

THE CHURCH CLUB OF NEW YORK

MINUTES OF THE 2020 ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday, June 24, 2020

Via ZOOM

Executive Director, Susan Ridgeway welcomed guests and explained that since the meeting is being hosted on ZOOM, those present, should remain on “mute” until the end of the meeting and enter any questions they may have into the “chat” function.

President Scott Evenbeck called to order, the Church Club of New York’s Annual Meeting of the Membership. The meeting convened at 6:15pm on Wednesday, June 24, 2020 via ZOOM.

Executive Director Susan Ridgeway confirmed a quorum.

The minutes of the prior year’s Annual Meeting of Monday, June 24, 2019, were circulated, both electronically and by regular mail, and were approved by those present at the ZOOM meeting and by those who turned in proxies.

Mr. Evenbeck referenced the unusual situation the world is currently facing with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. He credited Ms. Ridgeway for responding immediately in bringing ZOOM programming to the Church Club. The first ZOOM program offering occurred in April with a second program in May, and now this June Annual Meeting. Mr. Evenbeck noted that following the official business meeting, The Church of St. John’s in the Village has prepared a special pre-recorded Evensong for the Church Club, in honor of the Feast of St. John the Baptist, including the lighting and blessing of the Johnsmas Fire. Mr. Evenbeck and parishioners of St. John’s who are also members of the Church Club, participated in the recording of the Evensong service.

As Mr. Evenbeck will be rotating off of the Church Club’s Board of Trustees and as well as his position as President, he reflected on how he came to learn of the Church Club and was encouraged to join through, member and former Trustee, Jean Savage.

Mr. Evenbeck expressed his gratitude to the Board and commended them on their commitment, contributions, and service. Mr. Evenbeck recognized the other Trustees who are rotating off the Board – Mr. Christopher Adams, Ms. Donna Ashley, Ms. Muriel Kneeshaw, and Mr. Edward Valentine. He also recognized the ongoing support of two past-presidents attending the meeting – Mr. Stan Ackert and Mr. Bill Haas - for their help this year in trying to find a worthy home for the Church Club’s library and archives, which was a top priority for the year until the pandemic put everything on hold.

Mr. Evenbeck also noted that Mr. Ackert and Mr. Haas have been at the forefront of the Church Club’s establishment of a Planned Giving program. The Planned Giving program is important to helping ensure the future of the organization. Mr. Evenbeck encouraged members to consider making a planned gift to the Church Club “to ensure that we have the future that we want to have.”

Mr. Evenbeck explained that the incoming new Trustees will receive some orientation materials in the mail to help them understand the Church Club’s operations. The packet will also include a copy of the book **The Church Club of New York: The First One Hundred Years**. Mr. Evenbeck gave a brief overview of how the Church Club has tried to live up to the legacy left to it throughout time. The Church Club has offered a strong set of programs and in a greater number than in the recent past. He described the June 2019 pilgrimage members made to Gladstone’s Library and the Dioceses and parishes in Wales and that another pilgrimage to Wales is schedule again when the pandemic sub-sides and it is safe to gather and travel. Mr. Evenbeck commented on the success of the Bishop’s Forum in November at St. James’ Church with the Rt. Rev. Carlye Hughes, the Bishop of Newark, as well as the presentation of the “Young Adult of the Year Award”. He noted that Ms. Ridgeway is hard at work planning for the next Bishop’s Forum and Young Adult of the Year presentation scheduled for this November and most likely, on ZOOM.

Mr. Evenbeck explained that the Bishop of London was scheduled to be the guest speaker at this year’s Annual Dinner in May. With the dinner being cancelled due to COVID-19, the plan is to reschedule the Bishop of London for the 2021 Annual Dinner in March when she will be in town for a United Nations conference.

Mr. Evenbeck reiterated the success of the various ZOOM programs as well as successfully hosting the monthly Board of Trustee meetings on ZOOM.

In October, with thanks to the help of Trustee Stephen Storen, there are plans to have a fundraising event with Jennifer Jones Austin, CEO of the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA). Mr. Evenbeck noted that

several very generous underwriters of the Annual Dinner in May, which was cancelled, have allowed the Church Club to keep those funds. The donors will be recognized for their contributions during the event. Mr. Evenbeck emphasized the importance of the Annual Dinner as the main source of fundraising for the operations of the Church Club.

Mr. Evenbeck concluded his opening remarks and introduced Ms. Muriel Kneeshaw, Vice President and Chair of the Membership Committee, to give the membership report.

