

COVENANT OF THE HOPKINTON/MEDWAY COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY

Preamble

We, the parishes of Christ Church, Medway, and St. Paul's, Hopkinton, hereby join with the help of the Diocese of Massachusetts to collaborate in sharing our resources to meet the needs of our parishes, our parishioners, and the larger communities of which we are a part. After many months of research, work, sharing, reflection, discussion, and mutual support, representatives of each of our parishes have joined to propose the following means for the sustenance and growth of our separate parishes and our shared mission in Christ.

Neither parish alone has the ability, under current conditions, to maintain regular worship and meet its pastoral needs. But together, as we envision a sharing future, we can build a viable base that allows each parish to not only meet its current needs but grow in service and membership and that allows as well for the development of more and deeper ties between our two parish families. We envision neither the merger of the two nor the creation of a third entity to govern or oversee the affairs of the separate churches. The proposed council will in effect be the linked arms of our separate church bodies lending strength to one another.

While we have looked at, visited with, and drawn upon the experience and work of other "cluster" groups of parishes in Massachusetts and Connecticut, we are unaware of any other effort in this diocese to bring just two parishes together for their mutual sustenance. This has underscored for us the need to craft with a light hand and to preserve the utmost flexibility in the arrangements we propose.

Mission

To provide for shared ministry and administrative expense as well as such other resources or activities as the parishes may from time to time identify to further the health and vitality of each parish.

Commitment

Each parish by its assent to this Covenant agrees to continue its participation for a minimum of three years and to give at least a one-year notice to the other to either terminate or substantially alter the terms of the relationship.

Each parish shall be assessed and shall contribute to the Covenant budget in proportion to its respective annual diocesan assessments.

Council

Membership. There shall be a Council consisting of three representatives and one alternate from each parish and the Shepherd. The members and alternates shall be designated by the vestry to serve for staggered three-year terms (members) or one year (alternates). At least one member from each parish shall be a member of the vestry or, failing that, a designated liaison to that vestry. Ideally and to foster wider participation, no member should serve more than one consecutive three-year term. Vacancies shall be filled by the vestry, but in the absence of vestry action the remaining members and alternate from that parish may with the consent of the Shepherd designate an individual to fill the vacancy until the vestry acts. The vestry shall have the power, by the unanimous vote of the vestry members in attendance at a properly noticed meeting, to remove a member of the Council following reasonable notice to that member and an opportunity to be heard.

Officers. The Council shall at its first meeting and no less than annually thereafter choose two presidors, one from each parish, who shall be responsible for calling and presiding at meetings, communicating with members, and coordinating with the shepherd. The presidors shall, at the initial and at subsequent meetings (and with the advice and counsel of the Shepherd as needed), designate which of them shall bear the principal responsibility for carrying out particular tasks. The Council shall designate from time to time one of its members as clerk and shall choose a treasurer from outside its membership, who shall have voice but not vote at Council meetings.

Meetings. The Council shall meet at least three times per year to set the budget, to agree on programs, to review the progress under the Covenant and more frequently as may be deemed necessary among the chairpersons and the Shepherd.

Decisions. Two thirds of the membership shall be a quorum for Council decisions. The Council shall endeavor to make its decisions through consensus, but may reach decisions through majority vote except where such decisions may expressly require a larger majority.

Responsibilities. The Council shall budget for, receive, administer, and account to the vestries for funds needed for the support of the collaborative programs, staff and other shared expenses. Under appointment of the Bishop with the consent of the Council, the Shepherd, Assistant, and staff are responsible to the Council, which shall oversee their work and coordinate as needed with each parish. The Council shall also consider and from time to time recommend such changes to this covenant as it may deem in the best interests of the parishes and the continued vitality of the covenant. And the Council shall address and respond to such concerns as may from time to time be raised with it by the vestries or parish members.

Committees. The Council may create such committees and give them such authority as it may from time to time deem appropriate, except that it may not delegate any final authority specifically requiring full Council action.

Shepherd and Assistant

Shepherd. The Shepherd shall be appointed by the Bishop with the consent of the Council and shall be a full-time employee responsible to the Council. The Shepherd will bear primary responsibility for coordinating with the Assistant, subject to the approval of the Council, to meet the liturgical and other customary needs of each parish.

Assistant. The Assistant shall be a Sunday-only contract supply priest, hired by the Council, but working under the direction of the Shepherd.

Amendment

This covenant may be amended by the vote of no less than two thirds of the Council and the vestry of each parish. Any proposed amendment must be made available to the general membership within each parish at least one month before any such vote.