

Diocesan Council Meeting Minutes
Thursday, December 12, 2021 4 PM
Via Zoom

Present: Bishop Rob Hirschfeld, Margaret Porter, Reed Loy, Emily Drake, Sue Poulin, Gloria Gallant, Valerie Benoit, Joyce Johnson, Shelli Gay, Kelly Sundberg Seaman, Gail Avery, Elsa Worth, Barbara Buckley, Bengé Ambrogi, Kathryn Olson, Tina Pickering, Bill Petersen, Chris Porter, Alan McRae, Teresa Gocha

Guests: Sarah Ambrogi, Bonnie Chappell, Winnie Skeates, HR Committee

After calling the meeting to order at 4:02 PM, he offered an opening prayer for a New Church Year and for a meeting.

Bishop's Time

Covid. Our state's infection rate is the highest in the country. The clergy are anxious. Most Episcopalians vaccinated. The current guidance holds, urging people to stay the course and continue to be careful. Gratitude and prayers are offered for those working in health care.

Diocesan Convention. We had no technical hitches. Katie Rengers' homily received a good response, aligned with our Missional Communities resolution. The feedback favored keeping convention a virtual event, but with Presiding Bishop Michael Curry coming in 2022, we want to be in-person at the Concord Centre for the Arts, which has large capacity. The Missional Communities resolution passed, next steps: Constitution and Canons exploring issues of governance, fair share, etc. and a subgroup of Council with experience in those communities will work on that. Thanks to Bengé, Gloria, Chris, and Finance Committee for budget work, that resolution passed. Resolution #2 regarding combined role for convocation Council Representative and Convocation Convener was the Bishop's idea. It was defeated after robust and healthy and loving respectful discussion, we can be grateful for outcome of conversation. Joyce recognized work done to close communication gaps, we need time for improvement. (She is willing to meet with convocations for discussions.)

Collaborations with neighbor dioceses. Conversations among ME, VT, & NH bishops continue. They will broaden in the coming year to include others. Vermont has a subcommittee called THRIVE ((Taskforce for Hope, Revitalization, Innovation, Vision, and Efficiency).

Transition & Community Engagement/Reconciliation

The Bishop offered thanks for the Gail Avery's service and ministry as she steps down as Canon for Transition and Community Engagement/Reconciliation. Her tenure on Council has lasted 11 years, in various roles. Gail provided the following transition update:

Jason Wells to St. Matt's Goffstown

Nancy Vogeles becomes Chaplain and director at Tuck Center, Hanover

Shared Seacoast Ministry has completed search committee survey, interested in priest-in-charge

Hank Junkin retires from Milford in January. Supply for 4-6 weeks, then priest in charge.

Trinity Meredith is in search following Robin Thomas Soller's retirement, completing OTM profiles

Michael Green's last Sunday in Nashua is this week, Greg Baker will serve during transition

Miriam Acevedo retired from St. Stephen's in November, parish now served by "the Steves": priest Steve (Blackmer) of the Woods), deacon Steve (Ekerberg) of the Sky.

HR Committee & Compensation Framework Sarah Ambrogi & Committee

The proposed updated compensation framework was sent in advance to Council, with a memo. Sarah, Winnie, and Bonnie from the committee, and Bengé, offered clarifications and answered questions on changes and rationale. Cash compensation increased 4%, nearly equal to the CPI. The big change to the health care benefit: now based only on the employee policy rather than the employee plus one. This matches our reality for our clergy enrollment. Overall the 2022 framework is consistent with actual compensation around the diocese. It passed review by the attorney at McLane.

Chris asked about clergy healthcare offset. If clergy aren't needing the benefit, why is offset included in recommended compensation? Response: We prefer to keep a progressive total compensation model which prevents the

churches from getting used to not paying healthcare, and keeps compensation consistent. Benge: If based on employee plus one, they could be incentivized not to take it up, and the ACA prevents that. There's no financial benefit to not taking healthcare. Gail: Even clergy without the medical trust healthcare still pay for healthcare, if shared with a spouse, so offset is important. Sarah: We aren't encouraging or allowing clergy to not have healthcare. Must either come from another source or the medical trust.

Elsa moved acceptance of the update as presented, Joyce seconded. After discussion, the motion was approved.

Staffing Changes, 2022 Budget Changes Review and Vote *Bishop Rob, Benge Ambrogi*

Pending decisions can't be announced until the Council approves the necessary budget revision.

Tina Pickering will become Chief of Staff, Canon to the Ordinary and Transition Officer, and oversee missional communities (currently five). Increase to compensation.

Benge Ambrogi remains Chief Financial Officer, will no longer serve as Canon for Mission Resources, and will work four days instead of five. Decrease to compensation.

Louise Howlett, provides pastoral support to clergy, counseling, spiritual direction, will be Dean to the College of Clergy. Change from contract to ½ time salary.

Kelly Sundberg-Seaman: continues as Dean of School for Ministry and will become Dean for Christian Formation, lay and ordained, with office at Diocesan House. Change from ½ time to fulltime, salary increase.

Gloria Gallant: will retire as Director of Finance sometime in 2022. Manages finances for three different entities: diocese, trustees, bishop's funds.

Finance: There will be a three-month overlap for Gloria to work with her successor.

Katie Clark: communications staffer in Diocese of Maine will replace Dave Dezeil, to work on newsletters, press releases, social media, will help congregations with same. No budgetary impact.

Alanna van Antwerpen: Digital Missioner, adding the Community Engagement role and Reconciliation. Was ¼ time, will be salaried at ½ time. Receives increase.

Shelli Gay: As Executive Assistant to the Bishop schedules visitations, receives parochial reports, leads Diocesan Convention and Capital Campaigns.

Kathy Traynor: Administrative Office Manager, handles hospitality, convention registrations, clergy events

Kate Harmon Siberine: Was below framework as Missioner for Franklin, receives increase

Overview: budget for contract employees decreases but salary lines increase. There is a slight increase in total amount of staff time. Finance Committee approves the changes, and others don't want the office to be under-staffed. Increase is mitigated by The Episcopal Church grant of \$40,000 for any purpose. With these changes the total deficit for 2022 will be \$98,000 higher than what Convention approved, a similar deficit in past years. We have \$4000,000 cash reserves to manage it for 2022, 2023. By 2024 and 2025, the capital campaign funds will support the missional communities, curates, etc.—that is its purpose.

Chris moved acceptance of the budget revision for 2022. Sue seconded.

Discussion points: Need a system of feedback to staff, internal mutual ministry reviews. Make sure congregations are being well served. Were positions posted for applications, or done internally? Bishop: Both, but mostly internal promotions, although Exec. Assistant and Admin/Office Manager were from outside.

When the vote was called, it passed with two abstentions. Kelly recused, as she is affected by the

Sustainable Development Goals recommended allocations *Gail Avery*

The diocese budgets \$10,000 annual for SDGs. Of the five applications, two didn't meet requirements. After good discussion and hard work, three finalists were chosen. A subcommittee reviews applications and makes the recommendation for the full Reconciliation commission approval. Past recipients submit reports on progress.

Recommended allocations for 2022: \$3000 to Breakfast Project at The Good Shepherd Church in Esmeralda Municipality (Cuba), \$3000 to The Rabbit Project in Camaguey (Cuba), \$4000 to World Food Program (WFP)—Emergency feeding Afghanistan Children.

During discussion Chris asked if the monies get where they are needed, is there danger they will fall into the wrong hands? Gail stated that the confidence level is good because of our due diligence and reporting requirement. For Cuba, there's a good connection through Mark Pendleton in Exeter. For Afghanistan, the UN is one of the few agencies that can get in.

The motion passed.

Gail will continue to have a role on the Commission.

There will be a request for support from Christ Church, Portsmouth, for a group working with Ascentria, to place an Afghan refugee family in the Christ Church rectory/vicarage. The prospect for priest-in-charge of the Shared Seacoast Ministry wouldn't need housing.

Other Business

The Council approved housing declarations for clergy on the Bishop's staff: Bishop Rob, Kelly, Alanna, Liz DeNauw.

Bill Petersen reported that the monies transferred from the Mission Resources fair share line to mission grants was not used. He will be on sabbatical in early 2022.

Campus Ministry Funding allocations were approved in the following amounts: Hanover \$15,000, Plymouth \$5500, Durham \$4000, \$28,500 (with vote to approve the \$500 over budgeted amount)

The Bishop thanked Kelly for leadership of the Long-Term Covid Response Team, and moderating conversations. Our communications on "Exile" has been copied elsewhere around the church. The committee members will be thanked for service and dismissed.

Council reps whose terms expire in 2022: Valerie, Kathryn, Reed. Elsa is filling an unexpired term.

Teresa requested a brief summary of Council meetings to share with convocations and congregations.

Valerie moved approval of October meeting minutes, Kathy seconded, the motion passed.

The Bishop adjourned the meeting at 5.26 PM.

Addendum: Electronic Vote, Afghan Resettlement in Seacoast

On Wednesday, December 15, 2021, at Bengé's request, Bill Petersen made a motion allowing the to provide funds for a grant to Ascentria Care Alliance in support of resettling Afghan Refugees, as the Mission Resources Committee will underspend their budget by at least \$5,000. Zac Harmon seconded. These funds will be provided to the groups working to place an Afghan refugee family, potentially in the rectory at Christ Church in Portsmouth. Ascentria (formerly Lutheran Social Services), assists the Federal Government with refugee resettlement.

A vote was conducted via email, with overwhelming majority support of the motion, which passed.

Next meeting date: Thursday, January 13, 2022 @ 4 PM
Resolution #2
Clergy Compensation Analysis

Respectfully submitted,
Margaret Porter, Secretary/Moderator