Ms. Kneeshaw first asked attendees to take a moment of silence to remember three Church Club members and friends who passed away during the year including: Jo Brans, wife of Church Club Treasurer Willem Brans and a parishioner of Saint Thomas Church, Gabriel Bonadie a parishioner at Trinity Church, and Grace Allen a past President and Life Member of the Church Club and a parishioner at St. Stephen's, Port Washington, Long Island.

Ms. Kneeshaw reported that last year's membership totaled 348 and that we have gained **14** new members this year. She also noted, however, the loss of the three members who passed away and seven members who resigned because they have moved away or have found it too difficult to attend events. Sixty-one additional people were removed from the rolls for long-term non-payment of dues -two or more years of non-payment. Current membership is 291.

Some members when renewing this year, downgraded to the basic \$85 membership, while some members upgraded to Sponsor or Patron membership. And one member upgraded to the highest level, the \$4,000 Life Membership.

For the year, 2020, the Board approved an increase in the basic-level membership dues from \$65 to \$85 per year. Basic dues had not increased since their creation in 2016. There were no objections from members to this increase.

A new promotional one-page flyer was created featuring photos of Church Club members at events and incorporating quotations from members about how they benefit from membership. Board members have also been placing brochures and flyers in their parishes. Those materials are also made available at all Church Club events. Additionally, whenever in-person events have taken place, the members of the hosting parish are invited to attend the events as Church Club guests. Ms. Kneeshaw noted that when we return to in-person gatherings, there will, again, be a renewed emphasis on bringing in new members.

Before concluding, Ms. Kneeshaw took a few moments to reflect on the many contributions and the life of former President Grace Allen, who passed away recently at the age of 90. Mrs. Allen was president of the Church Club from 2004 to 2007.

Following the Membership Report, Mr. Evenbeck introduced the Treasurer, Mr. Gregory Stoskopf, to present the Treasurer's Report.

Mr. Stoskopf reported that at the start of the calendar year, the Liddell Restricted Fund opened with \$100,904 and the General Fund opened with \$292,404. After the roller coaster ride with the Stock Market, as of May 31, we have \$94,565 in the Liddell fund and \$273,928 in the General Fund.

The current checking account balance is around \$29,000. Monthly expenses are about \$8,600 which includes ED steepens, rent, web maintenance and other administrative expenses.

Looking forward, the cancellation of the Annual Dinner will present a financial challenge. We anticipated around \$60,000 in net income from this year's dinner. We took in pre-sale funds of around \$33,500 which, as President Evenbeck noted, we were allowed to keep. Notwithstanding those contributions, we are still looking at around a \$25,000 shortfall. However, there are some plans for supplementary fundraising with the Jennifer Jones Austin event in the Fall.

Currently there are 82 people who haven't paid their membership dues for the year, which would result in an additional \$11,000. Mr. Stoskopf encouraged members to be sure to bring their membership dues current and he also encouraged everyone, if they are able, to make an extra contribution to the Church Club. This would be a great year to do that to help us get through the financial challenge created by the COVID pandemic.

Mr. Stoskopf reported that the Church Club office will be relocating at the end of the year which will save the \$500-\$600 per month in rent costs.

Last year, because we took in less than expected from the 2019 Annual Dinner, we had to withdraw funds from the General Endowment. But the market was doing so well, however, that we actually ended up with more in the General Fund than was in it when we withdrew the \$30,000.

Mr. Willem Brans, Secretary of the Board, interjected that he thought it preferable to refer to withdrawals as loans, so that there is always the expectation that we plan to repay the funds to the endowment, when possible.

Following the Treasurer's Report, the Report of the Nominating Committee (comprised of G. William Haas, Chairman, Michael Cappiello, Dana Cole, Arnold Neis, and Bettina Nelson) was presented by Mr. Cappiello.

A motion was put forth, seconded, and members voted and unanimously approved to elect the following person(s) as Trustee(s) to serve a three-year term, expiring in 2023:

Christian Burke	Trustee
Emory Edwards	Trustee
Margaret Shields	Trustee
Adina Taylor	Trustee

A motion was put forth, seconded, and members voted and unanimously approved to elect the following person(s) as Trustee(s) to serve for an unexpired two-year balance of the term of retiring trustee Christopher Adams, ending in 2022.

Anne Kelly	Trustee
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A motion was put forth, seconded, and members voted and unanimously approved to elect the following person(s) as Trustee(s) to serve a second three-year term, expiring in 2023:

Nicholas Birns	Trustee
Willem Brans	Trustee
Gregory Stoskopf	Trustee
Christopher Strome	Trustee

In concluding the report, Mr. Cappiello indicated that the Nominating Committee recommends to the new Board of Trustees that it elect the following as officers of the Church Club for the year 2020-2021:

President	Nicholas Birns
Vice Presidents	Yvonne O'Neal
Vice President	Diane Pollard
Secretary	Willem Brans
Treasurer	Gregory Stoskopf

Mr. Evenbeck explained that the officers will be elected at the next meeting of the Board of Trustees on July 22.

