

# Trinity Rutland Vestry Meeting Minutes

November 20, 2025, 5-7pm

Present: Rev. Sarah Ginolfi, Lois Castonguay, Diane Novak, Brandy Blosser, Shannon Hill,  
& Clerk, Holly Webb  
Online: Cassi Whitcomb, Judy Hall, Melissa Alarie  
Absent: David Rugger

I. Call to Order/Opening Prayer 5:05 p.m. by Mother Sarah

II. Rector's Report

A. Sabbatical Planning: 2026 (anticipated one month), 2027 (anticipated 3 months)  
Things are lining up, specifically for period 2/19<sup>th</sup> through 3/19<sup>th</sup> 2026 (beginning the Thursday after Ash Wednesday, and back within Lent). Paul Gratz, Priest from Bennington, could offer some coverage; Liz and Nanci could also. For 2027 she is looking at July, suggesting mid-July through mid October. Fall is a busy time, but with sufficient advance planning this time frame could be manageable.

Motion to approve these proposed times made by Diana, seconded by Lois second; vote taken; unanimous approval.

B. Revisiting the Inclement Weather Sunday Snow Plan (Appendix A)

Discussion of information in Appendix A, including specifics.

Brandy: Suggested it be an invitation to call your pew mates--let it be more representative of an effort in shepherding. Sarah commented that while we are passing the Peace, we would have an opportunity to exchange phone/cell numbers with those around us.

Sarah needs to communicate with the staff to get a better understanding of what the staff can do when this happens--who can back up if another staff member can't do something, what systems or software need to be available and being certain that necessary people know how to operate it.

In cases where an email can be sent it out, it will be, but we need to identify those who can help with these emails.

For last-minute closures, for instance at 7 a.m. Sunday morning we realize we didn't call it by 5 p.m. last night, but we need to call it now. How will this be facilitated? Also, it should be understood that once a closure is announced, it will not be reversed if it turns out the weather has changed for the better. We need the congregation to be aware that they need to double check to see if there has been a closure.

Sarah can wordsmith the Appendix A language and circulate an updated version by email. A motion and vote were tabled for now.

C. Follow-up on development of a plan in the event of an Active Shooter Event.

Luke Krueger, a very capable and established person who has offered his assistance in helping Trinity develop its Active Shooter Response Plan.

Discussion: There is no cost for his training. It is offered for free. Training could be 1-4 hours. Mr. Krueger could be here for an early evening session. Ideally, all vestry and ushers will be in

attendance. This will not just be a presentation of theory. He will help us come up with a specific plan that can be communicated to the parish at large.

There was mutual agreement that this should be pursued and got on the calendar right away.

## BUSINESS SESSION

- I. Approval of October Minutes  
Motion to approve made by Diane, seconded by Shannon. There being no need for discussion or edits noted, a vote was taken for approval and passed unanimously.
- II. Treasurer's Reports for October  
Discussion of Finance Committee minutes: We have not yet gotten the \$50K from Smith-Benson fund from the Diocese – they transferred it into the wrong account, and this must be corrected. This situation must be rectified so delayed deposits do not keep happening.

Diane advised the Committee's primary focus was on the 2026 budget, but as there were no significant concerns, it was a smooth meeting. Sarah noted that there have been some human resource improvements that have made things a little less stressful than last year.

Motion to approve the Operating and Non-Operating Account Report made by Lois; Seconded by Brandy. Diane reported that the Committee's worries of last month, that income has lagged behind but has righted itself and we are about where we want to be; fuel will be increased overall for the year. Linda feels good about projections for next year. Once the Smith-Benson funds are received, our bottom line will be better balanced out. We are not outspending our income. Even though we have spent \$250K, we are not outspending income. We are done with Bridge Loan payments.

Vote to approve Finance Committee reports was taken and unanimously approved.

- III. Initial Budget Draft for 2026

Discussion:

The third column from the right of the 2026 budget proposal are estimates; it is anticipated numbers will go down to \$29K in the investment fund transfer line; that is something we hope not to have to do. In an ideal setting we will not be drawing down our investments by that number. There is acknowledgment that this is not a good place to be in but noting it is not time to panic yet.

Sarah did tell Sallie that it is our goal to get \$160K in pledges alone. We no longer plug in a figure of 13% on top of pledge income because we are moving closer to having a greater percentage of the congregation being pledgers. The supply priests figure needs to be higher in 2026 (from 1K to 2K because of Sarah's sabbatical). The diocesan established stipend for a Sunday service will increase from \$150 to \$175 in 2026. Staff salaries have been increased. The increase for pensions set by the Diocese is 6%, which is less than expected. Wendy has opted not to be on the Diocesan Health Plan but will take \$2K in lieu and have it put into 403B account.

