

**Executive Council of the Episcopal Church
Joint Standing Committee on Governance and Operations (GO)**

Final Minutes

**Monday, October 25, 2021
2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. EDT**

GO Members Present: Jane Cislucyis (Chair), Russ Randle (Vice Chair), Thomas Alexander (Secretary), Liza Anderson, Diane Butler, Polly Getz, Coach Glosson, Ed Konieczny, Aaron Perkins, President Gay Clark Jennings.

Staff and Guests Present: CLO Kent Anker, Secretary Michael Barlowe, Chancellor Sally Johnson, Chancellor Mary Kostel, Vice President Byron Rushing, COO Geof Smith, Molly James, Iris DiLeonardo.

Media Present: Kirk Peterson (*The Living Church*)

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Secretary Barlowe offered an opening prayer.

Jane Cislucyis invited GO members to check-in and offer personal updates.

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Proposed Special Parochial Report for 2021

Jane Cislucyis raised the 2021 Proposed Special Edition Parochial Report to the committee for conversation, anticipating our conversation via Zoom with Chris Rankin-Williams later in the afternoon.

Polly Getz specified that part of her concern with the parochial report is discerning the need for each individual component — why is this data requested, and for what is this data used?

Jane Cislucyis invited the committee to hold questions for Chris Rankin-Williams for when he joins us later in the afternoon.

GCO Report on 2020 Parochial Report Data

Secretary Barlowe offered some context to the conversation about the 2020 Parochial Report, primarily focusing on its function — a tool we can use to serve our Lord and his Church. In that spirit, the President of the House of Deputies has appointed great people to lead the Parochial Report. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Molly James, Iris DiLeonardo, and others have worked to make this report and its content deeply relevant and informative — truly, a tool we can use to serve the Church.

Iris DiLeonardo presented the data results of the 2020 Parochial Report. For these results, [click here](#).

Molly James joined the meeting.

Jane Cislucyis asked what ways that congregations and dioceses can use these resources.

Iris DiLeonardo and Molly James said there are all kinds of ways. Molly James described the ways in which we can collaborate with other experts who could use our data to help

Russ Randle asked what similarities can be seen between our data and other mainline denominations. Molly James responded that we are in the same boat, and in fact, we can see similarities even outside of mainline Protestantism.

Molly James received from the committee additional clarifying questions about the data results of the 2020 Parochial Report.

Vice President Rushing asked if the report has asked economic data or racial data — since we ask about parishioners' education background, why can't we ask about economic data or racial data? Secretary Barlowe seconded the Vice President's question. Russ Randle described how that the questions about race were removed following *Brown vs. Board of Education*, saying it was dropped for a good, specific reason, but maybe we have a good, specific reason to bring it back. Vice President Rushing and Secretary Barlowe agreed.

Molly James continued to receive clarifying questions.

Molly James described that the *tools* section on the Parochial Report page has been engineered to be just that: a tool!

With no further questions, the committee offered its gratitude for Molly James and Iris DiLeonardo. Secretary Barlowe offered his own particular gratitude for both Molly and Iris, singing their glorious praises as treasured members of Church leadership.

Molly James left the meeting.

Aaron Perkins briefly left the meeting to meet with the Joint Standing Committee Meeting on Mission Within the Episcopal Church.

The committee meeting stood in recess for a 10-minute break.

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Adoption of Minutes

Thomas Alexander asked for a motion to approve the draft minutes of GO's meetings in June 2021 and on September 9, 2021 and September 16, 2021.

Russ Randle moved the adoption of the minutes, Diane Butler seconded, and the draft minutes were unanimously approved.

Mutual Ministry Review

The committee discussed the way to make-up the committee that oversees the Mutual Ministry Review. The canon specifies that there are six non-officer members of Executive Council, but it does not specify anything else. President Jennings asked what is the best way to select the six members of Executive Council — if they're appointed, it could be a perceived bias, but if it's simply those who *de facto* members of Executive Committee, there is less of a perceived bias.

We tabled the discussion until after receiving Chris Rankin-Williams's report and having discussion about the Proposed Special Parochial Report for 2021.

Proposed Special Parochial Report for 2021

The committee welcomed the Rev. Chris Rankin-Williams, the chair of the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church, who presented the Proposed Special Parochial Report for 2021.

Some points of particular note:

The proposed report includes additional specified languages, reflecting some of the language-specific data that was received in the 2020 report.

Virtual worship attendance can be one of the greatest opportunities to conflate numbers; it's incredibly complicated to figure out an effective method and formula for calculating virtual worship attendance. Thus, there is an option for congregations to explain how they themselves determined those figures.

The Committee on the State of the Church is thrilled about the response from congregations with the narrative questions, and they are grateful for Secretary Barlowe, Molly James, and Iris DiLeonardo for their support in bringing on Elena G. van Stee from the University of Pennsylvania to help with interpreting the data. Hear, hear!

