

Vestry Members as Trustees of the Soul of the Parish

by

Mary Lou Hoover Divis

A Doctoral Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Department of Theology
of the Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor in Ministry Development

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Chapter I. Introduction

Issues of Leadership in Small Parishes

I can hardly believe this workshop and project succeeded! The Vestry at one parish I serve did not seem to understand their commitment to lead the parish by attending worship and meetings and engaging in prayer and Bible reading. In contrast, the Vestry at my other parish diligently display leadership through participation in the above-named activities. I designed a workshop to awaken passion, excitement, and commitment in the form of a retreat program at which attendance was mandatory. They came, they learned, they changed! At the retreat, I introduced a model of trusteeship: Vestry as Trustees of the Soul of the Parish, which will be explained later in this paper. Each Vestry wrote a Covenant Agreement of how we pray, worship, govern, and live together. This paper will explain the background, research, conversations, and outcomes of this retreat. I specifically want to know if each Vestry member will better understand her or his role, and if a culture of collaboration and attendance can be adapted by using a Covenant Agreement as the basis for meetings, prayer life, and Bible reading.

I serve as Rector (2012-present) at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Tunkhannock, PA, and as Priest-in-Charge (2018-2020) at the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany (Epiphany), Glenburn, PA, parishes about twenty minutes apart drive time, and years apart in contemporary/traditional worship. I have a unique relationship with each parish. St. Peter's called me while I was still a deacon, and I have been their Rector for seven years. Epiphany was my home parish that prayed me into the collar.

I learned during my first year at Epiphany that Vestry members attended worship and meetings infrequently, elected leaders, the business of the church went on. They were all over-committed, busy professionals. There seemed to be a lack of enthusiasm, a feeling of: “I’ve done my church thing for the week or month.” Church happened when the doors opened and ended when the church doors closed. I was dumbfounded to see how little the Vestry members at Epiphany participated in the corporate worship and church events there. Sensing that lack of passion to take membership and leadership seriously, I searched to see a joy of “what else can we do.” At St. Peter’s, the smaller parish, most Vestry members attend most Sundays; they are dedicated, alert, and enthusiastic. They find many ideas of how to be in, and help, the local community through prayer, service, healing.

I have observed that small churches can get caught in a cycle of repeated leaders. Before being called to these particular parishes, I served in four to five small parishes where I heard: “So-and-So has been on Vestry, or a warden, forever.” The current leadership at Epiphany did not seem to consider the strategic importance to govern with the intentionality of engaging in prayer, worship, Bible study, meeting attendance, and application of Biblical leadership into our life together. Thus, collaboration, learning, and seeing the interconnectedness of one another through a Biblical lens have been necessary aspects of this study.

Meet the Parishes

St. Peter's

St. Peter's is a changing parish. The original congregation in 1892 met in the local opera house on the third floor. A comment in the Vestry notes from that time suggested it was difficult for children and large people to climb the stairs. They next met in the local saloon on Sunday mornings for several years, until land was purchased for the first building in 1910. In the 1950's, a larger sanctuary was needed with a good kitchen and classrooms because the community and the parish were growing, according to Vestry minutes. The search for land began, and the second St. Peter's was constructed on a lovely site by the river in 1962. From the 1970's to the 1990's, the parish was filled with corporate managers, particularly from Proctor and Gamble, when it was a new industry in the community. The building was on a flood plain and flooded five to six times during the thirty-five years there. The most devastating flood was in 2004. I was called to serve in 2011.

Today, most of the corporate leaders have retired and moved away with their wealth, or died, leaving little or nothing to the welfare of the parish. The third St. Peter's is a contemporary structure, built in 2009-2010, out of five modular sections, several years after the beloved rector of thirty years retired. The first building is still standing, in town, about a block from the main Post Office; it has been multi-purposed over the years, and is currently a copy center for high-end art. In the current building, we worship with young and old, poor and rich, Latinos and Americans. The secretary at this parish decided to go back to school after I had served a year. A subsequent secretary/bookkeeper, unable to manage the position, was let go after two years. There is currently no paid secretary.

The seating in the sanctuary consists of moveable chairs that can easily be re-arranged. The color scheme is light, with clear glass windows. There is an electronic organ, no formal choir, a small procession, and a free-standing table for the altar which was preserved from the formerly flooded building. When the beloved rector retired, this parish called a priest whose personality of demeaning people divided the congregation. I have heard stories of the emotional abuse and public humiliation of altar servers.

I am the first rector in this new building, dedicated in 2010, after a series of supply priests. The average Sunday attendance is tiny, often fifteen to twenty (down from thirty about five years ago), due to deaths, moves, and stay-at-home elders. Latinos have begun to attend until their children are baptized. We plan to add Dia de los Muertos, a statue of Maria Guadalupe, and First Communion in the hopes of extending our reach to Latinos. Mass is spoken in English and Spanish, with a book colloquially called “the brown book/el libro marron” which has English/Spanish on opposing pages so it is easy to follow in both languages.¹ Hymns familiar to the English-speaking congregants, which are also available in Spanish, are blended into the worship. When there is a baptism, there can be fifty to sixty people in attendance. The priest prints the bulletins, which are then folded by volunteers. Volunteers mow the lawn, and whoever arrives at the church first in snow season, shovels. The worship style is open, less formal, and comfortable. The congregation is very friendly and welcoming. People are greeted with hugs as they come through the door.

¹ Convocation of American Church in Europe. *El Libro de Oración Común* (New York: Church Publishing Inc., 2003).

St. Peter's hosts between 150 to 250 in people in the building weekly for AA, Weight Watchers, a chiropractor, a dietitian, yoga, a drumming circle, and other events. Some meet in the sanctuary, some meet downstairs. St. Peter's offers Bible study after worship, and sometimes a study in someone's home. St. Peter's engages with the community with monthly healing services at two local nursing homes, and in the sanctuary by the International Order of St. Luke the Physician. This is an ecumenical group of healers who offer laying on of hands, prayers, chants, and Scripture, usually monthly. A healer prays and offers healing prayers for everyone during communion weekly. St. Peter's is also part of the opioid crisis by offering prayer services. I am involved with the opioid crisis in the Tunkhannock community in a variety of ways and bring awareness of the difficulties to the parishioners at St. Peter's. St. Peter's gladly participates in the local ecumenical ministerium Lent and Advent services and luncheon. St. Peter's rented space at the county fair for two years to sell meatball subs and garage-sale items. This event was not sustainable by the aging members of the parish.

Church of the Epiphany

The Church of the Epiphany building is a remodeled 1890's schoolhouse, hauled to the current location in 1919, to accommodate people who spent their summers in the area and wanted to worship in the Episcopal tradition without having to drive twenty miles to Scranton, according to stories in the parish history on the parish website.² A

² <https://www.epiphanyglenburn.org/>.

large addition to accommodate the growing Sunday school and other parish activities was added in the early 1970's.

In the past forty-five to fifty years, the parish was served for thirty years by a well-loved pastor, followed by a younger man, for about ten years, with a young family, who had a breakdown, eventually resigning without as much mental, physical, and financial support as was needed. As a congregant in the parish, and a member of Vestry at that time, I witnessed this. Another priest was called, and under her leadership, committees were disbanded and much money from the endowment was spent on unneeded items (for example, more than \$10,000 for the Institution of a new Rector). The parish was conflicted with liking her and finding her impossible to work with. This priest was there about five years; many people left during her tenure. I was not part of the parish during these changes but remained in touch through friends. The parish called another priest with a personality and attitude of disengagement, destruction of relationships, and a painful way of degrading people to their face. More people left during his tenure, which ended in 2014.

From the Senior Warden, I learned the parish then called a priest of Nigerian citizenship who served in Canada, and the U.S. Department of State would not allow this person to enter or work in the United States. It took almost two years for the Department of State to make its decision. The parish continued to be served by supply clergy, and eventually entered into a contract with a priest for long-term supply, to take care of the homebound and conduct services. He is a deeply prayerful person, but had debilitating physical issues during his tenure, leaving the parish without committed leadership for about three more years.

The above information helps the reader understand some of the disarray this parish has lived through. There is more. The parish membership and attendance have dwindled over the years, and the buildings and grounds have not been kept up. There are trees growing in the gutters, mold/mildew in the basement, worn carpets at the entrances, weeds surrounding the trees where there used to be thick layers of mulch. Even the walls and ceilings are crumbling. The people seem defeated, with no growth in sight. I have a remembered vision of a full church in the late 1990's, a full Sunday school, and many family events. When I was called to be the Priest-in-Charge, one of my first desires was to have the parish "look nice" inside and outside to be more inviting.

The thriving Sunday school of one hundred children thirty years ago had a part-time, paid Sunday school director; there are now seven children in Sunday school, and the part-time director is paid more now than years ago. This director is the wife of the acolyte/youth leader and together they have kept the children and youth (about seven to ten older children) corralled without benefit of clergy for thirty years, or more. However, there is noticeable territorialism within the building: the Sunday school director has taken over four of the seven usable downstairs rooms for different aspects of a rotating Sunday school program. Two rooms serve as her office, one is a tent, and one is a movie room. I believe these spaces could be better utilized to accommodate community programs, and/or be rentable.

The secretary has been the holding force of the parish for seventeen years, making day-to-day decisions as needed. She works thirty-two hours per week, making her eligible for benefits. She is a very strict gatekeeper. Her father was the organist for more than thirty years. Other paid personnel include the organist, choir director, and sexton.

The size of the parish, and those who tithe, has decreased according to the current parish registry. When I came to the parish in January 2018, there were 685 people listed as members on the Parochial Report!³ I have trimmed that to ninety-seven people who attend worship regularly. The worship style at Epiphany is traditional, with vestments for all servers and choir, processional at 11:00 a.m. Sundays. The 8:00 a.m. service, which has no hymns, was changed to 5:00 p.m. Saturday to accommodate sharing a priest.

There was a large table in a small place between choir loft and organ, put in by the previous priest, for Eucharist facing the congregation, but it was impossible to use the communion rail. I asked for a smaller table, which is braced on the steps in front of the East-facing attached-to-the-wall altar. There is just enough space to face the people, and still close the altar rail gates to use the kneeler for Communion (several people have said how wonderful it is to kneel for Communion because they had to stand with the large table in the way of the altar rail). There are dark wooden pews, a lectern and raised pulpit, clear glass windows, and a pipe-organ that was built to fit in a certain alcove according to the instructions of the long-term organist. The sacristy is dark also. It has not been repainted in more than forty years. Epiphany has welcomed me back as priest, the gutters will be cleaned, the rugs will be replaced, the 1970's kitchen has been modernized, the mildew issues can be repaired, and the toilets updated.

With sharing a priest, both parishes worship together on the fifth Sundays, alternating parishes and enjoying a meal together. Not many folks attend from the other parish when this happens. The first time we worshiped together, the choir (eight people)

³ Parochial Report, The Episcopal Church. ExecutiveInSite report 8/16/2016. First accessed January 15, 2019, <https://pr.dfms.org/>.

and four to five parishioners from Church of the Epiphany came to St. Peter's; the second time we met in a public park for "Mass in the Grass" and, collectively, about forty-five people attended from both parishes. In the fall, we again worshiped at St. Peter's and two people came from Epiphany. The next Fifth Sunday service was Lessons and Carols at the end of December 2018. Ten folks from St. Peter's went to Epiphany.

Church of the Epiphany has just started one healing service and one Eucharist in nursing homes, yoga was offered but not well attended, and bids are out for gutter cleaning and building restoration. Square dancing may be offered, social justice books are discussed at the library (in both communities), and adult spirituality, Bible study, and fellowship are being added to Epiphany.

Thesis Statement: Argument for Vestry Training

When I stand at the altar and see the congregation gathered, I am filled with love and caring. It is an honor to serve. My goal for the Vestry at Epiphany is to understand and sense this love that fills us. As I read about trusteeship, it became clearer to me that we are trustees of the very soul, the essence of love, that fills each parishioner as they worship, serve, sing, pray. I wanted Vestry to get a sense of this idea of trusteeship and put it into practice by attending worship and meetings, by learning more about one another, and how we can hold one another in prayer. I wanted to offer the Bible as a place to find comfort, learning, and strength. This project is a humble beginning into this process and way of life.

Vestry members need to understand their leadership role in the parish, shown through attending worship and meetings, engaging in the life of the parish, and

establishing prayer and Bible-reading habits. In a specific workshop, Vestry members will learn that their role and vision are needed by attendance at worship and meetings and engagement in the life of the parish. The project is a five-hour retreat based on the calling to leadership of Moses (Exod. 3:1-6) and Paul (Acts 9:1-6).⁴ This retreat also offers Kathryn Tyler Scott's work on trusteeship to encourage Vestry members at both parishes to realize that they need to be dedicated to growth, change, learning, and prayer support as a team in order to move into the future.⁵ Each Vestry retreat will culminate with a written Covenant Agreement describing how Vestry members are called to lead by attending worship, being prepared to attend meetings, promising to pray and read the Bible. The future is in their hands to encourage growth in their relationship with God and Scripture, to attend worship and meetings with intentionality, to engage with the parish community and those not yet in the parish.

The retreat introduces the idea of Vestry as "Trustees of the Soul of the Parish" and they collaboratively will write a Covenant Agreement as Trustees of the Soul of the Parish. I expect the Vestry at Epiphany will identify issues such as lack of attendance and commitment to help set priorities for this year and the future. I expect the Vestry of St. Peter's will continue to understand their role and responsibility. Sharing perspectives, ideas, and dreams in an atmosphere that values differences has helped form the covenant that these leaders write and are willing to live into. We can work together better when we

⁴ The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Edition Bible (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989). All Biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, unless specifically noted otherwise.

⁵ Kathryn Tyler Scott, *Creating Caring and Capable Boards: Reclaiming the Passion for Active Trusteeship* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

realize the future depends on the present, while continuing to learn about and live into what it means to be Christian in today's diverse communities.

My definition of trusteeship is: the intentional commitment to regular prayer, worship, attendance at meetings, and engagement of the community in order to deepen the love of God, neighbor, and one another. The soul of the parish is the essence of the love that holds us together to discern and do “the work God has given us to do” as the Dismissal from worship reminds us.⁶ The completed project provides these small churches of twenty to ninety members with ideas for leadership. This paper includes the learnings at this retreat, as Vestry see one another as individuals and a community, as chosen, duly elected leaders/Trustees. Data from this learning extends for three to five months to evaluate the strength of internalization and use of this training. Phenomenological research, which is based on “categories, themes, concepts” found in conversations, interviews, actions of each Vestry person, is used to explain the experience of the retreat.⁷

⁶ Church Hymnal Corporation, *Book of Common Prayer* (Kingsport, TN; Kingsport Press, 1977), 366.

⁷ Johnny M. Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2016), LOC 375 Kindle Version.

Chapter II. Leadership as Trustees of the Soul of the Parish

The idea of being a Trustee of the Soul of the Parish, introduced at the Vestry retreat, is based on the writings of current adaptive business and social science leaders. The method of inquiry, phenomenology, helps explain the outcome of this endeavor. The current leadership read the stories of the call of Paul and Moses at the retreat as a basis for their call to the ministry of Vestry, and serving God in each particular community.

Leadership of Biblical Proportions

Moses

In the Bible, The Book of Exodus explains how Joseph, an ancestor of Moses, became an Egyptian, and how he was responsible for bringing his Hebrew family to live in Egypt. Eventually, the Hebrews became enslaved by the Egyptians, and the Hebrews were very numerous. Moses, raised in the house of the Egyptian pharaoh, became the leader of the Hebrews when he identified with them in their struggle to understand who they were, who God is, and what they needed to do to live in community with God and one another.

The Book of Exodus, Chapter 3, verses 1-6, describes Moses' encounter with something unusual: a burning bush with a voice. The voice gives instructions about what Moses is to do with and for this group of people. Moses recognizes the voice of the bush as the voice of the God who called Moses' ancestor Abraham into a new land (Gen. 12:1-2). Now God calls Moses to lead God's people to a new land.

Moses is a shepherd. While tending his flocks, he cranes his neck to look at a bush that appears to be burning, but it is not being consumed (Exod. 3:3). With a mere twist of the neck, Moses reorients his entire being. In contrast to those who are stiff-necked—opposed to all that is new—Moses is ready to truly see God’s presence, and, as a result, God reveals the Divine Self to Moses. Moses’ leadership stems directly from his relationship with God, as the framer and keeper of the covenant that represents the destiny of his people. Peter Senge calls this “bringing mission to fruition,” not of what they have chosen, but of what each one is called to do.⁸

Moses was qualified for this new undertaking because of his many life experiences. Abandoned by his Jewish mother and set adrift in a basket (Exod. 2:3), his destiny was to be found by the princess of the pharaoh who happened to be bathing nearby (Exod. 2:5-6). Moses grew up under the guardianship of the princess, who kept him, knowing he was a Hebrew baby, against pharaoh’s ordinance to kill all the Hebrew baby boys (Exod. 1:16). Growing up, he must have been told he was Hebrew, yet he knew all of the customs, rituals, and ideals of the Egyptian upper class. One day, he attacked and killed an Egyptian man in order to protect a Hebrew man (Exod. 2:11-12). Moses fled (Exod. 2:15) into the desert, found a place to be a shepherd, and settled into a quiet life in the country, eventually marrying and enjoying family life. He took his wife and sons as he began the journey to Egypt (Exod. 4:20). These experiences enabled Moses to see himself as capable, cunning, flexible in his opinions and lifestyle, and willing to see life with new eyes.

⁸ <http://infed.org/mobi/peter-senge-and-the-learning-organization/>.

Moses related to people of differing backgrounds and religious beliefs, and he understood the consequences of his actions to follow one God. Leadership might not have been his strong point though. He escaped from situations that would have brought death twice (once in the basket and once in the desert), and he may have considered himself lucky. Moses faced problems along the way, changed his leadership style as needed, and got the people to their goal. Aaron Wildavsky explored the changes Moses must have gone through to reach the goal of liberating the Hebrew people from Egypt and leading them to a land of milk and honey (Exod. 3:8).

Wildavsky writes, “Leaders must be continual participants in their own education” which to me means leaders need to change and grow.⁹ Surroundings, belief, and way of life will determine leadership qualities, and these qualities can change over time. Moses had to change his leadership style several times during his tenure with the Hebrews because there were new challenges, and he learned “mostly from failure.”¹⁰ Wildavsky invites the reader to see these changes as Moses leads the Hebrews from slavery, through a time of anarchy, when there was no government to rely on. They moved not only through the desert, but through a stage of equity, when the values and vision of all the Hebrews were focused on God. Their travels in the desert included a system of hierarchy where there were leaders of tens and hundreds and up the ladder to Moses. Moses recognized what the people needed in leadership with help from others and he loved this people into the success of entering the Promised Land.

⁹ Aaron Wildavsky, *The Nursing Father: Moses as a Political Leader* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1984), 5.

¹⁰ Wildavsky, *The Nursing Father*, 6.

Wildavsky believes that Moses had to understand himself by answering the universal questions of humans: who am I, and, what should I do? Moses seemed to live in a wilderness all his life, first as a Hebrew raised by Egyptians, then as a murderer/shepherd/exile in a foreign land, and as the birth parent of a large nation of God's people. As Moses was first drawn out of the water, the Hebrews were birthed in the Red Sea. Moses' struggle to become the leader of this nation truly began. The story tells of the enslaved Hebrews listening to Moses, hoping to find a way out of their oppression. Moses heard from God about what Moses needed to do to lead God's people to a new land, a land of milk and honey (Exod. 1:8-22). Moses knew how the people had suffered under a person who considered himself a god and could do no wrong, and Moses accepted the call to become their leader.

Wildavsky helps the reader understand different aspects of leadership and sheds much light on how Moses worked through on-the-job leadership training. Leadership is not for the faint of heart. Moses' faith was his "willingness to act in the absence of things seen" and to see a future based on the past where he, and the Hebrew people, overcame multiple obstacles.¹¹ The Hebrews lived together with "no restraint but also no group boundaries" as they listened to God who saved them from pharaoh.¹² They needed to respect one another, settle disputes in small groups if possible, depend on their capabilities as gifts from God, without selfishness, anger, fear, or deceit.

Receiving and teaching his people how to live into the Laws of God took up most of Moses' time, as well as working with God to fill bellies and slake thirst. Moses learned

¹¹ Wildavsky, *Nursing Father*, 68.

¹² Wildavsky, *Nursing Father*, 68.

from his father-in-law Jethro, and Moses was able to accept seeing the Promised Land (Deut. 34:5-8) without entering, because it was time for a new leader, Joshua (Num. 27:18), to emerge. Instead of defining the leadership of Moses as successful, or as triumphing over the opposition, Wildavsky holds up leadership as a journey rather than a destination.

From anarchy, Moses needed to move his people to equity by following the covenant given by God: “you will be my people and I will be your God” (Exod. 6:7). This covenant required both sides to agree to a way of life that was helpful to both, as well as being interdependent on one another and on God. The people that Moses led out of Egypt had to trust Moses to take care of them and lead them to a Promised Land. Moses provided oversight for them under harsh conditions and monitored the great God YHWH, so they didn’t have to. Moses had a great task to bring frightened people out of Egypt, lead them in strange lands, and finally show them the fertile ground God promised to them. “I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession” (Exod. 6:8). Moses drew in leaders including Aaron, Miriam, Joshua as God commanded throughout his journey.

Moses also kept alive the memory of connection to this land because it had been promised to Abraham; the people were taking back what God had given them generations before. Even though the Hebrews themselves felt unwelcome in strange lands, they opened their hearts to welcome strangers. Moses learned how to lead by instructing those close to him what to do, and then leave it to those people to carry out welcome, worship, and life. He instilled in others to believe in something greater, something powerful, as they were often at odds about what to do.

Moses had the advantage of living with his “congregation” for many decades. He knew who was born, married, and when they died. He walked and talked with them daily, except when he was on retreat on the mountain. He learned by doing, trying, praying, exhorting, listening. His presence gave the people hope and consolation, according to his visions and prayers, with advice from others. Moses sometimes dealt harshly with those who opposed him. He rallied people when hostile armies gathered, reminding them to trust in God. Moses was with the people during discouraging and fearful times, as well as joyful celebrations. The leadership of Moses coalesced in the desert as Moses learned to trust God, the people, and himself as the chosen leader.

Nannerl Keohane poses ideas about leadership from Nelson Mandela, who describes the chief of a tribe as the leader who rules after taking information and opinions from other members of the tribe.¹³ Even after talking with others, when the chief makes a decision, not everyone may agree, but the tribe needs to remain together and most will follow the directive of the king. Moses faced this in his leadership. Moses spoke with God, conferred with Miriam, Aaron, and others as he worked to bring the vision of being a people of God, dependent on God, into shape.

God gave Moses freedom to lead the people into a different form of relationship. Instead of fearing pharaoh, the followers of Moses were invited into a relationship with God and one another based on love. This relationship was well laid out in the Commandments (Exod. 20:1-17), which started with accepting the loving God who is in charge of the journey. Margaret Wheatley writes that inhibiting change can work against

¹³ Nannerl O. Keohane, *Thinking about Leadership* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 159.

the freedom that people enjoy.¹⁴ Rather than inhibit change in himself and the people, Moses changed his thinking several times during the trek in the desert, and encouraged the people to learn new ways to be a community.

Rabbi Evan Moffic writes of the changes Moses made along the way from Egyptian prince to a runaway Hebrew to God's chosen spokesperson.¹⁵ Some of those changes include persistence, identifying his core values, willingness, and clarity about the risky business the Israelites were involved in. Moses used clarity and transparency in his teachings and life, talked to people face-to-face, and he knew what his 'boss' wanted. These skills kept Moses motivated and moving through his long career with the people of God in their circuitous route to the land God promised to them. It took the bravery and leadership of Moses to actually get them there. In his case, the scenic route was beneficial.

Paul and Moses had similar experiences of being called to serve God: Moses with a burning bush (Exod. 3:1-17) Paul with a great brightness (Acts 9:3-11). Moses entered the Promised Land, and Paul knew himself as a person of the Promise of God to be present always with God's people. Moses spent forty years (Num. 14:33) with his people, birthing, marrying, and burying many of them. Paul is with a group in a community or town for a fairly short period of time, perhaps two to four years. Paul was in contact with his converts and friends by letter, and by reports from people who stayed with the new group, while Paul went elsewhere to persuade others to believe in Jesus as Messiah.

¹⁴ Margaret Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2006), 89.

¹⁵ <http://yfc.net/images/uploads/general/20-tipes-from-moses.pdf>.

Paul

Paul had a powerful vision that caused him to review his life goals and accept a new way of living. He was learned, confident, and moved from place to place to follow his call from God. He worked as an artisan, encouraged others to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and he prayed. Paul knew the God that Moses knew, celebrated the festivals begun by Moses' people, read the accounts of what God's people did, and Paul believed in the God of Moses wholeheartedly. But a vision (Acts 9:17-20) changed his understanding of this God.

Moses grew into his leadership over a period of decades with the same families headed in one direction. Paul grew into his leadership role with many different communities over a period of years, and led by exhortation, correction, encouragement, and love as his letters in the New Testament testify. N. T. Wright suggests that Paul knew Scriptures inside and out, "he gives every impression of having swallowed the Bible whole."¹⁶ Saul of Tarsus had to begin again as Paul; Paul was not reticent to tell anyone and everyone about his joy in God's love and mercy. N.T. Wright states, "For Paul, "religion" was woven in with all of life; for the modern Western world, it is separated from it."¹⁷ Paul wrote to the congregations he worked with to remind them how to behave and how to lead with love and prayerful consideration of what he had taught them when he was present with them. When Paul wrote to the community in Galatia he reminded the people that because they are baptized "in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through

¹⁶ N.T. Wright, *Paul: A Biography* (San Francisco: Harper One. 2018), 16.

¹⁷ Wright, *Paul*, 3.

faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27) reminding them of the equality they share and the vision of being the body of Christ where they are. Paul also calls them “foolish” (Gal. 3:1-5) because they have failed to listen and embody the word of God given through Baptism. Daniel Boyarin writes that Paul was a passionate preacher and leader who saw Jesus Christ as the means of making the world one in Christ.¹⁸

According to Daniel Boyarin, Paul encouraged the communities he founded to learn and live a new way, living together in God’s spirit of mercy, inclusion, as a new creation. This new creation cares for one another, gives joyfully, engages with the community of believers and nonbelievers, meets regularly to pray, shares bread and wine in remembrance of Jesus’ body and blood given freely so people remember Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection. Paul offered hope amid despair, friendship amid loneliness, food for body and soul to carry people through the tragedies and hardships of life. These relationships sustain the congregations through the ups and downs of life when they come together to pray, and enrich the communities people live in.

Paul took up the same questions as Moses: who am I and what should I do? Paul understood himself as a Jew, a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5). He found his voice and actions in promoting the presence of God—the Messiah who overcame death and grave, as he lived his life in the Roman empire, preaching the political news of the New Kingdom, a kingdom which originates in God and is not interested in hierarchy or status, but thrives in the daily lives of those who love one another and demonstrate this love with actions

¹⁸ Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994).

that may lead to persecution. Boyarin writes, “what drove Paul was a passionate desire for human unification, for the erasure of differences and hierarchies between human beings, and that he saw the Christian event, as he had experienced it, as the vehicle for this transformation of humanity.”¹⁹

The Roman Empire was large, diverse, hierarchical, aristocratic (only the top 2 to 3 percent of the population ruled). They were urban and agrarian, according to Warren Carter. The aristocratic families depended on cheap labor, slaves, rent from tenants, taxes, and commodities of the people who did the work. Coercion was used to keep the people in line. According to Carter, there were “networks of patronage, alliances between Rome and elites in the provinces” with strong military forces to quell any thoughts of revolt.²⁰ The people were raised to be submissive and the consequences of rebellion were evident on every corner. “In addition to ownership of resources, military force, and working relationships with the elite, emperors secured their power by claiming the favor of the gods...to rule without end.”²¹

Jesus preached and lived a different rule of life, and Paul took up this cross as he traveled to various parts of the Roman Empire, declaring love and acceptance of all as a new way of life. Paul offered hope for a new life to a small portion of the approximately 97 percent of people who were non-elites, non-rulers, non-wealthy.²² This alternative way of life, seen in Paul’s letters, offered another way to see the world where Rome is not in charge, God is. God offers hope, reconciliation, peace, and love during hardship, loss,

¹⁹ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 106.

²⁰ Warren Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament – An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 3.

²¹ Carter, *Roman Empire*, 4.

²² Carter, *Roman Empire*, 7.

hunger, no status, while the Roman elite and military thought they were in control of the people by coercion, beatings, threats, physical strength. Paul writes of the Kingdom of God, which is life-giving, often using military terms, because this is language the people can identify. According to Carter, they are “soldiers in God’s service” (Phil. 2:25) with “divine power” (2 Cor. 10:3-6), Timothy is a “good servant/soldier of Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 4:6 and 2 Tim. 2:3); Paul writes of the “army of Christ” (1 Cor. 15:23) putting on the “armor of Christ” (Rom. 13:12). By using these military words, Paul teaches the people that the God they worship, who was crucified by the Romans, has power beyond the strength of the Roman world and beyond the dependence on the backs of the non-ruling workers. This strength holds the communities together and helps them grow in love, forgiveness, joy, in the midst of hatred, fear, hardship, and hunger.

This teaching is difficult to understand and live into. In Galatians, Chapters 3 and 4, Paul expresses some of his frustration, reminding people they did not know God, they were enslaved by tokens, which they continue to turn to instead of listening to the God who knows them intimately and loves them unconditionally. He writes, “I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted.” (Gal. 4:11). In Chapter 3 of the Letter to the Galatians, Paul calls them “foolish” (Gal. 3:1) due to their lack of trust in God.

Paul also writes to the people in Ephesus that they need to put away falsehood, speak truth to neighbors. Anger is a natural human emotion, but anger needs to be let go before “the sun goes down” (Eph. 4:26). Those who steal need to find honest work so they can help others, people need to use words filled with grace when speaking to one another and to all others to build up the community. Paul reminds them to get rid of

bitterness, wrath, anger, wrangling, slander, malice, to be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving as each one has been forgiven, by imitating God (Gal 4:28-5:1).

Paul encouraged his followers to choose a different lifestyle, a different way to “be” by following a God who loves. Wayne Meeks writes that large urban areas were laid out in a certain way, an early form of city planning. In these metropolitan areas, there were about two hundred people per acre with parks. We find the same density in western industrial slums, and instead of parks or green areas, we have shopping centers.²³ The roads were good in the Roman Empire, so travel was not impeded. There was an influx of Roman citizens into Greek cities, which caused stress on the Greeks who were living in the Roman Empire, without benefit of Roman citizenship that comes from having a father who is Roman, but it was the Roman immigrants to Greece who needed acculturation. The early Christians, a mixture of Greeks and Romans, are described as those who were “uneducated, foolish, dishonorable and stupid, and only slaves, women and little children.”²⁴ Paul’s congregations included people with status and citizenship but found identity as Christians and became a cohesive group in the areas Paul lived in. Paul gave them a dream, a reason, a love for one another through the life and death of Jesus regardless of earthly citizenship.

Moses knew the history of his people. He knew they are now enslaved, but had once been a mighty nation, dedicated to one God. Paul also knew the history of his people; he knew the trials of Moses and the joy of the people coming out of slavery. Knowing the history, for both men, gave them the impetus and courage to hear God

²³ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 28.

²⁴ Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 51.

speak, to move in a new direction, to open possibilities, as their leadership drew people into a different direction of walking with God. Knowing the past of these parishes has given me the desire to remember and offer another way to consider leadership—as walking with God, as Trustees of the Soul of the Parish, as people committed and dedicated to what is and what will be. The leadership Vestry offers is a vision for the people to grow into.

An Introduction to Trusteeship

In order to change/transform the world, or the current community, leaders must change or transform themselves to accommodate the changes around them. Leaders must learn to think dialectically, searching for truth, because reality is constantly changing; what is progressive at one point can turn into its opposite at a later point and in everything there is both the positive and negative. The responsibility of leadership in times of crisis, such as loss of members or lack of growth in a church, is not to denounce or protest discomfort, but voice the discomfort, and project a vision that encourages grassroots creation of positive alternatives. This is the work of the priest and Vestry together. As a Vestry person, a parish leader, each one needs to realize that their commitment, by election to the board, is to attend church and meetings, pray, read Scripture, and serve the community by inviting people to worship and other activities to expand relationships, by believing there is something greater than ourselves, and they/we have something to offer one another.

Trustee is a legal term, which, in its broadest sense, is a synonym for anyone in a position of trust, and can refer to any person who holds property, authority, or a position

of responsibility for the benefit of another. A trustee is in a special position of confidence in relation to the beneficiary because the trustee has control of property that is essentially owned by the beneficiary. The future of each church is held in the hands of trustees (Vestry members) with the property they control consisting of buildings, grounds, the calling of a priest, prudent investment of funds, making sure worship is conducted in an appropriate manner, and realizing they serve one another by holding each other accountable to the parish, and ultimately to God.

Trusteeship offers insight into the concept of stewardship of these souls, and attention to the needs and direction of the group one is leading.²⁵ The trustees need to take themselves out of the present moment and reach for the stars. They need to dream of what the future will look and feel like. This kind of thinking gives leaders enthusiasm and ownership of the future, rather than another document to pile up. Stewardship involves the care of the land, the money, and the people. Trusteeship includes stewardship but it goes much deeper. Trusteeship is care of the soul, of the very essence of who we are. If we envision the future together, we will create that future together. Scott writes that the future is a dream that the board has, and trusteeship is living into that dream. She quotes Parker Palmer, “The future of an organization depends not on rational planning but on an organic capacity to adapt to whatever comes along—without losing its integrity.”²⁶

Leadership Concepts from Current Social Science Leaders

²⁵ Scott, *Caring and Capable Boards*, 131.

²⁶ Scott, *Caring and Capable Boards*, 131.

Each parishioner is vibrant and alive in the Body of Christ and needs to recognize how each one is part of this Body. We, including me, need to grow spiritually, prayerfully, in gratitude and wonder. If we can wonder together about what God is up to, we will begin to see God's presence in meetings, worship, and events. We will begin to understand the trust that has been given to each of us as leaders.

William R. Mott and Scott suggest one-on-one meetings with board members in order to get to know them on a personal level, and to thank them often for what they do in the community.²⁷ This is an opportunity to see to my professional development, and lead by example so that Vestry, as leaders and members, are recognized for what they do in the parish and in the community. This is helpful to the overall relationship of the Vestry and a commitment I need to take. It is difficult to expect the people I count on to understand where I am coming from and what my hopes are. We need to take the time to understand the point of view and expectations of one another.

Ronald Heifetz writes about building adaptive capacity as a means of providing the next group of leaders with a built-in means of defining the work needed. He defines adaptive capacity as, "The resilience of people and the capacity of systems to engage in problem-defining work in the midst of adaptive pressures and the resulting disequilibrium."²⁸

At Epiphany, people are selected to run for Vestry based on whether they will fill requirements for certain categories (e.g. young-old/male-female, etc.), instead of best qualified. I decided to ask current Vestry members for the names of folks they thought

²⁷ Chris Argyis, *Overcoming Organizational Defenses* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1990).

²⁸ Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2009), 303.

would be good Vestry members, so that they themselves would be looking at people they knew in different ways than I did. I also used this idea at St. Peter's and found this helpful because many names were offered to invite to run for a Vestry seat. A letter sent to these people gave prospective members much to consider about being on Vestry.²⁹

Building the next group of Vestry members is an on-going dilemma because two to four people at St. Peter's and Epiphany, respectively, can change yearly, unless those members are eligible for a second term of three years. Some people are on Vestry because they are new to the church, or had kids in programs, or they have been on Vestry a long time and keep returning after one year off. How one develops trusteeship awareness with the next generation of leaders is an on-going opportunity for leaders to develop the capacity to work through changes in leadership and membership.

Chris Argyis writes about social virtues, such as caring, respect, strength, integrity, support, and honesty, as important traits for leaders. The work of the leader is to make decisions that are best for all concerned, with input from others. The author digs into governing or leading over a long period as opposed to decisions made to fix or mend one action at a time. He calls this double loop and single loop learning. The double loop covers needed reflection and feedback, whereas the single loop covers an immediate need without stepping back for a different view of the situation. Heifetz writes of the view from the balcony as a means of getting some distance from the issue, and looking at it from a different perspective. From the balcony there is a different view and one is better able to see the learning, improvisation, and repetition that occur among those participating in the dance of leadership.

²⁹ See Appendix 1.

This is important for church leadership growth and development because blaming others is easier than changing one's own perspective and actions. Distrust of distant leaders is another difficulty: "the diocese is far away and doesn't care about us" is a familiar refrain. And "we've always done it this way" is echoed through empty sanctuaries. Argyis' thoughts and practical ideas can help change the way religious leaders view their role as the search for "something must be done" continues.

Learning leadership from a business model is helpful as a student of, and person in, leadership. Reflection and feedback are necessary to learn how to overcome these defenses. This strikes me as what Moses, Paul, and Jesus spoke of: the governing values of separation, oppression, and fear needed to be wiped out and replaced with values of openness, love, and confidence. The Pharisees come to mind as an example of leaders who refused to look at the values that governed their actions. Ideas of how a small, elderly congregation deals with change could be a vexing problem that needs to be addressed. With open, honest discussion, people could see that the values of faith and tradition are not going away but need to be addressed in a contemporary manner for growth (internal and external) to occur. If the players have no new skills and the organization has no new policies to reward using the new skills, it is possible that feelings of disappointment and helplessness will develop, eventually reactivating the feelings of cynicism reminiscent of the old days.

An adaptive challenge for me is a willingness to be vulnerable. Brené Brown defines vulnerability as "uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure."³⁰ Brown suggests one must come to recognize that leadership is a vulnerable position and being vulnerable

³⁰ Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly* (New York, NY: Penguin Random House, 2012), 34.

can be painful. Fear can be a driving force to hide our vulnerable selves because we fear that the reaction to what we cannot fix or hold or make change or measure up to will make us feel like failures. Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable is risky. We risk relationships, positions, and advancements, because we think voicing our expectations will show our vulnerability. Showing others that we can be open and accepting of situations, and ourselves as imperfect, can cause much anxiety. For example, if I had coffee with each Vestry person individually, what might the risk be? In a one-to-one situation, I might not seem as authoritative as I am with the group, I might reveal something personal that would change the relationship or misunderstand something important to the person. On the other hand, connecting with each person is beneficial in several ways: to know one another better, to celebrate a relationship, to be human. This is a growing edge of discernment for me, and part of this study.

Another vulnerability of leadership is truth-telling. It is important to do what one says one will do, and to follow through even if the way is uncomfortable. Speaking truth to others can be uncomfortable, but when done with the recognition that I am imperfect, I can speak better with others from my points of vulnerability. I believe that is what Brown means by “emotional exposure,” mentioned above. Keohane calls this empathy because most leaders “care about the people they are trying to mobilize, direct and serve.”³¹ Keohane also describes leaders who see themselves with power over others and these leaders might say what folks want to hear and then do something entirely different. Or, leaders may not tell the whole truth of what the consequences of a particular decision would be. Using leadership to mismanage or avoid difficult decisions is not helpful.

³¹ Keohane, *Thinking about Leadership*, 107.

Using a leadership position to denigrate or control others is also not expected. She writes about what it takes for leaders to lead and be successful, such as judgement, and information across contexts.³² She further explains communication and compromise as components necessary for leadership.³³ These skills can be used for good, or for evil.

Keohane defines leadership in terms similar to trusteeship: Leaders: “determine or clarify goals for a group of individuals and bring together the energies of the members of that group to accomplish those goals.”³⁴ Leaders help an organization reach its potential and beyond, by setting goals and markers along the way to see what has been done in the past and envision what the future can be. There are leaders who make ineffective or detrimental choices, leaders who lack judgment, perception, understanding of the group they have been called to lead. Leaders can set goals that can destroy or build up. Moses and Paul struggled to each find their voice as leaders to reach places of fulfillment for the people they led. Their techniques differed, but they were honest to who they were, consistent with the people they led, and took time to know the people. They were vulnerable to the presence of God, the care of God’s people, and supportive to the leaders for the next generations. These leaders give me hope that my leadership is open, truthful, trusting in God and working together for what is hopeful for each parish and each community.

Wheatley also describes characteristics of declining and healthy systems.³⁵ In decline, systems live in decay, money replaces service, leaders maintain power, decisions

³² Keohane, *Thinking about Leadership*, 87-97.

³³ Keohane, *Thinking about Leadership*, 97-104.

³⁴ Keohane, *Thinking about Leadership*, 98.

³⁵ Margaret Wheatley, *Who Do We Choose to Be?* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Kohler Publications, 2017).

are for now rather than the future, and the status quo is just right. This seemed to be the opinion of former leaders in both parishes. In healthy systems, people speak to one another with caring, and long-term thinking is used in an atmosphere of trust. People on the board have a willingness to contribute in various ways, such as personal time and ideas, in addition to funds.

As Trustees of the Soul of the Parish, each Vestry person needs to commit to prayer, attendance at worship and meetings, Bible learning, and engagement with the community to deepen love of God, others, and ourselves because these practices will help Vestry connect with one another and the parish. Reading Scripture will help people be informed about our faith by learning where we came from and show how others have struggled and overcome difficulties with vision and intentionality.

Leadership needs to ask: what kind of parish do we want to leave for the next generations? The information about change in each community is dependent on cultural changes—ministries are needed for those who don't believe in church, those who speak a different language, those who have been harmed, those who have given up. Leadership as Trustees of the Soul of the Parish needs to prepare for the next people who will sit in their pews and at Vestry meetings as we continue to make God's presence real. The transition to Trustee of the Soul of the Parish is on-going. The goal of the intervention, the Vestry retreat, is to open eyes and hearts and souls to the presence of God in each heart, and over time, to live into the presence of God more and more.

Chapter III. Trusteeship Intervention

This chapter tells about the project for this paper and outcomes from the retreat. The retreat for Vestry members is an opportunity to learn about the calling of Moses and Paul by reading and discussing the stories of their call to serve God. Vestry members reflected on their calling to be on Vestry in light of these stories. Vestry members also learned about and discussed the concept of Trusteeship of the Soul of the Parish. They incorporated these learnings into a written Covenant Agreement about how they plan to carry out this calling to serve in each respective congregation. The Covenant Agreement, specific to each parish, will be read aloud at the beginning of each meeting to remind the group of expectations of Vestry members. Seeking new Vestry members annually will be more open by providing information about what Vestry does through the newsletter, short retreat(s), and direct invitation to possible members. I see this intervention as a responsibility for the future of both parishes.

Retreat, Participation, Covenant

When leadership is held tightly, the leadership can become closed and ineffective. In the past, people would be on Vestry for years and decades. The diocesan revised bylaws prevent this as well as provide for regular turnover and fresh ideas, which means constant training to help new Vestry members feel part of the team and to consider being a Trustee of the Soul of the Parish.³⁶

³⁶ Diocesan bylaws, <https://www.diobeth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/DioBeth-Canons--10.12.18.pdf>.

Pre-retreat information for this project included asking Vestry to submit resumes and respond to the question: why I am, or will be (for new Vestry), a great Vestry member. The written Covenant of Agreement as Trustees will be used in decision making and community building which will include expectations of preparing for Vestry meetings, following up on commitments, engagement with the worshiping and local community. I expect that we will look beyond ourselves to see the interconnectedness of who we are within the parish, community, the diocese, and God's reign.

This process began October 2018 with a letter to prospective Vestry members (Appendix 1). The Vestry retreat for Church of the Epiphany was held February 23, 2019; St. Peter's was held March 9, 2019. The follow-up interviews at both parishes were held in late April, during the two weeks right after Easter.

Eight out of nine Vestry members attended the retreat at Church of the Epiphany. The person who could not attend on this date attended the same retreat at St. Peter's. All five Vestry members attended at St. Peter's, as well as two from Epiphany. Each attendee contributed to small and large group discussions at both parishes. Each Vestry was able to formulate ideas for a Covenant Agreement to use at Vestry meetings and to consider between meetings. It was hoped the Covenant would increase buy in on the part of the vestry members because they had been a part of its writing, stating expectations and norms for themselves.

Phenomenology studies the experiences of people in a given situation—in this case a retreat to learn about leadership as trusteeship, and to write a Covenant of Agreement of expectations, based on the leadership at each Vestry. This method of

analysis asks: What did you experience today in writing this Covenant? This question was asked verbally at the end of each retreat. These are the responses by parish:

RESPONSES TO RETREAT

<i>St. Peter's</i>	<i>Epiphany</i>
This was helpful	This was a good idea
This was not what I expected, but it was helpful	We learned about one another and the church
I never looked at Vestry this way	We enjoyed being together
I need more information	Thank you, this was good
I didn't know much about being on Vestry	I didn't realize how important this work is

These responses led me to believe the exercise of attending the retreat was helpful, good, a learning activity, and enjoyable. People smiled, looked intently at the information, added to a flip chart, and collaborated in writing a Covenant Agreement. The retreat experience engaged people, asked them to reflect on a different vision of serving as Vestry, and every Vestry member attended. The introduction of Trusteeship of the Soul of the Parish gave people an opportunity to see themselves in a new light as 'called' and entrusted with the very soul of each parish.

My reactions were wow, people actually showed up, and this is important work. I realized people are looking for leadership values, something to understand about this role, and direction from Biblical and local perspectives. As the retreat leader, I noticed the experience of writing the covenant engaged all of the members present at both parishes. The experience included discussion, writing, and agreeing or offering changes and additional information. People physically leaned into the conversation, took notes, discussed what and why, came up with ideas together, accepted the concept of Trustees of the Soul of the Parish.

The nine people from Epiphany arrived on time, and volunteers offered to assist with reading, scribing, and Eucharist. They were attentive, asked questions, and seemed interested in the topic. They participated in large and small group discussions. They seemed thoughtful and engaged. Those new to Vestry participated as fully as seasoned members. There was laughter, reflection, silence, and attention to the project.

The reactions and results at St. Peter's includes: one person fixed the announcements that scroll on a small screen in the Narthex for about ten minutes, but eventually engaged in the retreat in the sanctuary, and participated in one-on-one conversations. Another person was in the process of moving and it was difficult to focus; she arrived about an hour into the retreat. Two people are new to Vestry and attended well to what was being said and engaged in the conversations. The fifth member was attentive, took notes, participated and engaged with others and with the discussions.

At both parishes, people specifically engaged in the Scripture stories by remembering that Moses and Paul both faced uphill battles in different cultures and were able to lead with God's presence. One person from Epiphany attended to help with the retreat at St. Peter's and presented the section of the calling of Moses and Paul. This person takes the responsibility of Vestry very seriously and was eager to help. The input from this person was helpful; the insight from another person from the first retreat would have added to the richness of the project.

Method of Inquiry: Phenomenology

John W. Cresswell discusses five approaches of inquiry for research for a given study, which include: "narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory,

ethnography, and case studies.”³⁷ He describes the focus of each method of inquiry, shown in the following parenthetical explanations, as: narrative research (exploring the life of an individual), phenomenology (understanding the essence of the experience), grounded theory (developing a theory grounded in data from the field), ethnography (describing and interpreting a culture-sharing group), case study (developing an in-depth description and analysis of a case, or multiple cases).

The Case Studies presented as part of my coursework at Virginia Theological Seminary were helpful, insightful, challenging, and an example of a short, intentional, and direct moment in time.³⁸ A case study is identified by the author, it converses with difficulties or opportunities, and offers insight into the thinking of the author as the author reflects on family systems, leadership opportunities, self-criticism, and some data relevant to the situation. This research project will be wider and deeper than a case study but will include some aspects of case study.

The research for this paper is based on phenomenological methodology. This method will give access to more than an individual experience of the retreat; it will be part of a lived experience of the whole group at each parish. Phenomenological research is used in social and health sciences, and it focuses on the reality one experiences “through [the] meaning of an experience of an individual.”³⁹ The anticipated universal participation is to be in retreat to write a covenant, and the object—the covenant—will be described through the eyes, ears, and hearts of the attendees. The data gathered will

³⁷ John W. Cresswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2007), 53.

³⁸ One case study I wrote involved the refusal of a Vestry person to provide background checks; another focused on lack of outreach to the community.

³⁹ Cresswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 59.

include analysis of significant statements and quotes from the people engaged, as well as feedback through structured questions of each individual. Survey responses, observations, and remembered/notated/recorded conversations will add to the data for this research and help others understand what it feels like to write a community covenant to adhere to as a means of clarifying what the role of being a Vestry person as Trustee of the Soul of the Parish means to each member. My involvement as presenter is included to gain a full picture of what this retreat accomplished. None of the other methodologies fit my desire to have each Vestry write their own rules and thus live by them. Living into this covenant is an ongoing process of expanding the phenomenology of the retreat.

The aim of phenomenological research, according to Clark Moustakas, is to “determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it.”⁴⁰ Particular questions are recommended to analyze regarding an experience, such as: how do you envision your call to be on Vestry: like Moses’ burning bush or Paul’s bright light; how do you understand your role as leader; how does it feel to be a Trustee of the Soul of the Parish? Relevant data identifies common themes based on the responses to the questions.⁴¹ My own experience of this retreat is included to identify the meaning of this common experience. The in-depth responses provided stories that can be utilized to gain a deeper understanding of who we are as individuals as Trustees of the Soul of the Parish.

⁴⁰ Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1994), 13.

⁴¹ Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods*. First accessed December 3, 2019. http://www.psyking.net/HTMLobj-3856/Moustakas.Phenomenological_Theory.pdf.

Reliability of data based on phenomenological research is dependent on the lived experience of the participants and the leader, according to Johnny Saldana. He writes that the coding of the data is not “a precise science” but is based on the interpretation of the person who makes sense of the data.⁴² As the leader, my experience of the retreat started with anticipation of the event, the work of writing the script for the retreat, gathering the materials, and attending to the details, such as time, place, space, easel, paper/pens, seating, items for worship, and lunch.

In order to classify and understand the retreat and following interviews, In Vivo Coding and Descriptive Coding will be used to signify important thoughts from the ensuing conversations and meetings.⁴³ What people actually say is important and can be grouped and measured according to categories and repetition. In Vivo Codes derive from the actual language of the participant. Descriptive Coding refers to the “breadth of opinions stated by multiple participants” which helps me assess information from all of the Vestry members.⁴⁴

What people say and how they say it is important to the structure and research involved in this project. Saldana writes, “Conceptual values, attitudes, and beliefs may not always be directly stated by participants” which is the beginning of understanding this type of qualitative research, based on recorded and transcribed follow-up interviews, as well as discussion questions at Vestry meetings.⁴⁵ I wanted to know the following: if

⁴² Saldana, *The Coding Manual*, 5, Kindle Edition LOC 271.

⁴³ Saldana, *The Coding Manual*, 105, LOC 2450. The root meaning of in vivo is “in that which is alive,” and as a code refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record, “the terms used by [participants] themselves” (Strauss, 1987, p. 33 – as quoted by Saldana).

⁴⁴ Saldana, *Coding Manual*, 8, LOC 134.

⁴⁵ Saldana, *Coding Manual*, 8, LOC 134.

attending to prayer, worship, and participation in meetings is important, will this show up in the interviews? If these are important practices, will it show in attendance? Can the leadership see their roles as necessary and their lives as role models? Many more questions bounced around in my thinking at this period of time.

As mentioned previously in this paper, the trusteeship authors I studied include Katherine Scott, whose book on uncovering the passion for trusteeship was an ‘aha’ moment for me; Ronald Heifetz, whose work with adaptive solutions that engage more people has been highly informative; and Margaret Wheatley, a social scientist. Wheatley opened my heart to thinking about the dreams of leadership as necessary to continue seeking possibilities for the future and living into these dreams by taking leadership very seriously for the sustenance of civilization on this planet.⁴⁶ There are other authors along the way who have also been very informative.

Trusteeship is important to envision the future, based on the history of the organization.⁴⁷ Some of the Vestry meetings in the past at Church of the Epiphany have included arguments, anger, and frustration that nothing was getting done in the parish or by the priest. These are stories I have heard from past and current parishioners. Several people have told me they will never serve on Vestry again. The current folks at St. Peter’s have not described this, but a few past members mentioned loud Vestry meetings. Becoming more aware of the presence of God at our meetings, and understanding that God has gifted each parish with mercy and joy, will help now and in the future to form a cohesive Vestry of Trustees of the Soul of the Parish. I envision trustees as thoughtful,

⁴⁶ Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*.

⁴⁷ Scott, *Caring and Capable Boards*, 130-131.

prayerful people, who work together not only for each parish here and now, but for the reign of God now and always.

Interviews

Interviews occurred about one month after St. Peter’s retreat and almost two months after Epiphany’s retreat, due to life experiences of illness, deaths, surgeries, travel plans, car accident (my spouse; he’s ok), and snow and ice difficulties during the end of winter. Several folks commented “I wish we had done this sooner.” I agree with that; it was unfortunate the interviews didn’t follow sooner. But, when we were able to meet, each person provided insight into what they remember about trusteeship. The questions and complete responses are found in Appendix 4. This section shows the responses to particular questions, and insight into what I learned from the people and from the process.

In order to understand the information from the retreat and follow-up interviews, I use charts to organize the responses into categories, which are coded in a manner that make sense to me. Each chart aligns with a question used in the interviews. The charts are followed with my interpretation, analysis, and learning.

Interview Question #1. Has your understanding of being a leader, from Vestry to Trustee, in the parish changed from before the retreat to now?

UNDERSTANDING OF LEADERSHIP AS TRUSTEE

<i>Positive</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Negative</i>
Help others (4)	Premise	Not well discussed
Specific	Assumption	Not everyone bought in
More	Interact with people	We fall short
Bigger idea	Nuts/bolts	Need fuller understanding
Education	Nothing to add	Hard to put self in those shoes
Involved	Long time on vestry	Not understand changes
Spiritual		No orientation

Servant		
Purpose, More defined		

As I reviewed the comments, the categories of Positive, Neutral, and Negative helped me categorize the lived reality of the attendees, and made sense to me. On the Positive side, people felt the retreat and the idea as presented made them think more about the idea of trusteeship as a helpful means of understanding the depth of the commitment of Vestry to themselves, one another and the parish. Trusteeship does invite us into a “bigger idea” of what our time together is about, and how we seek new opportunities to pray, learn, discern, and grow as leaders.

On the other hand, the message did not seem to resonate with some of the attendees at the retreat. I agree that trusteeship is a difficult concept to understand, and it must be difficult for folks who have not “read the book.” This is a learning curve for me, to continue to bring awareness to our time together and reinforce the dynamics of trusteeship by offering insights from the readings I have embraced. I also see some of the negative comments as opportunities for each person to grow into a fuller understanding and commitment to the quality of being a leader. This is a very awesome and sometimes difficult work we are called to do with and for one another, for the parish, and to glorify God regardless of the outcome or feelings I bring to a situation.

Interview Question #3. How do you feel about being a Trustee of the Soul of the Parish?

BEING TRUSTEE OF SOUL OF PARISH

<i>Positive</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Negative</i>
Connected, comfortable	Relieved	Out of my comfort zone
Wanted	Foresight	Nervous
Work together	Learn	Anxiety
Commitment	Where is God	Challenge

Responsibility (2)	Mission	Not good
Awesome, Awestruck		
Miracle, Honor		
Spiritual, Good		
Listen		

By coding these words into categories, I see there are many more comments that demonstrate a positive feeling towards being a Trustee of the Soul of the Parish. The Neutral comments also have a positive spin to them. The comments coded as Negative offer insight into the responsibility people are facing as they move from Vestry member to trustee. I also react with some anxiety and negativity when I am confronted with a new situation, or a different understanding of something I thought I knew about.

During the retreat, we talked about the “soul of the parish.” After several months of reading the data, I realized I did not ask for a definition of the soul of the parish as Vestry understands this language. An email was sent to both Vestries, asking: What does the “soul of the parish” mean to you? The following responses came back:

(Marty): I see vestry as trustees of the spiritual welfare of parishioners, to the extent that the parish is the primary local visible sign of Christ’s care for his flock, providing local opportunity for parishioners to fully participate in the “Jerusalem quadrilateral.” “They devoted themselves to the apostle’s teachings and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and prayers.” (Acts 2:42, NIV)

(Niko): For me, the soul of the parish encompasses both the members as well as the physical structure. While Church is not a building per say, but the individuals who gather in Christ’s name in a parish setting a Vestry is charged with seeing to the welfare of both as being the soul of the parish. We are entrusted to ensure the health/vitality, so far as possible, of the very core (soul) of our parish.

(Bub): I would define the “soul of the parish” as those people (members), priests, and church employees who perform the various parish duties that makes the parish function. It could also be members that have done something significant in the past, such as leave an endowment, Vestry warden who did something outstanding, or other church members that are leaders. I think these people all are the heart of the parish, as well as the soul.

(Lindy): “Soul of the parish”—the embodiment of the spiritual gifts which are God-given to each parishioner interwoven with the spiritual and biblical values modeled and taught by Jesus.

(Skippy): I believe this means we (the Vestry) are responsible for ensuring that everyone in the parish receives the opportunity to grow in personal faith through worship, Bible study, and fellowship. I also believe it includes the sharing of our faith beyond ourselves....the Parish into the community. In the same way, the Vestry should enable other parishioners to see themselves as important to the life of (this parish)—you don't have to be on Vestry to be a leader. It's easy to keep the same people in the same role “forever” so Vestry should be aware of “balancing” engagement of parishioners in ways that support the parish but doesn't overburden anyone while broadening their vision of the work of parish leaders.

(Lynn): I believe that the soul of the parish is similar to the mission, spiritual beliefs, and values of the congregation. As Vestry members, we are trustees of the mission/beliefs/values of the congregation in that we should be acting in best faith to make decisions that align with the “soul” of the parish.

(Ralph): To me the soul of anything is the fundamental essence of that thing. It deals with the organic makeup of a thing, but it does not have metrics that would allow for measure.

(Roberta): I think that being the trustee of the church is to inspire others to spread the word of God. It is also to set an example of God's love in giving and caring for others. Not only for people of our religion or our color or our sexuality or from what part of town we are from. We all put our pants on the same way.

The words from Vestry that I find pertinent to this study are: (1) Vestry are trustees of the spiritual welfare of parishioners; (2) people who do something or leave financial gifts are the heart of the parish; (3) Vestry is the embodiment of the spiritual gifts; (4) everyone in the parish receives the opportunity to grow in personal faith through worship, Bible study, and fellowship; (5) mission, spiritual beliefs, and values of the congregation are important to the Soul of the Parish; (6) the soul is a fundamental essence; (7) to be an example of God's love in giving and caring for others.

My definition of the “Soul of the Parish” is:

the essence of who we are as a people of God (a people who believe in a God who is spirit, human, beyond understanding, yet personal, the essence of our breath and existence, who created each one of us out of love to be in love with one another and creation). As a people of God, we worship and pray together and separately regularly, we meet together to make decisions on behalf of each particular parish, we learn more about our faith journeys by reading God’s Word, the Bible, and deepen our relationship with God and one another through reading and responding to God and to one another. These ideas enable us to live, worship, pray, lead in this essence of Love we call God.

The responses delve into the essence of who we are, what we think and believe, and encourage us to act on those beliefs and understandings. The responses tell me the people I pray with and lead are engaged in this process of learning more about themselves and the parish, opening to God’s love through prayer, worship, and fellowship. I am beginning to see enthusiasm among Vestry members. What I garner from this coding of direct responses is that people want to work together in the presence of a holy God for the benefit of the gathered community. I am humbled by the definitions of the soul of the parish, as they are overwhelmingly positive, on the mark, and helpful for the spiritual growth of the leaders.

Interview Question #6: How do you envision yourself called to this service as either Moses or Paul were called? Do you identify with one more than the other? Tell me about this.

CALLED AS MOSES OR PAUL

<i>Moses</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Paul</i>
Burning bush	Faithful, not successful	Clarifies Jesus’ life, death, resurrection
Faith opportunities	I like to help	Knew Scripture, Torah
Opportunity appears	My bulb isn’t too bright	Total conversion
Human failings	I’m not a speaker	House church OK
Blinding light (but not Moses)	Parish nursing	Asked to serve on Vestry like being knocked off horse

Open eyes, look purposefully to see what I would miss	Willing to serve	Very active and very pushy
Moses was touchy feely guy; supportive	Maybe both	Kick your rear end
Deliberate, thoughtful	Called by my actions	Bright lights would have had an effect on me
I know the story better	Supportive, encouragement	Not like Paul
	Too dramatic (for me to be either one)	
	An awakening	
	Personal duty	
	Pay attention to little things	
	I wonder what I would do	

This seemed to be a difficult question to respond to because there may be a lack of Biblical understanding, or an intimidation by such large characters from the Bible. I wonder if the call to Vestry is not as “important” as the call of these Biblical figures? Someone felt called to be on Vestry as a duty, because she said “yes” to participate in a number of various committees and events at church but did not see leadership/Vestry as a “calling” but based on abilities, knowledge, and trust.

There is a deeper reason to be on Vestry, I realize, that has not been taught or thought about. As a trustee, Scott suggests leaders ask board members for their hopes and outcomes.⁴⁸ Are there common hopes, or divergent outcomes? What will move the church into a place of wholeness and holiness? Questions to ponder together include an invitation to share inner feelings (how does that feel for you?) and being unafraid to unmask our hidden selves. The hopes may be widely divergent, or uncomfortable to

⁴⁸ Scott, *Caring and Capable Boards*, 176-177.

share. The outcomes are different than what I anticipated, and I see this as a gift. This is an on-going goal for me.

We are similar to, and different from, the communities of Paul and Moses. The leadership brings a variety of gifts, similar to the leaders who surrounded and supported Moses and Paul. The priest stands in the shoes of these leaders in a particular place and time. This question may have been difficult to answer due to the differences in the call to serve a small parish as opposed to serving in a leadership role as large as Moses and Paul.

Interview Question #8: Has anything changed in your prayer life?

CHANGE IN PRAYER LIFE

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Maybe</i>	<i>Other</i>
Completed Lay Eucharistic training	It should, but it hasn't	I'd like to read the Bible more because I've never read it	Due to illness, cannot do more
I've been saying (to others) I'll pray for you a lot more.	I don't think so. My spouse prays for both of us.		I'd like to see more Bible study (2)
More intentional prayer	I don't think so. I'd like to put more effort into it.		I'm reading the Bible more
I pray more for the parish			I like the Bible study classes we have; I want to learn more
			During Lent, I read all of Paul's letters as a discipline

If prayer is the basis for our religious development, and the Bible is the foundation for our religious beliefs, there is a disconnect between prayer, Bible learning, religion. It's as if it is enough to attend worship, donate to the church, and wipe one's hands when leaving the building. Understanding and learning where our beliefs come from, discussing with one another what Scripture means, and living into the power of

Jesus' love, are not part of the vocabulary. If trusteeship is based on Biblical foundations, and I believe it is, something is missing—knowing God's word, praying God's word, engaging and leaning into God's words are almost non-existent. The souls of the leaders of these parishes need some Biblical pumping up! There was no definition made of what I meant by prayer, and no one asked. I am also not sure why having Bible study classes relates to prayer; I surmise reading the Bible equates to prayer in some way. Some were quite honest and admitted they do not pray more. This can become the basis for a longer conversation about what is prayer, how often could/should one pray, what is the intent of prayer, and why do we pray in addition to attending worship?

Interview Question #9: Have you seen any changes in Bible study or prayer life, or attendance at Vestry or worship?

ATTEND WORSHIP/MEETINGS

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Other</i>
It's harder for me to attend (due to illness)	I try to attend as much as I can	I jump up and help others
	I don't think so	I'm putting it on the front burner
	I attend as often as I'm able to	I have to think about it more
	I'm more conscious of making sure I get there. If the trustees faces aren't seen at church then it's difficult (for others to attend)	I feel guilty when I don't come to church
	No	I have more anxiety if I don't attend

Most Vestry members attend most worship at St. Peter's, not at Epiphany. When people go away, they may or may not attend another church; if ill, it is best to stay home. This attendance correlates with the concept that attending worship and Vestry meetings is

important, even if attendance is irregular. How can my leadership offer support for Bible study and daily prayer? I have offered links to websites from time to time about this, and the group discussion about prayer was helpful. I believe there are deeper levels to move to in prayer and Bible reading.

Interview Question #10: Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about being a Trustee of the Soul of the Parish?

TRUSTEE OF THE SOUL OF THE PARISH

<i>Spiritual</i>	<i>Concept</i>	<i>Do</i>
God moment important	More responsibility than turning on the lights	Discussion about the meal (Eucharist)
I see hope (to rebuild parish)	It's an important concept	Get more people involved
Awesome responsibility	Potential to grow	Things we can do for the community
Need more time to contemplate soul of the parish	Find the right way (to grow)	Build up the church
I feel guilty, like I'm not contributing enough	Religion hasn't been savior of the world; many killed over religion	Brainstorm about what we could be doing
Looking for guidance through parishioners and vestry	Not about Bible study	Use computer age more
How to be a Trustee of the Soul of the Parish	Teens in church are connected	Talk to people about issues
Spiritual opportunity	I see potential	I realize it's more time
Active role, interactive role and responsibility	Easy to get burned out	I need to be introduced to it more
Thinking where parish can go; potential	Broadens understanding of what church is	Working together towards something
(you) have to come and participate		It's a relationship
More than a meeting		Engage with other Christians

The responses had a spiritual component which means an awareness of something beyond or something missing. People who responded conceptually means they were

thinking of ideas of what it means to hold souls in trust. The third-column responses tell of something that they feel needs to be done, should be done, or something to face that might cause people to change. The “Do” column also represents hope and commitment.

The Spiritual Commitment tells me that each Vestry member felt this was an exercise worth their time and offered valuable insight to me that they are thinking what it means to be a Trustee of the Soul of the Parish. I see willingness to engage, learn, grow, seek holiness. The concept of Trustee of the Soul responses tells me there may still be an “out there” idea that has not fully set into the call as a trustee. There are opportunities to deepen and broaden this concept into an acceptance and lived experience by continuing to talk, pray, and live into God’s word by serving the people who offer their souls and livelihood and prayers to God in each place.

The responses tell me the trustees want to get into the “doing” aspect of life together. They want to engage others, strengthen and improve relationships, invite others into prayer, as well as think, discuss, plan, and do, for and with others to broaden membership and engagement with the community, deepen relationships with one another through activities. As we continue to learn and grow into trustees, I see this as exciting, opening many opportunities through the grace of God, already present in the hearts and souls of each Vestry member.

The responses also help me to see that the role of Trustee of the Soul of the Parish asks Vestry to consider their own ability to change—to change from being “on” Vestry to BEING Vestry. In other words, it is important for the leadership to realize that serving in this way brings with it the responsibility of being involved in the community. People

want to get involved; they look for the potential their parish offers. They understand the spiritual need for God, and for learning about God by reading the Bible.

What people say and do is different. I tracked attendance at worship since the retreat: St. Peter's Vestry, four out of five members have been consistent in attending worship and meetings; one has had some medical issues. At Epiphany, every member attended the first Saturday or Sunday after the retreat. I thought: wow, this really worked. But it did not continue. One Vestry member went overseas for four to five weeks, another resigned, another has had serious medical issues. A chart of attendance is given in Appendix 8.

The question, "How do you feel about being the Trustee of the Soul of the Parish?" was asked at the end of the next Vestry meeting following the interviews. The voiced experiences from Epiphany include: the director of a local nursing home encourages and models for himself and his staff to write notes of thanks and encouragement to co-workers; three elders from the congregation remembered that "we used to" do many social activities in the parish; the treasurer expressed that he had "no idea" that Vestry was such an in-depth calling; two people did not add to the conversation.

The feelings offered include thankfulness, fond remembrances, trepidation. The model "this is what I do to encourage and thank others" tells me this person engages in relationships and offers gratitude. The fondness people carry for this parish is ever present; this too is based on relationships. The calling to serve on Vestry can be intimidating and overwhelming in some ways. It can be made clearer with preparation, understanding what people are signing up for, and listening to other peoples' joy or ill-

ease, without judgment, about this role. The Vestry lets people know this is a safe place to express oneself.

St. Peter's answers were different. As leaders in the parish, the Vestry said: people "watch us" to see what they need to do; we need to be active and show the members: "I'm here and serving and I represent the soul of the parish." Another response was: "We meet the needs of the congregation in the best way it will work." Others felt humbled, and open to guidance. One person said: "I feel I want to convey everybody is welcome and not shoved away. We reach out to everybody." St. Peter's responses look beyond the big window and look within for ways to seek understanding and to help others.

I believe being the Trustee of the Soul of the Parish needs an intentional commitment to prayer, worship, attendance at meetings, and engagement with the community to deepen love of God, neighbor, and one another. I found collaboration when writing the Covenant, as people expressed learning and interconnectedness with their leadership through a Biblical lens. One person said, "maybe this is too hard." I agree; it is hard. It is hard to balance life, death, hopes, ideas, requirements, and vacations into the daily life of a parish, and in each individual life. It is hard to think of God first with prayer and Bible study, it is hard not to respond to the needs of every person, it is hard to see God at work when the gutters are falling down. As Trustees of the Soul of the Parish, what comes first: God or gutters?

The concept of being the Soul of the Parish was described during the interviews as: "love of God and one another," "love of parish and activities," "love of worship at (this particular) parish," "seeing ourselves as servants of God, one another, and the

community.” I see this lived in the way people offer to pray and help one another. This sense of love is prevalent at both parishes. I feel this during worship, during meetings, during conversations; perhaps I am looking for this as others are, with the added concept of “the soul.” If Trustee of the Soul means an intentional commitment to prayer, worship, attending meetings, and engagement with the community and the Bible, perhaps leaders are already living this soul, and a deeper engagement with Scripture is needed to see how the stories of God’s love connects us.

A short Bible study of the upcoming psalm for Sunday was introduced in May 2019. It is a disappointment that Bible study for Vestry has not taken hold. Each person was asked to read the Psalm, included in the invitation to the Zoom meeting, and make one statement about it, without leaving the comfort of one’s home.⁴⁹ There was a lack of attendance at the Zoom meetings, which were scheduled for the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month. I asked at St. Peter’s Vestry meeting (June 15, 2019) if a different time or place would work better. The responses included: “I don’t drive well at night”; “you didn’t ask us what day and time would work.” Epiphany’s response to the Zoom time was one to two people attended regularly and the rest did not. After six to seven attempts, this was discontinued.

Both parishes wrote ideas for their Covenant Agreement and this is being refined as needed, at individual Vestry meetings. The Vestry meetings for May, June, and July are framed with questions about the retreat, the Covenant of Agreement, and engagement with the parish. Epiphany had some changes at the May meeting and another look at the Covenant will take place at the June meeting. I still take attendance at worship and

⁴⁹ Zoom for video, teleconference, and phones. First accessed June, 2019, <https://zoom.us/>.

meetings. The Covenant of Agreement has resulted in two people retiring from Epiphany Vestry due to the stress of the commitment to attend worship and meetings. St. Peter's refined the agreement at the meeting in June and will consider further changes if needed in July.

Chapter IV. Conclusions

The retreat had some successes and some needs for improvement. One success was that Vestry at Epiphany attended worship for three weeks in a row, either at the 5:00 p.m. Saturday or the 11:00 a.m. Sunday service. My first thought was, wow, that really worked! But that has changed. Attendance at the April Vestry meeting was ten out of eleven; one person was travelling. May attendance: six out of eleven. The cohort will change to ten, because one person resigned from Vestry. At the June meeting, the attendance was six out of ten. There have not been issues with attendance at St. Peter's for worship or Vestry meetings. St. Peter's has not had an attendance issue with Vestry at worship. Vestry members attend almost every week, and they let me know what is happening if they do not attend worship. The May Vestry meeting had one person missing; June, all were present. July was canceled. August had four out of five in attendance.

Success of Retreat in Light of Biblical and Social Science Literature

Brown would see this as a first step in that the recognition and awareness of expectations is in the open. There needs to be some conversations about re-framing outside influences that take people away from worship and meetings, and that starts with me re-framing my expectations that "of course, all leaders want to attend all meetings and worship and events," to thankfulness that the leaders are willing to consider this call to Vestry in a new light, as Trustees of the Soul of the Parish. It is a gift to have another year with each parish to continue to develop the concept of trusteeship and define what that means in each parish. It is much more than attendance at meetings and worship.

From the balcony, a success is that I see “wheels” turning in the brains of those who meet, I see people praying for and uplifting one another, I see the dance of life with some on the sidelines, some dancing merrily, some catching their breath, some happy, some not. The Vestry/trustees look different from up here. They are engaged as they are able, they are eager to continue to learn, and they hold one another, and each parish, in trust that the presence of God is with each of us. If I was on the floor, I would not see this joy. When I return to the floor, the dance will go on, with some leaving early, some arriving late, some engaged or watching. It is well. The new dance steps of trusteeship may feel uncomfortable at first, but all seem to be willing to try.

This intervention is a responsibility for the future of both parishes. When leadership is held tightly, the leadership can become closed and ineffective. In the past, people would be on Vestry for years and decades. The diocesan revised bylaws prevent this as well as provide for regular turnover, fresh ideas, which means constant training to help new members feel part of the team and to consider being a Trustee of the Soul of the Parish. As an adaptive issue, this concept of being Trustees of the Soul of the Parish is on-going. I ask Vestry to make a technical change by showing up for worship and meetings. I am hopeful that each church can successfully state and live into “this is the way we work together as people who hold the soul of the parish,” then whatever priest comes next will have a committed group who are eager to work together under the parameters the Vestry has set. If what happens after this intervention can be re-enforced for several years, it will feel natural for the Vestry to see the importance of their work: caring for the souls and sustenance of each parish in the light of God’s love.

When the church leaders see themselves as soul-holders rather than gatekeepers, I expect there will be a stronger commitment to service, worship attendance, prayer life, Bible reading, and an openness to God's Spirit to engage in the care of the parish. This is different thinking at one parish because I see some Vestry members who do not attend church regularly; one rarely attends. I hear over and over we need to do something to grow the church, and I hear that people don't read the Bible or pray regularly; half of the current Vestry members, and most committee members are recycled, in a tightly held pattern. There is a disconnect between wishing and praying, trusting in God's presence to carry us to a different level of commitment and understanding, considering death as part of a life cycle, and not letting go of "my" committee/leadership.

Humans have thrived on this planet for thousands of years by meeting challenges and finding ways to live through change. Humans live with natural disasters as well as people-made disasters. We have learned from past mistakes and successes by experimenting, diversifying, losing sometimes, over hundreds of years. In a world that is rapidly changing environmentally, culturally, religiously, politically, it is important for leadership to have the tools to adapt with confidence. Wheatley writes that leadership is a behavior, not a role. The behavior of leaders includes acceptance, inquisitiveness, openness, wonder. We need to look at what will be, what can be, and allow and encourage ourselves as leaders to adapt to changing circumstances with welcome instead of fear of something new.

Keohane sees power as "defining or clarifying goals" to bring together the energy (I call this the Holy Spirit) of the group as we pursue the goals.⁵⁰ Some needs at both

⁵⁰ Keohane, *Thinking about Leadership*, 195.

parishes include seeking members, being part of the community by presence as parishioners at community events, by reaching out to the unlovable and unloved. This is the work Jesus calls us to as Christians, and the leadership needs to demonstrate compassion based on Biblical beliefs, Baptismal promises, love of all God's people. The goal as Trustees of the Soul of the Parish includes prayer, Bible study, worship, and attendance. Keohane also writes that leaders are "routinely misunderstood."⁵¹ All I can add is "yes," as I search myself for ways to improve.

Success of Retreat to Retrain and Retain Vestry Members

The mission of each parish is the Great Commission: "Go, make disciples" (Matt. 28:18-20), but each parish has its own culture, needs, hopes, and dreams. Both parishes want to grow but are not engaged in the hard work of inviting someone, growing spiritually, and being in the community. The pool of leadership people is not large. There are complaints, voiced as disappointment, that more people don't attend church. Leadership folks are disappointed that there has not been immediate growth without realizing "newcomers" are people who like to be invited.⁵² If the value is more people in the pews without putting value on belief in the transforming power of God's love in Jesus Christ, then the parish is not living into the behavior of restored and renewed people. Leadership needs to address this as a group, which is difficult to do if leadership is not willing to attend worship, attend meetings, and read the Bible.

⁵¹ Keohane, *Thinking About Leadership*, 203.

⁵² Jim Griffith, "How to Reach New People," Griffith Coaching Network, first accessed January 15, 2019, <http://www.griffithcoaching.com/workshops/how-to-reach-new-people/>.

People are also over-committed to their children's and grandchildren's activities, or their own work schedules, preventing their attendance not only at worship services, but also at meetings, particularly at Epiphany. How can a newcomer be expected to behave in a new community when much of the community is elsewhere, membership has no obligations, and persons in leadership positions do not take this obligation seriously? For example, at Church of the Epiphany, two people new to the parish showed up for adult Bible study listed on the calendar, but the leader was not present.

A covenant agreement is not all there is to leadership. It is one idea of holding the Vestry members accountable for attendance, planning, meetings, worship, and what happens with this accountability to one another, to the parish, and to God. Neal Michell writes, "The aim of transformational leadership, is to influence major change in the organization and build commitment for the long haul. Greater commitment among followers is fostered by means of commitment to shared values."⁵³

Leadership also needs vision and prayer. Each parish has a vision statement that was developed before my time. I have asked how each one lives into their vision statement.⁵⁴ St. Peter's offered discussions and dialog with people from other faiths and current events as a means of opening up the parish to different points of view. St. Peter's also held vigils for people killed in mass shootings. With two parishes, these events have changed to healing services, game night once a month (the public is invited), and learning

⁵³ Neal O. Michell, *How To Hit the Ground Running: A Quick-Start Guide For Congregations with New Leadership* (New York, NY: Church Publishing, 2005), Kindle Edition LOC 830.

⁵⁴ St. Peter's vision statement: Sharing God's Unending Love in the Endless Mountains. Church of the Epiphany vision statement: To serve God by serving our neighbors in the community and the world.

how to be open to our Latino neighbors. Coffee-hour at St. Peter's offers lay-led discussion of the readings of the day.

Church of the Epiphany had a few parish events when I started there, such as a Welcome Back Breakfast on the second Sunday in September, cookie making at Advent, and the youth meeting for coffee Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m. We now have First Saturday night potluck supper after the 5:00 p.m. service, and Third Sunday brunch after the morning service. The first couple of times these were well attended; that has fallen off to a happy dozen. There are building projects and cleaning out going on, and events are being planned for the fall. Leadership is expected to attend these events. Only three to five Vestry members regularly attend events outside of worship.

Vision and prayer will bring us deeper into God's vision to love our neighbor. People are asked at the end of the service to talk to a neighbor for a minute or so, called a "God Moment." An example of a "God moment" question is: how did you serve God this week in your neighbor?⁵⁵ As a discussion question at the beginning of a Vestry meeting, people could talk one-on-one and get to know one another more. Neal Michell offers examples of questions throughout his book *Beyond Business as Usual* to use at Vestry meetings to bring a larger vision for Vestry to attend to, according to Michell, as well as the adaptive questions of Heifitz, Brown, Wheatley.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ The "God Moment" is a time at the end of worship where I ask people to discuss, in one minute each, a simple question with a person they didn't come with. Examples: how can I pray for you this week, where did you see God in the past week, how often do you forgive?

⁵⁶ Neal Michell, *Beyond Business as Usual* (New York, NY: Church Publishing, 2007).

An adaptive vision correlates values and behaviors. The vision needs to ask: what are we doing and why, is this working, why or why not. The vision is based on what one sees, and what one hopes to see. The vision may indicate openness, but the actions may indicate only the same people can do these things in this parish. I see this in terms of who attends diocesan convention, who is on committees (some of the same people since I attended years ago), who has led the youth group for almost forty years at one parish. At the other parish, I see hugs, invitations to join us for coffee, games, Bible study, prayer, healing, food give away, and an openness to the community.

Learning leadership from a business model is helpful as a student of, and person in, leadership. Reflection and feedback are necessary to learn how to overcome these defenses. This is what Moses, Paul, and Jesus spoke of: the governing values of separation, oppression, and fear needed to be wiped out and replaced with values of openness, love, and confidence. The Pharisees come to mind as an example of leaders who refused to look at the values that governed their actions. Ideas of how a small, elderly congregation deals with change could be a “vexing problem” that needs to be addressed.⁵⁷ With open, honest discussion of the values, people could see that the values of faith and tradition are not going away, but need to be addressed in a contemporary manner for growth (internal and external) to occur. If the players have no new skills and the organization has no new policies to reward using the new skills, it is possible that feelings of disappointment and helplessness will develop, eventually reactivating the feelings of cynicism reminiscent of the “good old days.”

⁵⁷ Argyis, *Organizational Defenses*, 95.

How might trusteeship help us to open our eyes, hearts, and ears to the changes before us at each parish? “We start over by returning to our identity the source of self-organization, reclaiming what we still believe in, what description gives meaning to who we want to be.”⁵⁸ Wheatley invites leaders to question how their organization came into being, why, and how does the organization bring the identity of the founders into the current leadership. By looking at the current situation of personal and corporate leadership unfolding, one can see how the system has evolved to be more interactive with the environment. Wheatley discusses systems of living things as having the capability to adapt to changing environments. These parishes can adapt. They need an invitation into the future. They need to articulate the future they want to live into as Trustees of the Soul of the Parish.

Katherine Scott defines trusteeship this way:

Effective trusteeship blends caring and competence, connects altruism and authority, and evolves from the generous act of being held in trust—the experience of being given to. Being held in trust is a profoundly personal experience that shapes individual and organizational character and behavior.⁵⁹

This makes me wonder if I am giving enough to the Vestry, in terms of who I am, how I got here, how I cling to Jesus and read the Bible. How do I let them know I care about each one deeply? How do I bring out their leadership qualities and love them for who each one is, as Jesus did with his disciples? A daring question for Vestry to consider would be: how does it feel for you to know God trusts you? I am working on these questions and opportunities.

⁵⁸ Wheatley, *Who Do We Choose to Be?* 228.

⁵⁹ Scott, *Caring and Capable Boards*, 22.

Scott offers a holistic sense that who I am and what I do are one and the same. For a Vestry person, if one is committed to serving on Vestry, it means people come to the meetings with intentionality to serve Christ in this parish, it means we are all totally committed to all aspects of life together with fellow worshipers, and we serve the parish by being involved in multiple activities in the parish and in the community, reflecting the esteem held for one another in this place. I anticipate that each Vestry covenant will reflect the differences in current and future strengths and weaknesses while providing solid oars to move the boat in choppy and dark, or calm and starry, seas.

Scott views leadership as moving from technical tasks of what needs to be attended to daily, to be able to lead through “ambiguity and complexity” in order to implement necessary, and sometimes, radical changes [in the parish].⁶⁰ One of Scott’s final points in defining trusteeship is for a board, or Vestry, to “bridge divisions so that growing human needs can be met.”⁶¹ This is what drew me to believe that trusteeship replaces membership. Vestry holds the souls of the parish—past, present, future—in their hearts and hands.

What is needed, Scott stresses, is a “discipline of depth education and self-evaluation” as Vestry members hold one another, the congregation, and community, as well as the diocese and larger communion, in trust and prayer.⁶² Being a trustee recognizes the financial and legal responsibilities of the parish, and seeks ways for members to look at themselves exercising trusteeship in both easy and difficult situations.

⁶⁰ Scott, *Caring and Capable Boards*, 11.

⁶¹ Scott, *Caring and Capable Boards*, 11.

⁶² Scott, *Caring and Capable Boards*, 145.

Questions, such as how did you prepare for today's meeting, what are priorities you have heard from the needs of the community, and what will make our meeting effective today, may be ways to begin a Vestry meeting because these questions expect that preparation work has been done, people have sought and listened to the ideas of others, and what we do is important to the greater life of the community.

Additionally, this scenario needs the intentional recognition of the Spirit to drive a Vestry to take chances as Moses did when he formed a new community, risked being wrong, found adaptive ways to live in the desert for forty years, groomed new leaders, and called folks who had gifts needed to keep the movement going. What is missing is the blinding light of God's mercy leading each parish into loving relationships, time to contemplate what this means to each group, and the opportunity to grow into who God is forming us to be. By taking time to listen deeply to the Spirit of God in their hearts, as well as remembering how the Spirit guides decisions, using the ideas of Kathryn Scott's PLANT (Preparing Leaders and Nurturing Trustees) system, Vestry will reconsider their role from quick fix to long-term sustainability.⁶³ God, the supreme PLANTer, has gifted us with capabilities and power to care for the entities we hold in trust for future generations.

Wheatley looks at science to see possibilities for the future beginning with a query about the beginning of life as cells formed by making a membrane to contain themselves as well as separate themselves from other cells. In order to do this, cells had to find the right membrane: too rigid and the cell would die because it could not receive nutrients, too soft and it would become mush. The identity of each cell became the stuff

⁶³ Scott, *Caring and Capable Boards*, 67.

of life as each cell is the “basis of how we define ourselves.”⁶⁴ Wheatley also writes that a group needs a focused identity, not command or control. As the Episcopal arm of the Jesus Movement, we are called to stand up against the dominant culture. The dominant culture requires folks to follow the rules, work hard in a high-paying position, and protect oneself. Church tells us to gather weekly for renewal through worship, to feed others, to welcome all, to live in God’s joy. We have much to learn from the early church; perhaps our boundaries are too rigid. We need to live with creativity, generosity, and kindness.⁶⁵

People in dire circumstances need to hear from their leaders, and ask how do we use ethics to “bind [us] together in trustworthy relationships” for the future of each organization.⁶⁶ Wheatley wonders if life on this planet will be resilient into the next ten to fifty years. She also predicts new cultures, and a new world will happen in approximately one hundred years due to significant change and loss of cultures, languages, ancient knowledge. She writes that in one hundred years the 5,000 to 6,000 languages being spoken around the world will become “just hundreds.”⁶⁷ Terrorism will increase, suicide will continue to climb, and we will enter a “post-truth era.”⁶⁸ How will our grandchildren in The Episcopal Church continue current worship, prayer, traditions, sacraments? This question and Wheatley’s questions are in the background of this paper, as I work with the current needs with thoughts to the future.

How does one instill confidence in the current Vestries to grow, change, be more outward thinking, to be Trustees of the Soul of the Parish? I wonder about enough, the

⁶⁴ Wheatley, *Who Do We Choose to Be*, 66.

⁶⁵ Wheatley, *Who Do We Choose to Be*, 154.

⁶⁶ Wheatley, *Who Do We Choose to Be*, 82.

⁶⁷ Wheatley, *Who Do We Choose to Be*, 96-97.

⁶⁸ Wheatley, *Who Do We Choose to Be*, 105-106.

greater good, and what is the Promised Land we need today. Moses led trusting in a great and powerful God; I lead with trust in a merciful, loving God who is still present to carry people to a place of refreshment, rest, peace. Are there now enough people in the pews, enough people to become trustees, and has the greater good been established, and what is the abundance we thrive on?

It takes confidence and vulnerability to learn how to lead in these times, to dare greatly, as Brené Brown writes in her book *Daring Greatly*. Being vulnerable can open up new pathways to leadership that are needed today in a divided world. She quotes Seth Goodin, “If you’re not uncomfortable in your work as a leader, it’s almost certain you’re not reaching your potential as a leader.”⁶⁹ Some of the discomforts include standing up in front of strangers, offering an idea that might fail, challenging the status quo, resisting.⁷⁰ All of these activities leave us feeling vulnerable. Do we dare to ask our parishioners what they expect the leaders to do? From her research, Brown has written a Manifesto for Leadership⁷¹ that includes leaders’ needs to show up, learn, inspire us to dare, connect, give us a purpose, have open conversations with us. Leaders who have moved from controlling to engaging, which opens leaders’ vulnerabilities, have a greater sense of success, take greater risks, and encourage everyone to use their skills, knowledge, and abilities to grow into the dream we are meant to be.

Moses did this in stages, and over forty years, always holding the Promised Land in the forefront of the trials and tribulations the people encountered. Paul jumped into his role after a significant vision. This vision turned his life upside down, and he had to

⁶⁹ Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 211.

⁷⁰ Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 211.

⁷¹ Brené Brown, Information on “Daring Greatly” first accessed January 15, 2019, www.brenebrown.com.

completely change his thoughts about Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 9:1-11). Paul used his leadership skills in new ways to open new doors, new ways of understanding God and our relationship with Jesus and one another. His considerable writings leave us with ways to learn how to follow God, take up the mantle of leadership, and grow community.

This retreat improved attendance at worship for two to three weeks following the retreat at Epiphany. By the fourth week, attendance at worship returned to the previous status before the retreat, and the same people are not seen regularly. At St. Peter's, attendance at worship has remained at four out of five usually present, but not the same folks are away the same week. A chart showing attendance is found in Appendix 8.

In past years at Epiphany, there were university professors who regularly offered Adult Forums between the early service and the later service. Conveniently, this was during Sunday school for children. These professors left the parish, Adult Forum was then led by the priest, and different priests had different ideas. This time between early and late service is no longer used due to the changes in worship times. However, I encouraged a study time for adults at 9:15 a.m., again lay led, and the person who was going to do this for a month did not show up. Newcomers, who were looking forward to Adult study, were disappointed there were no leaders, but they kept coming back and have become integral members. A four-week Lenten study, with soup supper, was offered at Epiphany and three people showed up, but not the same three people each week. At St. Peter's, five to six people engaged in a similar Lenten study, mostly the same folks each week. I am grateful for those who gather. The need to learn is present and needs to be re-engaged. Vestry will be helpful in looking into this. I also need to

report that the intended written surveys did not materialize as anticipated and are therefore not included in the outcomes.

Chapter V. What I Learned, What the Future Holds

I have lived for the past many months with the idea that trusteeship is beneficial to the growth and development of Vestry members to care for the soul of the parish. I realize one retreat is barely the beginning of this journey. The idea that transformed my thinking came from Scott:

The belief that the actions of trustees...can influence and even transform society must grow and contribute to reshaping common approaches to board [Vestry] education...[so that] a new generation of governance leaders will have the capacity to hold individuals, organizations, and communities in trust.⁷²

This has been my passion, and I realize it is just beginning. I have lived with the idea that trusteeship will improve attendance at Vestry meetings, worship, and Bible study because it will reshape the commitment of attendance, Bible study, and engagement of the people called to serve on Vestry.

New Vestry as Trustees of the Soul of the Parish

Wheatley writes of how systems in nature take generations to change and adapt to changing circumstances. Order is not the same as control. She writes that order means we are open to trust, surrender, togetherness, where the “issue is not control, but dynamic connectedness.”⁷³ My leadership is changing and adapting. Once, I sought control—here is the “program”; when we follow these steps, we will be a well-functioning, well-informed team that has the best interests of the parish in our top-of-mind awareness. Now

⁷² Scott, *Caring and Capable Boards*, 151.

⁷³ Wheatley, *Leadership*, 25.

I seek openness to disorder and to the dynamic connectedness of caring for God, one another, the parish, and the community, together.

Trusteeship offers me the encouragement to ask Vestry to “visualize what can be.”⁷⁴ As we honor the past, and participate in the present, we also need to consider the future of each parish. Financially, they are years apart. Engagement with the community is quite different. The futures will be different also. But, as Trustees of the Soul of the Parish, we are obligated to look at best/worst-case scenarios, in prayer and discussion, to consider what could be, to realize the future will be different from the past and present. Attendance will continue to be erratic, giving will continue to change; the ideas and the love will hold firm through trust in Jesus/God/Spirit.

Trusteeship as laid out by Scott seemed like a way to make a technical fix work for needed adaptive changes. At Epiphany, these changes included attending worship and meetings; at St. Peter’s, this was not an issue. By laying out the idea and use of a Covenant Agreement written specifically by the leaders, based on a Biblical foundation of how we work and pray together, and offering questions to ponder about the past, present, and future, I learned that the pondering brings learning, attention, realization that this might, or might not be, “my time” to serve on Vestry.

My Epiphany

A significant conversation took place at the June 2019 Vestry meeting at Epiphany. I asked Vestry about folks who only attend when it is their “turn” to do something, and I wondered about writing a letter explaining that participation is needed

⁷⁴ Scott, *Caring and Capable Boards*, 131.

more often. Several folks supported explaining the expectations. After a silence, one person suggested being thankful that they participate. In this blinding flash of insight (Moses and Paul come to mind), my attitude changed. By offering thanksgiving to all who serve, whenever they serve, turned me around; an immense stone rolled off my heart. I plan to take the time to write thank-you notes to each Vestry member or send emails to thank each one for a particular idea or helpful insight. Offering myself as a standard-bearer of thanksgiving is an attitude and commitment for me to consider and do! I realized that the more someone tells me thank you for something, the more I want to do it. I hope to become more aware of gratitude and become a leader who searches for ways to express the wonder of thankfulness.

My insight from this conversation is that I need to be more adaptive. Brené Brown writes about leadership in *Dare to Lead* as engaging in opportunities to learn about what people think and why. She writes:

“Leaders must either invest a reasonable amount of time attending to fears and feelings, or squander an unreasonable amount of time trying to manage ineffective and unproductive behavior.” Well, leader, heal thyself. We also have to invest time attending to our own fears, feelings, and history or we’ll find ourselves managing our own unproductive behaviors. As daring leaders, we have to stay curious about our own blind spots and how to pull those issues into view, and we need to commit to helping the people we serve find their blind spots in a way that’s safe and supportive. Like all of us, most of the daring, transformational leaders I’ve worked with have overcome hurtful experiences—from childhood illness and painful family histories to violence and trauma.⁷⁵

This quote reminds me that the past is part of me, blind spots happen, and deep commitment to God, to these groups, will be messy, sometimes painful, sometimes unhealthy, usually filled with grace and often laughter. All of who I am is similar to all of

⁷⁵ Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead* (New York, NY: Random House, 2018). LOC 113, Kindle edition.

the current Vestry members, with their pasts, presents, and ideals rolled into this group we now call trustees. For me to hold their souls in trust is daunting, fulfilling, in need of adaptability, sometimes hurtful. For me, and us, to remember that we are held in trust by the God who loves us helps us/me remember to be intentional, patient, gentle with the past, and hopeful for the future. Brown writes that leaders take responsibility for finding “potential in people and processes, and who has the courage to develop that potential.”⁷⁶ The potential of adaptation in the midst of storms, chaos, change, is within. I will continue to learn, seek, grow, adapt, try and try again. This brings me great joy.

Would I Be Moses or Paul?

I would consider myself more like Paul—I prefer to write than talk. I don’t like to admit to being lost (as in wandering), and burying people I love is hard (as is living with the same people for many generations). Paul had daring to learn to be someone new, to see himself as chosen by Christ to tell the Good News of life fully in the presence of God. Paul modeled this, critiqued the home churches he worked with, and exhorted them to be strong. By learning about and living into being God’s people, chosen as trustees of each parish, I offer questions, insight, ideas, and joy about accomplishments, learnings, changes. I also accept the ideas and insight of others in light of Trusteeship of the Soul of the Parish, and I am willing to change my mind.

Paul was part of something old seen in a new way. Paul spilled over this thanksgiving to God for all the joy and pain of discipleship he took on and endured. My hope and teaching and prayers are for the leadership at Epiphany and St. Peter’s to

⁷⁶ Brown, *Dare to Lead*, LOC 113, Kindle edition.

embrace a new way to see themselves as leaders, chosen and called. Both parishes continue to know one another better and re-form relationships into vibrant, caring folks. Both parishes reach out to serve others: St. Peter's by offering space, helping folks in the community as we are able, and a group of women who gather and intentionally pray for others. Parish nursing programs will become a reality. The International Order of St. Luke the Physician is re-forming also to offer more healing services at St. Peter's and at other places in the community.

Epiphany now has multiple projects going on. The kitchen is going to be renovated beginning in mid-July. The sacristy and downstairs will be painted in July. The annual rummage sale is coming up. A project that involves people painting small chairs to auction for a local, well-known mission for sexually abused children is in process. Ideas are being formulated to offer three programs on homelessness in the fall. The pavilion bids are coming in. There seems to be some excitement growing for opportunities for fellowship, learning, and giving.

And yet, Vestry continues to shrink. Three people have left, so there are six members including the Treasurer who has voice and vote; the Clerk of Vestry needs to resign also due to health issues. We have enough members for a quorum according to the diocesan bylaws, and I feel the folks who are currently on Vestry are committed to living into being the Trustees of the Soul of the Parish. It is time to find the next generation of trustees/Vestry members, as several will have served the allowed number of terms at the end of this year. This offers opportunity for training, learning about trusteeship, celebrating the contributions, and moving deeper into trusteeship.

Scott writes, “One of the greatest challenges all organizations face...is the development of trust and a deep, sustained commitment.”⁷⁷ This has been difficult with the turnover of priests over the past fifteen years. My term is just three years, unless the contract is renewed. Commitment is present in both parishes: commitment to each as a “church home,” commitment to the community, one another (people contact one another throughout the week), commitment to worship in the Episcopal tradition. I have to remember the people I work with are volunteers. They love their respective parishes. They have trusted me with their inmost thoughts during the interviews. The commitment is manifest in these actions, as well as coming back home to worship from wherever folks have traveled to. And, most important, they will be there longer than I will be. I have come to stir the pot, raise awareness, keep, or make, the buildings usable by others. My greatest challenge is to firmly say: It’s not about me; it is about where people see God in their lives.

I felt a seismic shift when thanksgiving was spoken by a Vestry member. Once upon a time, I saw a need for commitment, for understanding the expectations, and for not being on Vestry if one cannot attend worship at least three out of four weeks of the month. The other groups in the parish (Epiphany) also have a laid-back approach that I only need to attend worship when it is one’s turn to read, intercess, serve on Altar Guild or as Eucharistic Minister. Choir sings twice a month and not in the summer; this is also a lack of commitment to attend and sing with the congregation in the ‘off-weeks.’ I repeat,

⁷⁷ Scott, *Caring and Capable Boards*, 44.

attendance has not been an issue at St. Peter's. People tell me if they will be away, they find substitutes if needed, and there is an enjoyment in being with one another.

But the world at Epiphany I live in is more like this: I'll do my "job" and that's it. I wonder how to get the idea across that renewal and refreshment in God's love is always available, and that attending worship and meetings renews our sense of being people dedicated to God as God is dedicated to us—not just when it is my time to serve, but always and everywhere. I wish I could instill the need to refresh often is needed. This has to start with the leadership, and that's me, by showing and sharing thanksgiving for those who help, even if it is a text message!

There is life and love at both parishes. There is commitment and excitement. People think of possibilities. The soul of each parish is alive and thriving for those who show up to worship. The trustees who choose to attend meetings and worship are part of this growing excitement. Those who don't often have family obligations (aging parents, new grandbabies, children who live out of town) and they miss this excitement. Participation in Vestry meetings is available via phone, if needed.

Not being present at certain meetings does not mean they do not attend to the needs of the parish. I need to be thankful that people have families and grandchildren to visit, and they return safely. I am thankful there are people to fill roles during worship, and that sometimes people worship elsewhere. Each parish has functioned in a certain manner for years before me and will for years after me. Perhaps trusteeship is more apparent than I first believed. Perhaps doors have been opened, ideas have been seeded, and attendance will change. Perhaps a smaller Vestry would work.

Laloux quotes Margaret Wheatley:

[In] an emergent world...we can no longer stand at the end of something we visualize in detail and plan backwards from that future. Instead we must stand at the beginning, clear in our intent, with willingness to be involved in discovery. The world asks that we focus less on how we can coerce something to make it conform to our designs and focus more on how we can engage with one another, how we can enter into the experience and then notice what comes forth. It asks that we participate more than plan.⁷⁸

My intentional and emerging change in attitude offers me peace, courage, and love. I have given each group much to think about and discuss as we move into the future. I have offered one short retreat on trusteeship. It will take many meetings to live into: what does it mean to be a Trustee of the Soul of the Parish. This project has offered a start, a beginning, an opportunity to learn and grow and to share that learning and growth with others. It has given me permission to be involved in growth, mine and theirs, as we lean into trusteeship together. Evolution will take time, practice, mistakes, and learning, as well as letting go, trying something else, expecting the dance to continue. We review the Covenant Agreement at each Vestry meeting. Epiphany has decided to print and frame the agreement and put it in two strategic places for people to read.

It is the questions that are challenging and life-changing, because questions make me, and Vestry, think in new ways, discover ideas I/we hadn't thought of, and begin to reshape my/our thinking as the responses are pondered. Questions begin relationships. Paul and Moses grappled with: what is this? what happened? what do I need to do? In the space of astonishment and wonder, fear, and trembling, they received answers, a response, a chance to grow and change.

⁷⁸ Laloux, *Reinventing Organizations*, 212-213.

Wheatley asks: who do we choose to be?⁷⁹ As a civilization in collapse, in a society created in the image of people, at a time when there is failure in social and political spheres, we need hope, foresight, creativity, and responsiveness to one another.⁸⁰ How do we respond in these small enclaves of hope? Like Tibetan warriors, are we “brave enough to never resort to aggression or fear to accomplish [our] purposes”?⁸¹ Fear of loss, fear of change, fear we will cease to exist as we know life, fear that all will be lost can keep us from freedom to choose life that is gentle, confident, compassionate, and hide our leadership capabilities in this new world. The vision of Vestry working together in prayer and confidence as Trustees of the Soul of the Parish may be beyond my capabilities as a leader—because I am the one who frequently draws the line, sets the tone, makes things get done, sometimes by example, sometimes by sheer stupidity, often alone. Is it worth it? Is this how I choose to be remembered?

If I choose to be remembered as kind, loving, and thankful, as holding the souls of each parish in prayer and encouragement, in growth and loss, through expected and unexpected change, and if I choose to be more open, gracious, malleable by God’s grace and mercy, then I need to change. I need to be more intentional in my prayers, holding each parish in trust and love, as we live together in trusteeship with God. I also encourage each Vestry, each trustee of souls to pray for one another, and to pray for the parish and parishioners, and those not yet parishioners, daily.

As I think about the leadership I provide, the time with both parishes is not long, yet change is beginning to happen. The people at Church of the Epiphany are excited that

⁷⁹ Wheatley, *Who Do We Choose*, 247.

⁸⁰ Wheatley, *Who Do We Choose*, 249.

⁸¹ Wheatley, *Who Do We Choose*, 255.

something is being done, as in the new kitchen and pavilion. Some folks are beginning to grasp the significance of a small chapel for worship closer to bathrooms. The altar that is in the chapel was designed by a parishioner who is now one hundred years old; perhaps this chapel will be named after his family. People are beginning to see what can be thrown away or purposefully inventoried and stored. St. Peter's continues to find ways to engage with the Latino community.

I realize the people at both parishes need hope and vision to move forward without aimless wandering. Both parishes depend on leadership to point out opportunities to pray, seek justice, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). Dr. Norman J. Cohen writes, "Leadership...is the fine balance between continuity and change: building on the vision and insights of those who came before, but creating new and distinctive ways to extend the vision and bring it to fruition."⁸²

Final Thoughts

What a journey this has been. An opportunity to delve into my thoughts, needs, capabilities, and ideas. The joy of finishing is the joy of beginning anew and restarting with a new attitude, gratitude, insight, and learning when I never thought I could do this. I leave invigorated to continued growth, learning, insight, adaptation as I view myself as a Trustee of Souls of the Parish, along with Vestry. I am part of the Covenant Agreement in each parish, and I hope they will continue re-thinking, using, transforming this Covenant for years to come. I plan to offer a Vestry retreat every year we are together to deepen our

⁸² Norman J. Cohen, *Moses and the Journey to Leadership: Timeless Lessons of Effective Management from the Bible and Today's Leaders*. (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2007). Kindle edition LOC 615.

trust in God, in one another, and to deepen our awareness and understanding of ourselves as the Trustees of the Soul of the Parish. The gifts of the people who step forward to serve on Vestry need to be welcomed, affirmed, prayed over, and celebrated.

It is also with sadness to leave the work entailed to produce this ‘product.’ It is with joy that this project took place, came to fruition, and will now find meaningful life as the Covenants live on at each parish. I trust the parish leadership I have worked with will grow in Biblical reading, look forward to a new future, and enjoy worship in each respective parish as often as they are able.

I also leave with peace: the kind of peace that says ‘it is finished’ when I know this barely scratched the surface of trusteeship. Scott, Brown, and Wheatley reiterate this is a journey to seek wholeness and accept change. Trusteeship is deep and offers continual learning, repeated questions, and the call to let go. Trusteeship is an invitation to know one another better, recognize gifts and transformations, celebrate goals met, while looking for new leaders, new visions, new questions and goals while remembering the past and preparing for the future. I am grateful to have had this experience. I have learned much and will continue to be grateful.

Paul and Moses have been with me on this journey, pointing out what worked for them, and what they, as leaders, had to let go of. We live under the same commandments of God to worship, pray, celebrate, give to all we meet, and work for the benefit of humankind with love and mercy. The personal habits of worship in the same place each week have changed. The celebration, perhaps, is that worship and prayer are important to Vestry members, but it may look different than I presume it should.

This opportunity to delve into trusteeship as a way of governance is humbling, exciting, and will continue, with thankfulness and generosity and room to grow. The next trustee retreat is right around the corner!

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Appendix 1. Letter to Prospective Vestry Members Adjusted With Date/Church:

[current Vestry members invited verbally at two previous Vestry meetings]

Dear

The Vestry at [Church of the Epiphany or St. Peter's] has suggested you as a potential member of Vestry.

'Vestrie' began in the Church of England as a committee for the local secular and ecclesiastical government for a parish in England and Wales, which originally met in the vestry or sacristy of the parish church, and consequently became known colloquially as the "vestry". For many centuries they were the sole civil government of rural areas. At the high point of their powers, just prior to removal of Poor Law responsibilities in 1834, the vestries spent not far short of one-fifth of the budget of the national government itself. Their secular and ecclesiastical duties were separated under local government reforms in 1894. Their ecclesiastical duties have been performed by Parochial Church Councils since 1921. The only remnant of the vestry meeting is the parish meeting called to appoint churchwardens.¹

In Virginia the parishes were very large and it was difficult to get all the male parishioners together. So they would meet only once and elect twelve of their number to serve for life. This was known as a closed vestry. The transition to a closed vestry was completed by 1633 or 1634, when a Vestry Act was passed. It provided that "there be a vestrie held in each parish." The current vestry evolved from this colonial pattern.²

Today: The Vestry in every parish shall cooperate with the Rector in promoting the spiritual welfare of the parish and shall aid the Rector in the initiation, conduct and development of the mission of the Church both within and outside the parish. The Vestry shall supervise the care and maintenance of the buildings, furnishings and other properties of the parish, providing adequate insurance thereon. The Vestry shall be responsible for the proper care of the finances of the parish, including any trust funds, subject to the General Canons of the Church and the appropriate laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. And, each Vestry meeting shall be open to members of the congregation, except with respect to confidential personnel, legal or pastoral matters. The Vestry may, upon majority vote of the members where a quorum is present, designate the relevant portion of the meeting as confidential and closed.³

Vestry at [Church of the Epiphany/St. Peter's] oversees committees, in addition to the above statements. Oversee means keep in touch and pray for a committee. These committees include: Outreach, Sunday School, Marketing, Budget, Meals in the community, Personnel, Finance/Stewardship, Altar Guild, Memorial Garden, Agape, Building/Grounds/Maintenance, Nominations. And more!

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vestry>

² <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary/vestry>

³ <http://www.diobeth.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/DioBeth-Canons--9.30.17.pdf>

Vestry meets monthly, on the third (3rd) Wednesday of the month (there are a few exceptions) at 6:30 pm in the Commons Room, usually for about 1.5 – 2 hours [St. Peter's meets on the 2nd Saturday from 9:00-10:30 am]. There is an upcoming required Vestry retreat on [date adjusted for each parish], 2019, from 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. You are welcome to visit the October, November or December Vestry meetings.

The leadership is requesting a resume for the Priest and Wardens to review, and a brief statement saying “Why I will be an awesome Vestry member” and will be included in the parish election process. Resume and statement will be expected by the end of November. Vestry members are elected at the Annual Meeting, which will be January 20, 2019. The commitment is three (3) years, and a second term may be sought, in accordance with diocesan canons and parish by-laws. Vestry members are expected to attend worship weekly.

We ask that you pray about this invitation. If you feel God is calling you to put forth your name, there will be a Sunday afternoon gathering of potential Vestry members on November 18, 2018, at 12:30 pm, to ask questions, ponder choices, and pray together for the benefit of the parish. This is our regularly scheduled ‘Third Sunday Brunch.’ There is much going on at Epiphany that is quite exciting!

We are very grateful for your potential and prayerful consideration to be nominated for a Vestry seat. A slate of nominees will be offered in December for the parish to review prior to the Annual Meeting.

We hold you and your consideration in prayer.

In Christ's Service,

Appendix 2. Retreat Script

RETREAT OUTLINE

Goal: 1) describe how to be a trustee, 2) write a covenant statement

10 min Welcome, prayer

Need: candle, paten/bread, chalice/wine, corporal, purificator

Light a candle, pray for the presence of God, collect for a meeting

Welcome, thank you for being here today. The main goal is to make this retreat a time of worship, sharing, and learning. Worship is part of what we do as we gather in the name of God with joy and expectation of God's guidance and wonder. Sharing of ourselves in a place of openness and confidentiality. Sharing also in God's mercies and stories of God's love. Learning has to do with trusteeship: what it is in our context, and how we can use this concept to glorify God as we work together to be the trustees not only of finances and property, but of the hearts and souls of this parish community, and perhaps of the larger community.

A needed outcome of this retreat is to develop a Covenant Agreement of how we live and work together through worship, attendance, participation in community.

This is the outline of what I hope to accomplish today:

We'll talk very briefly, as a means of short introduction, about why we are in this room, this parish, and this community. These are very short stories, about 3-4 minutes each.

Next, we'll share ideas from the Vestry survey about responsibilities of vestry and how we fulfill these responsibilities. This may take about 30 minutes.

Then we'll talk about the difference between vestry and trustee in your words, and post the comments on the wall (or flip chart)

Then it's time for a story about trust from the Bible and wonder how that connects with us here and now with a silent break for about 5 minutes, and then discuss your thoughts.

(Print out the story?)

After the break I'll present what I have learned about trustees and why I'm so excited about this concept for vestry, how I believe creating a Covenant Agreement will help vestry function with a deeper commitment to spiritual growth, a deeper commitment to participation, and feel more fulfilled as members of this body.

Comments, questions?

20 min Discussion: why are you here, in this room, this parish, this community?

30 min From the Vestry survey: what you your responsibilities on Vestry

How are they fulfilled? Discussion of other questions on survey if time

20-30 min Present differences between Vestry – Trustee in their words

Post responses on wall. Bible story about trust.

Break

How are you doing so far? Any questions come to mind over the break?

This is the research section to talk about the differences between vestry member and trustee. Most of the trustee information is from Katherine Scott, who wrote the book about Trusteeship that really spoke to my heart. It deals with how we govern ourselves, and why Trusteeship is a deeper level of commitment. Some of the survey questions came from her work.

15-30 min From the survey – tell the responsibilities of Trustees

From research – tell the responsibilities of Trustees

What do you hear that is different or inviting? How are these ideas different from the responses on the wall (or flipchart)

10-15 min From Moses, Paul – both Moses and Paul, in the Bible, had to learn how to govern people, how to hold them in trust with God, and make decisions about which way to go.

Moses was with his congregation for 40 years. Moses had to trust God, and trust the people he was called to lead. Who do you think his senior and junior wardens were? What were some of the difficulties about the journey that you recall?

Have any of you been in the same occupation for 40 years? What changed over that time?

What's different generationally? How does the next generation learn about living together in the presence of God on this journey?

(anything else?)

Paul had a different approach. His timeline was shorter, he may have been with a community for only 2-4 years, yet we still read his words today to help us guide our work, worship, way of life. Paul did his leading by hands on, day to day life in local communities, then moved on to introduce Jesus' life and death and resurrection to more and more people. (selections)

What do you hear in these passages? (lectio)

10-15 min Parishioner survey data – any surprises?

Discussion: what do they say? What do we say? What's missing? *Do this ahead of time on flip chart*

How would you sum up what we have done so far? (*comments on flip chart*)

It's time to bless and share the bread and wine. Then we'll take 10-15 minutes quiet time to reflect, think, question, walk around. When we reconvene, there will be lunch and discussion of how these ideas fit together and come up with an outline of what the expectations are as trustees, and how we plan to live into those expectations together. This will be our Covenant Agreement. The agreement will include our expectations of one another as trustees of the souls of the parish, and the expectations of the parish as to the duties, responsibilities of the vestry members.

We also have to decide how to use this covenant in our monthly meetings and plans.

If there is energy, it would be helpful to write a letter to the parish to let them know about seeing ourselves as trustees and why, and invite their prayers.

I invite you to read the Eucharistic prayer aloud together. We will pass the bread and wine around sharing with one another.⁴

30-45 min Working Lunch

Incorporate all of these ideas into a working document to use at every Vestry meeting and with the congregation

Develop a short handbook of what it means to be on this Vestry – expectations, reasons, prayer (if possible)

30-45 min Write a covenant together of how we behave in accordance with the responsibilities of Trustees and expectations of congregation to carry on the life of the parish based on Trusteeship. How will this covenant be used?

⁴ Enriching Our Worship

OUR COVENANT OF AGREEMENT AS TRUSTEES OF THIS PARISH

Worship, attendance, participation in community

15-20 min How has your understanding of Vestry changed from member to trustee?

What will you do differently? What do you need? (collect for data) *write or record*

15 min What prayers of thanksgiving would you like to offer? *Pray and commission Trustees at this meeting and at worship*
Extinguish the candle.

Bible Readings for Retreat

A reading from the Book of Exodus, Chapter 3 [New International Version]⁵

3 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush.

Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.

3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up." 4 When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." 5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." 6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

A reading from the Book of Acts, chapter 9 [New International Version]

9 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. 3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁵ New International Version Bible

Appendix 3. Permission for Release of Information

This interview is being conducted for the purpose of learning about your thoughts after attending a Vestry retreat as part of the program at Virginia Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry Program, particularly regarding your feelings and thoughts.

The comments from this interview will be used for research purposes to help understand what people who attended the Vestry Retreat on Trusteeship have to say about how the retreat changed or did not change their outlook from member to keeper of souls. The research includes looking for similarities and differences in people's story to enable the researcher to prepare a dissertation for review at VTS. All names will be changed, as well as references or information that could easily identify the speaker.

The researcher, Rev. Lou Divis, will have this conversation for reference as part of the dissertation comparing information from St. Peter's and Church of the Epiphany. This larger paper will be seen by an Advisor and two (2) other assessors for a final determination of the quality of the dissertation.

By signing below, you agree to allow the researcher, Rev. Lou, to ask questions, and you agree to answer them as thoughtfully as possible. You also allow this conversation to be recorded, and used for research for this project.

I am deeply grateful for your participation.

Rev. Lou

Printed Name

Interviewee Signature

Date

(all interviewees signed this release; December 26, 2019)

Appendix 4. Vestry interviews/Questions and Answers by Each Person

(names changed for privacy)

Question #1 How has your understanding of being a leader in the parish changed from before the retreat to now? Tell me your feelings about this change.

Two (2) people had strong ‘no’ for an answer. These ‘no’ responses came from folks who have been on Vestry for several terms over the years. One had been on Vestry for nineteen (19) years, another for seventeen (17) years. Juan said there wasn’t anything to add, Marty remembered folks came from the other parish.

Lydia does not think she has a good understanding of the Vestry changes (from leaders to trustees), Morrie thought it gave him a ‘more defined sense of what the role is’. Roberta heard ‘it’s about helping the church’, Niko does not have a full sense of ‘understanding of not just the responsibilities but what to do, what I see about things that need to happen.’

Doc said: (it gives him) ‘a sense of being more important for us to not sit and make decisions but to go out there and interact with people.’ Ralph sees ‘there is much to do and how few people there are to do it.’ Lynn has had much experience attending and being on Vestry that she came in with a ‘bigger idea’ of what Vestry is about. Skippy said ‘the retreat provided a sense of education about the role of Vestry....specifically....I have a better idea of the responsibility of overseeing the funding part of it.’ Emma said ‘to help out the church – the direction the congregation wants to go in.’ Bub already viewed the Vestry as trustees with a ‘spiritual aspect’, and Vestry is the ‘nuts and bolts’ of running the parish, but ‘we are servants of the parish.’ Birdie recalled why he became a vestryman: ‘I thought I could help’. He is still working on this.

The feeling words include: puzzled, comfortable, interesting, ambivalence, anxiety, wonder, not being scared – ready to help, finding purpose, not fully understand the changes (from Vestry to Trustee).

The second question: How do understand the role of being a trustee of the soul of the parish? garnered the following responses.

“I didn’t think it was particularly well discussed. There was an assumption we would all become trustees.” (Marty). “We’re all connected – during the week I get phone calls from people” (Roberta). “You have to be an example to the rest of the parish. I don’t like to go out and try to tell people what to do.” (Ralph). “there is a ...weight to it that just being a parishioner doesn’t have. So you really take your responsibility the way it’s intended” (Lynn). “I don’t think of myself that way, I haven’t given it a lot of thought. I can help or know where to get help.” (Lydia). “I think it’s an honor – to represent the concerns and needs [of the parishioners] or direct them to the appropriate resource” (Skippy). “I’ve actually been involved and talking to the people more” (Niko). “It’s hard to fathom that so I don’t know if I see myself like that” (Emma). “We are guiding the parish and living out its mission and vision” (Bub). “It’s a big commitment... I should be able to do more” (Birdie). “The only difference (between religious and secular leadership) is that leadership in a religious context is magical – sometimes there’s just the feeling that the miracle of faith that’s important [as opposed to tactical needs and tangible items]” (Juan).

Question #2: (responses to Question #2 omitted; all were some form of no.)

Question #3: How do you feel about being a Trustee of the Soul of the Parish?

Many of the responses began with: ‘well’, ‘umm’, ‘I think’. The feeling words, after the initial words, included:

Ralph: it doesn’t bother me

Marty: I’ve always thought of it as a spiritual path and what we are doing to facilitate that and I’ve always felt we are falling somewhat short of that so I think if nothing else a good deal was accomplished because now maybe we will focus on that.

Morrie: a little nervous. I thinking that if I had done this [retreat] a year ago before the church is where the church is right now, I think I would probably have run screaming because there was very little structure to it. I feel settled in it now. I feel more relieved now that I’m in the role (vestry person) than how apprehensive I was before.

Roberta: it makes me fee like I’m connected and wanted and cared for – not just like to God but to people who are around me.

Lynn: somedays its really good, somedays I’d rather not do that – just sort of be quiet in a corner. Question: what would it feel like to sit in the corner? There are times I would not like to be responsible for stuff...I think it makes me concerned about people who think that coming to church on Sunday is enough an I don’t agree with that.

Skippy: I think it is important for me to learn from others...we need to all work together. I never thought of myself as part of the soul of the parish. I’m not sure I can answer that.

Niko: I feel a real responsibility. I have to listen when I pray to what the parish should be doing and its hard to understand.

Doc: I’m a natural science person...give me the numbers. I wasn’t a touchy-feely person, so that takes me out of my comfort zone. First feeling: a bit of anxiety.

Bub: comfortable, awestruck, it’s an awesome responsibility, a lot is entrusted to me so I pray daily, I reflect on it.

Birdie: I think it’s an honor.

Lydia: I’m OK with it. I guess I like something new. A challenge, I feel like maybe I can do more. I don’t know exactly what I should be doing.

Juan: I think it’s my responsibility to try and do that...in a way that meets the mission of the church...the mission really hasn’t changed, but the mission is the same as it has been for years, centuries actually. (Can you put a feeling word to that?) I guess I’d say that’s the miracle of faith.

Question #4: What have you heard yourself saying to others about the retreat?

One person spoke to a spouse. Others did not talk about the retreat directly, but talked to other people about Vestry, in particular that all parishioners can attend Vestry meetings.

One person wants to know more about the history of the parish. one person said: “I don’t know how to talk to others abut the church.” Another said: “It’s out of my comfort zone to talk to somebody about it.” And another: “I’m not certain what I I’m supposed to be talking about so I keep a closed-lip about it.” One is interested in reading “Vestry Papers” (from TEC) more.

Question #5: How have you connected with parishioners?"

Direct responses are not included here because this question had very similar responses to Q #4, except the folks from St. Peter's have connected by helping two families move, helping another family during an illness, and offered to pray for others. At Church of the Epiphany, one Vestry person wants to be on a particular committee, and one person spoke to another about being a Reader during worship. One Vestry member uses the "Peace" to chat with others.

My thoughts so far include: there needs to be more transparency, people need to know they are empowered to talk about Vestry, unless requested to not do so, and the minutes are public record. I wonder if a Vestry 101 session is needed annually. Both parishes remember overnight Vestry retreats; these have not been held in at least fifteen (15) years. That's a long memory. I wonder why.

There is also a disconnect between Vestry and parish. As trustees, we need to know about the people are thinking, what the people need/want, how they are doing, and what they believe the future holds. This is one reason I have requested Vestry members to be on committees, (only at Epiphany; there are no particular committees at St. Peter's); perhaps this needs to be a requirement. And the committees seem to be insular: this person has always been on this committee; maybe committees need to change as Vestry does. But that is a different dissertation.

Question #6: What have you heard yourself saying to others about the retreat?

Lydia: I understand it to be God calls the least of us. You don't expect it, I mean they didn't expect it, especially Paul, but they turn out to be the perfect one because when Paul, he knows where he was and what he had to do. Because of what his experience was before. Moses, too, (was) pretty humble, (he had) no idea. Both of these had no idea. I never put those two stories together before.

Birdie: It's puzzling. I don't think I really understand

Emma: My thought process is different than Paul and Moses. I understand what is going on right in front of me. (this might have been an opportunity to suggest what happened to them was right in front of them).

Bub: ..the call of Moses – he could have ignored it; it was a very subtle sign unless he stopped to pay attention. The call of Paul ..was very literally being knocked off your horse. So one is very in your face and one is very subtle. I think it shows us that in our role as vestry, some things can be very much in our face and some things we may miss an important moment.

Niko: I try to apply it personally (but) I don't see it happening to me personally at this point. I feel like I'm put in this position ... for a good reason. It's a tough time for the parish. things are changing faster than we can adjust ... God calls me to help. And maybe like Paul...he (God) didn't exactly say what you need to do, just that you need to do something. I'm glad I wasn't blinded for three (3) days.

Morrie: I'm not really sure how to answer that to be honest with you. I have faith, but the Bible is not my strong suit..... I feel I have a connection with God and faith. In my life it has not been my thing – connecting with the story. I remember the story, but I don't know what I thought about it.

Marty: God always calls us to do something we feel we will fall short of. Moses certainly felt that he...fell short of what was required. He talks about how he is a man of poor speech, not able to talk to people yet God calls him to lead forty (40) years in the wilderness. Paul calls himself the least of the disciples so in that respect we can all identify with that (that was the subject of your sermon) [he made a lot of connections but did not explicitly say who he identified with – very few folks did]

Roberta: I haven't thought about it.

Lynn: I think that both of those are instances of being exactly the right person for the job even if they didn't know what it was so that I think that it's the same thing in our time being part of the leadership in the church is that to a certain extent it needs to have that kind of a pull for you to have that kind of traumatic impact on you.

Skip: The Bible examples reinforced the getting (of) our attention as vestry members... to at least seek a path that follows God. Maybe you need to just listen and be open to further actions that will promote the love of God.

(use of I statements??)

Doc: I do feel a little differently now about the all to do something, to do your part. But it feels a little more serious now, more involved.

Juan: He (God) was getting their attention.

Ralph: You're supposed to be a leader. You are the light of the parish and I guess that is the calling of the vestry member to be that type of leader. [Vestry members are called to be the light of the parish? Yes]

Question #7. Has anything changed in your prayer life and Bible study? What changed and how is it going? What would you still like to see change?

Bub: I have completed training for Lay Eucharistic Minister and Lay Worship Leader, so comparable to common on vestry, my ministry has morphed and (become) more involved in the church.

Morrie: I don't think so. I don't think I'm reading the Bible and getting a lot out of that (meaning: I don't read the Bible.) [story about looking for church; family prays before dinner, bedtime with youngest child, volunteering important]. We're more like living-breathing faithful than you know what I mean (about) the book (Bible) and the Old Testament and all that stuff. My life and upbringing is based on seeing a person in need and acting upon it as God would act on it.

Juan: Well, my disorder has taken some of the fire away from me; I guess I'm not as effective as I was before the retreat and that has to do with the Parkinson's.

Lydia: Since being on Vestry, I equate that with being in church. I'm really interested in learning more about the church and God and the whole mystery of questioning. (What would you like to see change?) I find it's good to explore maybe a reading we didn't touch on too much in Bible study [Bible study at St. Peter's is lay led following coffee hour involving 3-5 people].

Birdie: I don't think so.... When I'm praying, I feel a little more with myself that I'm talking to God. One thing I'm missing is we used to have a Wednesday morning service. I like the music. I don't like the God-moment.

Emma: Even when I started becoming an acolyte I started being interested in what is going on. (what does that feel like?) I would like to think that there are different ideas, and different ideas are healthy.

Niko: I pray more for the parish that we are going in the right direction, and different ideas are healthy.

Skippy: It should but it hasn't. I need to and I'm aware of the need to set aside a specific time each day to focus. I need to but I haven't and since I just took the retreat on Lay Eucharistic Visitor and Lay Ministry – that also reinforced the responsibility. (what would you) It's about structure, self-discipline or whatever.

Lynn: No, I don't think so. I'd like to see a (group) Bible study. I would like to see that start again.

Ralph: No. (wife) reads daily devotions, sometimes I do, but we don't do anything jointly. I have to put more effort into that.

Roberta: I think I've been saying I'll pray for you a lot more and I do and when things get really tough, I'll say: God is going to handle that and it will come out in the wash you know. I'd like to read the Bible more because I've never read it and I would like to learn.

Marty: During Lent, I made it a point to reread Paul's letters. I can give things for the Tuesday night studies during Lent. [I wonder how to follow up on this].

Question #8 How do you see yourself called as Moses or Paul?

Skippy: I did not envision the role of Vestry, I have felt the call to parish nursing ... there is a concern for the health of the parish. XX approached me to be on vestry. I said I don't know if I'm qualified. He said it's not about being qualified, so ... I don't feel qualified (to be on Vestry) but I'm willing to serve and the call is health. [do you think parish nursing was a burning bush of a blinding light?] The parish nurse call was a blinding light, the other is more of a quieter (call).

Lynn: Wow, I'm thinking maybe both instances they were not afraid to speak about God's call to them and I think that I was called maybe more by my actions than by what I say. I'd like to think that my actions and words do help people think about where God should be in their lives or where they ought to be, or where they could be. does that make any sense? [so (you are) trying to include other people as Moses and Paul did to help other people discover their ministries].

Niko: it's easier for me to say what I don't feel called for. I don't feel I've been given these firm rules to tell the world or the congregation. But I feel like I'm called to be supportive of what we already have and encourage people to participate more but in ways that are comfortable for them, not like Paul – you gotta do it in this way because this is what God told me and look at what Jesus did and therefore you have to do the same thing. Interpret it for yourself and use your own judgment and do it. I don't feel like I have that type of authority as far as being called. I believe in the burning bush, I believe in the blinding light, I believe in the voice of God. Part of the problem with believing it is it's so astounding in the Bible you think it's not happening unless it's astounding to you but it doesn't have to be astounding. It can be very slight, mild, and you don't realize it until later.

Doc: Blinding light. It's an enlightening that I need to do more than come and make decisions, more of a personal but, personal involvement than I was thinking before than I was planning on doing.

Bub: I would identify with Paul because you asked me about serving on vestry so ... I sort of knocked me off my horse. I wasn't expecting it. [strictly Paul?] I think in that aspect serving on vestry I could more relate with Moses. I need to open my eyes more

and purposefully look to see thing I would otherwise miss. So being asked to serve was sort of just lightning strike and continuously serving I need to pay attention to the little things I may overlook so I need to keep my eyes and ears open.

Juan: I guess more likely be called like Moses than Paul Paul was very active and very pushy and very much likely to have a negative feeling about things. Moses on the other side was more a touching-feeling guy and he called the shots but he did it in a way that was supportive as opposed to Paul who was sort of a kick your rear end approach.

Emma: I think that to see what was going on...I've always questioned the Bible. I put myself in that situation and I wonder what I would do (no further explanation)

Lydia: I'm like my mother (always jumping in ready to help). I'm like my mother (long story about mom/being a mom, being involved in kids in Sunday School), I know its not Paul. [observation from interviewer: Moses took his time, he was deliberate. Paul was like and instant turn around. [I see you as being deliberate and thoughtful] Lydia: yeah, yeah.

Birdie: only because I know the story of Moses better I would probably lean toward Moses. [what about his story speaks to you?] Paul had bright lights, when I think about it, it would have more of an effect on me than Moses would. Not much help is it?

Ralph: my bulb isn't too bright, let's put it that way. (story about leaning: prefers to sit and read) I'm not a great speaker in front of a group of people – 4 or 5, I'm fine. [what I'm hearing is Moses talked to 600,000 people and Paul went ot small house church so would you identify with Paul?] Yes.

Roberta: I think that I was called because I am, I like to help.

Marty: I think I'm called to be faithful but not successful. I can identify with each to a certain extent. Moses had human failings. We all have thing we regret. But I think I identify more with Paul. Paul is the disciple who clarifies Jesus' life, death and resurrection. He puts it all in perspective due to his knowledge and immersion in the Hebrew tradition not only of Scripture and Torah and that stuff, but his total conversion I'm sure he felt abandoned during that period he was blinded, and then...it was a process for him to become a disciple – he didn't become a disciple right away. It took him years and he did more in missionary work that all the twelve (12) other disciple.

Morrie: More burning bush, I think. I se faith opportunities that happen right in front of me. I may not seek them out but there are moments in life given my upbringing (my mom was Catholic but ecumenical – she sent us to Baptist summer programs). So I take a lot of that about her and try to use it in my life. But I don't think I'm seeking out an opportunity to see something or do something but when the opportunity appears as a burning bush in front of me I'm excited t help out or whatever it might be, whatever the calling might be.

Question 9: Have you seen any changes in Bible study or prayer life, or attendance at Vestry or worship?

Niko: I haven't participated in Bible study. I was getting pretty involved before and I certainly didn't get less involved.

Bub: No changes

Ralph: No changes, other than I try to attend as much as I can.

Lynn: No

Roberta: I want to be more involved because when I see a need I just get up and take care of it. I don't wait for someone else to do it.

Skippy: No, I just try to attend whenever humanly able to do.

Birdie: I don't think so. (you've) given me something to think about.

Lydia: We haven't had a meeting since the retreat. [But, you attend worship regularly] Yes.

Doc: I feel guilty when I don't come to church. XX said something when we were talking – he said worship is the soul of the church. We were talking about the expectations of Vestry...of how often you (should) be attending. I'd never thought of it that way, so I feel guilty if I miss a weekend. I think I have more anxiety about when I can't get there.

Juan: I'm not as willing to attend meetings as I was that's just because it's more difficult for me (Parkinson's).

Morrie: I do think since we went through the Covenant and things like that I'm definitely more conscious of making sure I get there and understanding we are trustee. And if the trustees' faces aren't seen at church then it's difficult. (In-laws live a distance and the family visits them about every other weekend)

[The ideas of weekly attendance at worship and Bible study seem to be missing as a cultural norm. What are the implications for Trustees?]

Question 10: Anything else you'd like to tell me about being the Trustee of the Soul of the Parish?

Lynn: I think it broadens your understanding of what the church is and to not accept that opportunity cuts out a part of what people can learn and do and that engagement with other Christian is so – people look at it as a job instead of a spiritual opportunity. I think we can look at it (Vestry) as a job; we talk about it as serving, but you have to come to meetings and participate. It's a relationship, it's more than a meeting. It's about relationships, working together towards something. Moses was more heavy handed, and Paul, both wanted relationships with the people and with God.

Skippy: I'm looking for guidance through the other congregants, other vestry member, how to best do that, to best represent being a Trustee of the soul.

Niko: maybe I need to be introduced to it more, so I understand what the soul of the parish is better. As far as being a trustee, who are these responsibilities carried out day to day, week to week. I realized it takes [more time] than I thought. I'm thinking where the parish could go, where the potentials are. I feel like I'm not contributing enough and I feel sort of guilty.

Doc: It's more a full task, not task (a piece of work to be done or undertaken) function (an activity or purpose natural to or intended for a person or thing. work or operate in a proper or particular way.) ...it's more of an interactive role and responsibility than I had looked at it before being on Vestry, and certainly before the retreat. It kind of felt that about being on Vestry before the retreat but the retreat made it more concrete. It's a more active role than a passive role – that was the biggest take home for me.

Birdie: No, I don't think so. I may have to change that decision after thinking about our conversation today.

Lydia: I'd like ...to have more time to contemplate what it really means it's interesting, it an interesting idea, I mean, the soul of the parish.

Bub: Every day I'm cognizant of the awesome responsibility and every day I pray that I can to be the best job I can and...that I remain worthy of that call.

Emma: I think in making that commitment...it's important that we attend meetings and worship because we are on Vestry, but we are not there yet. I'm not very worried about it.

Juan: I think one of the main issues I kick around is the fact that we are going to have to go through change and that's gonna hurt but we gotta do it....the way religion is gonna work – it's gotta be addressed. [as Trustees of the Soul of the Parish we have to be prepared with new opportunities, new ways of connecting and communicating?] Yep.

Morrie: There is so much potential in our little church. I think that it's an exciting time to be a trustee of the soul of the church. the core soul of the people I've met and who go to our church, I see hope that we could rebuild it with the people we have.

Ralph: I think that one of the things [could be] small groups together [with] some kind of a little meeting, a little wine/cheese type of thing. Talk about what we could be doing and brainstorming things of that nature. I think it's more about building the church rather than the Bible study type of things. More general things we can do for the community, what we can do for each other. I would like to have something more about current events, what's happening in the world, why it is happening, and where does religion fit into all of this.

Roberta: I think the church has a lot of potential to grow but we just gotta find the right way to make it grow, to get more people involved in the area.

Marty: I think that's an important concept that needs to be conveyed to the Vestry that the spiritual welfare of the parishioners – it's something implicit when somebody attends and commits themselves to being in the parish and as parish leadership we have to acknowledge that we have more responsibility than just turning on the lights, going through a ritual there and nothing beyond that. It's something beyond make sure the place is clean, lit, orderly – the mechanics of it. the god-moment is important to put things in perspective. We just finished a ritual that is part of a 2000-year tradition established by Jesus, you know, breaking the bread together, a common meal, ant it is important to have a discussion about it, about the meal.

Appendix 5. Bylaws of All Parishes in the Diocese of Bethlehem Particular to Vestry

Title II: Of Parish Vestries and the Governance of Parishes

Canon 1. General Vestry Matters

Section 1. Responsibilities of Parish Vestry

A. The Vestry in every parish shall cooperate with the rector in promoting the spiritual welfare of the parish and shall aid the rector in the initiation, conduct and development of the mission of the Church both within and outside the parish.

B. The Vestry shall supervise the care and maintenance of the buildings, furnishings and other properties of the parish, providing adequate insurance thereon.

C. The Vestry shall be responsible for the proper care of the finances of the parish, including any trust funds, subject to the General Canons of the Church and the appropriate laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

D. Each Vestry meeting shall be open to members of the congregation, except with respect to confidential personnel, legal or pastoral matters. The Vestry may, upon majority vote of the members where a quorum is present, designate the relevant portion of the meeting as confidential and closed.

Canon 2: Call of a Priest

A call to a priest in the event of a vacancy in a clerical position shall be made in the form of a written Letter of Agreement, which shall include all items required by the Bishop, including a clause that the Letter of Agreement may be revised by mutual agreement. The Letter of Agreement and any subsequent revisions shall be submitted to the Bishop for approval.

Canon 3: Of the Governance of Parishes

Section 1: This section of the Canon takes the place of and supersedes the Bylaws of all Parishes in the Diocese.

A. Annual Parish Meeting

1. In every Parish, the Annual Parish Meeting shall be held in January at a time and place designated by the Vestry. Public notice of the Annual Meeting shall be given at all the services on the two preceding weekends. With the consent of the Ecclesiastical Authority, the Annual Meeting may be held during a different month.

2. The purpose of this Annual Meeting shall be to elect members to the Vestry; receive reports from the Vestry, parish officers, and organizations; including any reports about the budget approved by the Vestry for the new year; and to transact such other business as may properly come before it.

3. At the Annual Meeting, a report of the Parish finances shall be given, including reports of all assets and liabilities and all income and expenditures including any subsidiary or related organization or entity, including (but not limited to) all trusts, endowments or other accounts.

4. The Annual Parish Meeting shall be presided over by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, or if the office be vacant, or if the Rector or Priest-in-Charge be absent, by the Senior Warden.

5. Lay Members in good standing of the Parish who are physically present, who are at least 18 years of age, who are regular attendants at the services of the parish, and who are regular contributors for the six months preceding the meeting to the support of the Parish,

shall be entitled to vote at all Parish Meetings. A quorum for the transaction of business in the Annual Parish Meeting shall consist of 25% of the persons entitled to vote if they were present or 25 persons entitled to vote, whichever is less.

6. Each Parish shall have a Vestry consisting of not fewer than five nor more than twelve Lay Members at least 18 years of age in good standing elected at the annual Parish Meeting. The number of persons to serve on the Vestry of the Parish shall be set by resolution of the Annual Parish Meeting. A change in number may be effected by the same procedure.

7. The qualifications of persons to serve on the Vestry shall be the same as the qualifications to vote at the Annual Parish Meeting as set out above except that the person to be elected need not be present at the Meeting.

8. No cleric or member of a cleric's family shall be eligible for election as a member of the Vestry. No employee of the Parish or member of the employee's family shall be eligible for election to Vestry. No more than one member of a family may serve on Vestry at the same time. A Parish may apply by letter to the Bishop for an amendment to the provisions of this subsection, stating the specific provision it wishes to amend and the reasons for the amendment. The Bishop shall provide a response by letter to the Parish. If the Bishop approves the amendment, the provisions of this subsection shall be considered amended to the extent that the Bishop has approved the amendment as of the date of the letter.

9. In each Parish the Vestry may by resolution designate a Nominating Committee, otherwise the Rector or Priest-in-Charge together with the Senior Warden and the Junior Warden shall be the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall publish to the parish two weeks prior to the Annual Parish Meeting a ballot with sufficient qualified nominees to fill the vacancies on the Vestry for the upcoming year.

10. Additional nominations may be made from the floor of the Annual Parish Meeting. The nominator shall first obtain the consent of the nominee. Any question of the nominee's qualification to serve shall be resolved by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge prior to the election of Vestry members. In the absence of a Rector or Priest-in-Charge, the Senior Warden shall have the responsibility for determining the qualifications of any person nominated from the floor.

11. Each Annual Parish Meeting shall elect persons to serve on the Vestry replacing those members whose term in office has ended.

12. The length of one term of office for members of the Vestry shall be three years with one third of the members, or as near as may be, elected each year at the Annual Parish Meeting. A vestry member shall not be eligible for re-election until after one year after his or her second term has ended.

B. Special Parish Meetings

1. A Special Parish Meeting may be held at any time on the written order of the Ecclesiastical Authority or of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, or by resolution of the Vestry, or on a petition to the Ecclesiastical Authority if such petition be signed by not less than one-quarter (25%) of the number entitled to vote at the last Annual Parish Meeting.

2. All such orders, resolutions, or petitions shall specify the time and place of such meeting and the business to be considered.

3. At such meeting, no business shall be considered other than that specified in the call.

4. Notice of such meeting shall be read publicly in church at all services on two weekends prior to the meeting. This notice shall specify the time and place of the meeting, the business to be considered, and by whose order the meeting is called.

5. Such meeting may be presided over by the Bishop. If the Bishop does not preside, the Rector or Priest-in-Charge shall preside. If there is no Rector or Priest-in-Charge, the Ecclesiastical Authority may request the Senior Warden to preside.

C. Vestries

1. Duties of the Vestry.

a. In accordance with the Constitutions and Canons of The Episcopal Church and of this Diocese the Vestry shall govern the Parish and shall manage and be responsible for its property and material affairs; shall further the temporal and spiritual welfare of the Parish; provide a suitable place of worship and see that it is provided with all things necessary to the worship of Almighty God; shall select and call a Rector and provide for the remuneration of the Rector; and shall present to each Annual Parish Meeting a report on its work during the year preceding and a budget for the next year.

b. As to civil matters, the Vestry shall be the corporate Board of Directors. The Rector or Priest-in-Charge shall be a member of and preside over the Vestry and is the President of the corporation. If there is no Rector or Priest-in-Charge then the Senior Warden shall be the President of the Corporation.

c. In consultation with the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, all staff positions are created and funded by the Vestry. Personnel filling those positions are hired by and serve at the discretion of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge and are accountable to the Rector or Priest-in-Charge. The Rector or Priest-in-Charge may work collaboratively with a nominating or personnel committee in the selection of personnel.

d. A financial report shall be given at each regular meeting of the Vestry, which shall include current income and expenditures. Following approval, the report shall be made available to members of the congregation by publicly posting or otherwise.

2. Officers of the Vestry and of the Parish

a. The Lay Officers of a Parish shall consist of the Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Clerk and Treasurer who shall all be adult Lay Members in good standing of the Parish and at least 18 years of age. No cleric or family member of a cleric may serve as an Officer of the Parish. No employee of the Parish or member of such employee's family may serve as an Officer of the Parish. No family member of a Vestry member may serve as an Officer of the Parish. A Parish may apply by letter to the Bishop for an amendment to the provisions of this subsection, stating the specific provision it wishes to amend and the reasons for the amendment. The Bishop shall provide a response by letter to the Parish. If the Bishop approves the amendment, the provisions of this subsection shall be considered amended to the extent that the Bishop has approved the amendment as of the date of the letter.

b. The Senior Warden shall be elected annually by the Vestry, upon nomination by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, from among the members of the Vestry. If there be no Rector or Priest-in-Charge of the Parish, the Ecclesiastical Authority shall nominate a Senior Warden from among the members of the Vestry. The Vestry may, by majority vote, decide to call the Senior Warden the "Rector's Warden" or the "Vestry Warden", but in all cases the Senior Warden shall be elected by the Vestry and perform the duties of the Senior Warden.

c. It is the duty of the Senior Warden to work closely with the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, to advise the Rector or Priest-in-Charge on all matters pertaining to the parish upon which the Rector or Priest-in-Charge may wish to consult the Senior Warden, and to inform the Rector or Priest-in-Charge of all matters which the Senior Warden feels the Rector needs to know. If there is no Rector or Priest-in-Charge, it shall be the duty of the Senior Warden to assume all the temporal duties of the Rector including, but not limited to, presiding at Vestry meetings, signing documents, filing reports, and maintaining the Parish Register. In addition, it shall be the duty of the Senior Warden to provide for the continuation of Divine Worship.

d. The Junior Warden shall either be elected annually from among their number by the Vestry or shall be appointed by the Rector. In the absence of the Senior Warden, the Junior Warden is to assume the duties of the Senior Warden. The Vestry may, by majority vote, decide to call the Junior Warden the “Vestry Warden” or the “Rector’s Warden”, but in all cases the Junior Warden will perform the duties of the Junior Warden.

e. The Wardens shall see that the financial obligations of the Parish are met and that the buildings belonging to the Parish are kept in good repair and are adequately insured. Under the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, they shall see that all things needed for the orderly worship of God and for the proper administration of the sacraments are provided. They shall prevent or repress all disturbance of divine worship. In the absence of a Rector or Priest-in-Charge, they shall, with the advice of the Ecclesiastical Authority, procure suitable supply for the continuance of the services.

f. A Clerk shall be elected annually by the Vestry. The Clerk shall be responsible to see that minutes are taken of all Annual and Special Parish Meetings and of all meetings of the Vestry and shall attest to the same in the Book of Minutes of the Vestry, shall maintain in the said book the annual accounts of the temporal condition of the Parish, shall keep all original documents, and the list of voters provided for by these Canons. The Clerk shall turn over to his or her successor all books and documents in his possession that belong to the Parish.

g. A Treasurer shall be elected annually by the Vestry. Under the authority of the Vestry, the Treasurer is responsible to collect, receive, disburse, and account for the funds of the Parish. Prior to the Annual Parish Meeting, the Treasurer shall present to the Vestry a full and accurate statement of the financial condition of the Parish. This statement shall also be presented at the Annual Parish Meeting before the election of officers. At every meeting of the Vestry the Treasurer shall report the total assets and liabilities of the Parish and the income and expenses of the general operating funds. As directed the Treasurer shall report the income and expenses of any other funds. The Treasurer shall furnish a bond, but the cost of such bond shall be borne by the Parish. The Treasurer shall turn over to his or her successor all books, documents, and funds in his or her possession that belong to the Parish.

h. The Vestry shall fill any mid-term vacancies in their number or among the officers of the Parish by majority vote.

3. Meetings of the Vestry

a. Regular meetings of the Vestry shall be held at least quarterly. All Vestry members are expected to be present at Vestry meetings. If any member of the Vestry is

absent from three consecutive meetings without due cause, as determined by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge and the Wardens, that seat shall be declared vacant.

b. The Vestry shall not transact any business without the presence of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge of the Parish, or in the event that the office of Rector or Priest-in-Charge be vacant, without the presence of one of the Wardens. A quorum consisting of a majority of the elected members of the Vestry must be present for the Vestry to transact business. No action affecting the rights of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge shall be taken at any meeting at which the Rector or Priest-in-Charge has not been given the opportunity to attend.

c. Special Meetings of the Vestry may be called at any time at the request of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, or of any two Vestry members. Notice of such meeting shall be given to the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, the Wardens, and the members of the Vestry. This notice shall specify the time and place of the meeting and the business to be considered. No other business shall come before such special meeting except with the unanimous consent of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge and all members of the Vestry.

4. Indemnification

a. No member of the Vestry shall be personally liable for monetary damages for any action taken, or any failure to take any action, unless said person has breached or failed to perform the duties of the office prescribed by these Canons, and the breach or failure to perform constitutes self-dealing, willful misconduct or recklessness. The provisions of this section shall not apply to the responsibility or liability of said person pursuant to any criminal statute, or for the payment of taxes pursuant to local, state, or federal law.

b. The Parish shall indemnify any Vestry member who was or is a party to, or is threatened to be made a party to or who is called as a witness in connection with any threatened, pending, or completed action, suit or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative or investigative, including any action by or on behalf of the Parish by reason of the fact that he/she is or was a member of Vestry against expenses, including attorney's fees, judgments, fines and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred in connection with such action, suit, or proceeding unless the act or failure to act giving rise to the claim for indemnification is determined by a court of competent jurisdiction to have constituted willful misconduct or recklessness.

With respect to any such action, the Parish may participate therein at its own expense; and the Parish shall be entitled to assume the defense thereof, with Counsel selected by the Parish to the reasonable satisfaction of the party being indemnified. After notice from the Parish to such person of its election to assume the defense thereof, the Parish shall not be liable to such person for any legal or other expenses subsequently incurred by such person in connection with the defense thereof. Such person shall have the right to employ separate Counsel in such action, but the fees and expenses of such Counsel incurred after a notice from the Parish of its assumption of the defense thereof, shall be at the expense of such person.

Section 2: Subordinate Entities

A. If a Parish wholly owns any subordinate entity, whether or not that entity is separately incorporated, and the Parish pays staff to perform work for that entity, that subordinate entity shall have its own bylaws.

- B. All such bylaws and any amendments thereto shall first be submitted to the Bishop and Standing Committee for approval prior to submission to the Vestry for approval.
- C. Any existing bylaws for such entities which have not already been approved by the Bishop and the Standing Committee shall be submitted to the Bishop and to the Chancellor for review.

Appendix 6. InSite Report – Church of the Epiphany

The QuickInsite report is designed to provide a quick look at a geography defined by a user. It provides an initial impression of a study area through a set of 12 demographic variables, the top 10 Mosaic Segments and 5 Religious Beliefs and Practices derived from the Simmons National Consumer research data.

According to the InSite Report, a three-mile area around Church of the Epiphany is 94% white, the average age is 39, but expected to change to 43 by 2019, single families represent 9% of the population, elders 65 and older, make up 18% of the population. Overall, people from age 35-65+ are 59.7% of the population. Yet, the parish expects parents with young children to be our target audience! Parents with young families are only 9% of the population, and 14% of those households with children have one parent . Approximately 80% of the population is employed. Family income in this area is expected to grow.

“The number of families with annual incomes above \$100,000.00 is projected to grow over the next five years. For the current year, it is estimated that 47.1% of all family incomes exceed \$100,000 per year. In five years, that number is projected to be 48.4%.

Religious trends at Church of the Epiphany study area, (people within 3 miles of the church) reflect 35% who seek alternative spiritual practices, 38% look for Bible study and prayer groups, 52% prefer contemporary worship, 65% prefer traditional worship. These percentages represent a combination of moderately/very important for religious or ministry preferences.¹

¹ <http://missioninsite.com/images/reports/pdfs/quickinsite-sample.pdf>
ExecutiveInsite report 8/16/2016 <https://pr.dfms.org/>
ExecutiveInsight Report 2/6/2015 <https://pr.dfms.org/>

Appendix 7. InSite Report – St. Peter’s

The demographics included in Tunkhannock InSite report indicate the population in dropped 5% in 2016, the number of households dropped by 5%, and the number of families dropped by 7.9%. Single parent households are 27.3% of the population, 72.7% of children are in two parent homes. The InSite report anticipates a continuing drop of about 4% in each category by 2021. Three of four elementary schools have closed for this school year, 2018-2019. Racially, 96% of the residents of the county are white, and this is not expected to change over the next several years. The average age in 2016 is 43.5, and is expected to continue to rise, but the state average age is 40 in 2016, and is expected to change over the next 10 years by almost 4%.

In Tunkhannock:

The number of families with annual incomes above \$100,000 is projected to decline over the next five years. For the current year, it is estimated that 30.5% of all family incomes exceed \$100,000 per year. In five years that number is projected to be 30.3%.

The religious preferences in this area include: 32% who look for alternative spiritual practices as moderately important, for 7% it is very important. 43% look for Bible study/prayer groups as ‘moderate/very’ important combined. A total of 54% moderate/very important combined seek contemporary worship, while almost 69% of the population prefers traditional worship as moderate/very important.

Appendix 8. Attendance at Worship, Both Parishes

St. Peter's	Dates	Number attended worship	
Retreat March 2	March 3	4/5	
	March 10	3/5	
	March 17	5/5	
	March 24	4/5	
Both parishes worship together at St. Peter's	March 31	4/5	
	April 7	5/5	
	April 14	5/5	
	April 21	4/5	
	April 28	4/5	
	May 5	5/5	
	May 12	4/5	
	May 19	5/5	
	May 26	5/5	
	June 2	2/5	
	June 9	5/5	
	June 16	4/5	
	June 23	(priest on vacation)	
	Both parishes worship together at Epiphany	June 30	
	Epiphany*	February 24	9/10
	Retreat February 9	March 3	9/10
March 10		7/10	
March 17		3/10	
March 24		5/10	
March 31		5/10	
April 7		8/10	
April 14		8/10	
April 21		7/10	
April 28		7/10	
May 5		6/10	
May 12		4/10	
May 19		5/10	
May 26		5/10	
June 2		4/9 * resignation	
June 9		5/9	
June 16		6/10	
	June 23 (priest on vacation)		

* This is both Saturday and Sunday attendance; some Vestry attend Saturday evening and some attend Sunday morning.

Appendix 9. Covenant Agreements

CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY COVENANT AGREEMENT 2019

To serve God by serving our neighbors in the community and the world.

Worship

We agree to: Attend worship two (2) to three (3) times a month

- Open our meetings with prayer/devotion led by members
- Incorporate prayer/meditation into daily life with a focus on parish and community needs (five families/week)
- Share prayers for one another via email

Congregation

We agree to: Use the mission statement in decisions

- Let the congregation know more about what Vestry does
- Invite members to attend Vestry meetings
- Keep congregation informed by posting minutes, etc.
- Each one be on a committee, help committees rotate membership
- Invite a committee to report each month to Vestry
(written or in person, pray for that committee; what does your committee need this month?)

Outreach

We agree to: Be enthusiastic with invitations and marketing

- Request sending bulletin to everyone on the e-mail list weekly
- Connect to community by volunteering locally
- Recognize and appreciate volunteers with hand-written notes
[Ask people: if you were looking for spiritual fulfillment, what would you need?]

Future

We agree to: Leave better [when my term on Vestry is ended, I feel I have made a contribution to this church community, my circle of friends and work]
Maintain the viability of the parish and grow the number of people who will become members
Ask our neighbors and friends: what do you like/dislike about church

Other ideas (not necessarily covenantal but growth ideas – add more!)

We will consider: Coffee bar on Saturday mornings, VBS survey of families who attend, Exit questions: why did you leave? Add discussion groups, make a 5-10 year plan of action for numerical/spiritual growth [how measure?], youth events, fun events, FUNdraisers, invitations? Use of space for community needs, rental

ST. PETER'S COVENANT AGREEMENT 2019

Revised at May, 2019, Vestry meeting; questions added at May meeting.

OUR PROMISES TO GOD: Attend worship

Every week possible – Sundays, usher; acolytes (2 children)

Regular and help where/when needed

Where is prayer and Bible study?? Still working on this

OUR PROMISES TO OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Attend meetings, particularly Vestry

Make Vestry a priority and prepare for the meeting

(read agenda, review minutes, keeping up what was I supposed to do)

Encourage others to join WinGS

Prayer? Respect? Does serve need of community belong here?

Still working on this

OUR PROMISES TO EACH OTHER – *as Vestry; is this church family?*

Participate in the community / and serve for example, by:

Help at food giveaway, make hats, etc. for needy, help people move if needed, provide emergency funding for others if needed, provide shelter for those who survived floods or other bad weather conditions, have conversations about God/Church, identify new opportunities to serve others, i.e. assist with needs of community

Prayer? Bible study? Still working on this

Where do these items go?

Subcategories: service – foundation of organization

- commit to modeling Christian values and promoting open and respectful communication within the parish, with the rector and with the community
- commit to serving/representing the needs of the congregation through approachability and active listening

Note: civil, respectful, responding/reach