201st DIOCESAN CONVENTION MEETS ON ZOOM

The 201st Diocesan Convention met on ZOOM on Saturday, October 17, 2020 from 9:30 AM to just before 1 PM. St. Brendan's delegates were Lis Ingoldsby and Skip Greenlaw and of course Pastor Elaine was also present. Some 256 clergy and lay delegates participated in the Convention.

The Convention was preceded by several weeks of a Diocesan Town Meeting on Tuesdays at 5 PM which usually lasted for an hour. During this "town meeting," Bishop Brown and the Diocesan staff discussed rules of order, resolutions, the annual budget, and we practiced several times how to vote on ZOOM. The information contained in the "town meetings" was a great building block which resulted in a smooth and orderly convention.

The Finance Committee worked very hard to offer a budget which only had a 1% or $23,000 increase in it. The budget amounted to $1,831.422. The assessment (the amount congregations pay to the Diocese) remained at the same level as this year -- 5% on the first $10,000 of "routine operating income"(ROI) and 15% of remaining ROI. The budget was adopted overwhelmingly.

The guiding principles of the development of the budget were:

- Create the beloved community
- Equip our faith community to be mission outposts of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Support the Episcopal Church and our common life as the Diocese of Maine
- Root our plan within a sentence from Holy Scripture: "So that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which Jesus Christ has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power."

There was a lot of thoughtful discussion by the Rev. Lael Sorensen, Chair of the Finance Committee, and Canon Terry Reimer of the Diocesan staff about whether this was a realistic budget, given the impact on the Covid virus on pledged income. Terry promised that they would be in touch with treasurers of all congregations to discuss the revenue picture during 2020. The Diocesan Council will also monitor the income situation and make adjustments to the budget during 2021, if necessary.

Resolutions regarding clergy compensation and lay compensation were adopted. These resolutions contained minimum salaries for clergy and lay employees of the Diocese. The operative word is minimum; congregations may elect to pay clergy or lay employees more than the minimum. The minimum salary for full-time clergy in Hancock County is $60,800, and the minimum hourly wage for all congregational employees is $14.00 per hour.

All of the remaining resolutions which were adopted by 82% or more voting were focused around justice, social, and anti- discrimination issues which our national church, our Diocese, our nation, and all our communities are debating. They included:

- The Diocesan Justice Commission was tasked with supporting the ministry of the Maine Episcopal Network for Justice, Committee on Indian Relations, Episcopal Peace Fellowship - Maine, and the Racial Justice Council.
- Racial Justice Council was adopted for "the purpose of developing resources to support the ongoing ministry of the Racial Reconciliation in the Diocese of Maine.
- "Support for the authors of a letter to the Church on breaking free of white supremacy."
- "Support for the Covenant of Anti-Racism"
- A fund is established to pay for a carbon offset fee when air travel by the Bishop and Diocesan staff cannot be avoided.
- Support for legislation implementing recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act.

If you would like a copy of any of these resolutions, please contact Lis or Skip.

The last resolution was "the forfeiture of union" by Christ Church, Biddeford because "it is no longer an active worship community." It does not have a "Rector, Vestry, Wardens, or other officers, and therefore it no longer conforms to the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Diocese of Maine." Having said all the bureaucratic mumble jumble, Christ Church still has a very active ministry called the "Seeds of Hope". There was a wonderful video showing many of their activities and words from people whose lives they have impacted for the better. This is always a sad occasion.

The convention ended Sunday morning with a Diocesan worship service, a wonderful choir from many Maine Episcopal churches, and an inspiring sermon given by Bishop Brown.

We give thanks to the Diocesan staff for planning and organizing a wonderful convention given the unusual circumstances of not being able to assemble in person because of the Covid pandemic.

Thank you for electing us to represent you at the convention.

Peace and love,

Lis and Skip