

Executive Council Meeting
January 23, 2021
By Zoom Conference

These minutes were approved at the March 27, 2021 meeting.

Members Present: Dr. Mary Ellen Brown, Mstr. Jeffrey Dreyer, Ms. Lara Dreyer, Mr. Dick Frey, Ms. Rose Anne Grasty, Ms. Sally Hardgrove, The Rev. Paul Jacobson, Mr. Michael McGraw, The Rev. Rebecca Nickel, The Rev. Jan Oller, The Rev. C. Davies Reed, Ms. Mariann Scott, Ms. Susan Steigerwald, Mr. Sean Sullivan, The Rev. Holly Rankin-Zaher, Miss Ellie Zaher, The Rev. Suzanne Wille, Canon Brendan O’Sullivan-Hale, The Rev. Canon Kristin White, The Rt. Rev. Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows, Ms. Janet Brinkworth.

Members Absent: The Rev. Mary Bargiel, Mr. Isaiah Kuch, Mr. John Steele, Dr. Laurel Cornell

The meeting was called to order at 10:02am. Bishop Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows led the group in morning prayer.

A roll call of those present was confirmed by Ms. Janet Brinkworth

Organizing for Business. Canon Kristin White presented a review of our diocesan mission and Executive Council norms. The Bishop confirmed that all in attendance agreed with our mission and these norms.

Mission Strategy. The Bishop began this topic reminding the Council that the canon chartering this committee was amended at our 2020 Annual Convention. The question is how to best support congregations in gaining clarity of mission, working toward financial sustainability and strengthening neighborhood relationships. Bishop Jennifer has invited individuals to serve a two-year term on a new committee to focus on this task (members of this reconstituted committee will be announced soon).

The Bishop turned the conversation over the Canon Kristin, who reminded the Council of the ad hoc group of nine members that was convened last year to do preliminary work on an advisory and exploratory level to move forward. The amendment to Canon 5 approved at diocesan convention includes a combination of clergy and lay members of the Committee on Mission Strategy. Once invitations have been accepted, the committee will move forward with the advisory group’s recommendations.

Canon Brendan O’Sullivan-Hale indicated that he and Canon Kristin have had a conversation about the possibility of forming a community purchasing alliance, replicating a model used in other dioceses and non-profit networks to use collective purchasing power to negotiate better pricing and service for common services such as utilities, copier contracts, and solar power installation. He indicated that conversations with possible participants will be convened in coming months to evaluate interest and feasibility.

Canon Kristin added that this idea can be generalized to the whole diocese, not just certain geographic areas or church size. The Bishop indicates this is an opportunity for not only pricing benefits but relationships and networking. Canon Kristin also indicated that the Racial Justice & Reconciliation team has previously raised the point of promoting minority-owned businesses. Canon Brendan reminded the Council that the Thriving Congregations Grant that is now in place is to evaluate each building and associated expenses, which makes this a timely topic.

The Bishop reminded the Council that the diocese is disciplined and deliberate about what is presented and considered for presentation, and the Council is expected to evaluate programs and projects.

Leadership and Diocesan Updates. Bishop Jennifer began with some leadership news. The Rev. Jeff Bower is stepping down as the chair of Global Missions. Ms. Joan Amati has stepped down as the diocesan representative to Province V. Some details concerning the work of these groups were mentioned, with new leadership to be determined. The Presiding Bishop is no longer available to be the speaker at our 2021 Annual Convention. The Bishop is still in touch with his office to secure a new visit, which might be at a time other than our annual diocesan convention. This visit may also be shared by the Diocese of Northern Indiana. The Bishop shared that the executive team is not working on a detailed plan of scheduled events for 2021 because of the continued uncertainty surrounding the pandemic. Currently the plan is for virtual meetings through spring 2021, with several programs that are on hold. The Bishop continues to serve on various boards including Episcopal Relief and Development, Indiana Landmarks, and Partners for Sacred Places, and she feels this service continually yields fruit.

Canon Kristin indicated that she has been working extensively on getting the Mission Strategy project established. She serves as the staff liaison for Racial Justice & Education Team, which is serving as a hub of efforts to dismantle racism throughout the diocese. Executive Council member Mariann Scott is the communications person for the Team. She gave the Council an overview of resources and more that will be uploaded soon. Canon Kristin reminded the Council that “Sacred Ground” (an educational program developed by The Episcopal Church) is beginning at the end of January through April on two different nights, and these weekly classes are both full. Also “Brave Worship”, a diocesan series of six workshops focusing on expanding liturgy and music repertoire to include offerings from the African-American tradition, has completed two workshops, both well attended, including participants outside of our diocese. Canon Kristin advised that Jen Phelps is back from medical leave. Canon Kristin named new clergy now serving in the Diocese: the new dean of the Cathedral, Gray Lesesne; new chaplain at IU/Canterbury, Ed Bird; and a new rector at St Paul’s Richmond, Barbara Anne Fisher. Also, Rebekah Sims as been appointed as deacon at Chapel of the Good Shepherd, and William Morris at St David’s Bean Blossom. The College for Congregational Development (CCD) is scheduled for July. Current plans are for it to be in-person at Waycross.