The draft question for this year is written by people of color.

The hope is to intentionally craft a new narrative question each year.

Jane Cisluycis asked if we could strike “Episcopal Relief and Development” from line 14, just to keep each of the lines consistently generic, not exacting any specific organization, lest we alienate an organization that fails to be recognized. The committee and Chris Rankin-Williams agreed with the suggestion, and it will be incorporated into the next draft.

Chris Rankin-Williams reported that a lot of people have asked the next report include a question about any outstanding debt. Does the congregation have any outstanding debt? If so, how much? What is the debt for? In fact, this is perhaps the most often requested question.

There’s an additional question about what other events, opportunities, and challenges the overall diocese faced in 2021 (i.e., wildfire, hurricane, tornado, civil unrest, etc.).

Looking ahead, Chris Rankin-William conveyed the committee’s interest in exploring the idea of *Average Weekly Attendance* instead of *Average Sunday Attendance*, a move that the Lutheran Church has made. So, there would be (1) a calculation of average weekly attendance at all regularly scheduled worship services, and (2) a calculation of average weekly attendance at non-regularly scheduled worship services. If this change were made, or if there were other substantial changes, the congregation would likely need to know sooner rather than later.

Their goal is to have the 2022 proposed report at the January meeting of the Executive Council, which would allow for a press release to come out sooner rather than later, giving congregations (and Iris!) enough time to adapt to the different requests for data.

Chris Rankin-Williams received further clarifying questions from the committee.

These minutes do not reflect all of the details of that conversation, but the committee had an incredibly fruitful and fulsome discussion.

President Jennings praised Chris Rankin-Williams and the Committee on the State of the Church for their brilliant ways in which they’ve become experts in the workings and intentions of the parochial report, but also the brilliant ways in which they’ve exemplified beautiful collaboration with the General Convention Office.

Report from the Chief Operating Officer

The committee received a report from COO Geof Smith.

Some points of particular note:

The Church Center has officially opened; it was a relatively slow / soft reopening, but it has reopened. So long as employees have proven they can effectively work from home, they can, and some have, but many others have returned to working in-person.

Travel remains as-needed only, and it is still nowhere near the pre-pandemic amount.

The interim site for the Archives is complete.

The Communications team has begun a regular “pitch” meeting, ensuring that the stories that are being shared are representing as diverse of a spread as possible.

They are beginning implementing a two-step verification process for employees accessing outside of the main office.

He will report on staff / team visions and goals at our next meeting of the Executive Council.

COO Geof Smith received clarifying questions from the committee.

Secretary Barlowe recommended that, beginning with GO, the Executive Council have a conversation about contracted employees. COO Smith agreed.

President Jennings led a closing prayer.

The committee meeting stood in recess until Tuesday afternoon.

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Tuesday, October 26, 2021
2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. EDT

GO Members Present: Jane Cisluycis (Chair), Russ Randle (Vice Chair), Thomas Alexander (Secretary), Liza Anderson, Diane Butler, Polly Getz, Coach Glosson, Ed Konieczny, Aaron Perkins.

Staff and Guests Present: Vice President Byron Rushing, COO Geof Smith, Iris DiLeonardo, Chaplain Kurt Wiesner.

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Diane Butler offered an opening prayer.

Jane Cisluycis welcomed reflections on the morning plenary sessions — the table discussions on dismantling racism and the listening session with Indigenous Leaders.

These minutes do not reflect the specifics of that conversation, but the reflections were heartfelt and thoughtful. There were particular interests raised about how the Executive Council can catalyze diocesan research of local indigenous history throughout the Episcopal Church.

Presiding Bishop Curry, President Jennings, CLO Kent Anker, Chancellor Johnson, and Sean Rowe joined the committee meeting during the conversation.

Discussion of GO 028

Jane Cisluycis offered some introductory context to the newly revised resolution text for GO 028.

After the consultation with CPG on October 10, the working group on this resolution decided that they will not submit this resolution to the floor of Executive Council just yet. We will wait until there can be further consultations with people from CPG.

There are a number of issues that are coming down the pipe (i.e., the Boy Scouts and others) for the Episcopal Church and these are going to be necessary conversations between CPG and Executive Council.

President Jennings raised to the committee that there are *countless* instances of canonically required consultations. The canons are how we codify and direct our common life in the Church; it's not beyond our reach to do this kind of work. Using the canons to define our relationships is what we do as the Episcopal Church.

Ed Konieczny raised that there were instances in the recording of the conversation between Executive Council and CPG that demonstrated their willingness (albeit a new willingness) to accommodate without legislation. He said that the CPG constantly asked for explanation of the mistrust, but we did not provide an adequate response. He maintains the position that we do not have the authority or the precedence in our canons to overreach beyond our own selves as a corporation to another independent corporation.

