

## Report on Diocesan Council Zoom Meeting, April 4, 2020

The Meeting opened and closed with Devotions from *Iona Prayers for Healing*, led by Marjorie Strong.

### Economic Relief for Parishes

The Treasurer's Report focused on fiscal relief for churches related to the effect of the COVID 19 Pandemic:

- Each parish should encourage members to honor their pledges and other contributions, following suggestions posted on the Diocesan website.
- E-giving is available for individual parishes through a link on the Diocesan website at no cost to the parish.
- Individual parishes are urged to contact the Diocese directly to discuss questions or concerns.
- **Interest-free Loans:** The Diocesan Council voted unanimously to authorize the Grants and Loans Committee to provide immediately a no-interest loan to parishes for amounts up to 5% of their FY2020 Vestry-approved operating budget. The loans should be used for operating expenses of the church that would otherwise be difficult to pay or require the use of investment equity. The total amount available for the loans is \$130,000; if applications approach that amount, the Council will reconsider the total limit. Loan applications must be approved by the Vestry of the parish submitting the application, and they will be reviewed and funded in an expedited manner, with loan repayment to be deferred for 6 months and then repaid in 60 equal, monthly payments. If a loan application is approved, it is expected that the parish applying for the loan will be current with their parochial report before the funds will be disbursed.
- **CARES Act PPP program:** The Council discussed details of the recent \$349 billion federal paycheck protection program (PPP) for small businesses with fewer than 500 employees that are also available to religious organizations. Although the program had an overwhelmingly large public response, churches are encouraged to apply through any local bank that is administering the loan program on behalf the federal Small Business Administration (SBA). The amount of loan funding available is 2.5 times average monthly payroll, and the loan will be evaluated at the end of 8 weeks. Any loan money spent on payroll, utilities, interest loans or mortgage expenses will be forgiven. Remaining funds must be repaid at 1% interest, over a two-year period following a 6-month deferment. Any parish applying for the PPP loan program should notify the Diocese. The Council authorized the Trustees of the Diocese to apply for a PPP loan to fund payroll and healthcare benefits for employees of the Diocese.

## **Impacts of COVID-19**

- The Council reviewed direction and support from the Bishop's Office in response to the COVID-19 pandemic:
- All church buildings are closed until further notice, and no services or meetings are to be scheduled in the churches.
- All staff members at Rock Point are working from home, using telephone access and e-mail to maintain communications.
- The Bishop is leading two services daily, using ZOOM meeting technology. Join by using the link <https://zoom.us/j/541110497> or by phone (646) 876-9923, Code 531110497#.
- Holy Week services will be offered as webinars, emanating from the Cathedral in Burlington.
- The Finance Committee is meeting monthly, and the Diocesan Leadership Team meets regularly to discuss and resolve emerging issues.
- The annual launch of the Alleluia Fund has been delayed until further notice.
- The Bishop and Canon Lynn Bates will meet individually with congregations after Holy Week to discuss ongoing questions and concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Johnson