

**Report to the Diocesan Convention of March 2, 2019  
And Diocesan Council March, 2019  
from the Sabbatical Fund Committee**

On January 17, 2017, Diocesan Council approved a new Diocesan Sabbatical Policy. At the same meeting, a Diocesan Sabbatical Fund was created by resolution of Council, to be “overseen by a Committee of three to five persons, clergy or lay, appointed by the bishop for annual terms, which may be renewed. At least one of the members shall be a cleric who has had a sabbatical. There will be an offering for the Fund collected at one of the Diocesan Clergy Days each year. Lay and clerical members of our diocese as well as churches shall be invited to make contributions to the Fund. Clerics who have never experienced a sabbatical shall be eligible to receive grants from the Fund for their sabbatical expenses, with a preference given to clerics serving churches which themselves have never had a cleric take a sabbatical. The Committee shall report annually to Diocesan Council.” This is that report, shared also with Diocesan Convention.

Effective as of the Diocesan Convention of 2018, Bishop Stokes appointed five persons to the Sabbatical Fund Committee: Ms. Wendy Hallstrom (Church of the Holy Spirit, Lebanon), the Rev. Joanna Hollis (Christ Church, New Brunswick), the Rev. Ophelia Laughlin (now serving St. Matthew’s Church, Pennington), with myself, the Rev. Dr. Francis A. Hubbard (Retired, Priest Associate, St. Francis, Dunellen) as Chair. (I also, as a member of Diocesan Council at that time, authored the 2017 Resolution which established the Fund.) Since then, thanks to the generosity of donors from around the diocese, churches as well as individuals, a significant number of donations have come in. As of January 28, 2019, the Fund’s balance (all of which is currently invested in the Diocesan Investment Trust) is \$21,047.62.

The Committee has held three in-person meetings and two meetings by Zoom, in addition to a brief meeting after its Workshop. The Committee has made some policy decisions, one to clearly limit the prospective grants to priests (as deacons are typically non-stipendiary at their churches) and second that “priests who have been licensed and serve in the Diocese of New Jersey for five or more consecutive years shall be eligible to apply for grants if otherwise qualified.” The Committee sent out an on-line survey to Diocesan clergy last June and July which received 85 responses, a significant number of whom said that they had not yet been on sabbatical for financial reasons and a number who asked for advice or coaching in how to go about it. As a result, the Committee decided that creating what the Diocesan Sabbatical Policy calls “a roster of clergy experienced with sabbaticals willing to serve as sabbatical coaches “ was a necessary precursor to simply handing out money, so we decided not to accept applications for grants for 2019 sabbaticals but to hold a workshop (held on February 2 at Trinity Cathedral) as the beginning of an educational program for clergy and congregations.

In addition to the presenters and Committee members, seven clergy and six lay people representing eight churches from all over our diocese attended, and several more indicated they were interested but could not attend that day. The Rev. Joan Mason (who received a Lily Grant for her first sabbatical and can share that experience with interested persons) was a presenter and is willing to be consulted, as are the Rev. Ophelia Laughlin, the Rev. Marshall Shelly (St. Peter’s, Spotswood), the Rev. Dirk Reinken (St. Peter’s, Freehold), the Very Rev. René John (Trinity Cathedral, Trenton, who was to be a presenter at the workshop but had to be in Trinidad following his brother’s death) and myself, for a

start. Ms. Wendy Hallstrom will be happy to share with interested vestries her experience of being a lay leader in a parish while her rector was on sabbatical.

The Committee believes that preparation over a period of time is essential. Sabbaticals can benefit both clergy and parishes, both of whom need to be dedicated to doing ministry “over the long haul”, so intentional, designated periods of renewal in different ways than usual are very valuable for both priestly and congregational vitality and refreshment. The Lily Foundation, which offers grants in the order of \$50,000 to congregations for sabbaticals for congregation and clergy, asks, “What would make your heart sing?” — an excellent question, and the answer (for those who don’t get Lily grants) can cost a lot less than \$50,000!

A video of the workshop was done by the Committee and has been transmitted to the Diocesan Canon for Communications for posting on the diocesan website.

The Diocesan Sabbatical Policy clearly states that “Letters of Agreement for all clergy in charge of congregations shall contain a provision for Sabbatical Leave at the rate of two weeks for every year of service, available beginning at the 5th year and cumulative through the 7th.” The Committee has become aware that some Letters of Agreement (perhaps for Priests-in-charge or Vicars) may not yet contain that provision, or may pre-date this Diocesan Policy. *Bishop Stokes has assured me that Letters of Agreement need to reflect this policy, and should be changed if necessary.* This is good, especially since the purpose of the Fund is to make grants to clergy who may not have the personal and parish resources to have a true sabbatical without diocesan grants, and that includes clergy serving smaller and/or financially stressed churches. Therefore, Rectors, Vicars and Priests-in-charge all should have a provision in Letters of Agreement for accumulating Sabbatical Leave. Please request a copy of the full Policy if you need one.

The Committee will be developing its grant application form shortly. **Applications for grants for 2020 sabbaticals will be accepted during the month of September, 2019. Grants will be awarded by the end of October, 2019.** Finally, we will be planning a **fund-raising event, hopefully this fall** to raise money for the Sabbatical Fund, which we hope will be a vital part of diocesan life for years to come. In the meantime, checks can be made out to “Diocese of New Jersey” with “Sabbatical Fund” in the memo and mailed to Diocesan House.

Faithfully yours,

(The Rev. Dr.) Francis A. Hubbard, Chair  
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