

Trinity Episcopal Church
Rutland, VT

Annual Meeting Minutes 25 January 2026 - 43 parishioners present

Opening Prayer and Call to Order:

Mother Sarah opened the Meeting at 11:03 a.m. with a prayer.

Election of a Clerk:

Motion made by David Rugger, Seconded by Marc Brierre to appoint Holly Webb to serve as Clerk of the meeting. There being no additional discussion, a vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

Approval of Minutes for the January 26, 2025, Annual Meeting:

A motion was made by Wendy Grace, seconded by Larry Jensen to approve the minutes. There being no additional discussion, a vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

Rector's Report:

Mother Sarah noted to us that usually on Annual Meeting Sunday she would preface the meeting with a sermon speaking to some of the matters that would be addressed during annual meeting. However, due to circumstances occurring nationally at this time, her sermon needed to be pastoral, speaking to the issues facing us all in this moment.

Sarah reminded us of our call to shepherd, our call to nourish, to nurture--that this will be our work throughout the next year. Our call to shepherd is especially fitting with her upcoming mini sabbatical during the first month of Lent when we will have a good opportunity to put this into action. She also shared with us that she has not been super vocal on media of late in regard to all that we are hearing from the media. She explained that is because were she to be more vocal, she would want to be there with us, seeing it through, rather than being vocal and then just being unavailable for sharing a message of hope and encouragement during this time of unrest.

Sarah expressed her gratitude towards our vestry and its support; she is very mindful that a paid sabbatical is not something afforded to every employee. She further explained that she will take the next three months of her four-month sabbatical allotment in 2027.

She also shared her gratitude to the vestry for trying on a new structure of shared ministry. We will continue to grow into that new way of being because neither she nor the vestry can address all the work of the church within the time available at a monthly vestry meeting.

She expressed thanks to her staff for holding everything together and in meeting all the tasks and needs of Trinity. She acknowledged her gratitude to Melissa Alarie for faithfully serving as her Senior Warden. Melissa's family responsibilities have shifted, so that while she will remain on the vestry, she will not continue as Sr. Warden.

Sarah also expressed gratitude for all the work that has and continues to be done at the rectory.

Treasurer's Report and Presentation of 2026 Budget

Sarah welcomed Linda Fay to address those present. Linda explained that in 2025 expenses went over budget by about \$3,000, with most of that due to heating fuel exceeding the budgeted amount. However, we were able to make up much of the deficit for our expenses by other line items coming in under budget.

The non-operating funds were very active in 2025, especially the Property Fund. In the Memorial Garden we were able to put in new benches and purchased paver stones, with these costing approximately \$12,000. (\$5,000 of the cost for the benches was covered by a donation.) The Property and Building Funds were more active than usual. We brought around \$80,000 into the non-operating account in 2025, of which \$30,000 was requested from the Smith-Benson Fund in 2024, but the funds did not actually come through from the Diocese until 2025. We also needed to request an additional \$50,000 to cover unanticipated roof repairs.

The Jubilee Fund was our most active. Linda provided clarification that Trinity Presents brought in about \$31,000 in 2025. We allotted \$6,000 from the Jubilee Fund to the Organ Fund for a full evaluation of the instrument. The Fund also received \$20,000 in direct donations and a grant of \$4,500. Concerts brought in donations of \$5,800, some of which was contributed to Rutland Area Pride, Rutland Area NAACP and Rutland Neighbors, with \$1,700 going to our Operating Fund.

The 2026 operating budget was work in progress, being worked on right up until today. The Finance Committee decided that while we did achieve an increase in pledges and regular income, 2026 expenses are expected to require us to take all the remaining \$14,000 in the Holding Fund, exhausting that fund. These funds came from our PPP Loan from about four years ago.

Thus, it was decided to put out a challenge to the parish to increase our fundraising line item in the operating budget from \$2,500 in 2025 to \$7,500 in 2025. The people to lead that effort have been lined up. This challenge was made because we do not want to draw on the principal of our investments. The dividend and interest income represents a big portion of our income. Drawing down the principal causes our dividend income to drop, and we cannot responsibly do that.

A significant reason for expenses increasing in 2026 were increases in costs for health insurance, liability, and all other insurances. Also, we are trying to bring our staff salaries up so that they more reasonably compensate our staff for the hours they are working.

Questions posed on the budget:

- a) Wendy Grace posed a question about the approximate \$10,000 increase in Dividend and Interest income for 2026 asking what that is based on. Linda advised that increase is based on funds that we have currently. For instance, the Percy Woods Fund tells us in January what we can expect the dividend income will be for 2026.
- b) Addie Nell posed a question about the line item for Christmas flowers being significantly higher than was budgeted. She expressed concerns about the volume of Christmas flowers seeming to exceed what could be distributed afterwards and asked if we could do something different in the future – to put a process in place for taking plants to nursing homes or to purchase decorations that could be used year after year so that nothing goes to waste. Sarah advised that we do seek and receive extra donations to pay for Christmas decorations, but that our Pastoral Care Team can work on sufficient distribution of flowers after Christmas.

