

Prince of Peace Episcopal Church, Salem OR
St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Dallas OR
JOINT BISHOP'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

October 25, 2022, 6:00 p.m.

The meeting was held in-person and on Zoom.

Facilitator: The Rev. Chris Craun, Missioner for Thriving Congregations, Diocese of Oregon

Present in-person from Prince of Peace: Steven Ellis, Interim Vicar; Marcia Kelley Sr. Warden; Nick Fortey, Jr. Warden; Mary Macy, Treasurer; Rachel Bertoni; Diana Rainey; Bill Dalton; Sue Rembert; Barbara Ross, Clerk

Invited Guest: Ray Berhorst, member of the Three-church Committee

Present in-person from St. Thomas: Sally Clay, Sr. Warden; Carl Browning, Jr. Warden; Neil Clark, Treasurer; Lori Murphy Cole, Clerk; Barbara Chaney; Ann Hurd;

Present on Zoom: Rick Martell

Opening and Introductions:

Chris+ opened the meeting with prayer and invited us to introduce ourselves.

St. Edward's, Silverton is now on a different path but Prince of Peace and St. Thomas have indicated they are open to sharing a priest.

Recap of previous meetings: (Chris Craun)

1. Many churches are in transition
2. Clergy pool is shallow
3. We are trying to think collaboratively

Previous sharing among the three churches

1. Values and traditions
 - a. Where there is overlap and things held in common
 - i. We are attached to the people, the liturgy
2. Biggest burdens
 - a. Overall financial concerns
 - b. Building maintenance and property concerns
 - c. Aging congregations and lack of people-power
3. Possibilities for sharing
 - a. Need to do more than just share ministries
 - b. Could possibly share a priest and some administrative functions such as website, newsletter, etc.
4. Part Time is Plenty
 - a. Book and forums have been helpful
 - b. Both churches have operated with part-time clergy for many years.
 - i. Prince of Peace is adjusting to losing their parish administrator
 - ii. St. Thomas has been without a parish administrator for quite a while

What do we really need a priest to do?

1. Bill noted there is a difference between needs and wants.
2. Chris+ observed that when lay leadership goes down, priests tend to over-function.
 - a. During the pandemic, parishioners became more consumers of liturgy.
 - b. Now we need to be reminded we are all beloved and all gifted.
3. Ann H. said for the past two years, Father Fred was ill and could only do communion.
 - a. His wife did the website and the newsletter.
 - b. Parishioners have been doing everything else.
 - c. She feels St. Thomas only needs a ¼ time priest to do Sunday services
 - d. Carl feels during the pandemic there has been a drift from tradition and a priest is needed to revive.
4. Steve+ and Marcia shared that since Prince of Peace lost our parish administrator, parishioners have stepped up to handle many of the tasks.
 - a. We had a change in senior warden in February.
 - b. Office, stewardship, altar guild, Eucharistic Visitors, zoom team, outreach and newsletter are operating well.
 - c. Rachel noted we are transitioning from having a long-time priest.
 - d. Bill feels having a priest is important for people's spirituality

Resources

1. The parishes are similar in size.
 - a. Prince of Peace has 28 pledging units and Average Sunday Attendance 20-25.
 - b. St. Thomas has 23 pledging units and ASA of 20.
2. Finances
 - a. Prince of Peace can afford a ½ time priest.
 - b. St. Thomas can afford a ¼ time priest, although Neil expressed hope for 1/3 time.
3. Building and property
 - a. St. Thomas owns an older, well-maintained building
 - b. Prince of Peace has leased worship space for 35 years and owns property that could be built upon.
4. Service Area
 - a. Prince of Peace serves a widespread area (congregants attend from Silverton to Dallas).
 - b. St. Thomas's congregation is largely from Dallas.

Reminders

1. Chris+ reminded us this discussion is not about answers but about exploring possibilities.
2. Both congregations are mission churches, but the diocese does not want to dictate solutions to us.
3. We will have a say in whatever decisions are made.
4. There will always to be an on-ramp and an off-ramp to the process.

