

Diocesan Council Meeting Minutes
December 10, 2020
Via Zoom

Present: Bishop Rob, Margaret Porter, Chip Robinson, Reed Loy, Joyce Johnson, Valerie Benoit, Christ Porter, Teresa Gocha, Gail Avery, Barbara Buckley, Gloria Gallant, Alan McRae, Bengé Ambrogi, Zac Harmon, Bill Petersen

On opening the meeting, at 4.03 PM, the Bishop reminded us that this was the Feast day of Thomas Merton, and shared a sermon excerpt preached the morning after Merton's death. "Are you truly seeking God?" "Contemplation isn't satisfaction. It's search." Advent is a season of longing, of waiting, and continued hunger. God is yearning for us, desiring to be with us more closely. A prayer followed the reading. (printed at the end of this report)

Bishop's Time

Glad we're meeting more often now, in Covid time. Presence is needed. A Sacred Meal for Dispersed Community/Agape Meal is available. Those interested can check out Colin Chapman's "how to" featuring his family. The Long-Term Team is reading *How to Lead When you don't Know Where You're Going*, because we are definitely in a liminal season. This is no time for drawing out long-term goals or a strategic plan, but to attend to the soul of the church. Asking ourselves, "What is the soul of the ECONH, how do I tend to my own soul, the soul of others?" Long-term committee will discern how to make Council, Trustees, Finance, business committees, etc. reflect our deep particular relationship with Jesus, by gathering stakeholders, listening to voices we want to hear. Reed mentioned the importance of naming those learnings now, not just let them disappear when the pandemic passes.

Episcopal visitations have resumed. The canons require the Bishop to visit every parish once every 3 years, but he's trying to do it every year and a half. He's currently making up the ones that were missed in summer. In person if possible, some remotely. (Diocesan worship will still be offered every Sunday through the pandemic.) Visitation includes time with the Bishop, "coffee hour," Vestry gatherings.

Clergy will be 1-A status—essential workers—for a coronavirus vaccine. There might be distinctions, depending on type of clergy, for getting to the front of the line.

Diocesan Short-Term COVID Team

Chip updated on tasks undertaken, but with spike in infection the team is aware that people won't be going back into their buildings. The next meeting won't take place till early January. A subset of the group has developed a first draft of an FAQ document with responses to common questions. Curtis Metzger is reviewing a variety of resources on metrics for best guidance, but there is a rise in positivity rates so indoor worship is strongly discouraged. For those interested in air purifiers, the team recommends professional consultation. With each inquiry from a congregation, a liaison is assigned. The team addresses issues as they arise, as quickly and accurately as possible, and keeps up with what neighboring dioceses are doing. We are very current compared to some other, judging by websites. Bengé wondered what the team will do to address vaccine, its impact? This hasn't been done yet but will be. According to Teresa, the "Short-term" committee doesn't feel short-term.

Sustainable Development Goals Grants

Gail had provided the Council in advance with documentation on this year's five applicants, and reminded us of the criteria for acceptance. Of our total annual diocesan budget, .7% is used to fund SDG initiatives, about \$10,000. This year the money is pretty equally divided among three entities: \$3300 to Head to Head, Inc. (Haiti, St. Andrew's, Hopkinton), \$3300 to St. Vincent's Center (Haiti, St. Andrew's, New London), and \$3400 to Fe y Esperanza/Faith and Hope (Mexico, All Saint's Church, Peterborough). Questions asked include "Do they receive support from the parish? Is there a sustainability component? Is it a global

partnership?” With the application on the website, we receive applicants unrelated to ECONH. SDG group goes to Reconciliation Committee: Susan Lassen, Dana Dakin, Sally Mackey, Miriam Acevedo, Tobias Nyatsambo, Elizabeth Rotch. The proposal to accept the recommendations for SDC was moved, Teresa seconded, and it passed unanimously.

Recommendation to include PPP loans in Fair Share calculation *Benge Ambroggi*

The Episcopal Church will include Payroll Protection Monies in their fair share calculations for dioceses. Our diocesan Finance Committee feels and recommends that it should therefore be assessed in our diocesan Fair Share. This is a policy decision for dioceses, some will assess it, some won't. Chris moved acceptance of the policy, Teresa seconded. During discussion, Reed said his congregation took PPP but would make a decision in January. Benge recommends, that, so the forgiveness will not be applied till 2022. Some churches, like Zac's, factored in paying it back. Benge recommending discussing impacts ahead of time if the decision will affect someone's livelihood. The motion passed.

Approval of budgeted campus ministry requests (Dartmouth, UNH) *Benge Ambroggi*

ECONH budgets \$28,000 annually for campus ministry programs at PSU, Dartmouth, UNH \$4000. UNH receives theirs in two payment. Benge made the motion to send their second one. Alan seconded. During discussion, Joyce shared that the group has done the Black Heritage Trail, and the church included a university student on their rector search committee. The group has a real vitality, even with the COVID situation. The motion passed.

Approval of clergy staff housing declarations (Avery, Hirschfeld) *Gloria Gallant*

This annual approval for tax purposes takes place before year's end. Reed moved agreement, Barbara seconded, and the motion carried. Margaret will print, sign, and mail the declarations to Gloria.

Transitions

Gail reported that Durham's search committee is collecting names and vetting applications. Jay McLeod assisted with their mock interview. Joyce reported that it went well. The next Seacoast area transition will be Christ Church, Portsmouth/Trinity, Hampton, a process beginning in January. Now that Richard Davenport is on long-term disability, Susan Eibner is the multi-church/Episcopalian/Lutheran interim for 2 years. Cricket Cooper has returned as Interim Associate at St. Thomas in Hanover. Sandi Albom accepted a call to be interim in Massachusetts but remains canonically resident in this diocese and will continue work in recovery ministry here.

Other Business

Alan moved acceptance of October minutes, Reed seconded, the motion carried. We closed with prayer. (See below).

Next meeting: January 14, 2021

January Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/95949807575?pwd=cFRDWDVBa2ZtcERxUjIOTi9DYk03QT09>

Meeting ID: 959 4980 7575

Passcode: 477069

Teresa moved adjournment, Chip seconded, and the meeting concluded at 5.06.

Eternal God, who rulest the world from everlasting to everlasting: Speak to our heart when we faint for fear, and the love of many grows cold, and there is distress of nations upon earth. Keep us resolute and steadfast in the things that cannot be shaken; and make us lift up our eyes and behold, beyond the things that are seen and temporal, the things that are unseen and eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

O Lord our God, in whose hands is the issue of all things, and who requires from thy stewards not success but faithfulness: Give us such faith in thee and in thy sure purposes, that we measure not our lives by what we have done or failed to do, but by our obedience to thy holy will: through Jesus Christ our Lord.

From Parish Prayers, Compiled by Frank Colquhoun: Hodder and Stoughton, London 1967

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