**Diocesan Council Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, September 8, 2022 4 PM**

**Via Zoom**

**Present:** Bishop Rob, Margaret Porter, Chris Porter, Joyce Johnson, Shelley Kesselman, Vickie Haines, Gregory Anderson, Alanna van Antwerpen, Gloria Gallant, Kelly Sunberg Seaman, Lauren Tennett, Katie Clark, Benge Ambrogi, Kathy Boss, Susan Eibner, Emily Drake, Bill Petersen, Barbara Buckley

**Call to Order and Opening Prayers.** At 4:02 PM, the Bishop opened the meeting with prayer on the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, prayed at service of her coronation from an old English prayer book.

**Bishop’s Time**

*Diocesan Convention.* The Bishop briefly previewed the Presiding Bishop’s visit to our diocesan convention and his other activities the first weekend of November.

*Lambeth Conference of Bishops.* Every ten years, the Archbishop of Canterbury invites all bishops in the Anglican Communion to gather at Canterbury and Lambeth Palace in London to takes counsel from them the mission of the church, deepening bonds of fellowship in Christ. This gathering was delayed, first due to disagreements about same-gender issues, then by the Covid pandemic. This is not a legislative meeting with resolutions—instead there are “calls” for responses to certain topics related to our life together: ecumenical relationships, attitudes towards environmental stewardship, economic development. For this conference, there was an intention to vote on the call relative to understanding of Christian marriage. The re-drafted resolution was posted with controversial language inserted while bishops were in transit. Ultimately it was decided that conference would not seek agreement about it, there are different understandings in different places in the Communion. Not everyone was happy, but undergirding differences was a sense of deep love. It was an experience of church at its best, the middle way, a wide and broad church.

In the Lambeth Palace garden, there was a celebration, grieving, and commitment to care of the earth. A Communion Forest was established, as bishops committed o plant trees across the globe, at each confirmation (and in NH also at every celebration of new ministry). Individual will receive a seedling of a tree to plant somewhere, symbolically but also in real terms re-populate our deforested planet, to re-oxygenate the world.

Benge: Follow through? Living into the calls, follow up with relationships in South Sudan. Bishop of Portsmouth eager to visit New Hampshire—there may be a pulpit exchange, something fun.

*White Mountain School.* The board hired Donald Ball as Interim Head of School, from a school in Florida, who is delighted to be there. More decisions to be made at next board meeting. There are still residential vacancies. With the need to place Afghan exile girls in US schools, WMS could serve—it has capacity to welcome the students and this effort would be is mission-aligned with the school. Funding and host families will be needed, and the girls cannot return to their country.

*State House testimony.* Today the bishop spoke at NH Department of Education in defense and in support of public schools, with Alanna and Katie. There are ongoing efforts to dismantle the public school system, with tax revenues being diverted to Education Freedom Accounts and going to charter schools, home schools, and independent evangelical Christian schools

**2023 Draft Diocesan Budget *Benge Ambrogi, Lauren Tennett, Chris Porter***

The standard budget resolution being presented to Diocesan Convention shows 2023 revenue as $1,913,570 and expenses of $2,006,788. The deficit of $27,084 is sizeable, but one we can handle. Benge went through the budget narrative, pointing out that the focus for 2023 is a continuation of initiatives begun in 2020. New things include: more money for Youth & Young Adults and temporary support to congregations for increased energy costs.

On the income side, parish fair share giving is up, but this is based on the 2021 parochial report. Endowment income, dependent on the Trustees’ support, is a little higher over last year. Changes to income: registration fees for an in-person convention next year, to include food. No more PPP money.

Expense: The fair share adjustment administered by Mission Resources Committee (MRC) is slightly increased with grants to congregations slightly decreased. A line item of $75,000 is added as energy assistance for congregations, the way to administer this to be determined—MRC will be asked to take it on. North Country Ministry endowment funds currently support Liz DeNauw in Colebrook and Tim Brooke in Lancaster. Communications funding is down because of less reliance on print media and more use of social media. The Bishop’s curates funding varies year to year. Ministerial development fund is up slightly. Clergy coaching will continue. Lay leadership expenses are down, due to online training and support replacing in person—less costly and more effective. Safe church line is up, a contract person might be hired in collaboration with VT and ME to effectively oversee the program.

Support of the Diocese: Salary and benefits are consolidated as line items, for confidentiality. Based on CPI data for the Northeast, a 7% salary increase is built in.

Gregory moved acceptance of the 2023 budget resolution, Joyce seconded, and the motion was adopted.

**2022 Budget adjustment: staff members’ housing allowances *Gloria Gallant***

The adjustment for Kelly Sundberg-Seaman’s tax declaration was moved by Susan, seconded by Shelley, and carried. The resolution for Susan Langle was moved by Susan (Eibner) seconded by Greg, and approved

**Community Engagement Commission & Digital Mission Update, *Alanna van Antwerpen***

Upcoming events include Voting as Spiritual Practice with Alan Yarborough, who will lead a discernment on being present in civil engagement.

**Diocesan Convention: Agenda, PB visit, Communications *Katie Clark***

Katie provided an update on convention and the Presiding Bishop’s visit to New Hampshire. The Convention Business Meeting takes place online the evening of Friday, November 4. The Presiding Bishop will be featured on Saturday, November 5 at the Capital Center for the Arts in Concord. There will be online registration for both events. Watch for information in eNews, social media posts, and standalone communications to November. Do share with peers and your churches, assets will be created for use in bulletins, including photos and graphics for social media—churches don’t have to create these for themselves. We are doing more on social media than any other diocese for a PB visit. Infor is available on the website and a button for the PB’s visit.

**Gospel Oriented Communities Resolution**

Convention Resolution 1 creates and affirms a new category of church, mandating that a covenant to be written for each community, to include the advisory team (equivalent to a mission’s bishop’s committee), contributions to fair share, where and how to worship—with built-in flexibility because all the communities are different. The bishop has the authority to establish our relationship with these communities, and determine when affiliation—or not—is appropriate based on individual circumstances.

The community would be required to keep records of who attends, their mission, fair share participation, and acting in accordance with our Constitution and Canons. They will then have access to the resources and support that parishes and missions receive. They will participate as voting members at convention, with 1 clergy and 1 lay delegate to convention, but if led by 1 layperson would have a second lay delegate. The Bishop can bring in a community, or remove one, with the approval of SC.

Kelly asked about the parochial report—because for summer chapels, ASA isn’t recorded and not reported to The Episcopal Church, it’s done by proximity. The Bishop advised referred the question to Celeste or Jason). Joyce added that interested bodies (Council, etc.) could receive a quarterly report, there’s a lot to learn as this progresses, documentation. Gloria wondered if we could request the group exemption from TEC, available to seasonal chapels because they have a Tax ID. Will these be 5013C? Benge responded that each covenant would clarify who is the fiscal agent, whether they have Tax ID.

Joyce moved that Council sign on as supporter of this resolution, Susan seconded. The motion passed with one abstention (Alanna, as the Digital Mission is included in it).

**Other Business**

Greg moved approval of the July 2022 meeting minutes, Emily seconded, the motion carried.

The Bishop adjourned the meeting, with prayer, at 5.47 PM.

**Next meeting date:** October 13, 2022 @ 4 PM

**2022 Meeting Dates:**

Oct 13, ~~Nov no meeting after Diocesan Convention,~~ Dec 8 (date might be adjusted if necessary)