

Trinity Rutland Vestry Minutes

January 15, 2025

Present in Person: Shannon Hill, Brandy Blosser, Diane Novak, Rev. Sarah Ginolfi, Holly Webb, Clerk;
Present via Zoom: David Rugger, Lois Castonguay, Melissa Alarie (first hour); Absent: Cassie Whitcomb.

FORMATION SESSION

I. Call to Order/Opening Prayer: Mother Sarah opened the meeting at 5:03 with a prayer.

II. Filling a Vestry Vacancy:

Holly is willing to serve on Vestry again in a shepherding role. There has been a vacancy on the vestry since the resignation of Dave Thurmer, so Holly has agreed to serve the remainder of his term for the next two weeks until annual meeting. Motion to nominate Holly by Diane, seconded by David. No further discussion. The vote was unanimously approved.

III. Rector's Report:

A. Trinity Cross Award (Executive Session)

Motion made to go into executive session by Brandy, seconded by Judy. Session began at 5:06 and ended at 5:12.

B. Discussion of the history and purpose of the Jubilee Fund - The Severance Estate (see APPENDIX A). Sarah presented some historical information about how Ralph Severance named Trinity as a beneficiary in his will and how the Jubilee Fund came into being from that. There has been a lot of back and forth between the Finance Committee and the Vestry regarding the Jubilee Fund, its purposes and administration; clarifying a secondary purpose of the fund is for it to serve as an internal line of credit, or emergency fund when necessary. Sarah presented a brief bible study to demonstrate how the philosophy of Jubilee has been ingrained into creation of what is now our Jubilee Fund. She invited vestry members to share in the readings from Appendix B - The Year of Jubilee: (Leviticus 25); and from APPENDIX C - New Testament Comparison: (Acts 2: 42-47).

Sarah then shared some considerations from these readings in the context of Ralph Severance's gift to Trinity at the time it came to be. She shared that the Jubilee Fund, established in celebration of Ralph Severance, is allowed to be used for parish operations, ministries, and community initiatives that celebrate God's mission of love, care, and generosity with the world and our neighbors.

The Finance Committee has requested a clarification that the language of the Jubilee Fund be amended to reflect that this fund can also be used to offer "grants" as well as provide loans to other funds when extra-budgetary needs arise. Diane shared with us her experience within the Finance Committee in juxtaposition from sitting as a member of the vestry. Sarah then provided a comparison of how the Women of Trinity's use of the Dana Fund to help Trinity fulfill its Mission with how the Jubilee Fund allows us to carry out a similar mission. Also noted was that our Trinity Presents program could not have been revived without the Jubilee Fund.

Trinity can celebrate that our pledges have increased 45% since 2021 and that a significant part of that is from newcomers. Trinity can celebrate this has allowed us to bring Sarah to 90% time, that Wendy Grace has been able to be compensated more fairly. The Jubilee Fund is growing. It is a fund that people want to support, want to give to. This demonstrates to us the spirit of God directing us to relax and our open hands and recognize what God is saying to us.

Judy asked us to take a moment for people to quickly share some ideas we could Jubilee Funds for to fulfill this mission. Suggestions:

- a) Judy: Hood in the kitchen, make the kitchen into a commercial kitchen that we can rent out;
- b) Sarah: Making the offices on 2nd floor more rentable, boost them with non-profits in line with our mission;
- c) Diane: Use these funds as seed money to sponsor fund raising that ultimately will grow the resource;
- d) Brandy: improvements to Nourse Hall, make it so people can hear, new floor, a stage we can use, sound system, space people would want to use for meetings;

Sarah also commented that Bill Meub has met with her to discuss legacy giving and that perhaps Trinity Sunday, May 31st – the weekend after Memorial Day – might be an appropriate time.

As the Finance Committee has requested the Vestry to approve a “grants and loans option” for Jubilee Fund, not just loans, Diane made motion to add that the Jubilee Fund can provide grants and loans, not just loans. Melissa seconded the motion. Several members of the vestry remarked that in view of the readings, we could not live into the true purpose of the Jubilee Fund employing only a scarcity viewpoint, but that all fund raising and stewardship should come from a spirit of hope over fear, and abundance over scarcity. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

BUSINESS SESSION: (Note: To accommodate Melissa’s need to depart the meeting, the vestry jumped to Item III of the business session first, before continuing with the remaining items.)

