

Minutes – Diocesan Council
Saturday, April 20, 2024 – 9:30 a.m. at St. John’s College, Winnipeg, MB

Present = P; Regrets = R; Absent = A

Ex-Officio = (*); Appointed = (a)

R	Abra, Dr. Allison (<i>*Warden of St. John’s College</i>)	P	Mawejje, The Ven. Godfrey (<i>* Archdeacon</i>)
P	Aitken, Mary	P	Mawejje, June Rachel
R	Akinwale, The Rev. Wilson	P	Manzongo, The Ven. Naboth (<i>* Archdeacon</i>)
P	Bellay, Vic (<i>*Chancellor</i>)	P	McGillivray, Ben
P	Blaikie, The Ven. Simon (<i>* Exec. Archdeacon</i>)	P	McIntosh, The Rev. Wayne
P	Bonnett, Elizabeth	R	Panting, The Rev. Deacon Diane
P	Bowman, The Rev. Matthew	P	Pilbeam, Richard (<i>*Diocesan Treasurer</i>)
P	Brown, Eva	R	Robinson, The Rev. Theo
P	Buxton, Debbie	R	Roe-Finlay, The Rev. Deacon Susan
P	Cummings, Lucy	P	Russel, Canon Gary
P	Dolloff, The Rev. John	P	Sherman, Dorian
P	Dorrian, Colin	R	Smandych, The Rev. R. Susan
P	Falconer, The Rev. Henry (Joshua)	R	Woodcroft, The Rt. Rev. Geoffrey (<i>* Bishop</i>)
R	Johnson, The Very Rev. Paul (<i>* Dean</i>)		<i>Staff and non-voting members</i>
R	Laldin, The Ven. Karen (<i>* Archdeacon</i>)	P	Nixon, Melissa (<i>Office Coordinator</i>)
P	Lampman, The Ven. Paul (<i>* Archdeacon</i>)	R	Turnbull, Ryan (<i>Discipleship Developer</i>)
P	Larson, Barbara	P	Valencerina, Joy (<i>Director of Finance</i>)
R	MacDonald, The Rev. Deacon Lynn	P	Wedlake, Robert (<i>* Secretary of Synod</i>)

1. Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, Regrets, Opening Prayer

S. Blaikie called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. S. Blaikie welcomed everyone, said a land acknowledgment and prayer. E. Bonnett mentioned that the Metis Nation prefer to be referred to as “the red river metis” in Manitoba. E. Brown confirmed this. Regrets were read.

S. Blaikie explains that this meeting is on the single topic of Diocesan Finances as requested from the March 2024 Diocesan Council (DC) meeting.

S. Blaikie shared his hopes and expectations of today’s meeting in that all members of the council will feel equipped to speak with their parishes and the diocese as a whole with a common understanding of what the situation is. We are not going to agree on possible resolutions but

2. Approval of Agenda

M. Aitken asked if we were to approve the agenda. S. Blaikie responded that since the Agenda is set, it does not require approval.

3. Discussion on Diocesan Finances

-S. Blaikie began with a brief overview of the budget and how it is set up. As he reviewed accounts, he had people write letters beside certain accounts. Please see attached for marked up budget. Starting on page 1 Revenue, account #4-5146 is highlighted because it is an “in account”, on page 4 there is account #6-1325, which is the corresponding “out account”. This in/out is for the 2 developer positions that are paid for out of the New Church Development Fund (NCDF). The other “in/out” accounts are account # 4-5160 and #6-1350 which is the in/out for the “Retiree trust fund”. It is important to know this is not extra money coming in that we can use, or expenses that we can cut. This is strictly an “in/out account”. Those two “in/out” accounts total up to \$242,081 for the period ending Mar/24.

-On page 2 is the summary of Expenditures. On pages 3 -7 it provides a breakdown of the summary.

-S. Blaikie reviews how the accounts and pages relate to each other. The A,B &C on page 3 are detail of the A,B& C on page 2, and this continues on page 4 -7. S. Blaikie points out that 2 accounts under D –Diocesan Programs are the in/out accounts. So while the expense for Diocesan programs reads as \$303,636, it is not a true reflection of the cost to the budget. If those in/out amounts were to be removed from D – Diocesan programs, the subtotal would be \$61,555

- On page 7 there is a breakdown of the shared ministry funds from page 1, as well as brief detail on the trust fund we have. Some of the trust funds are internally restricted, others are externally restricted and we cannot use them for anything then their express purpose (ex. Retired clergy benefits). On the left hand side of the page, under C, we track the balance of the NCDF. We have used this for a few reasons in the past year.
- On page 8 is the income statement for the fund of the former St. Stephen's and on page 9 is some explanatory notes.
- Conversation turned to the NCDF and how long it may last. It is a finite resource, as the input of this account is from the sale of property. Currently we fund the UIMD and the DDD positions from this account. We have also voted to use this fund it to pay for a lawsuit and to pay off 2022 deficit.
- S. Blaikie reminds us that the operational budget for this diocese is the bare bones cost to operate and run the Diocese of Rupert's Land. There may be a couple of things we could cut, but it would mostly be nickel and diming and reducing ministry. If we reduce staff, we will likely lose the work we are doing towards reconciliation, the work supporting parishes or not responding to legal matters. If every parish paid the 12.5%, CM&M then we would have a nearly balanced budget this year.
- C. Dorrian points out this is the bare bones funding for this model but what about another model. S. Blaikie responds that if we decide that we do not need four diocese in Manitoba that we only really need one, then yes we could reduce staff and costs, but that is something that requires further discussion with the metropolitan. If our polity, our structure changed then yes, it would cost a different amount to run that model.
- S. Smandych did a great job at picking out a few things, here and there that could save some money, but it was nickel and diming and we voted against most of her suggestions for cost savings.
- S. Blaikie "another possible next step is insolvency" If we cannot generate enough revenue for this budget, we're done We've reached a point, where what must be done, to be a diocese is the budget. S. Blaikie uses the example of building a car, how if the car requires 424 parts to be a car, and we only have 421 parts, then we cannot build a car. At that point, we will need to go to the Primate or the Metropolitan and say, "We're done. We can no longer support the basic legal and fiduciary responsibilities of being a diocese".
- Some suggestions are we could write a letter to the primate and the metropolitan asking for a discussion to amalgamate the diocese in the prairies, or even wider. We can no longer support the current system as 22% of the revenue received go to the wider church
- There are 26 parishes within the city of Winnipeg; council could suggest that we can only support 12. A diocese out west went into their synod and closed 10 parishes, that was a hard decision but it helped. Are we there now?