Larry Jensen made a motion that those present express our appreciation to Linda for her exceptional work on the budget. The motion was enthusiastically seconded by everyone.

A motion to approve the budget was made by Keri Franzoni and seconded by Kathy Hall.

Sarah then discussed our efforts to seek \$8,100 in increased giving to avoid balancing our 2026 budget by drawing from the principal of our investments. She advised that not only has there been an additional \$10,000 raised that eradicates the need to draw from our investments, but it also reduces some of the anticipated draw from the Holding Fund.

She directed us to acknowledge the successes we are achieving:

- We are making an equity move for staff salaries;
- In 2021 our stewardship campaign raised \$105,500; In 2026 we raised 163,600!

“Things are tight because we are making equity moves and our priest’s family grew. That’s something to celebrate!” Of special note is that some of those increases are from new people who are also contributing to our common lives. “Fishing for people” is our most important stewardship mission at Trinity Church.

Dana Peterson made a motion to amend the budget as presented to reflect the changes that Linda and Sarah had just articulated. The motion was then seconded by David Rugger.

Dana explained that the amended numbers would reflect a \$10,000 increase in the pledge and regular income, bumping current budget from \$165, 800 to 175,800. Change in the investment line transfer would be reduced from \$8,100 to zero, and there would be an equal reduction in the non-operating holding fund account from \$14,00K to \$12,100. This takes \$1,900 off the \$14,000 line item and adds that to the \$8,100 and that accounts for the total \$10,000 in additional income, thereby balancing the budget with no draw on investment and a reduction in the holding fund withdrawals from \$14,000 to \$12,100. Sarah noted that we actually raised \$10,020.00!! Dana added a request to let the minutes reflect that bottom line number of \$321,948 has not changed, just the source of income to meet the expenses. The total budget figure remains the same.

A call for a vote in favor of the amendment to the budget as presented and explained was made and unanimously approved. That was immediately followed by a call for a vote in favor of passing the budget as amended. Again, it was unanimously approved.

Sarah extended a thank you to the four people who have committed to lead the fundraising effort.

Elections and Voting:

Report on Nominations for Vestry and Diocesan Convention Delegation:

- A. The slate of candidates for Vestry are Judy Hall, Cassi Whitcomb, and Holly Webb. A motion to approve the slate of candidates was made by John Riddle, seconded by Melissa Alarie. The vote was called and all candidates were unanimously approved.
- B. The slate of candidates for Diocesan Convention are Daisy Chew and Nanci Gordon. A motion to approve the slate of candidates was made by Wendy Grace, seconded by Katya Cooke. Melissa Alarie nominated Cassi Whitcomb as a third delegate to convention. A motion was

made by Kathy Hall to nominate Sarah Danner as the alternate to convention, seconded by Sallie Gill. A vote was called and all candidates were unanimously approved.

Acknowledgement of the 2025 Year in Review Report

Sarah thanked all who contributed to making of the Annual Report--especially Wendy Grace for all her work in getting it put together and ready for distribution. Wendy extended special thanks to Brandy Blosser for the pictures that appear in the annual report.

Commendations and Trinity Cross Award

Mother Sarah: “The Trinity Cross award is granted to someone who has demonstrated virtually years of service in the community and who has played essential roles in the life of our church.

In the life of a church, not every leader is remembered because they were universally agreed with. Some are remembered because what they offered mattered and because the moment they served demanded faith, rather than certainty.

Today we honor someone whose leadership came during critical chapters in our church’s life, when decisions carried weight and institutional impact. Their voice carried commitment and direction in conversations that mattered to the core of the parish life. And yet through critical moments of the parish, they remained deeply invested in the community as a calling, in prayer and deep study.

Through seasons of challenge and change, he showed up, he stayed engaged. He cared enough about this church to stand in the middle of complexity rather than walk away from it.

And while sometimes perspective differed in conversations about politics--or even sports ethics--could sometimes land you on a fast-moving train you did not intend to board, one thing remained consistent – his commitment to the life, mission, and future of this congregation, and the grace for holding all of it.

Thank you, Larry Jensen, for your passionate support for the life of Trinity Church.”

Announcements

Kathy Hall mentioned that the prayer shawl group now has 15-17 people express interest in participating in this group. Besides shawls the group will also be creating prayer crosses.

The next Annual Meeting will be Sunday, January 31, 2027

Closing Prayers

Mother Sarah led us in prayer.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.