

Episcopal Diocese of Montana
Minutes of Diocesan Council Zoom Media Meeting
April 17, 2021

The Diocesan Council of the Episcopal Diocese of Montana held a video meeting via Zoom Media, beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 17, 2021.

Attendance. Council members present were: The Rt. Rev. Martha (“Marty”) E. Stebbins, The Rev. Stephen Day, Cathy Morris, Keith Kuhn, The Rev. Dorcie Dvarishkis, The Rev. Jaime Leonard, Hope Stockwell, The Rev. Canon Clark Sherman, The Very Rev. Scott Anderson, Hank Tuell and The Rev. Mary Alice Jones. Council members Rick Harden and Jerry Southwood were absent. Also in attendance were Mark Dvarishkis, Diocesan Treasurer; Barb Hagen, Canon for Finance and Administration; and Gayle Gallik Archey, Diocesan Secretary.

Joining the meeting were members of the Congregational Development Task Force, they being: The Rev. Connie Campbell Pearson (St. James, Bozeman); The Rev. Dennis Campbell (St. Paul’s, Hamilton); David Campbell (Executive Director, Camp Marshall); The Rev. Steve DeHart (Christ Church, Sheridan); The Rev. Janis Hansen (Christ Church, Sheridan); The Rev. Adam Linton (Columbia Falls); The Rev. Canon Chris Roberts (Canon to the Ordinary); and Jim Wiley (Holy Spirit, Missoula).

African Bible Study. Bishop Marty began the meeting with a Gospel reading from Luke, then asked, “What is the Gospel saying to you?”

Call to Order / Adoption of Agenda. With a quorum participating, Bishop Marty called the meeting to order, and offered an opening prayer. The Agenda, as previously distributed, was adopted as printed.

Presentation by the Congregational Development Task Force. The Rev. Janis Hansen introduced herself, along with fellow members of the Congregational Development Task Force. Janis provided an overview of the Congregational Development Charter – Phase 1, as follows:

Objectives:

- Explore the culture of the Diocese of Montana: its resilience and learnings from the experience of COVID-19’s impact on the Diocese.
- Envision future development of congregational life;
- Identify support resources at the Diocesan and local parish levels.
- Envision effective congregational support programs.

Methodology:

- Interviews...qualitative and quantitative research to include surveys and interviews, and research on rural churches.
- Publish results in summary of verbatims, and statistical data.

Duration:

Phase 1 includes Steve DeHart's research and findings on rural churches, and The Resilience Survey regarding impact/lessons learned of COVID-19.

Form and Audience of Conclusion:

Present finding and recommendations to Diocese: Bishop, Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, Diocese at large, etc.

- Construct of Change:
If culture does not move, strategy and structure cannot succeed.

The Rev. Steve DeHart provided an overview of a study entitled "The Future of the Small Rural Church," which he conducted while on sabbatical.

Jim Wiley reviewed the Diocesan Snapshot and Vestry Resilience Survey. It was noted that 19 parishes in Montana have closed in the past 30 years. A majority of Montana Episcopalians are from the 8 larger urban congregations.

The Rev. Connie Campbell-Pearson outlined the results of a Clergy Resilience Survey in response to the Pandemic, specifically revenue and attendance of our parishes. Moving forward, most Clergy realize they must use video conferencing (Zoom Media).

Before leaving the meeting, the members of the Task Force reiterated they want to be a resource for Congregational Development with respect to Change Management; and Leadership Development.

Thoughts and Reflections of the Congregational Development Task Force Presentation. Although the information provided by the Task Force was well presented and informative, Council members questioned "How Come?" The size of a Church based on communicant numbers is not realistic. Average Sunday Attendance is better, as it provides a window of a Church's vitality and reality. Alternatively, the Average Weekly Engagement of members of a Parish, may be a more accurate measure. With visioning work, the challenge is assessing the culture of each Parish, which is so different throughout our Diocese.

Visioning Work. We are called to bring Christ to the World. Our ultimate goal is to make Disciples of Christ, and not the Episcopal Church. What does parish life look like? What do we desire for Montana?. After much discussion, Council members drafted the following Vision Statement:

Montana Diocesan Council Working Vision 2021

We are a vital part of the body of Christ, a Church which is loving, growing, vibrant, relevant, and effective. We extend the love of Christ through the sacraments, relationships, and our communities.

- Loving means loving God with all our being and from that we welcome all by both inviting in and going out into our communities.

- Growing means forming Christian disciples, planting faith communities, and helping all grow in their faith and engagement.
- Vibrant means dynamic, appeals broadly, reinventing and reimagining how we share the Gospel. Love and vibrancy are intertwined.
- Relevant means acknowledging that everyone is made in the image of God, which means we need to know our community, be engaged in our community, and know the community's dreams. What are the mutually understood needs and opportunities? We need to understand the people's hunger effectively.
- Effective means we communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ and our personal faith journey in ways that can be truly heard. And living genuinely into God's love and our faith; are we living examples?

Our coffee cup: Disciples, commas, and Christ.

A motion was made by Hank Tuell to accept the Vision Statement, and seconded by Steven Day. The motion was approved by unanimous vote of Council members. We now have *Vision*; next is *Strategy* - How do we invade Montana?

St. Mark's – Havre. Bishop Marty announced the final Eucharist at St. Mark's in Havre will be held Saturday, May 1, 2021 at 1 p.m. AA will continue to meet in the Church, as it is good to have a physical presence in the building on a regular basis. Bishop Marty stated the Diocese will look for ways to continue to use the building.

Future Diocesan Council Meetings.

- * Saturday, May 22, 2021 (via Zoom) at 10:00 a.m.
- * Saturday, July 10, 2021 - *Budget only* (in-person) at 10:00 a.m.
- * Saturday, August 14, 2021 (via Zoom) at 10:00 a.m.
- * Saturday, October 23, 2021 - *New Members* (via Zoom) at 10:00 a.m.
- * Saturday, November 13, 2021 (via Zoom) at 10:00 a.m.

Adjournment. There being no further business to come before the Diocesan Council, on motion duly made by Steven Day, and seconded by Cathy Morris, Council members unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 12:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Gayle Gallik Archey, Diocesan Secretary.