Canon Brendan indicated that his work has been largely focused on year-end financials, which typically are closed by mid-February. He mentioned that parochial reports are due March 1 and that the 2020 form requests new information related to the pandemic. Canon Brendan indicated that apportionment waiver applications are again available, but the diocese is also asking for additional data in order to get a more detailed picture of the financial health of our congregations. A second round of the government’s Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) is now available. Canon Brendan indicated that conditions of the second round will make most of our congregations ineligible to apply. He reported that St Paul’s, Jeffersonville’s apportionments have been paid and their loan is now current, which have been discussed in previous meetings. Beginning in March, the Rev. Holly Rankin Zaher and Canon Brendan will begin another round of “Faithful Innovation Learning Communities”, a program that works to discover how God is working in communities, and which is particularly relevant as we gradually enter the post-pandemic world. The diocese has joined an organization called Holy Hikes, which is an opportunity for individuals and congregations to be involved in outdoor ministry. The Rev. Cathy Scott will oversee this program Canon Brendan reminded the Council of the diocese’s involvement as fiscal agent for Justice Indiana, which is currently working on obtaining 501(c)3 status. This group will engage in advocacy and legal action targeting state policies that systematically disadvantage poor and minority communities. Canon Brendan reminded the Council that the

pilgrimage to Iona has been rescheduled for 2022. Bishop Jennifer mentioned that they are looking for a way that some can participate without making the trip to Scotland.

There was a question for Bishop Jennifer regarding timeline for events to be held in person. There was some discussion and the Bishop indicated that the decisions have to do with vaccine availability, decline in deaths or transmission, gathering outside beginning in the spring and summer, but there are still too many variables to make a definitive statement. The office is still closed, but there is a hope that staff can come back on a limited basis in the spring. Canon Kristin mentioned that the numbers of those infected are declining, but it is still very high. The diocese continues to receive questions from churches.

The Council took a short break.

The Minutes from the previous meeting on December 12, 2020 were presented for approval. A motion to approve the minutes was made by the Rev. C. Davies Reed, with a second from Mr. Sean Sullivan. Motion PASSED – none opposed, no abstentions.

Financial Report. Canon Brendan went over a draft 2020 income statement, which generally showed better than expected financial results. He noted a year-end deposit of \$90,000 to the endowment, representing an estimated operating surplus. Some unplanned events occurred which resulted in positive variances (a full-time staff member moving to part-time, the hiring of a chaplain at IU/Canterbury did not occur in 2020, etc.). There was a question of whether the emergency fund for assistance during the pandemic would carry over to 2021? Canon Brendan acknowledged the wisdom of doing so, and suggested it would be appropriate for the Investment and Finance Committee to make a recommendation.

Housing allowance. There were two additional housing allowance resolutions for the Rev. Ed Bird and the Rt. Rev. Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows (emailed to the Council in advance and attached as an addendum). A motion was made to approve both resolutions by The Rev. C. Davies Reed, with a second from The Rev. Rebecca Nickel. Motion PASSED – none opposed, no abstentions.

Approval of Audit. The draft audit was sent to Council members in advance, released a few weeks ago. There was brief discussion regarding the recommendations made, and if the delay of the report was communicated appropriately. Canon Brendan addressed questions about the recommendations for process improvement mentioned in the audit letter. This audit has been moved by the Investment and Finance Committee for approval by Executive Council. A vote to approve the audit was taken. Motion for approval PASSED – none opposed, no abstentions.

Treasurer's Report. Dr. Laurel Cornell sent the Treasurer's report in advance. Canon Brendan answered questions.

Old Business. Bishop Jennifer reminded the Council that the Episcopal Fund for Human Need (EFHN) was discussed last year at this time, needing some attention and direction. This topic is not forgotten but is still being discussed (the pandemic delayed these discussions).

There was no New Business brought before the Council.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Dr. Mary Ellen Brown, with a second by Ms. Rose Anne Grasty. Motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 11:35am.

Respectfully submitted, Janet Brinkworth