

Parish meeting February 3, 2019

Time: 11:30 AM

Attendance at the meeting:

By phone: Liz McMullan, Stefan Cushman, Ailsa Foulke, Tanny Clark, Jim Clunan, Mimi Houghton, and Axie Diana.

Marsha Planting, Leanna Greene, Janet Stratton, Lauri Fernald, Linda Jonas, Mary Lee Bayne, Maude March, Scott Planting, Kimberly Haller, Karol Hagberg, Kate Ellis and her daughters, Grace and Emily Ellis, Sydney Roberts Rockefeller, Moorhead Kennedy, Martha Bucklin, Jean Fernald, Judy Norwood, Jackie Agnese, Sheila Smallidge, Michael, Kerry Kenney

Opening prayer by The Rev. Cannon Michel Ambler

Opening remarks by The Rev. Cannon Michael Ambler

The vestry decided it was time for new leadership. The vestry is responsible for calling the rector and if needed asking them to leave. The Rev. Jane Cornman's leadership was not what The Parish of St. Mary and St. Jude needed to go forward. They asked the Bishop to dissolve the relationship between the parish and the rector. This process is always painful to everyone involved. The Bishop became involved to ensure things would be fair and compassionate to all involved. The Rev. Jane Cornman conceded and didn't fight the decision. She has several months' severance while she is looking for a new placement.

Marsha Planting stated she came on vestry late, as she was filling someone else's term. She said she cared tremendously for The Rev. Jane Cornman, and she thought she was a wonderful minister. She mentioned she didn't know the details Janet Stratton and Lauri Fernald spoke of and chose not to vote on her leaving. Janet Stratton was kind and thoughtful on how Marsha felt.

Leanna Greene stated she was not in favor of The Rev. Jane Cornman leaving as she no first had knowledge of if she was fulfilling her other rector duties. The majority of the vestry felt The Rev. Jane Cornman should be asked to leave.

Jane Stratton reported there were some administrative issues, differences of how the day to day work of the parish was conducted. Things were not done in a timely manner and these issues brought to The Rev. Jane Cornman's attention. Changes and expectations were agreed upon. In many cases these agreements were not followed through with by Jane. It was addressed again. The Rev. Jane Cornman didn't necessarily agree with what they thought should be taken care of in a timely fashion. Those were the stumbling blocks. The Rev. Jane Cornman did have a Life Coach during this process as well as a counselor.

Lauri Fernald reported that money was spent and then decided where to get the money to pay for these issues. The budget was not adhered to. The Rev. Jane Cornman and Lauri didn't agree on the budgeting process. The Parochial report was done at the last minute. One year it was several months late, and this was problematic. Personally, it was difficult for Lauri Fernald as she considers Jane a friend. It was difficult to separate professional and personal.

In final days The Rev. Jane Cornman did well finalizing things that were required to be completed before she left. This helped to make the transition easier.

Ailsa Foulke commented it was very difficult going through the process. Ailsa Foulke agreed with what Lauri Fernald and Janet Stratton said. She felt it was important for the termination of the relationship to end on a positive note.

Mimi Houghton stated that she liked The Rev. Jane Cornman. When things first started, she thought we could get through it and then it seemed like problems got worse and Jane was unable to lead the parish in the way that was needed. She did have coaching, but it didn't seem to work. We all wish her well and will miss her.

The Rev. Canon Michael Ambler responded that the roots of the issue go far back. Coaching started several years ago. The issues are not brand new. The Rev. Jane Cornman felt herself to be in the middle of a congregation that had divided into groups. (division of congregation) Many were angry with her and they really wanted to see her gone and that was painful for her. That may or may not have influenced the vestry, but it was high on The Rev. Jane Cornman mind.

