

St. Philip Parish Council
MINUTES
20 April 2021 Tuesday 7:00 p.m.
via zoom

1. Prayer

Christopher read a passage from Ecclesiastes 3:1-15. ('To everything there is a season') and offered a brief reflection on 'seasons' that come and go –in terms of the 'season of Covid' and the difficulties we face at this time. He spoke of his meeting at Rob & Liz Holloway's home nearly 35 years ago – when he was interviewed for the position of Associate Rector at St. Philip, and how very fine it was - tonight – to welcome Liz & Rob's granddaughter, Emma Litzenburger – recently acclaimed as Youth Representative to Diocesan Synod. He said it was a wonderful thing to have a 3rd generation member of this community participate in this way. Christopher emphasized that these are the cycles that are important – that - in the midst of challenges and hardships – 'Life' wins – steadiness - faithfulness – wins. We "win" when we stay close to God: "(verse 11: God has made everything suitable for its time; more over he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.)

Christopher concluded his brief reflection and opened the meeting with prayer.

2. Bishop's PC visit

Bishop Anna and Diocesan Vision Animator, Brendon Neilson, joined / hosted us for our zoom meeting. They have been doing workshop meetings with church councils throughout the diocese to establish an initial conversation with parish leadership, and to have 'a bit of a check in on the ministry hopes and identity in this season.'

Sixteen people joined Bishop Anna and Brendon:

Rector & Wardens:	Christopher Page,	Karen Van Rheenen;	Larry Anthony.
Council members:	Greg Anctil;	Dave Conway;	Ken Davidson;
	Gillian Fosdick;	Esther Graham;	Ged McLean
	Evelyn Savage;	Jennifer Sharlow.	
Guests:	Grace Bodie;	Shannon Carmichael;	Karen Fenimore;
	Emma Litzenburger;	Sharon Richmond.	

- 3.** Bishop Anna opened our discussion about congregational development resources for parish viability and vitality, the importance of bringing together things old and new; ancient and traditional ways in the service of contemporary worship.

Question put to each person present: What about life at St. Philip is life giving?

Very positive responses:

L.A.: the 'Life' – the liveliness - the people

D.C.: the 'Life' – the sense of community – involved in various projects including the Refugee committee

E.L.: warm & friendly community. Baptized here - always felt included in children & youth activities. Away some years – in the east – then returned and felt same sense of belonging

E.G. – also away for some years – and felt very welcome on return. Wonderful diversity of faith beginnings / background – Baptist / Catholic / Mennonite – all finding their way

G.F.: this is my community - the place where I belong – where I can contribute and give – and take and learn and pray

K.V.: echoed a number of experiences already expressed – came from a Catholic background – appreciated that teaching was not dogmatic

S.R.: parish is a place of growth, vulnerability, authenticity. So good that we are able to absorb errors and fumbles.

K.D.: - “test drove” 5 or 6 different churches – took time to heal from that – then found St. Philip – 28 yrs – friendship / community.

G.A.: first came 6 yrs ago - loved seeing all the kids – the freedom – chaos – the lego table -- sermons – teaching

S.C. every gift offered here is very welcome no matter how it is presented – it is warmly received.

K.F: came from a Baptist back ground - first of all to the 8am service. Loved the liturgy – the eucharist – the quietness. – found it all meaningful, healing and life-giving.

E.S.: great community – lots of children – 33 yrs – Emma’s grandparents did their marriage prep course. Their children grew up in this parish.

G.M.: 32 years – away for 13 – 14 – came back – still felt like home – another important aspect not mentioned so far – is the music - - different – unusual – central part of our services

J.S. 12 yrs. Warm & inviting place – her children always welcomed here

G.B.: also came from a church background of more ‘rigid’ teaching and so appreciated the ‘space’ at St. Philip

Brendon Neilson began with a first slide – “Model 5: Life Cycle of Organizations”

(credit Alice Mann’s book, “Can Our Church Live” – Redeveloping Congregations in Decline” which was adapted from Robert Gallagher’s work © 1988)

The Diagram shows the life cycle of a parish from Creation – to Formation – through Maturity – to Decline – Disintegration and Death.

Bishop Anna – value of diagram is to see that there is no such thing as ‘stability’ - asked us to go round the circle (in reverse order) to say where we thought our parish was in this cycle:

Majority saw us on the “On-going renewal and revitalization” continuum

Question: What is your ‘founding story’?

Two or three people were asked to speak to this – no one had any clear sense of the parish history.

(This is because when our history was published in 2013, it was then “released” to God in a Eucharistic service. We are no longer tied to, or by, that history.)

Second Slide: Boolean circles showing ‘past’ [No Longer’] and future [‘Not yet’] meeting in the LIMINAL centre

Slide: Diocesan Vision

At the centre – primary theme – Renewal - ‘Renewed Hearts - Spirits- People’

Faith in Action

Faith in Foundation

Faith in Formation

Top ‘petals’ of graphic flower - - Engaging God’s World; ‘Youth & Family life’ ; Worship Resources; Lay Ministry & Leadership Formation; Reconciliation & Beyond; Emerging communities

Faith in Foundation

- Asset Management
- Financial Resources
- Shared & Remote Ministries
- Effective communication
- Current Ministries

Primarily about congregational Development – What is our Ministry going to be in 10 – 15 – or 20 years? And how are we going to fund that Ministry? Time to begin the work of identifying and developing opportunities for ‘renewal’ Imagine, with God’s help – the deep roots of the church community extending into the future – continuing its mission and ministry for generations to come.

Slide #4: three ‘interlocking conversations’

Assets – “loaves & fishes” – gifted people within our community – skills – as well as the bank account and more usual “assets”

Parish heart – what is St. Philip uniquely poised to do? What do we value – what do we want to be part of?

Community need – what is happening within our geographic boundaries - in our neighbourhood?

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* [1973]

SLIDE #5: Who comprises the congregation on a Sunday morning?**Four concentric circles:**

- at the centre: - ‘Mature practitioners’
- 2nd: ‘Sunday Sacramentalists’
- 3rd: Occasional attenders (Christmas /Easter)
- 4th outer edge: ‘Vicariously Connected’ (“We are the church they choose not to attend”)

S.C.: – ‘occasional attenders’ – we are able to embrace that and welcome them whenever they come.

E.G.: more cynicism – aware of a lack of sense of connection – through this Covid time – for many - despair has deepened – there is a need for connection – community & hope.

K.V: Zoom has been a very good thing for many – we’ve been able to connect on-line each week

G.F.: the blessing of Covid is that it has made us more acutely aware that we live in “liminal space” – we always are – but in the pandemic we know that we are not in control. God alone is ‘in charge’ - so – we have to stay close to Him.

J.S: ‘GenX’ (demographic cohort following the baby boomers and preceding the millennials) a lot of this group are uncomfortable with “religion”

E.S.: for the short time that we were back in church, we did a fabulous job of ‘Hybrid Zoom+ ‘in-person’ worship – both are meaningful – would not want to lose either

S.R.: Judith Slimmon made the comment at our last Visioning meeting in March, 2021, that every person has a soul. And every soul needs to be nourished. Jesus did a lot of teaching and a lot of healing. Transformation happens from the inside - not the outside – we have the potential to share that healing and teaching – and to share many of the gifts within our community.

Bishop: How can you at St. Philp become more “porous”? - let people in to see us – know us – worship with us.

Question: To wrap up: How can we help?

S.R.: the committee had been struck in January 2020. We met in January and February - our March 2020 meeting was cancelled. We've also met recently and some members have withdrawn. Several have lost energy for that now.

Apart from Covid – it is also important to acknowledge that we are in a “transition time” as we move towards Christopher’s retirement. Possibly a new priest would do things differently – then part of our job is to support people through this change.
- committee stumbled over fund raising aspect of this Diocesan visioning - it would have been easier if the Diocese had been upfront about financial needs rather than couching them in terms of a ‘renewed vision’

Brendon acknowledged the rightness of this comment.

S.R. – also waiting to see if new Bishop would bring a change in the vision

Bishop: ultimate goal is for all parishes to be self-sustaining and for the Diocese to have a budget that is sustainable.

Congregations only vote in two ways: - with their feet – if they don’t like something – or with support if they do. There are some ways – some resources that the Diocese can offer to help in this process.

E.G. the clearer we can be going forward about – what seemed to be – the hidden agenda of diocesan fund raising – the better

Brendon: - yes – acknowledged.

Bishop: Quote: Eisenhower said ‘ Planning is everything. Plans are worthless.’

No need to worry too much about a timeline.

Think about stretching the vision of who we are – who we want to be

G.M. 2 things stopping St. Philip from moving forward - first Covid – second, the looming reality of Christopher’s retirement – Bishop asking – how can we help? – We would like a much more open process communicated to us about how we can move forward in transition to a new priest.

Bishop: not something to answer tonight – except to say that a number of other parishes are also in this same process, looking for a new priest. There are currently 77 priests in the Diocese – and many churches are in transition.

C.P.: 30 second version – tell us how you are – and how your family is doing?

Bishop – very much defined by that ‘Liminal space’ between what was and what will be.

Their home in Calgary has sold – transaction will be complete - today? with Inspector’s report. Household is actually 6 – Bishop Anna + husband - 2 children – and parents-in-law. Possession date for buyers will be set at June 25 and then family should be reunited very soon after.

Bishop closed in prayer & with thanks to all.

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Next meetings: 18 May, 15 June, 21 Sept, 19 Oct,
 16 Nov, 14 Dec (nb: 2nd Tue in Dec not 3rd)