

**Vestry Agenda**  
**April 23, 2024**  
**Hybrid: Zoom and St. John's**  
**7pm**

**I. Introduction/Introduccion**

The Vestry met at 7:00pm as planned. Present in person were Mother Minerva Camarena Skeith, Henry Welles and Patricia Mata. Attending via Zoom were Brian McGiverin, Kevin Flegal, Sarahi Giron, Mary Cree, and Deacon Victoria Mason.

A. Opening Prayer/Oracion de Apertura Mother Minerva

A. Rounds/Presentaciones Mother Minerva Camarena Skeith

A. Focus/Enfoque Mother Minerva

**II. Bible Study/Estudio Bíblico - Mary Cree**

Mary Cree read from the Gospel according to Luke 18: 1-8 and members discussed its meaning.

**III. Adoption of Minutes/Adopción de las Minutas Mother Minerva**

Adoption of the March minutes was deferred as these were sent to vestry members less than an hour before the meeting.

**IV. New Business/Negocio Nuevo Mother Minerva**

**A. New Leaders & training/Nuevos Lideres y Entrenamiento**

1. It is a goal of the vestry this year to recruit and train new leaders for the church. One area for recruitment is leadership for Christian Formation and activities for children.
2. Sarahi and Mary have volunteered to begin planning activities for children. Mary suggested asking parents in the congregation what activities they want for children's Christian Formation. Sarahi said she would also be interested in having these conversations with parents.
3. Mother Minerva said we also need to determine whether parents would like to have children's activities during the church service or at another time before or after services.
4. Mother Minerva noted that some grandparents who are members have expressed interest in church activities for their grandchildren.
5. Regarding training for Safeguarding God's People and Safeguarding God's children: Mother Minerva notes that all vestry members are required to take the training for

Safeguarding God's People. However, this training is currently being revised and so training can take place after the course has been rewritten.

6. Brian McGiverin suggested a house meeting at church regarding children's events. Patricia also endorsed this idea.

## B. Accepting Gifts Guidelines/Políticas de Aceptando Regalos

1. St. John's needs guidelines about which gifts we want to accept and which might be more appropriate for other charities or organizations. The church also may accept a gift at one time but find we cannot keep the gift later as it no longer fits into our ministry. Mother Minerva had asked Kevin Flegal to propose a policy for the parish in accepting gifts.
2. Kevin Flegal stated that the acceptance of gifts by the church needs to be precoordinated. In addition, there should be a stated policy that when a gift is accepted by the church, it becomes church property, and we may give it to someone else if we no longer have a way of maintaining the item or using it for our church ministry. The policy should include a list of things the church does not want to accept unless we specifically ask for them, such as in-kind donations. Kevin has created a draft explanation of these guidelines for Mother Minerva and Brian McGiverin. Kevin asked Mother Minerva and Brian to help him revise this draft so that he can present it at our next vestry meeting. Brian and Mother Minerva agreed to this.

## C. Door Protocols/Nuevas Pautas para las Puertas

1. Mother Minerva: We have new locks and panic bars for the doors to the sanctuary. We need a protocol for when to leave doors unlocked or to lock them during services. What about on Sunday? Do we leave the doors unlocked or leave them locked but have VOD or usher open the doors as needed? In the past, there have been minor incidents when a visitor has come into the sanctuary during services in a way which interrupted the worship service,
2. Brian: The problem of someone disruptive coming in still exists with or without the locks. A policy of locking the doors and then having someone profile whether to let someone in seems incomplete.
3. Kevin: In the past, before the new panic bars, the doors would be unlocked before the church services and remain unlocked during the service. For safety reasons, Kevin recommends leaving the doors between the Narthex and the sanctuary unlocked, but the exit doors from the Narthex to the outside could be locked to those outside during services with someone available to open the doors to latecomers.
4. Kevin: The Parish Hall was also unlocked during the services, with someone from the hospitality committee staying in the Parish Hall while the doors were unlocked.
5. Henry Welles: How do the doors work with the new locks? Kevin explained the panic bar. When the doors are locked, anyone inside can open the door by pushing on the bar but someone outside will have to knock on the door and be let in (unless they have a key).

6. Patricia Mata: When we were in the Parish Hall, the doors were always unlocked during services and afterward if there was a meal. Sometimes people came in when food was being served and no one knew who they were. At first, it was an uncomfortable situation, but they spoke to the visitors and found out that they didn't know what event we were celebrating; they wanted to ask for food. If someone asked for food, the hospitality committee or whoever was serving food decided to share food with the visitors.
7. Brian suggests we have doors unlocked for high traffic times and then have VOD to open the door for late comers. He points out that this still leaves the question of whom to let in. How are the ushers or vestry going to determine what visitors are safe to admit. And how will we be able to turn people away (if they are aggressive or disruptive)? How will we determine that someone is going to be disruptive? There is a temptation to let in people who have money and turn away those who appear to be homeless. Brian states we need a policy in place to deal with possible disruptions from visitors, and just having a locked door is not going to solve this problem alone.
8. Kevin notes that the doors can be propped open with a kickstand before the service and for the beginning of the service. We don't know if someone is going to be disruptive when they come to the door. Vestry of the day and ushers are going to need training to talk with visitors and see what their situation is when we open the door.
9. Deacon Victoria Mason: The bigger question is: How are we a welcoming church? What are the criteria for us to express how we welcome people who come to the church? Deacon Victoria agrees that there should be someone in the Narthex to welcome people as they come to the church. The police department also has training available in how to talk to people who arrive as newcomers.
10. Mother Minerva: What concerns me is not people asking for assistance but rather about someone arriving with a gun to shoot people with no way to stop them. As human beings we often judge people unfairly. However, Mother Minerva would like to have someone greet latecomers as they arrive and not open the door for someone who is armed. If someone arrives at our door armed and dangerous, then a vestry member or usher could not open the door and alert the congregation and call the police. If someone just wants water or to use the bathroom, we can and should let them in.
11. Henry Welles likes the idea of seeking training to deal with these issues and endorses the idea of having vestry of the day in the Narthex during services to greet latecomers and alert the congregation if dangerous situations arise.
12. Sarahi Giron relates that she once saw a visitor come late to the 1:00pm service and sit in the back. After the service, she asked the man if he spoke Spanish, because she was going to invite him to the meal after the service. The man said he did not speak Spanish and left.
13. Brian said we could engage people by asking them for content neutral information such as asking them to fill out a visitor form with contact information. This allows us to gauge their response for any obvious red flags (or signs of aggression).
14. Mother Minerva knows several people who live in the neighborhood of our church and sleep outside. Sometimes they are relatively calm and easier to engage with and sometimes they argue and literally fight with imaginary people (or visual hallucinations) that are not physically present. When they are agitated and fighting,

Mother Minerva avoids these people. The behavior of the person is more important than what they look like.

15. Brian said it is also an important factor if you already know the person and know that they can become agitated, rather than responding to someone you don't know and therefore have less information to believe they could become disruptive.
16. Henry noted that when our choir director wanted to visit Trinity Church in NYC, he had to show his ID, his Covid vaccination status and walk through a metal detector. St. John's isn't planning to be that restrictive, but it's worth considering how other churches are handling these issues.
17. Mary Cree suggested that we unlock the doors before each service, Lock and close the doors after the first ten minutes of each service and have a vestry member and one other person stay in the Narthex to let people into the church as appropriate. We also need to create a policy and educate ourselves and members of the congregation regarding how to recognize red flags for aggression/agitation and how to respond.
18. Mother Minerva: Currently, we do not have ushers at the 8:00am service. Vestry members of the day have been coming before the end of the 8:00 service and leaving after the beginning of the 1:00pm service. Pataricia states that the ushers from the 1:00pm service could stay in the Narthex and listen to the service from the speakers in the Narthex. We would have to ask them to stay in the Narthex so that they can see people coming to the door and let them in.
19. Deacon Victoria said that when one of the Austin synagogues was set on fire, they held a training for members of the Jewish congregation regarding safety precautions that was taught by the Austin police department. Mother Minerva states she has a contact number with the police department from one of the officers who comes to our parking lot in a police car to watch the building during the week for an officer who conducts safety training for organizations in the community. The person who does this neighborhood safety training may not be available for the next three months.
20. Mary said she would be willing to come for the 8:30 service on her day for VOD. Keven said that he routinely comes before the 8:30 service on his day as VOD. Henry says he normally worships at the 8:30 service and he would be happy to sit in the Narthex for the beginning of the service and his VOD days. Henry says he is VOD for the next two weeks. It was agreed that VOD should start coming to church at 8:30.

## V. Old Business/Negocio Viejo

Due to a lack of time, old business was limited to the Junior Warden's report regarding the Parish Hall.

### A. Partnership with COA Parks Dept./Ass. con el dep. De Parques de Austin

### B. Parish Hall/Salon Parroquial

Kevin Flegal reports that the cleaning of the Annex by congregation members has made it possible for groups to meet in the Annex, and the Monday Men's Meeting has already met in the Annex and given positive feedback. Cleaning of the Kitchen and areas A, B and D (where the Vestry used to meet) is planned for the May workday. Parish administrator and Junior Warden have set a goal for limited use of the Parish Hall for 2 or 3 hours at a time by May 12 for Sunday coffee hour and Christian

Formation groups. This portion of the Parish Hall could be available for limited use until construction begins to rebuild the remainder of the Parish Hall.

## VI. Report/Reports

The Rector's, Deacon's, Senior Warden, and Junior Warden Reports for April can be posted online.

- A. Junior Warden's Report/Reporte Guardian Menor Kevin Flegal
- B. Senior Warden's Report/Reporte Guardian Mayor Brian McGiverin
- C. Deacon's Report/Reporte de la Diacono Deacon Victoria
- D. Rector's Report/Reporte de la Rectora Mother Minerva

## VII. Next Step/Proximos Pasos

- A. May 28 de mayo: Vestry Meeting/Junta Parroquial
- B. April 25 de april:HJAN

- VIII. Closing Prayer/Oración Final Deacon Victoria Mason  
Clergy/Clero

## **2024 Vestry Meeting Schedule Calendario 2024 de la Junta Parroquia**

**May 28 de mayo**

**June 24 de junio**

**July - NO Meeting**

**August 27 de agosto**

**September 24 de septiembre**

**October 29 de octubre**

**November 26 de noviembre**

**December 17 de diciembre with Finance Committee con el Comité de Financia**

**January 21 de enero**