

NOTES

Rocky Mountain Regional Council Meeting, November 5, 2020 6:30 PM

Host: Church of the Beloved Facilitator: Dennis Scribe: Kae

Present: Greg, Michael, