

**Diocesan Council Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, October 14, 2021 4 PM**  
**Via Zoom**

**Present:** Bishop Rob Hirschfeld, Margaret Porter, Valerie Benoit, Shelli Gay, Gloria Gallant, Bengé Ambrogi, Chris Porter, Zac Harmon, Reed Loy, Tina Pickering, Elsa Worth, Gail Avery, Bill Petersen, Teresa Gocha, Sue Poulin, Shelli Gay, Gloria Gallant, Joyce Johnson, Barbara Buckley

After the Bishop called the meeting to order, he offered an opening prayer on the theme of Joy.

**Bishop's Time**

There are ongoing conversations with our neighboring dioceses of Vermont and Maine. Each bishop will make an announcement about this at his/her respective diocesan convention.

Maine could take on payroll function of congregations for their treasurers, with a single payroll person, centrally handled (as already done in Massachusetts dioceses), which would relieve the heavy burden of payroll. Another area of collaboration would be Safe Church training, to avoid duplication of effort. Bengé and Tina and Bishop Rob will have a conversation with the communications officer in Maine, who could provide help with websites, communication functions, social media. Walter Brownbridge, CTO for Cultural Transformation for VT, has a portfolio matching Gail Avery's in community engagement, he is open to sharing that function, if we can spread it across two dioceses. Conversations right now are What If? And Why Not? NH has a tradition in the Anglican Communion for not being afraid of change, and breaking tradition, but we are also a land of steady habits. It's a really exciting time to be part of this church right now—many signs of joy, hopefulness, energy, and dedication.

**Safe Church Training**

Tina reviewed the various changes to the Safe Church training program, while pointing out that more time is needed to evaluate available new courses and how to administer them. Therefore, safe church training is suspended until January 2022, but those ministries in congregations can continue with clergy and safe church officers providing general oversight. The new learning platform, Presidium Academy, is better and The Episcopal Church is rolling out new courses related to model policies from General Convention 2018. The website is updated to reflect this, and a letter is being drafted for clergy, safe church officers, administrators.

**School for Ministry**

In Advent, clergy and lay ministers have license renewal. This includes Eucharistic Minister Visitors and worship leaders. The Commission on Ministry seeks ways to encourage lay ministry discernment resources, living into our gifts, discerning God's call in our lives, online ministries, the Daily Office, bible studies, Renewal Works. Our School for Ministry wants to offer a formation curriculum for lay persons, and clergy wanted training for lay preaching and preaching mentoring—this will now be offered as a license. Requirements: one year of seminary level scripture course, or two years of School for Ministry work, combined with a half-year or more of a preaching course, plus preaching group cohort feedback. This could be done through Wesley Seabury or our own EfM. Two people are starting the scripture course. In the spring, there will be a cohort group for mentored preaching, with the year-long scripture course offered next year. It is important for clergy to affirm the call to this ministry, with a letter of recommendation, leading to the certificate or license in lay preaching.

Barbara asked about accessibility to these courses: would they be centrally located, requiring in-person participation, or with remote opportunities? (So people in the North Country wouldn't have to drive.) Tina

explained that the School for Ministry is meeting almost exclusively online, with an invitation to meet in-person once a quarter, but this is not required. Content, lectures, and readings done by the individual on their own time, the classroom work is via Google Classroom via Zoom, with group discussion led by mentor-teachers Kelly Sundberg-Seaman and Michael Greene.

The School for Ministry currently has 8 students: three in the second year priestly formation program, three in the first year program (two are in Maine), two in the lay preaching program. The website is undergoin an update. People interested in the program/s can call Tina for info.

Joyce asked if EfM is online. Yes—due to Covid. Michael Atkinson at St. Paul’s, Concord is the EfM coordinator for the diocese.

### **Presentations to Convocations/Feedback**

Presentation had taken place at four of our six convocations, with Celeste Hemingson presenting Resolution #1, Bengé #2, and Gloria #3, with good conversation about all. Main feedback/comments on #1: this year it’s a vote of support, the real decision would come next year as we implement any recommendations into the canons, our governing document. On #2, questions relate to the need to recruit fewer people vs. increased time commitment, having fewer people involved. No requested changed on #3 (2022 budget), no requested changes, just questions about line items.

Question from Margaret: How was it meeting with 2 convocations together? (Lakes & Central) Bengé explained this arose as a scheduling matter—Lakes “crashed” Central, it seemed to go well. More than two convocations at once would be harder, with too many people.

Question from Zac: For Missional Communities, how to make sure convocations and congregations are connected with them? Bishop: There’s no concrete example in the Southern convocation. These communities are currently on the edge of the church’s mission, but in time they can become central, as there may be a proliferation of these communities in future.

Gail: The missional communities need to to be listed in our journal & directory.

### **Transition & Community Engagement/Reconciliation**

*Transitions.* Gail reported on her attendance at the transition ministry conference in September. She and the Bishop attended a wonderful farewell for Jamie Hamilton (All Saints, Peterborough). The congregation is being served by a cohort of retired clergy, it’s going well. The Search Committee is formed and will be commissioned on Sunday. Milford has two candidates with applications. Nancy Vogeles is resigning from St. Matthew’s to care for her mother in Hanover, last Sunday is October 31. Alanna van Antwerpen and another will cover pastoral care through December. The vestry has received applications. At Trinity Meredith, Joe Rose is interning with Celeste. Miriam Acevedo of St. Stephen’s, Pittsfield, retires at November 21 service. The Bishop is sending The Rev. Steve Blackmer, “Steve of the Woods,” and The Rev. Deacon Steve Ekerberg, “Steve of the Sky,” as priest and deacon. Michael Reinke starts at Faith Merrimack this Sunday.

The Bishop praised the clergy retreat as “marvelous.” Brother James Koester from SJJ, rooted the gathering in prayer, it was really a retreat with time for mediation and prayer. He and the Bishop had many “walks” with clergy over those three days, as people contemplate retirement. Pray for an increase of ministry!

*Community engagement.* A Reparations discussion was held in September. Zac reported that between 50-100 tuned in, good turnout and good response. Bishop Rob led the land acknowledgement statement, which will be presented at Diocesan Convention. The band of Penacook of the Abenaki have shared history in NH from the Ice Age to the present, information is on our Digital Mission Facebook page. Paula Salvio, professor of Italian studies, gave information about Columbus Day, which can be contentious for the Italian-American community. There will be more engagement, reconciliation, action, going forward.

*SDGs.* At the December Council meeting, the subcommittee will present recommendations for our budgeted SDG grant of up to \$10,000 for a global initiative. Application deadline is November 15.

### **Mission Resources/Additional Funding**

Bill Petersen explained the MRC two-fold mission: providing venture capital for mission, and overseeing fair share adjustment. Fewer folks applied for fair share assistance, there is \$10,000 left over in the budget. The committee provided HOPE grants (Help for Online Promotion of Evangelism), up to \$3000 for worship and outreach. All the mission grant funding is spent, and though there are no pending grants, the committee requests funds to cover any November-December grant applications. In the interest of flexibility, MRC requested approval to access the \$10,000 adjustment money, if needed.

Joyce Johnson moved approval of a variance to MRC budget of \$10K underspent, remaining in the fair share adjustment line, to the mission resources grant line. Elsa Worth seconded. Discussion: Margaret can send a memo to the finance officer. The motion carried with one abstention (Reed Loy).

### **Other Business**

Reed moved approval of the July meeting minutes, Zac seconded, the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at approximately 5.15 p.m.

**Next meeting date:** Thursday, December 9, 2021 @ 4 PM

SDG recommended allocations, Convention feedback, staff housing allowance HR committee will present compensation and benefits Sarah invited to attend.

*Respectfully submitted,*

Margaret Porter, Secretary/Moderator