President Jennings invited us to consider the CPG's interest in knowing the 'root of the mistrust between Executive Council and CPG.' She invited Jane Cisluycis, Secretary Barlowe, and Chancellor Johnson to reflect on this based on their experience with consulting with CPG as the taskforce.

Chancellor Mary Kostel joined the meeting.

Secretary Barlowe pointed out how complicated the idea of *mistrust* is, and he expressed his worry about using such a term. It's not about *mistrust*, but not knowing what is happening. There needs to be absolute clarity. He also reiterated that we as Executive Council have fiduciary responsibilities that *include* the pension fund.

Chancellor Johnson shared the thoughts of Secretary Barlowe, saying that their confusion over the origin of a supposed mistrust feels complicated, because the report from the taskforce reflected a thorough and frank conversation about the sense of mistrust between the two boards. She continued to reflect on the past conversations of the taskforce.

Ed Konieczny suggested that we take the pension board on their offer to set up meetings, and if this fails, we follow up with the resolution.

Kent Anker later followed up on the point that the Executive Council has fiduciary responsibilities that include the pension fund.

Polly Getz raised her own concern that it is still not clear who the clients are for the CPG. Her position is that the Church is the client because it is the Church that provides the employees for the CPG.

Aaron Perkins raised that it would be in our best interest to be on the same page with the CPG board as best we can before General Convention. He does not believe that there can't be a happy medium in all of this.

Presiding Bishop Curry raised that it would be wise to search for a golden mean.

The committee meeting stood in recess for a 15-minute break.

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Legal Updates

Polly Getz moved that we enter executive session for a legal update with the chancellors invited to stay. Liza Anderson seconded, and it was approved unanimously.

We entered into executive session for a legal update.

We left executive session.

Ed Konieczny closed us in prayer.

The committee meeting stood in recess until Wednesday morning.

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Wednesday, October 27, 2021
10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

GO Members Present: Jane Cislucis (Chair), Russ Randle (Vice Chair), Thomas Alexander (Secretary), Liza Anderson, Diane Butler, Polly Getz, Coach Glosson, Ed Konieczny, Aaron Perkins.

Staff and Guests Present: COO Geof Smith, Iris DiLeonardo, Public Affairs Officer Amanda Skofstad, Chancellor Kostel

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COO Smith offered an opening prayer.

Jane Cislucis welcomed the new Public Affairs Officer Amanda Skofstad to our committee meeting. Amanda Skofstad introduced herself, described her background, and painted a vision of her work in public affairs.

A major part of the vision for her work comes from a conversation she had with the Presiding Bishop in her interview. He told her, “I want us to have a different kind of ‘Christian’ in the media.” Amanda Skofstad invited the committee to reflect on that idea.

These minutes do not reflect all of the specifics of that conversation, but we had a heartfelt and thoughtful conversation.

Some points of specific note:

Members of GO expressed their thoughts about the Episcopal Church reflecting the breadth found here at Executive Council, about eliminating the us-versus-them dichotomy, and the branding

Amanda Skofstad said that the Public Affairs office will be releasing a new media kit and style guide.

Liza Anderson asked a more philosophical question about how the Episcopal Church’s branding process can actually try to best reflect the realities on the ground. For instance, “The Episcopal Church welcomes you” may be the experience in the local congregation, but more often than not, for more reasons that we might imagine, it may not be the experience.

COO Smith reiterated that the research that the Public Affairs and Communication teams will do will be naturally integrated to the work of the rest of the DFMS.

We thanked Amanda Skofstad for her work and her presence among our committee for her report.

Amanda Skofstad left the committee meeting.

President Jennings joined the committee meeting.

Chancellor Johnson joined the committee meeting.

Jane Cislucis welcomed Bishop Todd Ousley to the committee via Zoom to report on the Office of Pastoral Development.

This report included updates on his work with bishop transitions around the church, recruiting and training consultants for bishop transition processes, troubleshooting canonical and pastoral concerns in bishop transition processes, and aiding in drafting diocesan profiles.

This report also included the taskforce on Episcopal transitions, which has considered all aspects of the bishop transition process. For details on this work, see their Blue Book report by [clicking here](#).

A particular note from the report that Todd Ousley raised is the outdated approach to medical evaluations in bishop transition processes. There ought to be a move from psychiatric assessment to psychological assessment, and there should be a substance abuse assessment. Thus, there would be three assessments: (1) medical assessment, (2) psychological assessment, and (3) substance abuse assessments.

There is also an incoming resolution to convention that includes these assessments for all orders: bishops, priests, and deacons.

