

Diocesan Council Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 13, 2021 4 PM
Via Zoom

Present: Bishop Rob, Margaret Porter, Emily Drake, Valerie Benoit, Joyce Johnson, Elsa Worth, Terry Knowles, Reed Loy, Sue Poulin, Gloria Gallant, Bengé Ambrogi, Barbara Buckley, Shelli Gay, Kelly Sundberg-Seaman, Bill Petersen, Zac Harmon, Alan MacRae

Noting that it was Ascension Day, the Bishop read a passage from the Book of Acts and opened the meeting with a prayer. We welcomed Sue Poulin as Seacoast Convocation's clergy representative. Chip Robinson has retired, after approximately forty years in ministry.

Bishop's Time

Covid update. The diocesan E-News sent out updated guidance on returning to in-person worship, outdoors and indoors, communion distribution, precautions, and careful provisions for distribution of wine. There are outbreaks in Sullivan County (nursing home, Newport community). The vaccine doesn't make a person fully immune. The Bishop thanked those the Council members serving on the the Short Term Team, and Curtis Metzger for succeeding Chip Robinson as convener.

Transitions. With Canon Gail Avery on sabbatical, the Bishop is handling these matters. He anticipates a "tsunami" of clergy retirements, all across the diocese, some half a dozen announcements aren't yet public but will be over the summer. We can be thankful to the Holy Spirit for inspiring us to found the School for Ministry—we are preparing people with different protocols, among them a series of town meetings to discern where the Holy Spirit is leading, what are available gifts, challenges, perceived threats. Are there other models for leadership? The Thursday Clergy Gathering is now the Leadership Group, because two congregations currently have laypersons as pastoral leaders (Dan Andrus in Dunbarton, Aaron Jenkyn in Newport).

Capital Campaign. Its purpose will be to equip people for new models of leadership. Examples of what we've done already: Church of the Woods, the re-opened Mission in Franklin, Ed Frost's dinner church in Manchester, Alanna Van Antwerpen's formation of the Digital Mission. Without new vision, only the largest few congregations would continue and thrive. If we allow that to be the path, there would be more alienation and splintering, communities would have no place to share burdens and joys. We have the School for Ministry, we are creating missional communities—not canonical missions for people to gather for worship and Christ's presence. This capital campaign would provide resources to support people and mission, clergy coaching, possible loans to congregations. The intent is to support flourishing and thriving, not merely surviving. We are currently in a period of listening prior to a three-year campaign, and are a year away from beginning the ask. It will involve spinning off dividends and resources as well contributions. The diocese is working with Leslie Pendleton, who previously worked at the Episcopal Church Foundation. We are already receiving messages of support, encouragement, insight.

Bengé: If people interested in more details or being involved, email him or Bishop.

Convocations

Joyce reported on the subgroup's work combining three documents: Convocations Handbook, the ad hoc committee's recommendations, and Bengé's 2018 memo for co-conveners. The best practices calendar starts in January when new delegates and co-conveners begin their work. The document includes the review of resolutions, and promoting action and response on those. Gloria wondered if it contained info that that convocations aren't closed meetings, lay parish leaders could attend. (This will be added.) Zac suggested putting the new delegate responsibilities at the beginning. Kelly pointed out that parish nominating committees are another important audience for the document. Bengé stressed the importance of having overlap between vestries and bishop committees and convocation delegates. Reed wanted to know if there was information about how many delegates a congregation is supposed to have. There is a formula, the diocese can provide that info. A future gathering of conveners is planned, with the Bishop attending, as well as members from the subgroup, to foster networking and share the best practices.

Short-term Response Team

The CDC recently released new guidance, stating that masking is unnecessary for vaccinated persons, indoors or outdoors. We have no way of knowing who is vaccinated, will continue to recommend caution as congregations begin to gather again.

Long-term Team

Kelly reported that team members are dispersing among diocesan book groups during May and June, participating in the reading of *The Church Cracked Open* by Stephanie Spellers. The team will convene again in late June.

Other Business

Zac moved acceptance of the April meeting minutes, Joyce seconded, and the motion carried.

Next meeting date: June 10, 4 pm. Agenda: More on transitions, latest Covid updates and guidance, indoor worship protocols, diocesan convention plans and theme,

Motion to adjourn.

After concluding prayers from Traditional Collects, second prayer for the Ascension, the Bishop adjourned the meeting at 4.55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Porter, Moderator/Secretary