

# GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Windsor, Connecticut

December 9, 2025

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## Attendance

**Present:** Larry Young, Ken Roach, Margaret Shields, Debbie Hutchinson, Andrea Anderson, John Carpenter, Susan Burgdorf, Katrina Woodhouse, JoAnne McLeod, Linda Rickard, Debbie Boone, Jan Belinger, Rich Adessa, and Dave Stender.

**Absent:** Father Don Hamer, Jo Anne Harrison-Becker, Chuck Drake, Carol Hall, and Reverend Charlotte LaForest.

### **1. Call to Order**

The December 9, 2025 Vestry meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Senior Warden Debbie Hutchinson.

### **2. Opening Prayer**

Debbie Hutchinson led the vestry in saying the Opening Prayer.

### **3. Additions/Deletions to Agenda**

There were two additions to the agenda:

- 6. Executive Session

This will be led by Jan Bellinger

- Old Business

2. Partners for Sacred Places – Father Don will lead the conversation via Zoom.

### **4. Approval of the Minutes**

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to accept the minutes as written from the November 11, 2025 Vestry meeting.

### **5. Financial Report**

Larry presented the vestry with the year-to-date budget versus the actual and a consolidated 2025 projection. He stated that Rich Adessa is currently taking care of St. John's expenses. Larry had not yet entered their finances into the Grace Church books. Larry reported that the projected deficit of \$30,000 is now much smaller at about \$8000. Much of this difference is due to us not having a permanent priest in charge; it is much less expensive to pay a supply priest. We also do not have a permanent choir director and organist. A question was asked regarding how much we will owe the Diocese for our pledge. Larry and Rich explained that we will not incur a large pledge amount because of the merging of the two churches.

#### **a. Technology Needs of the Newly Merged Parish**

Larry reported that we have spent about \$2500 on a new computer for Father Don and for Bonnie. Currently, the only other technology needed is for the touch screen on the organ. Dave Stender reported that this monitor has not been working for several months but the organists are still able to play because they use a mouse rather than the touch screen. Dave stated that possible repairs will take place after Christmas.

**b. Budget Request from the Diocese**

Debbie reported that we have asked Canon Rosado if we can ask for a full- time priest. The Diocese is requesting another submission of our budget. Debbie informed Canon Olds that we need more time for this to take place. We need to prepare budgets for different scenarios that highlight different options regarding what is done with the property, who we call as a new priest in charge and hiring a new director of music. Debbie stated that she needs leaders of ministries to submit budgets to show what they need money-wise so that an accurate budget can be made.

**c. Replacement of Outside Door in Lower Parish Hall**

Ken Roach reported that he has received a quote for a new side door to the Lower Parish Hall. However, he stated that this will need to be amended to include the back door to the kitchen, which also needs to be replaced. This discussion will be moved to the January meeting.

As a part of the security plan, Larry presented an aerial drawing of the Church which highlighted the coverage that proposed new cameras would give us. Someone would need to monitor the cameras from the office during services. The idea of a security team was proposed to take turns doing the monitoring. Another suggestion was to hire an off-duty police officer to monitor security during services. It was decided to contact the Windsor Chief of Police to get his input. This topic will be deferred until the January vestry meeting.

**d. Status of Organist**

This topic was deferred until the January vestry meeting.

**e. Approve Annual Meeting Date**

Based on the new by-laws, the Annual Meeting will take place in May. We will wait to determine a date.

**6. Executive Session – Calling our Next Priest**

The vestry went into Executive Session to discuss matters of personnel.

A lengthy discussion took place. During the Executive session, a motion was made by Dave Stender and duly seconded by Ken Roach. The vestry voted with 13 in favor, and one opposed as follows:

RESOLVED, that the vestry call the Rev. Donald L. Hamer, D.Min., to serve as its next Priest in Charge (PIC) effective January 1, 2026 and the Vestry has determined that an annual amount up to \$66,029 of the Reverend Donald L. Hamer's total compensation is hereby designated as a housing allowance for the calendar year 2026 to be used for expenses related to providing a home, including rent, mortgage interest, utilities, and repairs. This designation is made in accordance with Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code.

The vestry came out of Executive Session.

**Old Business**

**1. Update on the St. John's Campus**

Jan Bellinger reported that she had a Zoom meeting with Father Don, St. John's real estate broker Keith Kumnik, and their attorney, Stephen Penney. Research discovered that Epaphras L. Phelps gave the land for the rectory; Mr. Phelps deeded the land for use as a rectory, but he did not sell the property to St. John's. As a result, the land under the rectory belongs to his direct heirs. Attorney Penney contacted an attorney in Cheshire, Andrew Knott, who works on finding direct heirs and resolving these types of property issues; he uses the resources developed by the Mormons' ancestry base. If hired, Attorney Knott would receive \$5000 and the Mormon facility would receive \$15,000, Jan stated that once the title to the land is cleared, a decision can be made regarding selling the property or using it for combined use.

Dave Stender made a motion, seconded by Sue Burgdorf: Resolved that the Vestry allocate a sum up to \$25,000 to pay for legal expenses and expenses related to searching the ancestry of the original donor of the property on which the St. John's rectory now sits in order to obtain a clear title to that property.