Next, Ms. Ridgeway provided the Executive Director's Report.

Ms. Ridgeway, offered thanks and appreciation to Church of the St. John's in the Village parishioners, staff, and clergy for putting together the recording of Evensong which members and guests are invited to view immediately following the conclusion of the Annual Meeting.

Ms. Ridgeway expressed her gratitude to each of the Trustees and, particularly, those rotating off the Board over the course of her nearly four years with the Church Club and that we plan to continue to build on that work.

Ms. Ridgeway thanked Church Club members for the great support she has always received. She noted that she often receives letters and emails with very positive and supportive comments about the programs the Church Club offers and the sense of community and fellowship that continues to flourish. She emphasized the impact those comments have on keeping her energized and inspired.

Ms. Ridgeway recognized the wonderful work done by Ms. Kneeshaw as Chair of the Membership Committee and noted that the Church Club has acquired over 100 new members in the past four years and that we plan to continue to build on that work.

Referring back to Mr. Evenbeck's comments, Ms. Ridgeway expressed her appreciation for the counsel of Mr. Bill Haas and Mr. Stan Ackert, two past presidents and go-to "legal eagles".

Although having to cancel the Annual Dinner and the in-person event scheduled for March, a tour of the newly renovated Trinity Church, the Church Club quickly adapted to ZOOM technology and immediately scheduled two unplanned ZOOM events, beginning in April, with "Art of the Resurrection". The May event featured "Damaged Heritage: The Elaine Race Massacre and A Story of Reconciliation" with author J. Chester Johnson.

Ms. Ridgeway noted that the upside to ZOOM events is that it allows some people who can't attend events in person, the opportunity to do so online. So, if, and when, events can resume in person, the Church Club will likely still do a combination of in-person events as well as ZOOM events, to give more people a chance to participate.

Ms. Ridgeway encouraged members and guests to participate in the Fall fundraiser with Jennifer Jones Austin.

Ms. Ridgeway reiterated that the 2021 Annual Dinner will be held in March when the Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, will be in town simultaneously to attend a United Nations event.

Ms. Ridgeway expressed, again, her thoughts about her vision for the future of the Church Club in bringing people together from across parishes and dioceses and across the miles. She noted that the Church Club currently has members from all over the country, including new members from Tennessee, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. The Church Club also has members from parishes all over the city and from dioceses outside of New York. The Church Club currently has a very loyal group of Episcopal clergy members, as well as, Associate members from other denominations. Ms. Ridgeway expressed her view that the Church Club has a unique role in bringing people together in that way. Members continue to be present at memorial services for beloved friends who have left us. The Church Club supports the special programs of parishes and faith-based organizations which are part of our wider Episcopal community. And members support and celebrate one another's individual milestones such as a speaking engagement, a book launch, a wedding celebration or receiving a special award, among others. Ms. Ridgeway cited Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's words about becoming a "Beloved Community", "Growing together as people who love God, and love the image of God that we find in our neighbors and in Creation." Ms. Ridgeway emphasized that her vision for the Church Club is to continue to grow in communion and fellowship with that larger "Beloved Community".

Ms. Ridgeway paid honor, once again, to Mrs. Grace Allen, who loved the Church Club and gave much to it. Ms. Ridgeway read words of tribute provided by Mrs. Allen's good friend and Church Club member Adelaide Farah.

Ms. Ridgeway is working with Mrs. Allen's parish, St. Stephen's in Port Washington, to coordinate a lasting gift from the Church Club to be given to St. Stephen's in Mrs. Allen's honor.

Ms. Ridgeway concluded by letting Church Club members know that there may be special plans for the Annual Bishop's Forum in November and that they would soon hear more details about the October event with FPWA's Jennifer Jones Austin.

Mr. Evenbeck gave final comments, noting that the Church Club has been working on expanding its reach more effectively with the other dioceses adjacent to the New York Diocese – Long Island, Newark, New Jersey, and Connecticut. He also expressed that so much of an organization's success is built on relationships and he credited Ms. Ridgeway with continuously reaching out and building strong connections with Church Club members, especially, during the current COVID crisis as well as finding ways to connect the Church Club to the broader Episcopal Community.

Mr. Evenbeck reminded participants to logon to St. John's online Evensong service following the meeting, and then asked participants to give Ms. Ridgeway a round of applause in recognition of her contributions to the Church Club during her soon-to-be four-year tenure.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Ridgeway
Executive Director