There is also an incoming resolution to convention that clarifies who determines the assessors. Currently, for deacons and priests, the assessors are determined and recruited locally, but for bishops, they are determined and recruited at a church-wide level. The resolution calls for all determination and recruitment to happen locally, though the Office for Pastoral Development will receive reports and notifications.

Todd Ousley reminded us of his work as the Title IV intake officer for bishops in the Episcopal Church.

Coach Glosson asked what happens when the Office of Pastoral Development notices a red flag in the process of searching for a new bishop. Todd Ousley responded that most red flags are identified at the diocesan level, and so they are often dealt with at a diocesan level. If a red flag were noticed at a church-wide level, it would likely be a medical issue, a background check issue, a credit report issue, or a Title IV issue. He reiterated that his role is not to say “no” to these candidates, but to simply notify the diocesan nominating committee. If they have already been elected, it would then be a conversation between the

president of the diocesan standing committee, the diocesan chancellor, Todd Ousley, and occasionally the current diocesan bishop.

Average tenure of bishops is still 8-10 years at this point.

Transition processes are typically receiving half of the normal applicants. In 2020 the average number of applicants is 21, 2021 is 16, 2022 is 11.

We thanked Todd Ousley for his work and his presence among our committee for his report.

Aaron Perkins reported on his work as one member of the Executive Council Grants Evaluation Team formed earlier in the summer that will evaluate the grant processes throughout the church, beginning with General Convention and then moving to Executive Council. They have been in conversation with department heads, grant administrators, and key staff people related to these grant programs.

The first question they asked was if the Church should be in grant-issuing business, and the overwhelming response was “yes.” From there, the taskforce will evaluate the way we do this work, asking this question of whether the Church should be issuing grants, again and again. One of the key issues that they will need to address is the follow-up process and tracking (Who is getting grants and who is not?) so that we as the Church can know the impacts of our grant-issuing.

The committee meeting stood in recess until the afternoon session beginning at 3:00 p.m.

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Wednesday, October 27, 2021

3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

GO Members Present: Jane Cisluycis (Chair), Russ Randle (Vice Chair), Thomas Alexander (Secretary), Liza Anderson, Diane Butler, Polly Getz, Coach Glosson, Ed Konieczny, Aaron Perkins.

Staff and Guests Present: COO Geof Smith, CLO Kent Anker, Chancellor Kostel, Iris DiLeonardo

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Liza Anderson was invited to lead a discussion about FIN 119 Ad Hoc Committee on Translation and Interpretation.

To begin, Liza Anderson asked what this specific text is. Is it a resolution? Is it a resolution-in-progress?

Polly Getz responded that this is a proposed policy, which was the only task requested of the taskforce. It is up to the Executive Council to decide what to do with this going forward.

Liza Anderson raises a number of concerns with how this policy relates liturgy and suggested that there be a distinction between translation expectations for governance and for liturgy.

Ed Konieczny raised a concern about the current bishop of Taiwan, who cannot speak English. The need for Chinese translation and interpretation is crucially needed,

Polly Getz, who served as a member of the taskforce, chaired by Scott Hayashi, that proposed this policy, walked us through the history of the origins and decision-making behind the draft policy proposal that we considered.

Chancellor Johnson joined the committee meeting.

President Jennings joined the committee meeting.

Russ Randle asked what the average rate of downloads for non-English documents is compared to English documents?

Thomas Alexander recommended that liturgy not be specified in this document — except for ASL interpretation for liturgical gatherings — because of the new translation processes that are being perfected by the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music. These new processes have different requirements and benchmarks. For instance, liturgical texts are written and reviewed by people whose first language is the language of the given translated text. Non-native speakers, regardless of their fluency, can't participate in the translating and reviewing process.

Russ Randle asked COO Smith how it would be implemented. COO Smith said that it would be a big transition, but that doesn't mean it isn't necessary.

Liza Anderson recommended that we have a process by which all materials can be translated into any language, but they have to be requested. Some materials, though, would be automatically translated.

President Jennings really liked the idea, saying that the Spanish translation of the Blue Book has received fewer than 10 clicks. President Jennings wants us to be inclusive, but there could be something helpful with a request system.

Ed Konieczny recommended that we consult with native speakers in this Church to determine what *kinds* of documents need to be translated, how they need to be translated, how quickly they need to be translated, and so forth.

Polly Getz said that this is a helpful amount of information to take back to the taskforce to rework and make new proposals.

Update on Court of Review Organization

Jane Cislucyis welcomed Laura Russell for an update on the Court of Review and she called on Russ Randle to introduce Laura Russell's report.

The committee received the report on the Court of Review from Laura Russell. For more about the proposed rules of the Court of Review, [click here](#).

The committee thanked Laura Russell for her time and her report.

Ed Konieczny moved that we adjourn our meeting, and Liza Anderson seconded. All approved.

Coach Glosson led a closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Alexander
Secretary