A discussion took place. Larry questioned how the legal expenses would be paid. Rich Adessa stated that the money could come from the St. John's Money Market account. Larry Young made a friendly amendment to the motion on the floor: If a direct heir is found who wants payment for the land, we will negotiate the price. If no direct heir is found, the probate court will be used. The friendly amendment passed unanimously. Dave Stender's original motion with the addition of the friendly amendment was voted on and it passed unanimously.

## **2. Partners for Sacred Spaces**

Father Don joined the meeting via Zoom. He reported that, at the vestry's request, he had a conference call with Gianfranco Grande, Executive Vice President of Partners for Sacred Places. Father Don reported that Partners for Sacred Places is interested in working with us because our merger involves the preservation of two historic sacred buildings. Our present situation involves capital improvements on one building (Windsor) and exploring the possible re-purposing of another historic building (East Windsor). Gianfranco believes that, if framed properly, our merged sense of purpose with our two campuses would make us excellent candidates in 2027 for one of their Fund for Historic Places grants of \$500,000; they award approximately eight per year for outstanding "model" projects. Partners begin every project-- whether it be preservation or repurposing or a capital campaign-- by leading in a process of community asset mapping. Gianfranco suggested a first meeting with the vestry so that questions can be answered and more details of the process discussed. The introductory meetings are at no cost. However, if we choose to work with Partners, there will be a fee. They begin every project with a capital campaign and suggest that we hire someone to lead that project. The vestry expressed interest in what Partners has to offer, and Debbie asked Father Don to reach out to Gianfranco to find dates in January when he is in the area so that he can meet with the vestry.

## **3. Roof Repairs**

A report on the progress of the roof repairs was deferred to the January vestry meeting. Larry Young made a motion regarding paying for the repairs which was seconded by Ken Roach: I move that the funding for the current roofing work on the Chancel roof and the back roof on the Tuttle House be funded by: 1) an anonymous donation of \$20,000, 2) a withdrawal from the Tuttle Fund MMA at Windsor Federal of \$21,000, and 3) a withdrawal from the D&B Investment Account at the Diocese of \$70,000; the total project cost is \$111,000. There was no discussion on the motion, and it passed unanimously.

## **4. Ramp Update**

Dave Stender reported on two options and quotes for accessibility to the Church. A lift only, open-air lift starts at \$45,000 and does not include the cost for site preparation. Repair costs for a lift can run extremely high. Dave has received two bids on the ramp project; one contractor dropped out of the

bidding process. The ramp quotes received vary by about \$40,000. Because of the wide disparity in ramp quotes, architect Tom Nolan has suggested that we receive a third quote. A discussion took place. Dave made a motion, seconded by Margaret Shields that the accessibility project for Grace Church will not include a lift; we will have an outside ramp. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously. Dave will pursue getting another ramp quote.

## **5. Thanksgiving Service – Thank you letters**

Debbie stated that the service was a success. She reported that \$500 was collected and will be split between the Five Corner Cupboard and the Windsor Food Pantry. Lilian Hutchinson has volunteered to organize the next interfaith Thanksgiving service. Debbie stated that thank you letters will be sent to the speakers who participated in the service.

## **6. Church by the Pond**

JoAnne McLeod reported that the outreach was a success once again. Volunteers baked/bought cookies, met to make sandwiches and assemble lunches, and dispensed the lunches at the park. We handed out sixty lunches. Donations from the congregation helped to offset the cost of the food. The next Church by the Pond will take place in April.

## **New Business**

### **1. Lessons and Carols**

The Lessons and Carols service was well attended and a success. It was followed by the Annual Christmas Potluck lunch. Some parishioners were disappointed that the music did not include Christmas carols. Familiar carols will be sung during the Christmas 1 Holy Eucharist service.

### **2. Bishop Laura's Visit, February 1, 2026**

Debbie stated that our former Verger, Bob Keating, will be honored during this service. He will be given a gift to thank him for his years of service and dedication. Bishop Laura will be here to help us give thanks for our merger and all of the ministries at Grace will be blessed. Debbie suggested that we consult with an iconographer to combine the name St. John's with Grace. The idea would be to create a sign and banner to reflect the new parish. She will speak with Joy Doran about who her parish used to create their sign. A request for ideas from an iconographer will be sent in January.

### **3. Donations for Food Ministry**

Debbie reported that, as of our meeting, over 170 lbs. of food has been donated from Grace Church. Larry noted that there is still about \$5000 available in our Food Ministry account. Debbie said that South Park Inn has no more federal funding. She suggested that we make a donation to them from our Food Ministry Account. Larry noted that he would like donations for food ministries to be in our budgeting process to perpetuate that money. A motion was made by Margaret Shields and seconded by Andrea Anderson to donate \$600 to the South Park Inn from the Food Ministry account. There were no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously. Larry stated that he would write a check that Tom Woodruff could deliver along with the Dove Tree gifts.

### **4. Additional Comments/Thoughts**

Ken Roach noted that Wreaths Across America will be taking place. He personally pays for and places a wreath on the grave of Howard Gray. Mr. Gray was a WW1 veteran who was a member of Grace Church. Debbie said that she would like to put a wreath on the grave of former veteran Paul Cassarino, a long-time and well-loved parishioner at Grace.

## **5. Closing Prayer**

With no further business before the vestry, the meeting was adjourned at 9:28 pm. Debbie Hutchinson led the vestry in saying the closing prayer.

JoAnne McLeod, Clerk