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**DIOCESAN COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING - AGENDA**

April 2, 2020

via ZOOM

2 p.m.

- 1) Opening Prayer – Heather Blais
- 2) Consent Agenda (Minutes of February 1 and March 26 meetings)
- 3) Report from the Bishop
- 4) Parish Survey
- 5) Financial Support for Parishes
 - a) SBA Loans through the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) Act
 - b) Loans from the Diocese
- 6) Operations and Financial Resource COVID notice

FUTURE MEETINGS

Thursday, April 2, 2020 2:00-4:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 11, 2020 2:00-4:30 p.m.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Officers and Appointed Members:

The Rt. Rev. Douglas Fisher, President

The Rev. Nancy Webb Stroud, Vice President

Ms. Wende Wheeler, Secretary

Ms. Kitty Dougherty, Treasurer

Mr. Frank Minasian, Trustee Representative

Term of Office Expires:

Convention of 2020 - Heather Blais, Donna Christian, Richard Delorme

Convention of 2021 - José Reyes Pérez, Mark Rogers, Eliot Moss, Rick Gore

Convention of 2022 - Janet Zimmerman, Janet Young, Beth Washburn

Minutes of the Meeting of Diocesan Council

February 1, 2020

Kendrick Room, Christ Church Cathedral, Springfield
(following Diocesan Council Retreat)

Present

The Rt. Rev. Doug Fisher, President
The Rev. Nancy Webb Stroud, Vice-President
Donna Christian
Richard Delorme
Frank Minasian
The Rev. Eliot Moss
The Rev. José Reyes
Mark Rogers
The Rev. Rich Simpson
The Rev. Dcn. Beth Washburn
Wende Wheeler, Secretary
Janet Young

Absent

The Rev. Heather Blais
Kitty Dougherty, Treasurer
Richard Gore
The Rev. Janet Zimmerman

3:15 p.m. Called to order

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda, which included Minutes from the November 21, 2019 meeting, the Financial Reports through November 2019, and the Real Estate Update were moved, seconded and unanimously approved.

Vote to Approve Operating Agreement Between Church of the Epiphany, Wilbraham and Christ the King Lutheran Church in Wilbraham

The agreement was moved, and seconded as presented. There was no discussion. It was passed unanimously on voice vote.

Vote to Approve Operating Agreement and Articles of Merger between Christ Church Episcopal, and Trinity Lutheran Church in Sheffield

The agreement was moved, and seconded as presented. There was no discussion. It was passed unanimously on voice vote.

Vote to affirm the request to reclassify St. Thomas, Auburn as a Mission Congregation

The request was moved and seconded. There was some discussion of the circumstances around this request. The rectory did not sell as quickly as planned. Conversations are ensuing with congregations in Rochdale and Oxford, but this situation, which is fluid, had been a long decline, and then a more sudden

financial emergency that progressed more rapidly than expected, forcing this decision. The motion was passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Nancy Stoud, Steve Abow and Dick Delorme raised for discussion the possibility that we may, in the future, get an Assessment Reduction Request from St. John's, Northampton. Council had some conversation around how we might want to approach requests like this from parishes with healthy endowments, but a sizable deficit. There was agreement that it's an opportunity to consider a variety of tools (loan, non-financial remediation, etc.), and to help the parish implement remedial measures. Discussion will be ongoing.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Wende T. Wheeler, Secretary

UPCOMING COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE

Thursday, April 2, 2020 2:00-4:30 p.m. (Heather Blais, chaplain)
(meeting moved forward one week to March 26, via ZOOM)
Thursday, June 11, 2020 2:00-4:30 p.m.

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Minutes of the Meeting of Diocesan Council

March 26, 2020 2 p.m.

via Zoom

Present

The Rt. Rev. Doug Fisher, President
The Rev. Nancy Webb Stroud, Vice-President
Steve Abdow
The Rev. Heather Blais
Donna Christian
Richard Delorme
Richard Gore
Frank Minasian
The Rev. José Reyes
Mark Rogers
The Rev. Rich Simpson
The Rev. Dcn. Beth Washburn
Wende Wheeler, Secretary
Janet Young
The Rev. Janet Zimmerman

Absent

Kitty Dougherty, Treasurer
The Rev. Eliot Moss

2:05 Called to order

Report on behalf of the Trustees – Mick Kalber

Mick presented an update on the Diocese's investment funds in the context of the current economic instability and the COVID-19 pandemic. He indicated that the precipitous market drops would be muted in distributions by the fact that the distributions are based on a 20-quarter rolling average. The December fund value was approximately \$65 million; in the week before the meeting, the value was approximately \$55 million. However, Mick is encouraged that some assets had declined less than anticipated. Mick is continuing to meet with Mercer, our investment advisors and the Trustees to determine the wisest strategy under the circumstances.

Parish Relief Actions

Council reviewed the measures passed by Bishop's Budget and Finance Committee. The intent of the collection of measures is to make \$1 million in relief available for parishes struggling with the sudden economic downturn.

The first measure for approval by Council is forgiveness of two months of assessment payments:

Motion: That the Council approve the forgiveness of Common Ministry Assessment payments from parishes for April and May.

Moved and seconded. There was discussion around the details of the program. The Bishop indicated that he is looking for an action that will help to allay anxiety now. There is recognition that this is not a long term solution, and further forgiveness may not be possible.
The motion was passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Parishes will be notified immediately of the assessment forgiveness by emailed message being drafted by Steve.

Further measures continue to be under discussion. Options include a loan pool of up to \$800,000. Concerns are to help parishes make payroll. There also recognition that the sharp spike in layoffs due to the pandemic response means that many in our parishes may be undergoing financial strain. Implications of the current situation will not be entirely know for some time.

Motion: To approve a draw of up to \$500,000 on the Diocesan line of credit at United Bank for the purpose of parish relief.

Moved and seconded. Discussion was around the plans for repayment, which will be from investments (at a presumably more advantageous time), budget reductions, repayments from parishes, etc.
The motion was passed unanimously on a voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Wende T. Wheeler, Secretary

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Financial Support and Potential Actions During This Time

Diocesan Council voted to suspend the collection of Common Ministry assessments for a period of two months. Assessment payments for April and May have been forgiven. We will cancel those two scheduled EFT withdrawals.

If your congregation is making ends meet and you are able to continue supporting our Common Ministry we will gratefully accept all or some portion of your assessment. Your contributions will be used to support other congregations. You may send a check, if this feels right. Regardless, we offer this suspension to enable you to continue God's mission locally.

We are urgently investigating options for financial support for our congregations available through the **Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act**. You will hear from us as soon as we reach some conclusions.

Church Insurance will be extending payments for 90 days beyond the effective/due date before cancellation. You may receive system generated notices during the extension. Please call the Church Insurance billing department at 1-800-819-2984 if you have any questions or receive a notice.

The Episcopal Church Medical Trust is providing a 90-day extension on employee benefit premiums for health insurance.

The Church Pension Fund is providing the same extension on pension assessments.

We encourage you to ask the members of your congregation to continue to financially support their church to the extent they are able, especially those among us who have pledged support for this year.

You will need to encourage **remote giving** which can take place in three ways:

1. Members mail their pledge payment to the church office
2. Schedule automatic payments through your bank's online banking service (recurring payments are the most reliable and helpful way to fulfill your pledge)
3. Provide online giving capability on your website through an established giving platform for either one time or recurring giving.

A recommended online giving platform is Tithely. They offer a discounted to members of The Episcopal Network for Stewardship of which all congregations of the diocese are members. They provide excellent support as a rule. There is no additional fee at all and you can get set up very quickly.

The TENS rate for credit card transactions is 2.75%+30c per transaction. Normally they are 2.9%+30c. <https://get.tithe.ly/partner/tens>.

Other options can be found here: <https://outreach.com/blog/best-church-online-giving-platforms/>

The Episcopal Church is publishing updates. <https://episcopalchurch.org/concerning-covid19>

Episcopal Church Foundation has a list of COVID-19 response resources that they will continue to update <https://www.ecfvp.org/blogs/3763/covid-19-resources>

The **MA Council of Churches** has a tremendous list of COVID-19 response resources <https://www.masscouncilofchurches.org/covid-19-response/>

Here is a copy of the letter that **Mick Kalber, Executive Director of the Trustees for the Diocese** sent out a week ago:

Hello Everyone,

In these uncertain and troubling times, I am passing along some information to you and your congregations regarding your Trustees funds.

As you recall, the Trustees' spending policy calculates its quarterly disbursement based upon the average ending market value of the Fund over the past 20 quarters. The relatively good news is that the 1Q 2020 ending market value, while expected to be dramatically lower, will be largely offset by the previous 19 ending market values. Thus, the disbursements you will receive the end of April are expected to be only about **1% lower** than the disbursements you received last January. I want to allay your concerns of a dramatic reduction of your 1Q 2020 disbursements.

Diocesan House closed today for the foreseeable future, with only some members of the staff coming in occasionally to perform tasks they cannot do remotely. Thus, to expedite any Trustees requests you may submit, please communicate electronically – not using the U.S. Postal Service. I am working remotely and will respond to emails and voice mails: mkalber@diocesewma.org / 413-417-2339.

Also, please contact me any time on my mobile phone: **508-864-6800**. If you need to use the USPS, please use my home address: **37 Finlay Road, Fiskdale, MA 01518**.

Don't hesitate to call me with any questions you may have. I'll do my best to minimize any service delays.

Mick

Here are a few ideas about other ways to manage cash flow:

OPERATIONS

- Make sure the thermostats are reduced to be consistent with the reduced occupancy of the building. Consider turning off the furnace/hot water heater when it is warm enough and usage allows.
- Make sure the building is buttoned up – windows, doors.
- Minimize electrical usage – turn off all lights, unplug appliances.
- Revise cleaning intervals consistent with space usage

ADMINISTRATIVE/FINANCIAL

- See if you can preserve cash by changing utilities payments to budget plan
- Consider if any changes need to be made in the arrangements allowing creditors to withdraw amounts from your checking account without further authorization.

Vitality Team Statement of Purpose

First Draft

3/12/20

Why has the Vitality Team formed:

During this time of cultural change when churches are being called to be transformed and are not equipped to minister as they had in the past, the Congregational Vitality group will act to find ways to renew, reform, clarify and support people and churches throughout the Diocese. We will help churches seek to find ways to take risks as they join God where God is working in their community, renewing the energy of Christ within each person and church and to be Christ's body, not just the institution.

What the Vitality Team plans to do:

Build Relationships

- Person to person
- Vitality Team to church leadership
- Diocese to individual churches

Assess and reflect on current realities, meeting each person and church where they are

Provide Resources and Support

How the Vitality Team will work:

Let churches know Vitality Team is part of a Diocesan Plan / Mandate / Movement

- Partnering with the Diocese in addressing the needs of churches in the Diocese
- Share and celebrate work and success with the rest of the Diocese.

Build Relationships

- Determine where relationships already exist
- Target where there is energy / relationships / needs, referencing Grid data
- Help determine Funding needs:
 - Programs
 - Staffing
 - Food / hospitality / travel

Assess and Reflect on Current Realities

- Review the Grid data
- Identify a common tool that will help churches assess their reality - Hear Stories
- Funding for Training and Consulting tools, food and hospitality

Resources and Support

- Develop new resources as needed encouraging flexibility, care and thoughtfulness as to the type and number of resources
- Match strategy for resources to quadrant group determined using Grid data.
- Determine staffing and correct / appropriate marketing
- Funding
- Follow through and accountability, both internally and externally

Pray for the Process, inviting Council and Diocese into supportive prayer.