4. Discussion on Parish Amalgamation / Disestablishment

- The positive/ negative effects of closing parishes inside Winnipeg was discussed.
- If closing and amalgamating parishes is all we do, it will only be delaying the inevitable. We need to reinvigorate the body of Christ and reimagine how we can make others fall in love with Christ
- If we have 3 parishes, 3 buildings, 30 parishioners in each, and one priest serving them all, there is some immediate benefits to amalgamating. Paying the utilities, taxes and upkeep on one building versus three.
- If the average priest, in the average situation can pastor to 150 people, and if we take one priest and split them over 3 parishes with 30 people, they are not only pastoring to 90 people, but they have 3 vestry meetings, 3 corporation meetings and all the added travel.
- If each parish has 2-4 kids in it, that's' not a youth group, once you amalgamate you could have a dozen for a group.
- More people will lighten the load. It is easier to pull from a pot of 90 than 30. You can decide together what is important, is it feeding the neighbourhood? How can you accomplish that together?
- It is possible for 3 congregations of 30 to amalgamate and the new congregation to be only 30 because so many people were lost in the transition.
- B. Larson talks about the closing of her home parish in the Diocese of Keewatin and how they were unhappy it happened but that they were doing much more impactful things working with their new Parish, including drawing in lots of new young families. They don't have a regular Sunday school but when they do have a 'kids Sunday' it is packed with kids and their families.
- Getting out of buildings, selling and renting is considered much more manageable. S. Blaikie mentions a Bishop in Maryland who told them to plant a church in a coffee shop, so they rented a coffee shop, the priest washes the dishes and she is there 7 days a week. And on Sunday's they just happen to do church. It is a coffee shop but there is always a priest walking around, serving and pastoring. It's church but done different.

- Amalgamations do not always work. The common suggestion is to sell all the buildings and go rent something for a year, get to know each other and find out if it is going to work, otherwise somebody loses and somebody wins.
- Closing churches would need to be a multi prong approach, with growth as the main focus.
- Natural Church Development (NCD) was something we looked at when Heather was here. It is a good but pricey tool

5. Break

S. Blaikie said a prayer for Cheryl, B. McGillvary's support worker who had a fall and is on her way to the Grace Hospital. Meeting resumes at 11:22 am

6. Discussion on Common Mission & Ministry

- S. Blaikie started the discussion with acknowledging the members of the CM+M committee within our own council, P. Lampman, R. Pilbeam and C. Dorrian, they are here to listen and not present anything.
- Reviewed a brief history of apportionment in the dioceses of Canada, with a focus on Rupert's Land. In Synod 2008, we decided to change the previous apportionment of 20% and call the new 12.5% Common Mission and Ministry. Synod 2008 gave Diocesan Council the ability to change the rate up to 3% at a time. Only one change happened, from 12 % to 12.5%. Every diocese does apportionment differently, with different percentages, different funds it applies to, different structures
- The Diocesan Council has been dealing with the issue of CM+M for a very long time. We currently have P. Lampman chair the current committee, G. Russell ran the committee back in 2022 and Bishop Don commissioned a "Vitality and Viability" study on the diocese and their parishes and presented it at Synod 2012. It is important to remember that Common Ministry and Mission is an agreement between parishes, that this is how we are going to support each other.
- Whether we change the rate or not is one question, because even if we make it 80%, parishes will likely pay what parishes can/want to pay. There is no enforcement on the parishes that do not meet their proposed contributions, a story was shared that at a parish's budget meeting they decided to continue not meeting their 12.5% because no one called or complained about the short payment.
- The Bishop's latest directive, in regards to sale of property and arrears of CM&M being removed from the funds of the sale before distribution, will help in some situations.
- Discussions revolved around parishes in different situations; some that cannot afford much but do their best to get to 10-12% of their income, there is also parishes whose income is high but their contribution are low, how do we get those parishes to participate? Others noticed how some parishes that the diocese supports, through ministry funds and grants, are not meeting their contribution as well.
- W. McIntosh asked if every parish paid their 12.5% CM&M, how close would, we be to balancing the budget? S. Blaikie responded, this year we would be, with all parishes paying 12.5% of CM&M we would be \$30,000 short of a balanced budget. This would be something that was much more manageable
- The discussion on parish's vestries usually choosing to lower CM&M contributions when there is cuts that need to be made because they do not understand what the diocese is and what it does for them, and why they should pay a percentage of their earnings. N. Manzongo replied that we need to realize we are all the diocese, it is just not the people in the Bishop's office. We must not see it as 'us vs. them' situation, the diocese is not removed from the parishes, we are all the diocese. If the diocese dies, then the parishes will die and we will lose everything.
- As we had reached our time and discussion was still productive, the decision was to have another Extraordinary meeting in June. Details will be promulgated via email when a date is selected

7. Adjournment

P. Lampman prayed and the meeting ended at 12:13pm