III. Fourth Budget Draft for 2026: Sarah led us in explanations of the numbers shown on the budget proposal by the Finance Committee. Of special note:

- 1) It is not ideal to balance the budget with a draw on our investments.
- 2) We hear the Finance Committee’s ambitious call to do \$7500 worth of fundraising. Sarah asked if anyone on the vestry is willing to lead such an effort. She is supportive of this ambitious goal. Discussion followed resulting in the understanding that Trinity needs new people who are dedicated to seeing this through forming a fundraising committee and bringing the wider congregation along in support of it. Historically, this has been expected to be handled by the vestry and so far that has not been working. The consensus is that this needs to be coming from a different and more effective direction. We need to move from a place of brainstorming to a place of moving it forward. However, this initiative needs to occur before Annual Meeting or the vestry and Sarah cannot in good faith lead the congregation in passing the budget with this figure in it. Two volunteers from the congregation have been recruited (Sarah Danner and Keri Franzoni) with two more needed to head up and move this initiative forward successfully.

On these two critical points from the budget, it was agreed that we need lead with a demonstration of hope when we ask the congregation to get behind and support it. We need to be mindful that the 2026 budget currently represents a higher draw from holding/investments than desired (\$14k holding/\$8k investments).

Appeal to the Congregation: There has been a request by the Finance Committee to make an extra appeal to the congregation so that we are not required to draw down our investments to meet our budget requirements. We have not been effectively delegating what we need accomplished to other groups. We need to invite others to lead, share ideas, and spur volunteers to support the fundraising ideas we come up with. David has offered to make the extra appeal at this coming Sunday’s service.

Judy asked what this extra appeal is to be in support of. Sarah advised it would be for general income, not capital income only for a specific project.

On another note, Sarah stated that she and Christina could pay a portion of the cost of their healthcare. Sarah explained, however, that any change of this nature would mean that her LOA with Trinity would first need to be changed and approved by the Diocese to address that. Thus, this cannot happen in the 2026 budget. However, it could be addressed in 2026 by Sarah and Christina increasing their pledge, with shared cost of healthcare to start in the 2027 budget year. Sarah asked if this is something she can work towards with Vestry, and it was agreed that this is something we can work towards together. Any future agreement may need to take into consideration the lesser COLA Sarah received in 2024 when the diocese directed parishes make a move to pay the full premium of healthcare.

A motion to approve the budget was made by Diane, seconded by Lois. With the clarifications and requirements as detailed above, the vote to approve the budget was unanimous.

Sarah asked for two vestry people to assist with handwritten thank you notes for pledges. Brandy and Holly will do so.

- I. Approval of December Minutes: David made a motion to approve the minutes with some clarifications made to them by Sarah; seconded by Shannon. The vote to approve the Minutes was unanimous.

Matter occurring after December meeting handled by E-Mail:

On January 5, 2026, Sarah notified the vestry that she is seeking approval for a youth event at Rock Point in May. Plans are still coming together, but the aim (for both Trinity and the diocese) is to have a social/service project/confirmation gathering of diocesan youth, their families, and others interested in partnering in youth work at Rock Point. Having cabins will enable those travelling from farther away to sleep over. Some of the cabins themselves could also use some work. A motion was sought to cover the cost of this event from our youth fund, with other participating parishes to then be invited to help reimburse the cost directly to us. Sarah noted that the women of Trinity also made a motion to support Diocesan youth ministry and some of these funds could come from that source too, but her preference is to give other churches the opportunity to get some skin in the game before filling all the gaps from other resources. The rector at Holy Trinity in Swanton said she was going to look into helping, so things are already in motion for broader support of this project. A motion for Trinity to provide the initial funding from our Youth Fund so it could be scheduled was made by Melissa, seconded by Lois. After the required 24-hour waiting/discussion period, a vote was called for and on January 8, the motion was unanimously approved. Booking of the event will go through Vermont Huts and Trails.

- II. Approval of the Treasurer's Reports for December (including Q3 2025 Discretionary/Flower Funds): A motion to approve was made by David, seconded by Shannon. Sarah provided an explanation of the funds on the non-operating report, where the funds come from, and how funds in our holding fund are managed.

Discussion also included an explanation and further discussion of an item flagged by the Finance Committee that the estimate in 2025 for fuel costs was actually 25% under on what our actual fuel costs were and that there needs to be discussion about how this might be done differently, what is needed to change and fix this.

