

Diocesan Council Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 9, 2023 4:00 PM
Via Zoom

Present: Bishop Rob, Margaret Porter, Chris Porter, Terry Knowles, Joyce Johnson, Shelley Kesselman, Emily Drake, Barbara Buckley, Colin Chapman, Alanna Van Antwerpen, Alan Macrae, Lauren Tennett, Bengé Ambrogi, Greg Anderson, Bill Petersen, Tina Pickering

Bishop Rob called the meeting to order at 4:04 PM, opening with a prayer for time of disaster on behalf of the people of Turkey and Syria following the earthquake, and another prayer for “those who work in offices.”

Bishop’s Time

Faith, Merrimack. This mission was closed on January 19, 2023. Members worshiped in Wheeler Chapel, not owned by them or ECONH. Geof Smith, retired from the Presiding Bishop’s staff and resident in NH, is helping to dispose of the material possessions—organ, chairs, etc. ad possessions, so Geof Smith helping to dispose of material assets, organ and chairs, etc. There will be an open house at the church, if any need prayer books or other assets, which allows Faith’s possessions to live on. People who worshiped there are spreading out into other churches: Goffstown, Milford, Londonderry, West Manchester.

Seacoast Shared Ministry. The former pairing of mission churches Trinity, Hampton and Christ Church, Portsmouth, concluded on December 31, 2022. The Bishop will make a request of the Standing Committee for a change of status, making Christ Church a Gospel-oriented community rather than a mission. The campus is four acres, with a rectory, Little Blessings Daycare in the church basement, a burial ground of former enslaved persons. Alternate uses are being explored, with possibilities for continuing the daycare, providing housing and worship space. The rectory is currently occupied by an Afghani family. The congregation is served by Richard Belshaw.

Union, Claremont and Trinity, Claremont. These ministries are being reimagined. Both are parishes but creating a single mission from the two will probably be a resolution presented at the next diocesan convention. It is a challenged town with school issues, but signs of new life and revival taking place.

Transitions. Robin Thomas Soller, retired from Trinity, Meredith after 26 years, is the part-time priest-in-charge at St. Andrew’s, Tamworth. Caroline Hines is retiring. The rector of St. Paul’s, Concord retires in mid-March with a final service in her honor on April 16th, with the Bishop present. Canon to the Ordinary Tina Pickering has begun as CTO for Maine also, with 2/3 time in New Hampshire and 1/3 time in Maine. She will continue transition work here and serve Bishop Thomas Brown in a chief of staff role. There will be a salary reduction to our 2023 budget. Shelli Gay, Executive Assistant to the Bishop will continue in that room at ½ time and spend ½ time on the Capital Campaign.

Question: Joyce asked whether the former missions will still have delegates to convocation and convention. Yes. A Gospel-oriented community is allowed one delegate plus the priest.

Clergy Conference. Led by Cynthia Bourgeault, it produced remarkable stories of places previously in decline and stress: St. James and Good Shepherd in Laconia have called Janet Lombardo to serve both, they are holding a joint service using a combination of Episcopal and Lutheran liturgies. Susan Langle is joyfully serving as priest in partnership at Epiphany, Newport.

2022 Year-end financials Lauren Tennett

Lauren led the council through the balance sheet. Congregational giving is consisted. She’s continuing to monitor cash reserves to be in compliance with policy, it will be adjusted sometime Q1. The undeposited funds are those that came in over the holidays, were recorded but not in bank. Diocesan Advance Fund loan repayments are all current, but DAF Q4 activity isn’t reflected yet. Bengé requested that people pass on the staff’s gratitude to their convocations and churches that fair share giving is up to date. On the Profit & Loss statement, dividend distributions have been corrected and are back on schedule. There has been an audit adjustment for grant monies received in 2021 to place them in the correct year. The North Country Funds transfer will be corrected in 2023. There are a few new program lines to reflect the School for Ministry, with congregations making contributions to it, and that activity is picking up. There’s some rearrangement of other funds. Overall, the numbers are a little ahead of budget, but not all Q4 income and expenses are updated. Sustainability grants given out by the Standing Committee totaled \$108,856, which is a record.

