Actions of Diocesan Council

A Summary of More Important Council Decisions and Information
A.D. 2003

8 February 2003

Retired Clergy and Widow's Insurance

The national church changed the way it covers the medicare supplements for retired clergy, so a change in diocesan policy is required. The Diocese will offer to pay, for those who qualify, the premium plan--$100 per month. The Diocese is also offering to pay for those who retired as of 31 December 2002 an additional co-payment of $10 per month. This actually represents a savings of around $30 to $40 per month. This is a reconstruction of last meeting's decision. This was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously.

Rental Fees for Wawasee

A 5% increase in rates was proposed by the Wawasee Director, Sharon Katona. These rates are summarized in the schedule submitted by Sharon. These were approved by Council.

Cluster Conferences

The three conferences for varying size congregations are scheduled for March 1; March 29; and April 26. There are about 15 middle sized, 15 small, and 7 large congregations. It is hoped that one of the results of the conferences will be a series of networks.

12 April 2003

Proposed Policy on Gambling

Ben Jones prepared a proposed statement which council then discussed at length: "It is the position of the Bishop and Council of the Diocese of Northern Indiana that fundraising using games-of-chance is completely contrary to the character of God who gives completely, unreservedly and without measure or thought of getting anything in return. We are disciples of Jesus, the unique and perfect image of God, the Word made flesh. As such we seek to become more and more like Him through imitation of his life in the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is the policy of this Diocese that fundraising using games-of-chance be strictly prohibited."
Two issues emerged: a theoretical issue of the wrongness of gambling to raise church funds and the lesser issue of occasional raffles and other such like things for mission projects or community projects. The Bishop and Ben will take a look at the statement and refer it back to council later on.

14 June 2003

Proposed Policy on Gambling

Bishop Little reported that the policy development was on hold for the time being.

New Business

Mr Ted Kimball of Grace Church, Ft Wayne, was present to present the parish's request for a reduction in assessment of $21, 047, the amount due this year. The parish has been in deficit over the last three years, last year to a pronounced degree. The causes were several and many types of reports were presented to council. Ultimately there was a motion made and seconded that the amount requested be granted and that the parish pursue refinancing the mortgage on their new building. All concurred.

16 August 2003

Assessment Reduction Petition

Council heard from representatives of St John's, Bristol, regarding their parish financial difficulties and a request for a total reduction in their 2003 assessment. The reasons included the poor economy and falling pledges due to the cyclical nature of local industry and emergency repairs to the fabric of the building last year.
After the presentation, it was moved that the amount St John's paid this year toward last year's arrears be considered as current year payment. This amounted to $8130.90. It was also part of the motion that last year's arrears be considered simply forgiven. This motion passed.

2004 Budget

There was much discussion of the budget in the light of recent General Convention actions and the fact that the budget proposed approximately $117,000 to be spent on support of the General Convention and National Church budget.
Finally a motion was presented: to escrow further diocesan contributions to the national Church budget for the year 2003 beginning immediately and continuing until the next Council meeting on September 27th. The motion included the intention to study ways in which individuals and parishes may support or not support the General Convention program budget in light of the recent General Convention actions. The motion also included the expectation that at its 27th of September meeting a proposal regarding these matters will be drafted as a Council recommendation to Diocesan Convention. The motion was seconded and passes with one abstention.
Next an amendment was offered to the 2004 budget requiring that a breakdown of the national Church budget be made, reflecting the difference between General Convention expense and the General Convention program budget, to be included in the diocesan budget. This was seconded and passed. Council then passed the 2004 budget as amended.

Assessment reduction petition

Council next turned to the request from St John's, Bristol. After discussion and reflecting the desire of the parish to pay an additional $3000 in arrears from 2002, it was moved and seconded to consider that the parish had actually paid about $8000 in the year 2003, which council was now considering as 2003 payments, and, hoping to receive the additional $3000, to forgive the remaining amount of the 2003 assessment, with the understanding that the arrears in clergy insurance and pension premiums would be paid as soon as possible. This motion was seconded and passed. It was also decided that if cash flow required, the treasurer could take the amount needed to supply the required $9000 from the Episcopate Fund.

The Bishop's Report

General Convention aftermath: clergy and lay meetings are scheduled in the deaneries.

27 September 2003

Assessment Reduction Petitions

Council first heard from representatives of Trinity Church, Ft Wayne, [Rebecca Nickel, Rector, Dale Graham, Sr Warden, and James Fry, Finance Committee Chair], asking for a reduction in the 2004 assessment of $20,000. Causes cited were a reduction in pledges, and a question about whether the assessments were based on correct amounts—that is, money transferred from endowments and fund-raisers. This will not solve budget problems for 2004, but it will help. There may be as many as three salaried positions eliminated. There is a hope that if pledges increase 5%, that an $85,000 deficit will be covered from additional endowment income. There is also good hope that some of the systemic problems currently being confronted at Trinity will be resolved. Mother Rebecca asked for prayers.

Next, representatives from Grace Church, Ft Wayne, came to council, [Barb Schmitz, Priest in Charge, and Ted Kimball, Sr Warden], requesting a reduction in assessment for 2004 of 50% or $13,382.50. They spoke of a continuation of the difficulties the parish has been experiencing the last couple of years. There is a lot of healing going on in the parish but it will take time to recover from the losses experienced.
Finally, representatives came to council from Holy Trinity Church, South Bend, [Tina Velthuizen, Rector, David Koehler, Sr Warden, and Jon Molnar, Treasurer], requesting forgiveness for the the total of the 2003 assessment. Good things are going on in the parish, but the congregation is small and many are both poor and on retirement income. At council's advice, there was an additional request made for a complete reduction of the assessment for 2004—the money is simply not there, nor will it be.
After much discussion, all of these petitions were granted.

2003 Budget

The first item to be discussed was how to finance current arrears. There is $7000 left over from money originally meant for Fr Samuel in Angola in a separate fund. When it was agreed to forgive Holy Trinity's current year assessment, it was also agreed to take any year-end deficit from this $7000, if needed.

2004 Budget

Council now tackled the 2004 budget, considering that assessment reductions in the amount of $41,093.56 have been requested. A short-fall seems inevitable. Council considered what might happen if there were not sufficient money to pay the national church asking and our own staff? Council was in fair agreement that local staff comes first. It is possible that $30,000 could be taken from the CR&D budget and that the $11,000 reserved for reductions could be added to it. But this is also the part of the budget that can be used to support local parishes in difficulties.
At this point there was a discussion of a resolution which affects the diocesan contribution to the national church budget.
***Resolved**, That the 105th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Northern Indiana amend the Proposed 2004 Diocesan Budget by allowing congregations of the Diocese to offer to their pledgers the option not to support the national budget of the Episcopal Church, by directing the Treasurer of the Diocese to withhold what would ordinarily have been sent to the Mission and Ministry of the Episcopal Church in 2004 to be retained in the Diocese for local mission work; and be it further*
***Resolved**, that this amount be calculated by determining what percentage of the total parish budget for 2004 is represented by those choosing not to support the national budget, calculating what amount of the diocesan assessment is thereby represented, and directing the Treasurer of the Diocese to retain 15.99% of that amount.*
***Explanation**: The resolution recognizes that the General Convention of 2003 has left parishes divided and conflicted over its decision regarding the confirmation of the Bishop-elect of New Hampshire, and further recognizes that some members of the parishes of the Diocese of Northern Indiana are unwilling that their pledge money should support the national church budget, Each parish will decide whether to offer this option to its parishioners. If a parish chooses to do so, the diocesan treasurer will be notified that, of the total amount pledged for the year 2004, what percentage has opted out of national budget support. The amount which would have been given to the national church budget from that parish will then be reduced accordingly when the national church assessment is paid. The figure 15.99% is the amount of each parish's assessment that ultimately goes to support the national budget of the Episcopal Church. [For example, if a parish's assessment for 2004 is $10,000 and 50% of the parish budget for 2004 is accounted for by persons who have opted not to support the national church budget, the amount sent by the diocese to the national Church budget will be reduced by $799.50—15.99% of $5000.]*

This is not an ideal situation, but in a time in which some persons cannot conscientiously support a structure which has gone against their strongly held religious convictions, this seems preferable to a complete withholding of funds from the local church and diocese.
The motion was made and seconded. After much debate it carried: eleven voting in favor, three against.
Now with regard to the deficit entailed by agreed-to assessment reductions. It was suggested that Sharon re-do the budget in the income side and present a deficit budget to convention. After reflection this was considered a bad idea. The Budget was moved and seconded and then a motion to amend was given: Sharon was asked to revise the budget to reflect the amount of assessment reductions council made, taking the shortfall equally from the CR&D line item and the national church assessment line. This motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Now, with the budget amended, as noted above, the motion to adopt the budget and present it to Convention in its amended form passed unanimously.

The Bishop's Report

Bishop Little reported on a meeting he had with the Presiding Bishop and other bishops in light of the General Convention.
General Convention aftermath: clergy and lay meetings are continuing in the deaneries, and the bishop gave a synopsis.
Bishop Little called attention to meetings coming up: in Dallas in early October, where over 2000 people are attending, including 600 priests. In London, October 15 and 16, the Primates of the Anglican Communion. November 2nd is the scheduled consecration date for Gene Robinson.

Respectfully Submitted,
Fr John Schramm
Secretary to Convention