



DIOCESE *of* CHRIST *our* HOPE

Report to the 2024 Synod of the Diocese of Christ Our Hope, ACNA

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Vice Chair, Diocesan Council

As I conclude my second term as a member of the Diocesan Council, I would like to share my final report to the 2024 Synod. After 6 years service on the Diocesan Council, the last two years as Vice Chair, I will be stepping down. I am pleased to announce that Jerald Walz will be serving as Vice Chair for the coming year.

I want to extend my thanks to my fellow Diocesan Council members that have completed their terms, all of whom are standing for re-election at Synod: Katherine Heidenthal, Elaine Townley, and Rev. Martin Rhodes. I also want to thank Laura Vail for stepping in to fill a vacant seat this past year.

For those unfamiliar with the work of the Diocesan Council, we meet monthly (and sometimes more) to provide advice to the bishops, financial oversight, and oversight in other matters as defined by the canons. This year, Bishop Alan Hawkins took a more active role with the council as part of the transition plan with Bishop Steve Breedlove.

Working Groups

At the Deans and Diocesan Council retreat in January, the Diocesan Council formalized the creation of six working groups, each led by 2 council members. These groups have significantly enhanced our ability to work between meetings and allowed for the involvement of subject matter experts in focused areas. The working groups are:

- Ministry Grants
- Credentialing
- Safeguarding

- Governance
- Human Resources
- Executive

These groups have provided new opportunities for involvement throughout the diocese, helping guide the council's work in various streams over the year.

Financial Oversight

In collaboration with the Finance Committee and the Diocesan Chief Operating Officer, the council developed and approved the 2025 budget. This budget includes cost-of-living adjustments for staff and an increase in Operational Reserves. We took into account feedback from last year's Synod and Deans and Diocesan Council retreat, working to improve the flow of information between Synod, the Finance Committee, and the staff. This included sharing proposed budget details and updates throughout the year.

Ministry Grants

Each year, the council manages the diocese's mission budget, primarily through the awarding of Ministry Grants. This year, the council implemented a new review process within the Ministry Grant Working Group, which included members from outside the council. We received 6 new proposals, totaling nearly \$1.2 million in funding requests. I'm happy to report that the council approved 4 grants, amounting to more than \$750,000 over the next six years. To date, we have had 65 active or completed Ministry Grants, totaling over \$5.7 million in grants.

In addition, the council:

- Reviewed and approved the nominees to the Constitution and Canons Committee, to be voted upon at Synod.
- Reviewed and approved a slate of nominees to the Ecclesiastical Trial Court, to be voted upon at Synod.
- Provisionally approved the applications of 8 churches.

The past six years have been both challenging and rewarding. While the work has often been time-consuming and involved difficult conversations, it has also been deeply enriching, increasing my connection to our diocese. I encourage everyone to consider how they can become more involved.

Please continue to pray for the Diocesan Council as we faithfully steward the resources entrusted to us.

In Christ,
Jeff Whitworth