

The Episcopal Church in Delaware
Diocesan Council Meeting Minutes – A Synopsis
Approved But Unarchived Minutes
April 20, 2023

The Minutes of the February 2023 meeting and the agenda for the April 2023 meeting were approved.

Saint Michael's School and Nursery, Inc. requested that the Diocesan Council transfer to them two parcels of land currently owned by the Diocesan Council in Wilmington. The request was reviewed with both Diocesan legal and the City of Wilmington, DE, both of which had no issues with the transfer. Helen Spence, Vice President of the Diocesan Council, presented a motion on behalf of Canon Judith Gregory, that the Diocesan Council approve the transfer of the parcels of land at a nominal cost. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Frank Daniels, Treasurer, reported that eight churches and ECW have signed up to participate in the small church audit program offered by the Diocese in conjunction with the University of Delaware. The program has been updated this year to better fit our needs, and the University of Delaware students conducting the audits are doing a thorough job. Frank Daniels also reported that work on the 2024 budget will begin in June 2023, and that the Diocesan Council audit will be done by the end of next week.

The search committee for the Executive Director position at Camp Arrowhead is being formed. There are two finalists for the Retreat Director position.

The Reverend Canon Martha Kirkpatrick explained the new transition process in the Episcopal Church in Delaware. The Canon noted that there are nearly 300 clergy needed, nation-wide, with 128 full time and 168 part time positions currently open. In Delaware, a number of smaller parishes are seeking part time clergy, and several parishes are served by part time clergy over the age of seventy-two, and that half of the parishes in the Delaware diocese need clergy. The Canon added that other mainline churches are being forced to be creative about ministry, learning to live with shared ministry. Full time interim priests are becoming difficult to find, and some parishes hire retired priests to serve as half time interim priests. If a parish cannot find an interim, there are other types of on-going clergy support. There are resources to help a parish discern if the time has come for it to close and to help a parish implement that decision.

The path to ordained ministry is changing. Some people who are going into ordained ministry are older and see it as a part time service. Seminaries are trying to offer the Master Divinity degree online. There are not enough seminarians to fill all the vacancies of retiring priests.

Canon Kirkpatrick explained the transition process in the Diocese of Delaware has changed from the bishop's office doing most of the evaluation of candidates and determining the list of finalists for parishes to interview, with the Standing Committee being required to approve the panel of finalists, to a process where the parishes will do the work of discernment with the support of the diocese. The bishop now offers a Growth and Vitality Workshop in which a parish in transition looks at patterns of attendance and giving, and begins to think about its options for clergy. This requires a hard look at finances. If a parish cannot afford a full time priest it must consider its options for a part time priest. For full time priest positions, the diocese offers the services of a search consultant and will pay eighty percent (80%) of the cost.

Bishop Brown stated that he will not yoke parishes together to share a priest because those arrangements don't work. Instead, the diocese is providing resources and guidance to help parishes make their own decisions.

Bishop Brown's Blueprint will be announced in *The Net* next week, and the Bishop hopes that everyone will know the four priorities by the end of the year.