

Diocese of Rupert's Land
Executive Committee Minutes

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

Present: Archdeacon Simon Blaikie, Bishop Geoff Woodcroft, The Rev. Brian Ford, Sharon Routley, Richard Pilbeam, The Rev. Andrew Rampton, Canon Gary Russell, Chancellor Jim Ripley, Dean Paul Johnson, Archdeacon Helen Kennedy, Archdeacon Naboth Manzongo, Archdeacon Mawejje, Archdeacon Dave Labdon, The Rev. Helen Holbrook, The Rev. Vincent Solomon

Regrets: none

Staff: The Rev. Dr. Heather McCance, Joy Valencerina

1) Call to Order

a) Opening prayer and acknowledgement of the land

Bishop Geoff began with a reading of 1 John and reflected on it. Without being loving, are we able to hear God, to see what God is calling us toward? So many of our siblings are afflicted by brutal violence every day; how are we to carry the cross in order to follow Jesus? It takes incredible faith that we do this as the Body of Christ. We need to be taught, again and again, to love one another as God has loved us.

Bishop Geoff opened with prayer.

Richard Pilbeam read the acknowledgement of the land.

2) Additions to the Agenda

None were offered.

3) Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Dean Paul Johnson, seconded by Chancellor Jim Ripley, and carried, that the agenda as circulated be approved.

4) Approval of the Minutes of March 16th

Motion: Be it resolved that the Minutes from the March meeting be amended to show that Heather McCance, who suggested that she might have had to leave the meeting early, did in fact attend the entire meeting.

R.Pilbeam/J. Ripley **Carried**

5) Business Arising from the Meeting of March 16th

None.

6) Funding for New Website(s)

Archdeacon Simon Blaikie suggested this be dealt with as part of the Finance Report later in our meeting.

7) Finance Task Force Update

This group was formed by Council to help us deal with the matter of a significant deficit in our 2021 budget by Deacon Lynn MacDonald, Canon Gary, Ms Lucy Cummings to be in conversation with the Diocese. The group began meeting six weeks ago, and began by discovering one another's gifts. They decided to invite others from outside Council to join the group, including one person from outside the Diocese.

Meetings have begun with scripture, and proceeded to reflections on generosity and church behaviour. They are meeting every Wednesday morning. The focus is to listen to God's voice and direction.

The topic of a capital campaign has not arisen.

The Task Force is moving forward in deep reflection on living in generosity, challenging disciples to go deeply into God's Word and to examine how we live daily in generosity. The desire is to generate communication to best equip disciples for nurturing and flourishing. We are not a business, and a business model will not suffice. We seek not to fall into a false perception of scarcity. It is critical to engage disciples in ministry opportunities where their gifts are best suited. Money is not the problem, but the vehicle by which God has drawn us back to Christ, the head of the Body.

Our buildings can be both mill stones and blessings. We've noted that in most parishes, offering patterns are dependent on physical attendance at worship. There is often a sense of consumerism in church. Do local churches understand and engage in their local context?

Gary Russell added stewardship is primarily about making disciples; money is in the mix, but it has to be about people stepping up because they're engaged with the mission. Mission comes from scripture, scripture that teaches about becoming disciples. Gary's go-to word is engagement, with collective and individual calling. Disciples need to know what needs doing. How has the pandemic impacted all of this? A survey was suggested; Gary shared link for a prototype (<https://creativestewardship.ca/survey/>). He asked Executive to look and give feedback about whether this survey would be a helpful direction for us to go.

The Task Force will continue discussion and planning. This is not a time for retrenchment but an opportunity for church renewal.

Helen Holbrook asked if it is possible for parishes to get a sense of the needs of the communities around the churches? Gary responded that this question is included in the survey. Helen suggested an example might be Habitat for Humanity, which brings together all sorts of people and groups to respond to a need.

Gary's survey asks people if they're willing to have their response shared with the local parish.

8) Funding Request from St. Thomas, Weston

The request is for funding from the Shared Ministry Investment Fund, and was circulated to Executive members earlier this week.

Archdeacon Simon Blaikie reported that Archdeacon Helen Kennedy noted to him prior to today's meeting that this Fund is intended for only start-up funds. This is a pre-existing program that has been funded in this way before. We cannot approve this request.

Simon asked Executive whether they wish to see such funding requests (to be aware of what is happening) or if he should simply inform the parish that their request does not meet the criteria.

Andrew Rampton asked if there is someone who can give St. Thomas' support in finding other sources of funding. He suggested that perhaps the Women's Inter-Church Council or Safeway community foundation would be good sources for them. If our response here has to be no, is there someone who can resource these requests (in this case or in future requests from parishes)? Bishop Geoff responded that there is not, but there may be a need to develop such a resource.

