

Diocesan Council Meeting, September 15, 2021 at 7pm

The Zoom meeting began with prayer. We took a couple of minutes of silence to pray our way into the journey that began, for most of us, when the bishop wrote a letter to the diocese in July about our financial situation and the challenges and opportunities that situation will present to us (*Building a Bridge to the Future*). In the silence, we were encouraged to pray with our hopes and fears for this journey, which will likely be an increasingly central theme in the story of our diocese during the Program Year that's just getting under way.

The meeting itself covered a lot of ground, falling into four sections:

First, Canon Walter Brownridge's report:

The THRIVE taskforce (*Taskforce for Hope, Revitalization, Innovation, Vitality, and Efficiency*), which was created to explore options as we respond to the issues in [the Bishop's letter](#), will begin formal meetings soon. Walter has been meeting with the co-chairs of the group, Ellen McCulloch-Lovell and the Rev. Scott Neal.

A Sacred Ground group, consisting of six people, has been formed in the diocese ([Sacred Ground](#) is a film- and readings-based dialogue series on race, grounded in faith, produced by The Episcopal Church). The group intends to lead virtual conversations around the diocese.

The budget is being reworked into a narrative/zero based format that better expresses our priorities.

The diocese was the victim of financial fraud -- a "phishing" attack that hijacked a diocesan staff member's email. It is expected that the \$12,000 will be covered by insurance, and the diocese is implementing new security measures.

Second, Bishop Shannon's report:

The bishop announced that her assistant, Pamela Van de Graf, will retire as of November 9th. (We'll miss her!)

In response to the ongoing pandemic, the House of Bishops meeting that began on September 20 had been changed from in-person to virtual, our own Diocesan Convention has been changed from hybrid to all-virtual, and the bishop has had to give up indoor face-to-face meetings at diocesan headquarters.

The Restart Committee, rechristened the Covid Response Team, has begun to meet again to offer guidance as we move into the colder weather.

Finally, the bishop reported that she's having regular meetings with the bishops of New Hampshire and Maine, and will report on developments in the *Mountain* and at Convention. She reiterated that these talks are focused on collaboration, not merger.

Third, we discussed coordination among the leadership groups in the diocese, with conversation around the "All on the Same Page" retreats, our engagement with the THRIVE taskforce, and the fundamental mission of Council. We agreed that Council could better function if the meetings were quarterly rather than monthly, with closer attention paid to the use of subcommittees and coordinating our work with other bodies (eg, the diocesan Finance Committee).

Fourth, Gerry Davis presented his Treasurer's report.

Support from parishes ("assessments") is below what was budgeted, but is around what was predicted when Gerry did some analysis based on the budgets approved by the Annual Meetings in January. Still, this leaves us with less income than anticipated. Nine months into the year, we are reporting a net positive balance of \$57,697, but much of that is due to the federal pandemic relief funds (PPP) we received; without them we would show a deficit of \$16,165.

The Bishop's Appeal was a great success, raising \$61,445, of which just over \$59,000 was earmarked for "area of greatest need."

We ended with the compline prayer taken from a sermon of St. Augustine: the one that begins, "Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night...."

Reported by Mark Preece.