Other items discussed from the Treasurer's Reports:

- a. We took \$25,750 from reserves in 2025 (\$2k more than planned). We ended the year in the black and did not need to take investment fund income, but we needed to take \$2K more than expected from the holding fund. Of special note is that we are balancing our 2026 budget by using all the \$14,000 in our holding fund to balance the budget. It's a good fund to have money in, but it's not a good plan to have all of it used up.

- b. Development of a dedicated fundraising team is a priority.
- c. The finance team has requested a revision in the funding pathway for the attic/basement work at the Rectory; specifically, *that the \$16,653 grant from the Jubilee Fund for this work should be directed to the Building Fund to pay for Eliminator bid. Then, any rebates from Efficiency Vermont would be returned to the Jubilee Fund.* If it's building expenses, the finance committee wants these to be handled as above in italics. The Vestry agreed that this method of tracking the funds is acceptable.

A vote to approve the Treasurer's Reports was taken and was unanimously approved.

III. Ministry Oversight Team Updates

- a. Stewardship (Diane and Sarah+) Thank you notes need to go out. We need to continue to offer encouragement to people who have not pledged yet, but who have pledged in the past, as this has netted some additional pledges.
- b. Worship (Lois and David) Lois: A meeting with John Riddle to evaluate our music program and suggestions for changes and supplementation has been completed and was well received by John. David has made an appeal to the congregation for folks to join the choir. David advised there is a real spirit of cooperation for trying new things and incorporating feedback in this regard. Sarah stated she would like to work towards a noon-time healing service, but it cannot solely fall upon her to implement and carry out this ministry.
- c. Evangelism (David R. and Melissa) – As to the next Trinity Presents, David provided a brief synopsis of what the Borromeo Quartet's program is about and that it the performance is scheduled for Sunday, March 22 at 3 p.m
- d. Education (Melissa, Brandy, and Sarah+) Sunday school sessions are going well. It would be nice to have the sound capabilities of the parish hall improved so sessions could occur there. We are still trying to get two sessions each month, but we need to get that smoothed out and with some flexibility depending on circumstances at hand, including looking ahead to make sure it doesn't conflict with other groups needing to implement that time slot. The Youth Group continues to plug along with five consistent attendees and two additional fairly regular attendees. There are some exciting opportunities for overnights coming up. One in Acadia National Park. We have a very faithful group of adult leaders for this group. Some 18 months in, there is still excitement and energy. Participants need to work on inviting others into the group. There is some resistance by attendees to the group changing, so that will need encouragement for successful change to happen.
- e. Pastoral (Shannon) The only thing new is that the knitting group welcomed people at last Sunday's coffee hour and it's exciting that there were six or more that showed interest in this group. The group is going to put out a packet on what the group does, knitting items to be worked on. Group is looking at doing future meetings in the library versus the parish hall at large. Sarah acknowledged gratefulness for Shannon's efforts to grow this group and its ministry/pastoral care team. Sarah suggested perhaps a story share on what this ministry is about would be good.
- f. Property (Judy and Lois) Still waiting to get the Eliminator's schedule to do the work. Also waiting for an updated quote from TwoBirds. We need to develop and line up a list of specific repair providers that Sarah can call when repair needs arise. Sarah will communicate to finance team that she is going to request Nature's Way to come get their things and inform them that we will not be continuing with them. Recently, they have not proven to be reliable in the timing of their visits. That \$75/mo contract will be canceled, but the upcoming work in the basement and attic is anticipated to help alleviate the pest issues.

- g. Service and Outreach (Cassi, Judy, Brandy) Wendy is going to be coming on as WOTF president. There will be a meeting on Feb 8th. This is not a forever ministry for her, but she cares about WOTF and wants to serve as a transition person. She will sit down with everyone and take everyone through the current bylaws, discuss what our current capacity is, and what needs to be amended. This will be an educational and formation opportunity, not an invitation for anyone to trample on anything or anyone.

Judy has communicated with a woman named Peace regarding Kato's Kids. The information we offer on our bulletin board about this organization is incomplete. Our parishioners have given to this organization. It has now straightened out its legal matters. Thus, we need to update bulletin board and share the information with our congregation. It might be appropriate to invite Peace to do a workshop, or to come speak with the vestry or the congregation. It would be a good idea for us to have someone like Peace confirming that the monies that are being donated are going where they are supposed to and are doing what they are supposed to be doing. If we are going to support Kato's Kids, it would be best to have someone on the ground making sure things are going the way we expect them to. Shannon advised that in her dealings with Kato, he has been very accountable to her for donations made. Sarah would like us to be part of a conversation with Peace and requested that it be scheduled after her sabbatical. Sarah suggested that it might be best for the first meeting with Peace to with the vestry rather than with whole parish and suggested an invitation for this to happen by June.

