

**DIOCESE OF ONTARIO
SYNOD COUNCIL
JANUARY 26th, 2021 – 6PM
ONLINE ONLY
MINUTES**

Attendance: Bishop Michael Oulton, Alex Pierson, Wayne Varley, Heather Grimshaw, Maureen Butler, Robin Jones, Lynn Mitchell, Trish Miller, Viren Oogarah, Bill Clarke, Valerie Kelly, Joseph Burnham, Nancy Beale, Michael Read, Anne Patterson, Katherine (Kate) McLean, Garth Allen, Sophie Kiwala, Don Bailey, Pauline Eskerod

Welcome:

Chair

The Bishop welcomed all to the first meeting of 2021.

Opening Devotions:

Wayne Varley

Wayne led Opening Devotions offering a stewardship prayer from Salisbury, England invoking a spirit of peace and unity. We were invited to be mindful of those negatively affected by the virus and those suffering as a result of the climate emergency. Wayne prayed for on-going social action and justice in the Diocese and offered thanks for gifts we enjoy.

Agenda Review and Adoption

Chair

No additional items.

Chair's Remarks and Bishop's Update

Chair

- Holding Ada Clifton in prayers - Incumbent of the Parishes of Kente and Marysburgh – who is now on long term disability. Please hold her and her husband, Lloyd, in your prayers. The parishes are vacant and preparation for a parish profile will commence for a new clerical position. Please hold the parishes in prayer during this transition.
- The Parish of Lakes & Locks and the Parish of Sharbot Lake will continue to be advertised for a clergy position
- In November 2020, the Bishop began the Clergy Ministry & Development Reviews. A few reviews occurred prior to the Covid Emergency State; once this has ended scheduling will resume
- Bishop Michael recalled with disappointment the need to suspend in-person worship services over the Christmas season. The Bishop continues to offer weekly Morning Prayer worship on Wednesdays; and continues to enjoy watching on-line worship services throughout the Diocese. He was “virtually” at the Parishes of Christ Church (Gananoque) and Church of the Redeemer (Rockport) this past Sunday. He was joined

on-line by 35 lay readers for Evening Prayer last evening. The Bishop noted that on-line statistics across the Diocese for Christmas Eve worship services was close to 5,900. With thanks, the Bishop upholds parishes throughout the Diocese in prayer.

Approval of Minutes – November 2020 Meeting**Chair****MOTION****MButler/APatterson****BE IT APPROVED THAT THE Minutes of November 2020 be approved as presented.****CARRIED****Business Arising from the Minutes****Chair**

None

PWRDF Update**Sophie Kiwala**

Bishop Michael introduced Sophie Kiwala, the new PWRDF Diocesan representative. Sophie held the first introductory Zoom meeting last week with 14 people and two representatives from PWRDF. Sophie wants to connect with parishes, raise awareness and encourages parishes have a representative and to reach beyond the Anglican community. An informative PWRDF YouTube Channel is available. The “World of Gifts” catalogue is available year-round. PWRDF is hoping to move donations to electronic means. Sophie is in the conceptual stages of creating an on-line Bishop’s dinner with a speaker yet to be confirmed. She welcomes individuals interested in working on this with her. In his thanks, the Bishop noted Sophie can be reached at: pwrdf@ontario.anglican.ca and thanked her for her presentation.

COVID-19 Pandemic – Status**Bishop, DEO, AMP**

Alex reminded Council that as of Dec 24, 2020 the Diocese had returned to the Red Phase of the pandemic protocols. With increasing numbers of covid cases, the closure of church buildings was an exercise in caution! The civil province of Ontario, introduced the 2nd emergency state mid-January, which we continue to be in. On-line worship, pastoral and financial support, continues. The Wardens, Treasurers and Clergy continue with bi-weekly virtual meetings with the Diocese. The Emergency State is projected to end Feb. 11 and the assumption is re-opening on Feb 12 following regulations of Province. Alex’s council to churches is to remain hopeful but uncertain of when this current phase will end.

Vestry Meetings & Vestry Lists

As part of the update on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the diocese, Council considered how to deal with vestry lists as churches plan for annual vestry meetings, given the restrictions of COVID-19 and the new reality of online worship. A draft policy was issued to wardens, treasurers and clergy for review and consultation.

Alex presented the policy “Vestry List Flexibility – Draft Version 3” to Council as an attachment prior to the meeting. Canonically, parishes are to have Annual Vestry by Mar 15th. Alex spoke to reasons why parishioners may not yet feel safe returning and noted in-person meetings should not be more than an hour in length. Decisions on how to host vestry is to be made at the local church level. Creating the Vestry List follows Diocesan Canons however, with many worship services now involving virtual viewers it is no longer clear who can be a voting member of the parish and if parishioners can in fact meet canonical requirements due to the pandemic and no Holy Communion. The outcome is the revised policy document.

MOTION**MRead/BClarke**

BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE policy document “Vestry List Flexibility, draft version 3” be received for discussion.

After considerable discussion:

The following paragraph on page one of the draft policy is to delete the last portion of the sentence:

Members who previously (i.e., 2020) were on the Vestry List should remain unless they have advised the church, they no longer wish to be a member, ~~ceased to be geographically resident in the diocese or have passed away.~~

It was agreed, for the present time, considering vestries will commence shortly, that Wardens and the Incumbent are responsible for the Vestry list and unresolved disputes may be addressed at the Diocesan level.

Council approved the Guideline for Vestry Lists.

CARRIED

The revised and approved document will be issued shortly

Finance 2020 Year end, Investments, Receivables**DEO/CFO**

Alex presented an update on year end activity, including the Investment Fund, Parish Receivables, 2020 Audit and the work underway to transfer the Diocesan record system (clergy, staff and parish files) from paper-based to digital records stored in a Cloud service. A student

hired for 2 months using the Government of Canada Student program is working on this project.

2020 Audit

The Audit Committee met with the auditors in Dec 2020. Interim auditing began in late summer; Diocesan staff continue the on-going audit work with the hope of presenting the unaudited financials at the March Synod Council meeting.

Financial Systems

In order to continue to integrate and manage church investments, an additional module has been added to the Sage program being used. Alex highlighted all transactions in 2021 will be handled through the new module; 40% of funds from churches in January are now on-line. Utilizing this new method is a faster process that will be easier to use going forward. Alex spoke to the year-end Diocesan Receivables from parishes and shared a slide deck of data. Alex discussed the adjusted amount: in 2020, raw data of \$457K has been adjusted to \$362K once cheque dates (of either 2020 or 2021) had been distinguished.

Fraud Policy

Alex highlighted this is a management policy and brought the policy to Synod Council for governance approval. The auditors, recommending the need for such policy, have reviewed and approved it. Prior to 2018 there was no policy and it has been in use since then.

MOTION

APatterson/DBailey

BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE Fraud Policy Version 1.3 (January 2021) be tabled for discussion.

Discussion: a lengthy discussion ensued which indicated adequate controls are in place. As a management policy, it is internal and currently in effect. Council approved the document, but limited its scope to the Diocesan Centre operations. At this point it will not apply to parishes. Further work will be done to develop a framework for parishes to adopt.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE Fraud Policy Version 1.3 (January 2021) be accepted with the noted proviso.

CARRIED

Diocesan Files and Records

Alex shared with Council the transition process of moving Diocesan files and records from “on paper” to digital. Due to integration problems and limited effectiveness and the de-commissioning of the local server, content is being moved to Microsoft Cloud SharePoint

OneDrive. This includes clergy and parish files [paper to digital] as well as Archives. Alex noted risks of continuing with paper are: fire, confidentiality, access is available only at the Diocesan Office, which is an issue during the pandemic. Priority has been given to active clergy and staff files. HR Partner Software is designed for small not-for-profits, is a Canadian company with a Data Centre in Canada. The Diocese applied for funding through the Summer Student Program to hire students to assist with this transitional project. Two students were funded with a start date of Jan 4th; one student had to leave for personal reasons. Two document scanners were purchased and with the pandemic Emergency State lockdown, the remaining student is working from home and at the Diocesan Office as needed. It's expected the transfer of material for Diocesan Staff & Active Clergy be complete by the end of program term in February 2021. Application is being made for the 2021 program to continue the transition work. Alex noted with the transfer to digital its a more modern system with good security.

Pandemic Financial Response Team

DEO, PFRT

Alex reminded Council of the members of the PFRT: Peter Case, Charles Morris, Michael Read, Robin Jones, Wayne Varley, Alex Pierson.

Alex continued with a presentation based on the framework Council approved at its June meeting. This program, as well as the interest forgiveness on insurance, the Tech Grants and the cleaning/disinfecting starter kits are all funded by the CEWS received for Diocesan Office staff. These funds are held in a restricted fund under the direction of Synod Council. The goal of the program is to support the churches that have suffered the largest income reductions due to COVID-19 with limited available financial resources to sustain themselves and with a healthy ministry and mission. Analysis was done on the first two criteria for support using data reported by churches/parishes for the March to December 2020 (the period of the pandemic restrictions). The first criteria are based on net reduction in income (income reduction 2019 to 2020 less the amount of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy received). The second criteria is based on the financial resources available to the church to sustain itself through the income reduction. Based on these first two criteria, ten churches were recommended to move to the third criteria (Ministry and Mission survey). These 10 churches represent 80% of the net income reduction from March to December. Council approved the PFRT recommendations and directed that these churches be invited to work with the Ven Wayne Varley, Canon Michael Read and their Territorial Archdeacons on the Ministry and Mission survey. After completion, the surveys will be reviewed by the PFRT and the bishop. Based on this review a final recommendation will be made to Synod Council. This is targeted for the February meeting of Synod Council.

Michael Read spoke briefly to "A Healthy Church" by Robert Warren (Ministry & Mission Survey) and recommended it for use with all churches in the Diocese.

MOTION**RJones/MRead****BE IT RESOLVED THAT SYNOD COUNCIL:**

1. Accepts the Report of the Pandemic Financial Response Team
2. Directs that the ten churches be asked to submit for the Third (Ministry) Filter
3. Approves the allocation of \$8,000 for Insurance Interest Forgiveness, \$7,000 for Tech Grants in 2021
4. Directs that the balance of the funds as well as any Diocesan CEWS received in 2021 be held in the Restricted Fund for support of Churches later in 2021 as directed by Council.

CARRIED

The Bishop extended his sincere thanks to the Team for their considerable work. Wayne requested the three archdeacons, Bishop Michael, Alex and he to meet in the coming days.

Worship Committee Update**Lynn Mitchell**

Lynn noted the committee met today. The worship resource for annual vestries is complete. Worship resources are available on the Diocesan website. The committee is collecting Lenten resources. They are looking at a series of essays for stressful times, for Eucharistic practices & theologies for use in the future. Lynn thought preparation for the Diocesan Synod should start soon and hoped to attend a Synod Planning meeting. The Bishop extended his thanks to the Committee for the Lessons & Carols service organized in December.

Stewardship Update**Trish Miller**

Trish noted a meeting will be held on Thursday of this week with various partners; looking for resources on website.

Program Update**AMP**

Wayne reminded Council that various diocesan programmatic groups will be presenting in the coming months.

Synod 2021 Planning Update**Michael Read**

Michael indicated the planning committee would be meeting on February 4th and, at this time, are planning a hybrid model for Fall Synod.

Consent Agenda – nothing

Other Business**February 2021 Meeting – Input on Agenda Items for the Regular Meeting**

The Bishop invited Council members to email the Diocesan Office any agenda items.

Adjournment and Grace

Bill Clarke moved adjournment at 8:34pm. All in favour. The meeting concluded with The Grace.

Date of Next Meeting:

TUESDAY, February 23, 2021

6 pm

Online Only

Devotions: Lynn Mitchell

Bishop Michael Oulton

Rev. Canon Valerie Kelly, Clerical Secretary

Date