**Diocesan Council Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, March 9, 2023 4:30 PM**

**Via Zoom**

**Present:** Margaret Porter, Chris Porter, Shelley Kesselman, Lauren Tennett, Tina Pickering,, Alanna Van Antwerpen, Colin Chapman, Emily Drake, Alan MaCrae, Reed Loy, Richard Davenport, Kathy Boss, Colin, Chapman, Benge Ambrogi, Greg Anderson, Bill Peterson, Kelly Sundberg-Seaman

After Margaret Porter opened the meeting, there was an opening prayer. New and returning members were welcomed.

**Mission Resources Committee fair share adjustment recommendations**

Colin Chapman explained that the recent meeting in Hopkinton with applicants was the first held in person since the 2020 lockdown. Applications became available in January, MRC meet in February for a preliminary discussion to determine questions and questioners. At the meeting with the five applicants, each church had ten minutes allotted for sharing, followed by ten minutes for questioning, and the churches could ask one another questions. Colin, who was present, abstained from all Londonderry conversations in meetings and from the committee vote. MRC determined that there was no reason to deviate from the amounts requested; even so, money remains in the committee budget. Possibly it can go towards other grant requests that come in during the year but probably won’t be needed for energy assistance grants. Other members (Lauren, Reed, Benge) were invited to share.

Benge: unusually, no unreasonable asks. The percentage of what most people requested in the 20% range of fair share. Colin: except for Londonderry none of these churches had made prior requests. It’s good news that there weren’t more pastoral-sized congregations.

Shelley asked what other support does the diocese offer the churches. Colin: Varies by congregation, could be conversations with the Bishop’s office about clergy leadership, worship model, etc. Trends about what was heard in conversations is passed to the diocesan office so staff can determine how to help congregations with lack of clergy hours or in transition. Richard: Congregations and leaders can establish direct relationships with the people in the diocese and other congregations who can help or give insight—it’s one of the sweetest things that can happen, that ongoing support is indispensable. Constructive and supportive, maintains relationships. Emily: Is there a time limit that a parish or priest has to respond to suggestions or show progress? Colin: MRC doesn’t police or manage the adjustment. Implementation not in our purview, and the diocese is usually working with them already on other pieces. Benge: it’s noted if there’s an application the following year, there’s need to respond to previous year. There have been congregations coming several years but no change. And no adjustment. Tina: Contexts, circumstances, personalities are so different. Love that we’re a diocese that doesn’t take cookie cutter approach. It’s a bespoke process. Benge: Adaptive. Reed: You can hear when a congregation is trying. Not highly mysterious.

Kathy moved acceptance of the group of recommendations. Bill seconded. Colin abstained. The motion passed.

**Update on Transitions**

Tina Pickering, now Canon to the Ordinary in both New Hampshire and Maine, is walking the collaboration between dioceses. She’s in Maine two days a week.

After bad news on clergy shortages, there are quite a few congregations in transition, and some announcements. Kathy Boss has been celebrated as new rector at Church of the Good Shepherd, Nasuah. Kit Wang, formerly of Trinity, Hampton, is now priest in charge at St. John the Baptist, Sanbornville as of March 5th. Richard Belshaw is priest in partnership in Christ Church, Portsmouth, serving that gospel oriented community in a sacramental and pastoral way. The Bishop appointed Robin Soller to half-time at St. Andrew’s in the Valley, Tamworth. Skippy Ender, former naval military chaplain, is appointed priest in charge at Christ Church, North Conway, and will live there. Leah Philbrick, from Seacoast NH but ordained in the UK, is priest in charge at Trinity, Hampton.

Current openings: St. John’s Walpole (working on it) All Saints, Littleton accepting names, doing a great job as a transition committee with Barbara Buckley as co-chair. Trinity, Claremont and Union. At St. Paul’s, Concord, Kate Atkinson retires this month, her ministry will be celebrated next month, Denis Brunelle is priest in charge in transition, they are moving into the search process.

Colin: With reportedly one clergy person available for every ten openings, is there a sense going into the transition officers conference that it may stay the same or any cause for optimism? Tina: I don’t get a sense that the clergy shortage is easing. Richard: The long term demographic trends pointed towards it fifteen years ago, so the end of the pandemic isn’t bringing a major shift. Tina: At the transition ministry conference we don’t usually present part time clergy openings, though in a smaller rural diocese there are o many part time.

**Formation and School for Ministry Update**

Kelly Sundberg Seaman, Dean of Formation, participates in a monthly gathering of deans of diocesan schools within the Iona Collaborative based at the Seminary of the Southwest. She asked prayers for several busy weeks for those in ordination process, with plans for ordaining vocational and transition deacons in June. The retreat with people in process and Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee will be this weekend—a time of formation and fellowship, a return to gathering in person, renewing relationships. After that, those later in the process will have diocesan General Ordination Examination (GOE)—Bill Petersen serves on our local board of examining chaplains—we don’t send most of our people to national GOE. The Standing Committee is meeting with people, the next but last threshold for ordinations.

*Lay ministry training:* there is a growing number of lay preacher students. In future, bi-vocational congregations will thrive through partnerships with people in holy orders and those practicing their baptismal call as lay pastoral leaders. We have 5 licensed lay preachers, 2 more have completed training, 4 people will study this spring. More people, especially in the North Country are feeling the call and receiving encouragement. Among the Iona Collaborative deans there’s a deep sense of commitment to form people who are called to any order of ministry. As a lay or clergy leader, be alert to gifts among you, or your own, know that we are committed to recognizing and empowering people to serve collaboratively. A prospective lay preacher needs to be an Episcopalian with clergy support.

Currently we have 3 or 4 people in regional discernment committees. Their next step would be postulancy, with formal training in Scripture, at least a year of seminary level study, at a seminary or our School for Ministry. We have excellent EfM groups and mentors (that full Bible course counts), and offer training in the art and theology of preaching, not just how we preach but why we preach. We’re working towards building other lay courses—including equipping people in pastoral healing and prayer, pastoral visiting. We will build what you need!

Reed: We can get something on the calendar for clergy and lay pastoral leaders, a training in how to have the radar up and say to someone, “I think you’re a deacon, I think you’re a priest, let’s talk more about that.” I’m aware of the ecclesial responsibility to replace myself as a leader, by people with gifts. Kelly: One of the gifts that partnership with Iona Collaborative is a discernment retreat focused on recognizing vocations, especially bivocational vocations. Been trying to figure out when they can come to NH to do it. There’s a conceptual pivot happening—lots of ways people are called into ministry. For theological education, the Church Divinity School of the Pacific has joined seminaries, making it possible to study for the MDiv. in new and flexible ways. People involved in local formation realizing that options are multiplying, in overlapping ways. There’s a whole spectrum of ways for people to be trained, no matter what order of ministry. Thanks to the people of the diocese of NH for believing in and supporting.

**Other Business**

Council Retreat Subcommittee: meeting on 20 April

Greg moved approval of February 2023 meeting minutes, Shelley seconded, the motion carried.

*Respectfully submitted,*

Margaret Porter

**2023 Diocesan Council Meeting Dates** (subject to change as necessary):

June 8, July 13, August 10, September 14, October 12, November 9, December 14