Community Engagement and SpiritBound Digital Mission Alanna Van Antwerpen

Commissions Update. Efforts are underway for commissions to develop practices together and communicate with one another and the Bishop. They have met with him one-on-one to revisit mission statements and purpose statements and will take these back to their commissions this month. The groups are revitalizing, post-Covid, and reengaging with their

community partners and the churches, leveraging experiences. They are in conversation with Katie Clark, Communications Officer, to share ministry stories and roll out to our social media platforms, eNews, press releases. World Mission Sunday is February 19, there will be a blog post on the website and information on how to participate via link. The Angola committee is asking all to read a prayer. Due to low registration (it's winter!) Family Fun Day sponsored by the Earth Care Commissions was cancelled, but more family fun is coming at a better season. Over the next few weeks, the Prison Concerns Committee is participating in a restorative justice seminar, learning about alternatives to the current justice system and conflict resolution.

Spirit Bound Digital Mission. Since 2021, there has been investment towards planting an online church community dedicated to making church accessible to those not visiting a church building on Sundays. The gathering takes place on Sundays at 7:00 p.m. live on Facebook, and there's a weekly newsletter. Digital dialogues is being hosted, conversation with Colin Chapman from the Red Church Door and Bishop Mark Beckwith on a forum. A new logo and website are being developed in consultation with Katie Clark, to provide a comprehensive platform for accessing content. This will tie together the diocesan website, YouTube, and Facebook. Those with ideas or questions should get in touch.

Re-Allocation of CHiPs funding to Children's Literacy Foundation

The CHiPs program in the past was supported by the purchase of toys that were brought to diocesan convention, and taken to the men's and women's prisons for "shopping" for their children and gift-wrapping. Money is also collected to support the program—often more is given than spent. The current amount is over \$37,000. This was given with the understanding that it would go to gifts for children of incarcerated. The auditor raised the necessity of distribution, and Lauren and Alanna discussed with CHiPs and Prison Concerns to figure out what to do. Simultaneous, the Children's Literacy Foundation sought funding to purchase books—the incarcerated persons could select a book and give it to their child on visitation day or send via mail, which maintains involvement in the child's life. This program enhances the lives of the inmates and the children. Their grant request came to the Mission Resources Committee, which didn't have an appropriate category, as they give only to congregations.

Council was asked to approve the grant request and fund \$9000 of CHiPs monies to the Children's Literacy Foundation. Shelley made the motion, Joyce seconded. With no discussion approval was unanimous. Colin Chapman reported hearing some concerns from people wishing for more definition of how the program works, and guardrails and restrictions by CHiPs that make it less rewarding. If writing a check, the timing coincides with Stewardship season and Christmas. Can restrictions be listed on items to purchase? Alanna reported that there was a vote at the last Prison Concerns meeting.

Diocesan Council Retreat

This has not taken place for several years. It allowed an opportunity to step back from the money-moving and administrative and programming role of council, letting members know one another on a soul level, pray together, spiritual reflection (and spiritual accountability), being reminded of how God's mission has a church. In the past it was a day retreat, sometimes at St. Andrew's, Hopkinton. Doesn't have to be complicated or heavy. We can go to a place (suggestions: Newport, White Mountain School, Holderness, Claremont, Laconia).

Subcommittee volunteers: Shelley Kesselman, Alan MacRae, Greg Anderson, Bengé Ambrogi, Margaret Porter

Other Business

Bill moved approval of the January 2023 meeting minutes, Emily seconded, and the motion carried. After closing intercessions and a collect, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Margaret Porter

Next meeting date: March 9, 2023 @ 4 PM
Agenda items: Mission Resources fair share adjustment recommendations

2023 Diocesan Council Meeting Dates (subject to change as necessary):

March 9, April 20, May 11, June 8, July 13, August 10, September 14, October 12, November 9, December 14