a new chief of operations/chief of staff, who also can take on the responsibilities of finance and facilities. Mutual ministry reviews and accountability will become a regular aspect of church life.

Michael Sahdev speaks about his role at the church and concludes that we all have been put here for a reason, and "the church needs us (vestry/clergy) to be together".

The meeting adjourned at 9:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Hallie Foote
Secretary to the Vestry