Current Possibilities

1. Chris+ noted the person who previously had expressed interest is no longer available.
2. She has been in conversation with and will be conducting Zoom interviews with two other possibilities.
 - a. A young priest who has been serving as a curate in another diocese.
 - b. A married ELCA clergy couple from another diocese who are interested in sharing a position. (Because The Episcopal Church is in full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, this is not an issue.)
 - i. One of these people is completely bi-lingual.
3. Supply priest/Interim/Priest-in-charge
 - a. A supply priest only leads worship and has no other responsibilities
 - b. An interim leads the congregation for a period of time but cannot be considered for a permanent position.
 - c. A priest-in-charge leads during a time of transition and is also eligible to be considered for a permanent position.
 - d. These positions would be for a priest-in-charge
 - i. We would use this time to explore possibilities of how the congregations might work together.
 - ii. The priest would encourage the congregations to think creatively and courageously.
 - iii. After a year's time, there would be opportunity to evaluate how this is working for people.
4. Some possible scenarios
 - a. Share clergy and everything else remains separate.
 - b. Share clergy and some ministries.
 - c. Share priest and combine ministries in Polk County.
 - d. Merge into one church
5. Question: How committed is Prince of Peace to West Salem?
 - a. Prince of Peace was founded as a mission of St. Paul's to West Salem
 - b. Currently reality is only about 1/3 of current membership lives in West Salem.
 - c. Prince of Peace draws from a large geographic area including all parts of Salem and surrounding communities.
 - d. Concerns were expressed about driving distances, traffic, road safety and time.
6. The priest-in-charge would be tasked with mutual exploration/helping us define needs and wants. Observations:
 - a. Dallas is a separate community
 - b. Prince of Peace is held together by something other than geography

Diocesan role:

1. Chris+ said the Diocese **is** revamping. Hopes to become a resource to congregations.
 - a. Will help with finding locating possible candidates, letters of agreement, etc.
 - b. Will be available to answer questions
2. She said every community of faith is a full-time job. When hiring for less than full-time:
 - a. What do we want the priest to do?

- b. What are we willing to do?
3. She said it may also be possible to apply for grant from the diocese to bring the collaborative position to full-time.
4. Diocese may have funds to help with moving expenses if needed.
5. Chris+ said we need to remain flexible. She is unsure of the timing these candidates will be available, but suggested we budget and conduct our stewardship campaigns as if we will be hiring a priest-in-charge.

Observations:

1. Rachel reported the people of Prince of Peace seem supportive of sharing a priest.
2. Chris+ observed the community of Dallas is a mission field for the Episcopal Church because it is home to so many evangelical churches. She noted that in the past, the Episcopal Church attracted many Roman Catholic people, but now it is evangelical young people who are seeking something else. She wants our priests to help us look outside of ourselves and grow.
3. Rick lives in West Salem but attends St. Thomas. He would like to expand the churches' virtual reach. He would be supportive of the congregations merging.

Next Steps:

1. Chris+ has already shared our parish profiles with the prospective candidates.
2. She is planning to interview them on Zoom.
3. If they are interested, she will share their resumes and on-line profiles with us.
4. The next step would be for this group to interview the candidates on Zoom.
5. This group will have another meeting to plan the interview.
6. In the meantime, Senior Wardens and Treasurers will meet together.
7. When the timing and process have moved along, there will be an opportunity for the two-church group to interview the candidate(s) in person.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: All information about the candidates must be held in confidence. We are not to share names or any identifying information with anyone outside of this group.

Next meetings:

1. St. Thomas BAC meets on the 2nd Tuesday at 6:30.
2. Prince of Peace BAC usually meets on the 3rd Wednesday at 6:30 but will be meeting a week early in November.

Next Joint Meeting will be held Sunday, November 13 at 1:30 at St. Thomas.

Submitted by Barbara Ross, Prince of Peace clerk