

Diocese of Ontario
Synod Council Meeting
March 22, 2022
6 p.m. On-Line Only

Present: Bishop Michael Oulton, Alex Pierson, Valerie Kelly, Wayne Varley, Robert Porter, Barb Gilbert, Alison Filteau, Lynn Mitchell, David Selzer, Pauline Eskerod, Maureen Butler, Joseph Burnham, Jim Young, Trish Miller, Richard Hetke, Sandra Hounsell-Drover, Aveleigh Kyle, Peter Cory, Joseph Burnham, Bill Clarke

Guests: Michael Read & Russ Grant (Executive Board)

Regrets: Jeff O'Hare, Noel Henry

1.0 Opening Devotions

Rev. Lynn Mitchell offered a devotion on peace adapted from "Celtic Daily Prayer Book Two: Further Up and Further in." A copy of the devotion can be found in the shared folder on Microsoft Teams. It opened with silence and then Lynn led with a prayer as it pertained to war and candle-lighting for peace and justice. Prayer partners on Synod Council were invited to follow with candle lighting throughout the on-going prayer.

2.0 Agenda Review and Adoption

Bishop Michael indicated that we have 2 hours allotted for our meeting and that time has been assigned for each agenda item. There were no changes to the agenda as presented.

3.0 Chair's Remarks and Bishop's Update

Bishop Michael spoke to the item foremost in everyone's mind, that the Rev. Darlene Cunliffe died suddenly and unexpectedly while she was recovering from injuries sustained in a fall. Darlene was looking forward to returning to her Parish of North Hastings (Maynooth & Bancroft) and her congregation later in April. Darlene was a member of Synod Council (Hastings Deanery). The funeral service is being planned for Saturday, April 2 at 1:30pm in Bancroft. Clergy are invited to attend and vest in the liturgical colour of white. Bishop Michael offered a prayer of thanksgiving for the life and witness of Darlene.

4.0 Approval of February 2022 Synod Council Minutes and Business arising from the Minutes

A motion was moved by Lynn Mitchell to approve the minutes as presented. Seconded by David Selzer. The minutes were approved with no errors or omissions.

There was no business arising from the Minutes.

5.0 Executive Board Update

Bishop Oulton welcomed members of the Executive Board Michael Read and Russ Grant, to the meeting. The Board has been working on several items and a large part of their recent discussions of late has been around getting through the pandemic and the impact on congregations, the lessons learned and the challenges and opportunities we face as a result. Michael Read indicated they hope to have a resource person in place by late summer/early fall, whom parishes can access for help and support as they recover from the impact of Covid. Russ indicated there was funding remaining from the Community Engagement Facilitator position that will be used for the support person. Synod Council members were offered the opportunity to ask questions of the Michael and Russ. It is anticipated the position will be short-term and contract. Bishop Michael extended his thanks to the Executive Board members for their work.

6.0 Covid 19 Pandemic Update

The Diocese has issued revised protocols in line with the steps that have been established moving forward by the Ontario Government. The Diocese is looking at lifting the mask mandate on the 5th Sunday in Lent., April 3. They are also considering reinstating the Common Cup. Parishes are being encouraged to discuss these measures.

7.0 Synod Council Governance and Responsibility

The Bishop has extended the survey completion date until the end of the month re. the Synod Council Retreat. He is looking at May 28 for the half day session with Susan Graham Walker who joined the last meeting of Synod Council. This day will be looking at the role of Synod Council members. All members are encouraged to complete the survey which can be found in the Microsoft Teams folder. This will help Susan to frame the facilitation of the day. There will be more conversations around this at the April meeting.

8.0 Synod 2023

There has been considerable debriefing around Synod 2021. Michael Read spoke about the meetings and conversations with the steering group about the last Synod. A lot of reflections come out of conversations about what we have done in the past and what we can do in the future. Covid has had an impact on both these things, particularly around gathering together. He specified that feedback showed that Synod should be more of an event as it appeared that people look forward to the engagement with one another. Michael indicated that the next Synod should be in person, perhaps as a weekend event.

Friday would be dedicated to financial and administrative items. Saturday's focus on the Mission and Ministry of the Diocese and would allow an extended time to worship, join in small groups, have workshops, etc. Sunday would be an opportunity to have worship together as a Diocese.

Synod 2023 is tentatively scheduled for May 26, 27 & 28th; Michael will continue discussion with co-chair Audrey Dolizsny. The Bishop indicated 2023 is the 160th anniversary of the Diocese. He spoke of the 150th celebration at the Kingston (K-Rock) Centre, where the entire diocese was able to gather in person. Alex indicated there is new legislation and, in the Chancellor's absence, indicated that ONCA (Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act) now stipulates shareholder meetings must be a minimum of every 15 months between new meetings hence the need to shift Synod from the Fall to the Spring.

9.0 Finance Update

Alex Pierson presented a Finance Update, a copy of which can be found in the shared Microsoft Teams folder. Alex indicated he would not speak to numbers but rather to the evolution of the financial system starting in 2018/2019 including switching from the ADP payroll to Sage. Next steps will be getting on-line access for churches. The 2021 Financial Year Audit is underway with the appointed Auditor (Wilkinson & Company). The Audited Consolidated Financial Statements for 2021 are expected to be presented to Council at the April meeting. Alex also spoke about updates with the BAO and the challenge of Church properties. Synod Council members were offered the opportunity to ask questions with respect to the Finance Update.

10.0 Ministry and Program Update

Wayne Varley offered an update on the DOORS (Diocese of Ontario Refugee Support) group concerning priorities and future path in support of refugee settlement. The federal government is making a number of changes to the application process while widespread need exists. A synopsis of this update is attached to these minutes as Appendix A.

11.0 Stewardship and Congregational Development Update

Trish Miller shared that the Diocese now has access to resources from TENS acknowledging the diocese has paid for access to resources from The Episcopal Network for Stewardship (TENS). Churches will be able to access these online. She will send out a link and password for people to use this resource. She also indicated that they have held the first meeting with T&D and Clergy Care and developing a survey as to where individuals are with respect to their mental and spiritual health and what kind of resources they would like to see.

Bishop Michael plans to reinstate the Ministry Development Review for Clergy and will invite clergy to respond, looking especially at challenges brought by the pandemic.

12.0 Worship Committee Update

Lynn Mitchell indicated that the Committee is putting the finishing touches on the renewal of vows, both baptismal and ordination, to be held at the Cathedral on April 8th and also be live streamed. The Committee is also working on worship for the Clergy Retreat later in April. Bishop Michael indicated that the Primate is considering a theme around renewal: facing the future and focusing on where we are as we come out of the pandemic.

13.0 Consent Agenda, Other Business, Input for April Agenda

There were no consent agenda items, nor any items put forward for the April agenda.

14.0 Meeting Evaluations, Adjournment, The Grace

Bishop Michael encouraged people to complete the meeting evaluation form found in the shared folder. Trish Miller made a motion for adjournment, Lynn Mitchell seconded. The meeting adjourned with the Grace at 7:38 pm.

Date of Next Meeting:

April 26th, 2022, 6 pm (Plan for a Hybrid meeting) Devotions: Noel Henry

Bishop Michael Oulton
Diocese of Ontario

Alison Filteau
Lay Secretary

Date

APPENDIX "A" To Synod Council Minutes, March 22, 2022**DOORS Update Presentation to Synod Council, March 22, 2022, submitted by Wayne Varley:**

I am pleased that we devoted most of last month's meeting of Synod Council to several program activities in the life of our diocese. Tonight, I would like to offer an update from DOORS in midst of the global situation and rising number of refugees.

Last week I met with Mimi Merrill. Generally, there are four areas requiring more of her attention, that of DOORS, and others involved in refugee settlement and support.

The first is the usual application process, case managing a backlog of applications, some dating back up to about five years, and made more difficult and uncertain as a result of the pandemic.

The second is the continuing Operation Afghan Safety.

The third is the Program Integrity Framework with the goal of ensuring resettled refugees are provided with necessary support and involving greater levels of administration including tracking, monitoring, and oversight of constituent groups and co-sponsors. Thankfully, Mimi and DOORS is developing a small group of volunteers to assist with the growing administrative requirements.

The fourth area of concern, involvement and uncertainty is as a result of the war in Ukraine, the increasing number of refugees as a result of the conflict, and our federal government's priority to fast track Ukraine refugee applications for those wishing to come to Canada. All involved in refugee settlement and support await the administrative details from Immigration Refugee Citizenship Canada. Presently, it is unknown how many Ukraine refugees may come to Canada, where they may settle, and it is assumed for most it will be a temporary measure meaning it is anticipated that they will return to Europe.

IRCC views all four areas as priority for Sponsorship Agreement Holders and others, and many SAH's function as best they can with limited resources. I asked Mimi what our best use of resources will be in the coming months and years and her advice is that DOORS continue dealing with the usual application process and backlog. IRCC scheduled two online webinars later this month and early April, but they have been cancelled as a result of the Ukraine refugee situation and may be rescheduled for May of this year when there is more information to communicate.

We will keep Council informed about DOORS work in this regard.