

Diocesan Council Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 15, 2021 4 PM
Via Zoom

Present: Bishop Rob, Margaret Porter, Chip Robinson, Emily Drake, Teresa Gocha, Valerie Benoit, Elsa Worth, Chris Porter, Gloria Gallant, Kelly Sundberg-Seaman, Shelli Gay, Bill Petersen, Reed Loy, Zac Harmon, Bengé Ambrog, Kathy Olson, Terry Knowles, Barbara Buckley, Joyce Johnson

The Bishop opened the meeting with a prayer and welcomed Elsa Worth as Lakes Convocation clergy representative for Lakes, and Shelli Gay as his new Executive Assistant.

Bishop's Time

With warmer weather, outdoor worship is now possible. The Bishop has one confirmation. The Governor will soon end the statewide mask mandate, which puts pressure on church leadership to enforce mask wearing at church. If we ever want children back in church, it is important for vaccinated adults to maintain mask-wearing.

The Bishop's staff has been meeting with Alanna van Antwerpen, recipient of a grant from The Episcopal Church (TEC) for a mission in the digital sphere, i.e. digital network community. Currently it is being called Digital Mission New Hampshire. Every second Sunday there will be a worship service at 9:30, through the month of August. Additional offerings will include occasional evening forums on topics of interest. On Tuesday, May 11, the Digital Mission will host an informal conversation on race in NH, between James McKim and the Bishop. There will be a link on diocesan website for the Zoom meeting. This is not designed as a mission solely for the Episcopal church—Alanna hopes to reach people not in the church. The Bishop is resuming visitations, and in May in Nashua will baptize people there who have come into the church since the pandemic.

Convocations

Valerie requested a more formal Council response to the work done last year by the Convocation Adventurers group that met over the summer. Bengé studied meeting minutes and discovered Council never took action after Reed and the group presented their final report. It is recommended that we resume the effort to advise convocations about their role and responsibilities (there is a handbook in need of updating) and provide direction and guidance on accountability and follow-through with regard to convention resolutions. A framework was created to keep resolutions before us. Central Convocation discussed the response to the reparations resolution. Valerie pointed out that the conveners' report to the journal would state what had been done and discussed relative to convention resolutions, and they need to be aware of the timeline. Also, when people become a new convocation delegate, they need a revised document with guidance for conveners and member.

Reed moved that co-conveners provide these documents to the convocations annually, Valerie seconded. During discussion, Zac asked about the process, obtaining feedback. Reed responded that we did this last year and got very little response. Bengé agreed there is a need to merge the two documents—the handbook and the timeline, but pointed out that accountability should be written into the resolution, spelling out expected action of convocation and congregations. Reed added that the Resolutions Committee should be informed about this to ensure inclusion in convention resolutions. Barbara mentioned working on Sacred Ground with Kathy Boss and wondered if anyone else in the diocese was doing it? The Bishop responded that there are groups around the diocese, in response to the resolution, they came up from the grassroots. Elsa was concerned about how to fit everything in, if convocations meet only four times a year, and invite volunteer speakers but also have discussion on resolutions late in the year. If upholding resolutions is a primary role, that takes time. Terry pointed out that some convocation reps have served for many years, others have not and don't know what the group is designed to do. Most nonprofits have a board member handbook. Margaret recalled that last year's group hoped to provide enough clarity and description of responsibility that potential delegates would be excited and enthusiastic about taking on the important work of the diocese.

The Bishop called for a subgroup to review the documents and reiterate the purpose of convocations. Last year's resolutions, and the Covid pandemic, re-energized convocations. Margaret offered to convene the group, and the following members volunteered: Emily, Valerie, Teresa, Kathy, Joyce, and Bengé (staff liaison). Reed's resolution was voted on and passed.

Short-term Response Team

Chip said the group would be meeting on Tuesday. Covid Act Now reports NH as having an elevated risk level. Daily new cases rate is 32, our standard was 10 for indoor, 20 for outdoor gatherings. Few counties meet the standards for positive test rate. Our standards correspond with those of our neighbors. Congregations will be expected to track numbers for themselves, and continue with masking and distancing and sanitizing surfaces. We will be determining the vaccination impact on re-opening plans. Congregations contain many older people, many have been vaccinated once or twice, this might provide some leeway and modifications for gatherings and meetings of outside groups, 12-step programs, and thrift shops. The next meeting is Chip's last as convener, a successor will be needed.

Long-term Team

Kelly said that team will soon schedule a next meeting. Elsa is a new member. Topics at the Thursday morning clergy gathering brought new urgency to the Team's work. What does hybrid worship look like? It isn't just making things work for the vaccinated, young parents and young clergy also need pastoral support, to ensure the intergenerational life of the of the congregations. We don't want to be distracted by the pull of returning to the familiar. As role of pastors to the community, we must be caretaking of all: attentive to loneliness and isolation of elders, as well as the strain of decision making of working families. Book groups are emerging to read Stephanie Spellers' new book *The Church Cracked Open*,

Other Business

Barbara moved acceptance of the March meeting minutes, Teresa seconded, and the motion carried.

Next meeting date: May 13, 4 pm

After concluding prayers, the bishop adjourned the meeting at 5.1 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Margaret Porter