Constance "Tanny" Clark added that going through these changes are painful for all sides. Divisions in the parish are insightful and something The Parish of St. Mary and St. Jude has been dealing with prior to The Rev. Jane Cornman. We really need to work hard on this in the future with any new person who is called. Tanny appreciates the work the vestry did to work out problems. The vestry kept the best interest of the parish in mind when making their decision. Tanny invited all members of the parish to help us move forward.

Mary Lee Bayne mentioned the Bishop's letter in the spring. The Bishop wrote the vestry voted to have the Rev. Jane Cornman remain as our priest, two members of the vestry were not in favor. She saw that as the first instance of the division of the parish.

The Rev. Canon Michael Ambler reported that when issues first arose the vestry decided not to ask for a unanimous vote on the decision to keep Jane. The vestry decided not to ask for The Rev. Jane Cornman's departure. Things were quiet during the summer then in the fall discussions were started again. They tried to repair that relationship as other difficulties came to light and it ultimately didn't succeed.

Scott Planting stated that listening to members of the parish over the past year he heard a great deal of anger coming from people, both personally and pastorally. He suggested that the parish meet to talk through these issues.

Divisions: Maude March mentioned she was a member of a group of three who wrote a letter to bishop and vestry on why they felt The Rev. Jane Cornman was not suited to be a rector. The issue she addressed was about the violation of Cannon 4. Maude March's problem was her trust had been violated and she was deeply angry at The Rev. Jane Cornman. Working with The Rev. Jane Cornman as warden for two years, she liked her as a person but didn't like that she didn't face up to her violation and continued to think that it was ok. Personally, she felt it was a violation of her trust. She couldn't be part of this parish if she didn't trust her. As warden and chairman of the capital campaign that also made me angry. Asking for money for a year-round

rector she felt angry. She felt it all began when we said, “you are new and we will give you some passes”. As a first-time rector, we tried to be forgiving, and it got to the point that there was no more room for forgiveness after three years. Not writing letters, not contacting people, not responding to emails, administrative abilities were nil, and that is why I, Maude felt that she felt she should not be rector.

The Rev. Cn. Michael Ambler thanked Maude March. He said she had articulated well there was hurt on both sides.

Jackie Agnese wanted to know what is the difference of a female leaving after having an affair, or a gay person leaving? (Bishop Chalfont was asked to leave after having an affair with his driver) The scripture stays the same. The Rev. Jane Cornman was not asked to leave because of the affair, they supported her through that, explained Reverend Canon Michael Ambler.

Maude March and her group of three felt The Rev. Jane Cornman ignored the entire situation. Maude March and others felt rectors, priests, teachers, judges, etc. are held to a higher standard.

Jackie Agnese feels what The Rev. Jane Cornman knew what she did was wrong, and she did it anyway.

The vestry will have to discuss how to address the issues out there.

Axie Diana feels looking to the bigger picture, what has happened is water over the dam, now there are big issues ahead of us. I met with The Rev. Jane Cornman over the summer and discussed this with her as I was on the search committee that called her. Axie felt betrayed, not so much by Jane and her family, but by her parish in Philadelphia that recommended Jane for the position. We took them at their word and whatever comes of this we should be thinking about how we are going to get beyond this. It is the church she loves, the beauty and history that are important. If we are open minded and prayerful, we can move forward, and make the best of the bad situation. Please keep this in mind.

Moorhead Kennedy felt The Rev. Jane Cornman spoke too fast and softly when preaching. Today he could hear The Rev. Canon Michael Ambler well and enjoyed his sermon. Mike Kennedy reported leaving in the past as he wasn't getting much out of what Jane was saying. These are basic problems, maybe we can look into them when we call a new rector,

Sydney Roberts Rockefeller is upset that there are a lot of parishioners that should be at this meeting that are not.