V. Critical Projects for 2025 Check-in

- a. Organ Project (Scheduling Larry Nevin's Evaluation?) David: There has been no movement on scheduling this, but it will be moved forward.
- b. Rectory (Siding/Soffits & Eaves/Heat Pumps, Paving, Loose ends from Phase 1), Siding: Lois following up.
- c. Paving Rear Lot/Updating Paving: Sarah: message out to GW for a bid, but they won't do it until later in the Spring.
- d. Inclement Weather Sunday Snow plan: Sarah: the staff has not been response to Sarah about the snow plan so that will be looked at after annual meeting. The biggest challenge is who is responsible for communicating what and where.

VI. Adjournment: The Vestry retreat and February meeting will take place from 2/7 11:30 to 3:30. As the VSO is having rehearsal at Trinity that day, we need an alternative location. Holly offered to host at her house in Shrewsbury – with a “Plan B” if driving conditions to Shrewsbury require it. A request was made to move our March 19 meeting to March 26th due to the 19th being Sarah's first day back from sabbatical. Vestry members were agreeable.

1. The Sabbath Year – Rest for the Land (vv. 1–7)

Every seventh year, Israel is commanded to let the land rest completely—no sowing, pruning, or harvesting for profit. This agricultural pause mirrors the weekly Sabbath and teaches that productivity is not the ultimate measure of faithfulness. Whatever grows naturally during this year is to be shared equally among landowners, laborers, immigrants, and even animals. The Sabbath year reinforces **trust in God’s provision** and acknowledges that the land is not endlessly exploitable but requires care and restraint.

2. The Year of Jubilee – Reset and Release (vv. 8–17)

After seven Sabbath cycles (49 years), the fiftieth year is declared the **Year of Jubilee** with the blowing of a ram’s horn. During this year, ancestral land that had been sold returns to the original family, and economic disparities are intentionally corrected. Sales of land are therefore temporary and calculated based on the number of harvests remaining until Jubilee. This system prevents generational poverty and reminds Israel that **the land belongs to God**, not to human owners.

3. Living Faithfully in the Land – Trust and Fairness (vv. 18–22)

God anticipates Israel’s fear: *What will we eat if we do not plant?* The promise is that obedience will be met with abundance—God will provide enough in the sixth year to carry the people through the Sabbath year. This section ties obedience to blessing, not as a formula, but as a relationship of trust. Faithfulness is shown not only in worship, but in economic and agricultural practices that reflect reliance on God rather than anxiety-driven accumulation.

4. Land Redemption and Family Stability (vv. 23–34)

Because the land belongs to God, it cannot be sold permanently. Families have the right—and responsibility—to redeem land if a relative falls into hardship. Even homes in unwalled villages are treated like farmland and restored at Jubilee. This preserves family identity, inheritance, and stability within the community. Economic misfortune is not allowed to erase a family’s place among God’s people.

5. Care for the Poor – No Exploitation (vv. 35–38)

When a neighbor becomes poor, the community is commanded to support them without charging interest or seeking profit. Aid is framed not as charity but as covenant responsibility. The motivation given is theological: *“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt.”* Israel’s memory of slavery shapes its ethics—**freedom experienced must become freedom extended**.

6. Limits on Servitude – People Are Not Property (vv. 39–46)

If an Israelite becomes so poor that they must sell their labor, they are not to be treated as slaves but as hired workers or resident laborers. Their dignity is protected, and they remain members of the covenant community. While foreign slaves are addressed differently (reflecting the ancient context), Israelites are reminded that they ultimately belong to God alone. No economic situation removes their worth.

7. Redemption from Foreign Bondage – Freedom Restored (vv. 47–55)

Even if an Israelite sells themselves to a foreign resident, they retain the right of redemption—either by family members or at Jubilee. The chapter closes by grounding everything in Israel’s identity: they are God’s servants, redeemed from Egypt. Human ownership is temporary; **God’s claim is ultimate**.

APPENDIX C: Acts 2: 42-47

Community of Believers

⁴² The believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. ⁴³ A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were united and shared everything. ⁴⁵ They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. ⁴⁶ Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. ⁴⁷ They praised God and demonstrated God’s goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved.