

DIOCESAN BOARD
Zoom – Tuesday, March 17, 2020

Standing Committee Members Present:

The Rev. Brooks Cato	Ms. Charlene Fix
The Rev. Jennifer Kenna	Ms. Beth Hallinan
The Rev. Dan Handschy	Ms. Felicity Hallanan
The Rev. Brad Benson	Ms. Cindy Adamowsky (also Board)

Board Members Present:

The Rt. Rev. Dr. DeDe Duncan-Probe	The Rev. Jon White
The Rev. Julie Calhoun-Bryant	Mr. Angie Smith
The Rev. Steve White	The Rev. Lisa Busby
The Very Rev. Christine Day	

Excused:

The Rev. Molly Payne-Hardin	Ms. Debra Baker
Mr. Ronald Cole	

Others Present:

Mr. Jonathan Fellows	Ms. Cathy Hobart
Ms. Martha Berry	The Rev. Cn. Carrie Schofield-Broadbent
Mr. Henry Wakefield	Ms. Kathleen McDaniel
Ms. Meredith Kadet Sanderson	

Bishop's Time

The Bishop welcomed the joint group and explained her Pastoral Directive dealing with the COVID-19 Coronavirus.

The plan is that each church can do their own form of remote gathering. The Bishop will plan to lead Eucharist on Sunday morning and may ask other clergy to preach each week. Two months is a long time. We want to nurture this time as we find ways to be “church beyond the walls.” We will be sorting things out as the situation changes and government directives dictate.

There isn't an easy fix in this. People need to be kept safe – that is the most important thing. We need to give our health care workers time to respond. We are doing things so this pandemic doesn't become so horrific. God is going to meet us in this.

We closed the diocesan office yesterday. The two confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Onondaga County moved up the closing from Friday. There is tremendous sadness in all of these changes but they are good choices for the safety of everyone.

General discussion included comments on the Bishop's Pastoral Directive.

AA groups are essential services for people to maintain their sobriety and health. Other purposes (exercise classes, etc.) are less compelling for keeping the buildings open.

Are home visits allowed if people don't have any symptoms? The Pastoral Directive banned all in-person visits. There are carriers with no symptoms. If there is a way to sit outside on a porch and keep 4-5 feet distance is might be okay but to enter a house or enclosed space is not allowed.

The Rev. Busby has a resource for online AA meetings she will share with Ms. Sanderson and on the clergy FB page.

Mr. Fellows pointed out that the Pastoral Directive is "canonically binding" on all clergy. It's not a recommendation or suggestion or something they can quibble with. It's a canonical directive tied to Title IV disciplinary measures.

The Bishop asked how, "How are you finding a hopeful place, comfort?"

The Rev. Cato noted that he has never seen so many people volunteer. People are chomping at the bit to help out.

The Rev. Cn. Schofield-Broadbent said that one bright spot of hope came last night when a congregational developed workshop was planned. She was afraid no one would come on Zoom but that was unfounded as they had a good turnout. (Some had to get help from their kids to set up the Zoom connection.) Very confident and faithful that the Holy Spirit will do a new thing. It's lovely to see the people cooperate with this new way of gathering.

Mr. Smith said he was following Presiding Bishop Curry at the National Cathedral for Sunday's service. After that on You Tube it showed the PB at another church doing his antiracism talk. His talks and speaking about the Episcopal part of the Jesus Movement was energizing. At St. Paul's, Owego he helped Mother Trula get her Zoom account so the vestry will meet via Zoom. Life is not what it was we are in for a lot of changes. Prayers for us all.

The Bishop explained that, when the message firsts came out she wanted to empower the clergy to make decisions that made sense for them. She had wanted to stay away from closing churches to public worship. The conversation changed quickly and she felt it was imperative that we take the necessary steps to ensure the safety of our congregations to the extent possible. It was very difficult but gratifying when the first responses were asking about others. We will

be stronger having weathered this storm together. We will see resurrection in ways we have not experienced before.

We will continue to stay in communion and will establish a regular weekly time for Facebook prayer. We will plan six weeks out for Sunday prayer and perhaps include different speakers.

Today is St. Patrick's Day. Patrick was enslaved by Irish pirates and look what God brought out of that. God is so much bigger than COVID-19.

Does our insurance have coverage for loss of income due to the stopping of business? Ms. McDaniel will check with our Church Insurance rep.

Spend the currency of this time in productive and enjoyable ways. Games, puzzles, go outside with nature (not others).

The Standing Committee members were dismissed at 11:32 AM.

The Board meeting continued via Zoom.

Board Meeting

Opening Prayer – The Rev. Jon White

Consent Agenda

- Minutes of January meeting
- Zion, Pierrepont Manor request for annual payment from W.C. Pierrepont Fund
- St. Peter's, Bainbridge request for annual payment from Foote Fund

The Consent Agenda was moved by the Very Rev. Day and seconded by the Rev. White. Approved.

Reports

- Financial – The Rev. Steve White
 - December Financial Statements

Ms. Adamowsky moved to accept the financial statements as presented; seconded by Mr. Smith. Approved.

- Finance Committee—The Rev. Steve White
 - Christ Church, Binghamton Audit Scholarship Request
 - Grace, Utica Audit Scholarship Request

The Rev. S. White moved to approve both audit requests; seconded by the Very Rev. Day. Approved.

- All Saints', Johnson City Assessment Reduction Request

The Rev. S. White wants to talk to the parish finance committee chairperson but that hasn't happened yet.

- Trinity, Elmira asked for forgiveness of their assessment. In the meantime they have decided to close. We will recommend that they decide when they will close first and then we will prorate the assessment to that date. After discussion it was recommended to not forgive assessment but prorate it based on the parish closing date.

The Rev. S. White moved to accept the recommendation to prorate the parish assessment based on the parish closing date; seconded by the Very Rev. Day. Approved.

- Investment Committee—Mr. Angie Smith (report attached)
The report should be celebrated but that will be a different story in May [due to the COVID-19 crisis] when the Committee meets again. Due to the way the distributions are handled on rate of return, the current crisis won't have an impact for a couple of years when it brings the distribution down. The Committee will meet with advisors again in May.

- Legal Issues

Related to COVID-19 and the Bishop's Pastoral Directive: The Rev. J. White asked about outside groups that use the church space. His parish (St. Luke's, Camillus) doesn't have a clause in their lease that can tell the daycare program to go away without breaking the lease. Any advice? They shouldn't be meeting at this time during the state of emergency. Mr. Fellows will be glad to look at lease. Rectors have authority to direct closure of their facilities or not. We need to follow the directives that the Governor has ordered on child care.

- Mr. Curtin sent a letter that finally broke the log jam with the Sackets Harbor closing. The lawyer for the historical society has been the impediment. It looks like it will go forward.
- Ms. Joell Szachara was criminally charged and arraigned and is currently in plead discussions with the district attorney including making restitution of the amounts taken. The Title IV process has concluded. They entered an Accord and she has surrendered her orders. Courts are now closed so it will be a while before this comes to conclusion.

- Committees & Task Forces

- Property—Mr. Henry Wakefield (report attached)
 - Whitesboro Property: **Recommendation to the Board (via email) was moved by the Rev. J. White; seconded by the Rev. Payne-Hardin: Accept the purchase offer with the contingency of waiting on the Church Insurance outcome. This would keep everything in play and not discourage the potential buyer. We have nothing to lose in this scenario and believe this is a prudent step as it shows progress on our side and not delays. Approved (via email responses as of 2-6-2020).**

We have a contractor working to get permits in place to tear down house on the Whitesboro property.

- Grace Church, Waverly – The parish voted to suspend services as of February 23, 2020 (see attached). We have received an inquiry from Pastor Curtis Hall (607-377-2812) regarding the recently closed Grace Church, Waverly. Pastor Hall said his congregation is fairly new and is worshipping in a house. He would be interested in renting the property short-term while we decide what we want to do with it.
- St. Paul’s, Paris Hill – The cemetery society still exists which takes the care of the cemetery out of our hands. They still have a working board so all matters regarding the cemetery need to be referred to them.
- As of today’s meeting, the properties in Whitesboro and Clark Mills received Standing Committee approval to be sold. We don’t have the full deed for Clark Mills. (The deed we found doesn’t cover the whole parcel of land.) We are preparing a court action to acquire the title.
- Grace Church, Willowdale: Mr. Larry Campbell is working with Mr. Fellows to close out the cemetery
- There has been no contact with Trinity, Elmira or Grace, Waverly; both have recently voted to close. Mr. Wakefield will contact Church Insurance to see if we can rent the Waverly property.

Mr. Smith expressed thanks to Mr. Wakefield and the Property Committee for their good work.

- COM— The Commission on Ministry will be meeting tomorrow. The Standing Committee has approved the Rev. Dcn. Shelly Banner for ordination. Unfortunately her ordination date will be delayed until the current COVID-19 situation passes.
- Standing Committee—Ms. Cynthia Adamowsky
 - Welcomed the Rev. Dan Handschy as a new member, filling the vacancy left by the Rev. Jon White when he accepted the Bishop’s appointment to the Board.
 - Four Episcopal election consents were approved
 - The Rev. Cato gave an update on Ms. Erica Olson-Bang who is a postulant assigned as an intern at his parish.
 - The Rev. Dcn. Shelly Banner was interviewed; it was a fruitful and wonderful conversation. The Committee approved her ordination to priesthood.
- Ministry Support Committee—Ms. Cathy Hobart

Nominations to the Committee: The Rev. Handschy (St. David’s, Dewitt) nominated a parishioner. Ms. Hobart explained the primary role of the Committee is to deal with basic benefits and HR issues. They put together recommendations for the clergy compensation

resolution that goes to Convention, including COLA recommendations and clergy supply rates. The Committee also reviews and recommends health insurance plans and cost sharing for diocesan and parish employees. The Employee Handbook for the staff and template for the parishes is being held up in the editing process.

- Foundation—no update
- Vision, Mission, Rule of Life – The task force is receiving feedback and will compile it for their meeting in May.
- Long Range Planning – A Zoom meeting was held and it was determined to go into abeyance at this point while they determine what their focus should be. The Bishop is looking for long-range thinking; look ahead and see what issues and questions we need to be thinking about. They have been looking at Map Dash and the accompanying data which will help us look at difficult questions especially as they pertain to long term issues of church growth and shrinkage. The Rev. S. White noted that the data for Elmira looked pretty solid.

- Canon’s Report – The Rev. Cn. Carrie Schofield-Broadbent

In January two churches voted to close: Grace, Waverly’s last service will be February 23rd and Trinity, Elmira’s end date has yet to be determined). She is looking for a compassionate way to work with parishes who are discerning closing.

Congregational development workshops will be via Zoom.

This “pinch point” (referring to COVIC-19) in the church will give us a whole lot of data about parishes that are adaptable, pliable enough to go forward in a new way.

She is trying to support parishes, especially wardens in charge where there isn’t clergy leadership.

New Business

- Search for our second canon is temporarily on hold during this time of uncertainty.

- Insurance Minimum Requirements (Sample from W. North Carolina in packet)

A parishioner of St. Paul’s, Syracuse asked if there was a policy for insurance minimums; we don’t have one. Mr. Fellows recommends that the parishes have at least a million in liability insurance coverage. While working with parishes that are closing we have to tell them to set aside certain funds to keep up insurance and maintenance of property. This is crucial as we move forward.

Some of this depends on State law. Church Insurance doesn’t have specific guidelines; the sample policy from W. NC was forwarded to us by Church Ins. We also need to know what criminal crime covers vs other damage. It was agreed that we should have a policy for church insurance minimums and need a Task Force to deal with these issues. Mr. Fellows can review the policy in consultation with Ms. Berry and Ms. Hobart. Terms will be defined by the policy. Ms. Hobart will invite the person from St. Paul’s, Syracuse to join the Task Force.

- Assessment Amendment Policy

There is a process for parishes who are seeking a change in their diocesan assessments. It is a collaborative process to help them identify their financial situation. We work together to evaluate the spiritual and financial health of the parish to make the best decision by using objective criteria. This was developed by the Rev. S. White and the Finance Committee. It is recommended that this policy be put in place for all requests moving forward.

Ms. Adamowsky moved adoption of the policy, seconded by the Rev. Calhoun-Bryant. Approved.

- Diocesan Board Covenant

This Covenant is the implementation of the Rule of Life into our work as a Board. It highlights the commitments we are willing to make as members of the Board and how we approach and go about our work as the Board. The Rev. J. White reviewed each point of the Covenant.

We can show parishes how to use the RoL for vestries and other committees. As the Board, it's important that we are role models of the RoL.

Mr. Smith moved adoption of the Board Covenant; seconded by the Rev. Busby. Approved.

- Convention Resolutions – The Rev. J. White would like a committee to look at resolutions dealing with the resolutions to Convention: the Rev. Calhoun-Bryant, the Rev. Day and Ms. Berry volunteered. Ms. Berry will also serve as the committee's liaison to the Constitution & Canon Committee of the Diocese.
- Procedures for Parish Closings: A new Task Force of the Rev. S. White, the Rev. Cn. Schofield-Broadbent, the Rev. J. White and Ms. Hobart will undertake this task.
- Coronavirus Response – The Rev. J. White opened the floor to further discussion.
 - Ms. Berry will review online guidelines as they relate to voting.
 - Ms. McDaniel will look at insurance coverage for loss of income.
 - Parish staff coming into the church is currently at the discretion of the rector.
 - The Rev. Cn. Scofield-Broadbent is collecting information from each parish regarding their procedures during this time of crisis. She posted information from TENS on the clergy FB page and additional resources will be posted as they become available.

The instinct in times of crisis is to withdraw into ourselves. Is there any thought about parishes joining together during this time? What would that look like? The Bishop wants to encourage parishes to be reaching out to the greater community especially neighboring parishes, retirement communities, health centers, etc. How do we do this when upholding social-distancing guidelines? The Bishop will be meeting with the clergy this afternoon and this will be a weekly meeting (via Zoom).

The financial burden will be significant for many people and parishes.

Some of what we treasure about our church may never recover. But a lot of what we love about our church can get stronger or sit in dormancy and come out in new ways when this crisis is over. In times of severe difficulty you either become stronger or break down. Our parishes will survive—or not—depending on their strength, flexibility and versatility.

The Bishop will be asking the Deans to take a stronger role in checking in regularly with parishes, especially those without clergy leadership and at least every other week.

Is staff going into the building (alone) allowed if they can maintain the social distancing space? Yes, for right now, keeping in mind that this is a quickly evolving situation that needs constant monitoring and adjusting as appropriate.

The Rev. S. White moved to adjourn the meeting; second by the Rev. Busby. Approved.

The Rev. S. White closed the meeting in prayer at 1:05 PM

Next Meeting Date & Location: 11:00 AM, Tuesday, May 19th, InterFaith Works

Respectfully submitted:
Kathleen D. McDaniel