The Rev. Cn. Michael Ambler stated there are deep divisions. Not all are the same ones. Some around The Rev. Jane Cornman, some around the structure of finance of the parish, and issues between the summer/year-round parishioners. It becomes hard when you have several different issues. To move forward is going to require what has happened in the past, to be wrapped up quickly. There is a lot of anger, and it will take time to get back to a healthy parish. We need to pursue love and justice along the way as we await the coming of Christ. Grappling with the hard issues is holy work. What is going on here is really compacted but we must be able to make decisions about going forward. How will “you” decided to address differences and decisions

that have happened? If we don't address them, they will happen again. The family fell apart, congregation financial issues, difference, what does God want for us? If we address these we can move forward.

Maude March and Janet Stratton talked about hiring future priests. Janet explained the fact that there is no job description for a rector. The priest job is in the letter of agreement and canons of the church. It is a relationship between priest and congregation. Michael Ambler confirmed that is the case. He explained that the Priest is not the boss parent. Day to day content of a priest is negotiable. When the relationship works, it is a regular conversation between the rector and vestry. There isn't a template of the job description/contract.

Mary Lee Bayne was concerned about what was in place for Sunday morning worship. Liz McMullan has supply priest set through Dec. 31, other than July and August. There are two supply priests willing to be here for July and August. After Liz McMullan hears feedback from the congregation on who which one they would like, she will contact them.

Maude March asked if the vestry is negotiating on if they will call a new rector.

Janet Stratton stated that the vestry is not wedded to anyone, but we have our bases covered for now and will not have to close our doors on any Sundays. However, in the future, finances will enter into our decision for a new rector.

Lauri Fernald reported that financially we can't continue to have a full-time rector. The fact is that the other three parishes on the island are there already. They are having two priests cover three parishes and maybe we can work together throughout the island. Lauri Fernald has been participating with the other parishes as she thinks we knew we would become actively involved.

Mary Lee Bayne asked what happens to the endowments if we become seasonal.

The Rev. Cn. Michael Ambler stated that if The Parish of St. Mary and St. Jude ceases to be a parish those endowments would stay and would not go to the dioceses. The money is for ministry here on Mt. Desert Island. If all the churches on the island closed it would be decided on how to dispute the money on the ministry here on the island.

Scott Planting thanked The Rev. Cn. Michael Ambler for coming. He asked what is the process to deal with our issues? The Rev. Cn. Michael Ambler told him the vestry will be exercising leadership, and the Bishop's office is there to consult with them. The Parish can also find a neutral person to consult with if they chose not to go through the Bishop's office.

Janet Stratton invited all to reach out to the vestry with any and all concerns.

Scott Planting thanked Janet Stratton for all she has done. Janet Stratton told everyone if they want to attend the vestry they can, or they can call in. No secretary that has been at the meetings, Kerry Kenney will take the minutes and post the minutes on line in a timely manner.

Martha Bucklin thanked Beth Renault for all she had done. Martha felt some problems may have been delayed because Beth was too close to the situation. She has great hope for the future.

The Sr. Warden's big responsibility is to the parish. She has sadness also and hopes for love and truth as we move forward.

There was a concern for people who don't receive email. Kerry Kenney clarified that those people receive a hard copy of church correspondence in the mail.

Linda Jonas asked when The Rev. Jane Cornman would be gone? It was explained to her that The Rev. Jane Cornman's last day is January 31, 2019. But she may stay in the rectory until the end of April, if she chooses. The Rev. Jane Cornman has support from the dioceses as she navigates her next steps. She will have contact with the St. Mary and St. Jude parishioners until the end of February but by March the Bishop feels the contact should be completed. The Rev. Cn. Michael Ambler feels it is important not to ask Jane to attend events associated with the Church. This would be too painful for all involved.

Janet Stratton thanked Kerry Kenney for her help during the transition.

The Rev. Cn. Michael Ambler told the parish not to view the vestry as people who meet and tell you things. The parishioners should feel comfortable going to the vestry and sharing their concerns.

The Rev. Cn. Michael Ambler also recommends the parish meets informally to discuss concerns of the parish.

Closing prayer by The Rev. Cn. Michael Ambler.

Adjourned: 12:45 PM