Pledge status update: we have raised \$55K with 22 pledging units so far. We started our campaign ask a week later this year.

We got an excellent rate on fuel for this year's budget! A win!

#### IV. Ministry Oversight Team Updates

##### a. Stewardship (Diane and Sarah+)

###### i. Updating the Parish Administrator LOA

Just before tonight's vestry meeting Sarah emailed the most recent LOA version. The only change to the draft LOA vestry has been presented with reflects Wendy's decision not to take Diocesan Health Plan. Other than that, the draft the vestry has seen has not changed.

Sarah requested the vestry to look at the LOA. David is not here, so we need to know if he has questions before a vote is taken. Motions to approve will be done via email.

Diane says she has nothing else new on stewardship. Brittany Gilman did a great job with a story share. Daisy Chew will be doing another story share.

##### b. Worship (Lois)

Lois – has nothing new to share.

Sarah: the most critical thing is to continue with staff mutual ministry reviews.

We also need look at other options than supply priests since they are sparse in our area.

##### c. Evangelism (David R. and Melissa)

Winterreise concert was wonderful. Constant screeching by the bats was disturbing to those present and we need to see what we can do about it.

We have had \$20K in donations (two \$10K) to Trinity Presents.

There were fewer in attendance at Winterreise – likely due to a conflicting Messiah rehearsal and a concert at Grace the same afternoon.

##### d. Education (Melissa, Brandy, and Sarah+)

There will be a Christmas pageant this year. Discussion is occurring on other options for placement of a crèche. This is an opportunity to try it a different way for a missional reason. Trinity's traditional crèche presents an accessibility issue during sanctuary entrance as well as communion. We need to explore other crèche ideas.

The pageant will serve as the bulk of "The Liturgy of the Word."

##### e. Pastoral (Shannon)

Shannon: We need to figure out when meetings can be scheduled to work on prayer shawls.

Pastoral visits are going well. The sending of lay ministers every Sunday is going well and is well received by the congregation.

f. Property (Judy and Lois)

i. Rectory Discernment Small Group update.

Lois: There have been meetings held; the consensus is for us to continue to hold onto the Rectory. There are “lots of wheels turning” in terms of the Rectory. Sarah and Lois did walk-thru evaluation with Efficiency Vermont. The attic has to be cleaned out and reinsulated. We have to use Efficiency Vermont’s contractors in order to get funding from Efficiency Vermont. We cannot use Nature’s Way. Before we can get this done, we need an energy audit of the house. Thus far, the earliest that we can get an audit done is January 26<sup>th</sup>.

We’re having trouble finding contractors to do the siding. One contractor said they couldn’t get to it until 2027. The Primo bid is pricey. As to the Two Birds bid, if we could get something approved with them asap, they could likely do it this coming summer. We need to get through the finance piece. There are loans available from the diocese (low interest). Grants are not an option. Heads Up: If and when we get a company contracted to do the work, we will have to put 50% down immediately.

The energy audit previously conducted wasn’t really an energy audit. A big challenge is in getting an energy rebate is whether the rectory is considered residential or commercial. A rebate on commercial property is \$5k for rebate, but residential property could be up to \$9500.

Lois and David came by and plugged up a lot of the holes in the rectory. Jim Cruise is going to do some plugging up of holes in the kitchen as soon as he can get time.

Judy: Hard core operating costs need to be known, and a management plan needs to be set up to establish a budget for ongoing maintenance. We need to figure out our costs to operate the rectory – establish life expectancy of things there so we can anticipate when things are going to die and budget in advance for repairs, replacement – establish a fund to address rectory needs as they arise. There needs to be an ability to predict fixed costs and reasonable long-term maintenance costs in order to arrive at a workable budget, so that we are not always putting out fires. This group is hoping to have something solid by December to report.

Sarah mentioned that she doesn’t see the utility/heat bills. If she and her family were made aware, they could potentially adjust where possible.

A motion was made to allocate up to \$500 to conduct the energy audit by Judy; seconded by D; vote taken and unanimously approved.

ii. Hygiene concern on Trinity campus (human waste increasing). Homeless folks are using our campus as a toilet. This is mostly a daily occurrence. Gil has had to clean up

these messes (using a pooper scooper), and he also regularly has to pick up needles. With our landscaping as it is, this problem is not going to go away.

Judy asked what could we do differently? What are other churches doing? Sarah noted that most are cutting down all bushes or maintaining no more than waist tall bushes.

g. Service and Outreach (Cassi, Judy, Brandy)

Brandy: We had successful rummage sale. There will be another one in the Spring. We are doing stockings for Seniors. The WOTF will be meeting again sometime soon.