Andrew suggested that until such a resource exists, having these requests come to Executive would be helpful, so that we can offer such suggestions.

Bishop Geoff asked Archdeacon Helen to spend some time with St Thomas' leadership to explore other options.

Archdeacon Helen asked if there are other funds within the diocese that could support this. She suggested the Youth Ministry fund, as this is a ministry for young people. Archdeacon Simon asked if Helen has the terms of reference for that fund. Helen responded that there are none; this was started but never finished.

Bishop Geoff reminded us of Paul Lampman's request at Council in the fall that Council be provided with a full list of the funds available with those terms of reference. Joy Valencerina is doing this work, but it is taking time (especially with the extra workload of the pandemic).

Archdeacon Helen reported from institutional memory that the youth ministry fund is to be used for training for youth ministry leaders, outreach ministry to and for youth, and to support youth in going to youth events. This request comes within these terms as ministry to youth.

Archdeacon Dave Labdon stated that if we don't hear about these requests at Executive, we won't know what's going on in the Diocese. There's a wealth of information and resources in these gatherings that can be offered to parishes seeking assistance. If we are looking to create a new body with this knowledge, its composition would probably not look very different from what is here in Executive already.

Archdeacon Mawejje noted that there's no way we can know all of what God is doing through God's people but that hearing these requests are a good way for us to know and offer support. Having requests come here allows us to find ways to resource the need. The terms of reference are not meant to deter ministry and outreach, but to give a particular focus to each of the funds.

Joy reported that there is about \$15,000 in youth ministry unused, so there is room in that fund.

Chancellor Jim Ripley said that he would be happy to vote in favour of the motion, with the confirmation that the criteria for the fund is broad enough to allow for this. Both Archdeacon Helen and Bishop Geoff affirmed this.

Archdeacon Helen will still be in touch with St. Thomas to help them explore further funding opportunities.

Motion: *Be it resolved, that Executive approve a grant of \$2,000 from the Diocesan Youth Ministry Fund to St. Thomas, Weston, as per their grant request.*

H. Kennedy/P.Johnson

Carried

9) Funding Request from Healing and Reconciliation Fund (UIMD)

Vince Solomon presented the grant request, circulated to Executive in advance of this meeting, which comes to us from Canon Murray Still and the Elders' Circle. The work is a partnership work with those with fetal alcohol syndrome in teaching an Introduction to the Cree language. Request is for \$2,200.

Vince noted that this project extends our Acts of Synod in 2016. We haven't established funding for cultural and language revitalization, so this fund is the best source for funding the project.

Chancellor Jim Ripley pointed out that the memo we received was a request for \$2,500. Vince clarified that the request is actually for \$2,200.

Gary Russell noted that when the same kind of program was done two years ago, there were programs in Cree, Michif and Ojibwe; Vince confirmed that this program is only for Cree.

Motion: *Be it resolved, that Executive approve a grant request for \$2,200 for this project, with the funds to come from the Healing and Reconciliation Fund of the Diocese.*

G. Mawejje/G. Russell

Carried

10) Funding Request from Indigenous Peoples' Restoration Fund (UIMD)

Vince Solomon presented the grant request for the Music for Life program request, for up to \$2500. Vince suggested Executive approve a grant for \$1,000. Archdeacon Mawejje asked why Vince is suggesting a grant of less than the request. Vince said that this fund is getting quite depleted and he wishes us to steward this resource.

Bishop Geoff learned about this program around 2018 when some of the Quakers were very involved. The number of unpaid teachers and distributors of instruments who are involved is amazing. Indigenous youth are receiving fantastic opportunities and wonderful growth is happening among the students.

Motion: *Be it resolved, that Executive approve a grant of \$1,000 for the Music for Life program from the Indigenous Peoples' Restoration Fund.*

G. Mawejje/B. Ford

Carried

11) Update on Crystal City

Archdeacon Simon Blaikie reported that we used to have a parish called St. Andrew's in Crystal City, southwest of Pilot Mound. The property has been purchased by the neighbour who has been tending the property for years. Winston Smith, our real estate advisor, deserves our gratitude for the work he did on our behalf; Bishop Geoff will write a letter of thanks.

Bishop Geoff reported that this property and building were sold for what they were worth. The neighbour and town council have been tending to all the building and property needs since 1990. Geoff toured the location last fall; the building is derelict, and the neighbour will assume the costs of pulling the building down.

12) Finance Report

a) Financial Statements

Referring to the financial statements circulated ahead of this meeting, J. Valencerina reported that the Diocese has a \$8600 deficit at the end of the first quarter. RL News revenue is down \$1700, Common Mission and Ministry is down \$1500. 'Donations' are up \$11,000, representing bridge funding from the Province. Other expenses are generally underspent this year-to-date. Joy reminded Executive that the budget seen here is a preliminary budget.

Motion: *Be it resolved that as moved by finance committee, that Executive received the financial statements to the end of March.* ***Carried***

b) Staffing change

Bishop Geoff reported that over the past year we've come to a place where we're understaffed in the Finance department. Joy is keeping up but just barely. Payroll requires three full days of work to prepare the payroll, reconcile, and complete transactions per pay period (so, six full days a month). We need an assistant who can do payroll as well as accounts payable and receivable, and deal with liability insurance.

The Finance Committee is bringing a motion that Executive recommend to Council that the Diocese terminate the present position of 'office assistant' and then initiate a new position, 'Assistant to Director of Finance,' with responsibility for payroll, renters' liability insurance, accounts payable and receivable, the donation database, and any other duties assigned by the Director of Finance.

Chancellor Jim Ripley said that it was unclear to him what's happening to the person currently in the position of assistant. Is there a cost to eliminating the position? Archdeacon Simon Blaikie responded that current employee is eligible to apply for the new position. He suggested that if we were to follow the pattern established with clergy, we would give 90 days' notice. The Chancellor can't say whether that is appropriate, would need to look at the length of service of that person, age, a number of other factors; three months may be more than adequate or not adequate. Offering the person the chance to apply for the job may not excuse the Diocese from the need for notice or pay in lieu of notice. We need to understand that this may come with a financial cost to the Diocese.

Chancellor Jim Ripley further suggested that reference to liability insurance should probably be to insurance more generally, and suggested that this might be a friendly amendment. Joy responded that the staff support is needed specifically with regards to liability insurance in cases where parishes are renting their building to individuals or groups. Jim suggested that he would change amendment to "renters' liability insurance." (This is noted in the wording of the motion above as a friendly amendment.)

c) Website Funding

S. Blaikie advised that Executive had approved funding for a new website for the Diocese for \$2000 per month for a period of 3 years from the New Church Development Fund.

The current Diocesan website is dated and is not functioning as it should – the developer of the site advised that he cannot repair it and a new site is needed.

The Bishop has asked Simon to take the lead on this and he has Judy McIvor and Brian Form assisting to work on creating something new.

The criteria for making this decision is that it should not rely only on local talent – which may disappear – but be supported both nationally and internationally

We looked at what the other Diocese in Canada were using and found the Diocese of New West, BC, Edmonton and others were using a Tithe.ly platform.

Tithe.ly is comprised of the former Canadian company Ascend, which they acquired a few years ago.

The cost is minimal - \$20 US per parish – with 70 parishes that would be a cost of \$1400 us a month or approximately \$2000 CAD.

BC was able to get buy in from the parishes by paying ½ of this cost for the parishes.

Catherine Pate is their Director of Communications (formerly from Winnipeg) and speaks highly of the process of setting up and maintaining the sites.

It will take between 6-9 months to develop the Diocesan site and the Finance Committee has given approval based on a completion date of January 1, 2022.

Simon, Judy and Brian will be meeting weekly over the next while to get things going. Once they have a handle on things, there will be a roll out to the parishes.

P. Johnson – questioned the extra cost for the parishes – added on to the extra cost for payroll.

S. Blaikie – the cost will be covered for a period of time and hopefully by then the parishes will be in a position to take over the cost.

A. Rampton – has used the Tithe.ly site for donations and found them very good to work with.

The Tithe.ly site gives us the ability to share events from parishes to the diocese and vice versa.

At this point in the meeting, Bishop Geoff determined that with Helen Kennedy and Dave Labdon having left the meeting there was no long a Quorum and we will not be able to put anything further to a vote.

The meeting continued

For information purposes, the Finance Committee has recommended that the Diocese pay for an upgrade to the WIFI services at Bishop Geoff's home. Currently he does not have enough bandwidth to take part in Zoom meetings from home and must come to the office.

Discussion regarding whether these two items should be voted on – perhaps online. It was determined that we can take both to Council without a vote.

Finance reported that we have claimed back \$499,365 in CEWS payments to the end of December. S. Routley is currently working on the January amounts. The program has been extended until the end of September according to the recent provincial budget.

Bishop asked that he and S. Routley draft a letter to the government from the Diocese expressing our thanks. The Manitoba Bridge Grant was mentioned as well.

Vince advised that there is a grant available from the National Church – he will forward the details to S. Routley and J. Valencerina.

13) Members' Reflections

R. Pilbeam offered a closing prayer

14) Adjournment

Bishop Geoff declared the meeting adjourned in absence of a quorum.