

**Diocese of Ontario
Synod Council
Tuesday, 28 April 2020 - 6pm
On-line Only
Minutes**

Present: Bishop Michael Oulton, Alex Pierson, Wayne Varley, Valerie Kelly, Heather Grimshaw, Lynn Mitchell, Peter Cory, Don Davidson, Michael Read, Joseph Burnham, Viren Oogarah, Anne Patterson, Maureen Butler, Robin Jones, Trish Miller, Pauline Eskerod, Bill Clarke. Kate McLean, Nancy Beale, an unidentified caller.

Regrets: Chancellor Garth Allen, Ada Clifton, Shane MacKay.

Opening Devotions:

Lynn Mitchell

Lynn led Synod Council in with a reflection from Sunday's gospel, the road to Emmaus. Lynn closed with the Collect.

Agenda Review and Adoption

Chair

Chair's Remarks and Bishop's Update

Chair

- The Bishop appointed the following people as Canons of The Cathedral of St. George: Anne Patterson, Sharon Dunlop, Lynn Dillabough, Valerie Kelly and Nancy Beale. The Bishop expressed his appreciation for their commitment to the work of the church and explained that 'canon' is from the Latin and Greek for 'rule' in which one orders their life in such a way as to exhibit a response to call in ministry. A service of installation will be held in the future.
- Prayers are sought for the people of Nova Scotia who suffered a tragedy over the weekend of April 18 and 19th
- The service of consecration for the new bishop of Ottawa, Shane Parker, will be held on Pentecost Sunday (May 31). There is a minimum number of bishops required to be present in order for the consecration to occur, pandemic precautions will be in place in order the consecration may be held in Christ Church Cathedral in Ottawa. The last day for the current Bishop, John Chapman, is April 30th. Bishop Michael expressed his gratitude to John for his friendship and support and wished him and his wife, Catherine, the best in his retirement.

Approval of Minutes – March 2020 Meeting

Chair

MOTION:

DDavidson/MRead

BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE Minutes of March 24, 2020 be accepted as presented.

CARRIED

Business Arising from the Minutes**Chair**

-none

Q1 2020 Unaudited Financial Statements**CFO**

Alex Pierson presented the unaudited diocesan finances as of the end of the first quarter (Jan-Mar). The Operating Fund saw a surplus of just over \$30,000 for the quarter. The April view forecast (Jan-Mar actuals with current forecasts for Apr to Dec) shows a surplus for the year of almost \$58,000. The impact of the pandemic cannot be fully factored into financial planning at this point, other than areas that are experiencing reductions in spending (e.g. travel, meetings, conferences, etc.). The financial situation is under continual review and is being adapted moving forward. Synod Council was provided with an update on the Central Investment Fund, as well as an overview of how diocesan funds are allocated and designated. A Pandemic Financial Response Team has been established to assist and is comprised of Charles Morris, Peter Case, Robin Jones, Michael Read, Wayne Varley and Alex Pierson. The Diocese is now set up with the Bank of Montreal as a payee for online banking. Governance and best practices are being established for authorization. More churches are using direct deposit instead of cheques being mailed and this proves more efficient and effective. Joyce Williams and other diocesan staff are facilitating details to ensure accountability.

MOTION:**LMitchell/PCory**

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the unaudited reports for the first quarter be received by Synod Council.

CARRIED**Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic****Bishop
DEO/CFO**

The Bishop thanked Alex and the Finance Committee for the quarterly report. As well, the Bishop extended thanks to the Parish leaderships for stepping up and managing since the suspension of church worship services on March 15. He acknowledged the positive and creative responses of parish leaders and their adaptation during the pandemic. While the Diocesan Office remains closed, with staff working from home, connections continue. Each week an on-line “drop in” meeting for wardens, treasurers and clergy takes place with diocesan leadership to share information and answer questions. The Bishop meets weekly on-line with the House of Bishops, as do the executive officers/archdeacons and finance officers/treasurers.

Revisions and up-dates to the Ministry, Pastoral Care and Worship guidelines were shared and will continue to be updated as required (version 6 will be sent out to parishes as well as uploaded to the diocesan HUB). The Bishop acknowledged and thanked Michael Read and Mark Hauser for their parts in creating a beautiful diocesan Easter Sunday liturgy on-line. He noted that over 1,500 people watched the Easter service and that on-line engagement in various forms of worship has increased over the past few weeks and acknowledges we can expect the on-line format to be long-term. As we move toward Pentecost (May 31) the ecclesial province will be organizing a virtual service, similar to the diocesan Easter Sunday service. Mark Hauser

(Diocesan Communications Officer) will be handling the production and editing components for this pre-recorded on-line worship service.

Alex informed Synod Council that the diocese is applying for financial support under the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) program on behalf of the churches. These funds will be credited back to each church/parish's account with the diocese, offsetting the payroll costs which are also charged there. The Pandemic Financial Response Team will help review and plan next steps in moving forward as a diocese.

Alex highlighted the following points:

- the Diocesan Action Plan to-date has been to conserve diocesan resources and minimize discretionary spending; to prioritize payments from investment funds to parishes with a cap of \$25,000/parish/month. The Investment advisor/broker has been asked to have \$500,000 accessible for the short term. The CEWS program support is critical in moving forward
- Flow of finances from churches to diocese was outlined
- Support to parishes has been extended by:
 - charging no interest on insurance premiums; providing technology to enable/enhance online worship & governance; CEWS to support payroll
 - Support will be tailored to individual parish's circumstances and situations and to ensure good stewardship of resources that are available
 - Next step is to develop criteria pertaining to finances
- Church Support Fund – a consolidation of funds available for support

Final Thoughts: we need to be flexible, nimble, and provide careful stewardship as we continue through these uncertain times.

Discussion that followed revealed the financial insecurities of some dioceses in the country as well as parishes within the diocese. The Bishop indicated re-building will be a societal effort. In thanking Alex for his presentation and the work involved, Robin also indicated there is a 'political' window available for the Bishops to present to the federal government to help guide policy-making in the timing of re-opening churches.

Synod Planning Update

Michael Read

Michael noted the theme for this year's Synod: *Being Light and Building Hope*. The Planning Committee continues to work on logistics. The Plenary Speaker is Bishop William Cliff (Diocese of Brandon). The Planning Committee will meet virtually in May. The Bishop indicated the outlook taken at the present time is an 8-week planning framework and recognizes that gathering physically in the Fall for Synod may not be possible. A decision must be made by the June meeting of Synod Council. Canonically, the diocese is required to meet every two years. However, if it is not possible to physically meet then a special synod will be convened to determine next step.

Consent Agenda (no items currently identified)

-none

Other Business

-Wayne reminded Synod Council that it had been agreed that Diocesan Program groups would have a representative at monthly Synod Council meetings to explain the ministry of various programs/commission, etc. The last group was DOORS (Refugee Support). Considering the current pandemic situation, this will be postponed.

May 2020 Meeting – Input on Agenda Items for the Regular Meeting

-none

Meeting Evaluations – have been e-mailed and is in the form of a fillable pdf

Adjournment & The Grace: Don Davidson moved adjournment, seconded by Bill Clarke at 8:07pm. We closed with the Grace.

Date of Next Meeting: TUESDAY May, 26, 2020 – 6PM
Anticipated to be Online
Devotions: Anne Patterson

Bishop Michael Oulton

Rev. Canon Valerie Kelly
Clerical Secretary

Date