

**Diocesan Council Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, January 12, 2023 4:30 PM**  
**Via Zoom**

**Present:** Margaret Porter, Lauren Tennett, Susan Eibner, Terry Knowles, Chris Porter, Gregory Anderson, Shelley Kesselman, Joyce Johnson, Emily Drake, Teresa Gocha, Alanna Van Antwerpen, Kelly Sundberg Seaman, Colin Chapman, Bill Petersen, Tina Pickering, Katie Clark, Barbara Buckley, Benge Ambrogi

After Margaret Porter opened the meeting at 4:30 PM, Susan Eibner offered Jan Richardson's *Blessing the Ordinary*.

**Formation and School for Ministry Update** *Kelly Sundberg-Seaman*

Kelly followed up her December report on the School for Ministry with her insights from the recent FORMA conference. The Earth Care Commission and people from Maine with teenagers and tweenagers are participating in Family Fun Day at Barbara Harris, and there is a Have your Say Retreat for Youth sponsored by Maine with NH participating. Episcopal Youth Event is recruiting ME and NH students for the triennial festival for Episcopal youth from church all over world. Individuals and congregations in NH have upcoming formation opportunities, there are resources available on the diocesan website, including Lenten resources for self, household, and congregation. If congregations have formation needs, please have them contact Kelly.

**Transition Update** *Tina Pickering*

Transition within the diocese continues to be active, and Tina had much to share.

The Vestry of Church of the Good Shepherd called priest-in-charge Kathy Boss as the new rector, with celebration of new ministry on March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Seventeen churches are in some stage of transition. Candidates interested in ministry in our diocese have been cultivated—it's helpful if people have a prior connection to the state: summer camp, or grew up here, or have family here. Plenty of people with those connections are discerning, some are open to part-time ministry.

Other churches are not officially in transition but have disruptions, but diocesan staff are walking through it with them. Some with fulltime priests are discerning part-time, some that have fulltime clergy are launching traditional searches. Many churches are gracefully moving along without consistent clergy as solutions are being worked out. The Claremont congregations are determining next steps, as are the two churches that were in the Seacoast Shared Ministry. Faith, Merrimack will close after the final service and liturgy on January 22, with the Bishop presiding. Members are connecting with area priests, being welcomed with open arms in churches close by.

The Transition Ministry conference is in March.

**Housing Allowance resolution (Louise Howlett)** *Lauren Tennett*

Extra time was needed to prepare this staff member's declaration. Bill Petersen moved acceptance, Shelley Kesselman seconded, the motion carried.

**Finance**

Benge said 2022 year-end financials would be presented to Council in February.

The wardens and treasurers meeting was postponed. Changes are being made so parochial reports can be filled out online using FormStack, which should be easier to use and will aggregate the data. Legacy information will be eliminated. This reduces paperwork for diocesan staff and treasurers and clerks, who have enough to do. The Episcopal Church's Committee on the State of the Church has asked dioceses to simplify the process and now we are doing it.

There will be a meeting scheduled for wardens and treasurers, and opened up to other vestry members to learn aspects of church operations: canons, budgets, planned giving, investments, stewardship. More info to come.

**Fair Share Adjustment Process**

Colin Chapman, chair of Mission Resources Committee, reported that the fair share application went live last week, and the meeting with requesting congregations will take place in Hopkinton in February. Teresa asked whether there is a metric about whether to apply for fair share? There is not, and the best solution if unsure is talking to Colin or

Benge for an assessment about whether to apply. If there was difficulty paying in 2022 or a church fell behind, that's a good reason to apply for 2023. If there are other circumstances, there can be a conversation.

Benge said that we are in a little dip. Following parochial reports from prior years, after the 2008 financial crisis, 2011 was a low point for fair share giving. We are now three years after the onset of the 2020 pandemic.

The Mission Resources is providing winter fuel support through grants. At the last MRC meeting, six applications were approved and a couple of more are coming in. Let your congregations know about this.

Tina added that there is discussion about parish, missions, gospel oriented community designations. We will likely see convention resolutions to change some churches' status. Council members can be ambassadors of the idea that change to mission status is not a downgrade. Problems getting a full vestry or carrying out clergy search are indicators. There's so much more flexibility for supplying missions with clergy in the current transition market, by appointing a priest-in-charge.

### **Bishop's Time**

Bishop Rob, who joined the Council after a prior meeting, spoke of the way the Holy Spirit is reshaping us, reforming us as church, and not in way that respects whether we want it or not. Transitions are keeping us at our prayers. He expressed gratitude to the staff and all present, for their forbearance, dedication, and fortitude. Prayer takes place every day in the chapel at noon, for all of us and you.

Some churches will be in transition of designation—from parish to mission, from mission to Gospel-oriented community, in order to reshape them. Meetings are underway with churches in Central Convocation regarding Holy Cross, Weare, engaging neighboring churches to have brainstorming about what could happen there. There are clergy health issues also, causing church trauma.

White Mountain School hosts an Afghani student, hopes to add another, raising funds and seeking a host family.

### **Council Retreat**

What does it mean to be a diocesan council in such times of turbulence? What is the role of contemplation, contemplative leadership? There has been no retreat for five or six years. They used to take place in September. Let's brainstorm, send emails.

### **Other Business**

The date for the April meeting was changed from Easter Tuesday to April 20.

Greg Anderson moved approval of the December 2022 meeting minutes, Colin Chapman seconded, Council approved.

After a closing collect, the meeting adjourned.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
Margaret Porter

**Next meeting date:** February 9, 2023 @ 4 PM  
Agenda items: 2023 year-end financials, etc.

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

February 9, March 9, April 20, May 11, June 8, July 13, August 10, September 14, October 12, November 9, December 14