Tatum's Totes is a group that sometimes can take unneeded suitcases. (Foster kids need suitcases.) We had some nice suitcases left over from the rummage sale that could be directed to Tatum's Totes or foster kids that need one.

Question posed: Is there a new president for WOTF yet?

Sarah: Linda Fay is treasurer. There are no other officers yet. WOTF might only meet quarterly, or as needed for rummage sales and other needs.

This Opportunity to look at this ministry going forward. We are in a similar situation with no leadership for O&E. Sarah has looked at the Bylaws and noted that WOTF has not been able to operate as outlined in its bylaws for some time. It has been a majorly successful ministry that we need to figure out what it looks like going forward -- and presents us with an opportunity to see how this ministry could be brought forward successfully. We might consider combining WOTF and O&E. We need to identify our long-term goals for a 21<sup>st</sup> century plan for these groups.

V. Critical Projects for 2025 Check-in

a. Organ Project

- i. Sallie Gill requests us to transfer some funds from Jubilee/Trinity Presents to the organ fund to be used on the organ. We have had \$20K in donations to Trinity Presents that could be used to go forward with the evaluation of the Organ. David R has recommended that \$6k be transferred from the Jubilee Fund to the Organ fund to help cover the estimated \$5K fee to evaluate the organ that has been approved.

A motion to make the \$6K transfer was made by Diane; seconded by Cassi. Vote taken with unanimous approval.

b. Rectory (Siding/Soffits & Eaves/Heat Pumps, Paving, Loose ends from Phase 1)-*See above regarding Rectory related items.*

- c. Paving: This will not be happening in 2025. The parking lot lines still need to be painted. Shannon reported Green Mountain Line Painting out of Bennington can do this, but it cannot be done until Spring. They have provided a quote of \$1250. We could go back to GW, or we could go to the contractor that will be doing the parking lot paving if it makes better sense to coordinate it with that.

Sarah: The Bank has allotted money in its budget to share the cost of repaving the rear parking lot next spring. We need to reach out to GW to see what is possible. Our lease with

Bank is up in November. We need to get this done BEFORE the lease expires. It is very likely that when we do a new contract with the Bank could migrate to a 60/40 split, with us bearing the higher percentage since the bank doesn't rent each space in that lot. We need to parse out what parking spots are available to the bank and what are not. We might be able to rent out parking spaces elsewhere as a different income source. We potentially have 10 spaces that could be rented out to others than the Bank.

Lois is point person for parking lot paving. Sarah asked Lois to follow up with GW to see if their bid is still good.

- d. Junior Warden: A Junior warden is elected by the Vestry. Question posed: Is any vestry person willing to serve as Jr. Warden until the January meeting? (No takers). Sarah: In the policy manual there isn't a specific job description. Historically the Junior Warden has headed up buildings/grounds, and it has been someone with a handyman, contractor background. However, it isn't realistic to expect the junior warden to be an unpaid sexton. A whole team needs to support care for our buildings and grounds.

Lois: Suggested that buildings/grounds committee folks (not just vestry persons on that committee) fill in for this position until there is an election of a junior warden in January. Sarah suggested two people from the vestry and two people from buildings/grounds. Sarah suggested we might promote the vacant position and the need to address it--what we're looking for--to the congregation to see who might come forward. This doesn't mean they have to do the maintenance work, just that they be the point person to get tasks assigned to a contractor or whomever is going to do it; do the follow-up on it to make sure it's being scheduled, getting done; making phone calls and reporting back. Also, there is a need for a point person or persons paying attention when things are getting done.

- e. Parish Kitchen Hood – no discussion.

- f. Inclement Weather Sunday Snow plan- *see above agenda item.*

VI. Adjournment: *The Next Vestry Meeting will be December 18th, 2025.*

Meeting Adjourned 7:03 p.m.

#### APPENDIX A: Inclement Weather Snow Plan for Sundays

When Sunday worship needs to be cancelled due to extreme weather or some other emergency, the cancellation will be communicated as follows:

An email will be sent to the parish by 5pm on Saturday evening to communicate that the worship service is cancelled. A post to the website and the Trinity Facebook group with the same information will be shared. When worship is cancelled due to extreme weather conditions, the Rector is not expected to drive or walk to the church to catch anyone who did not receive the message. The Rectory may only be a few blocks away from the parish, yet extreme weather can make travel even in this short distance unsafe. Any foot or car traffic can also interfere with the city's efforts to clear the roads and sidewalks.

When weather is iffy, but the service is not cancelled, the parish asks everyone to please use their own best discernment, as to whether it is wise to travel. There can be significant variation in the weather and road conditions throughout the greater Rutland area.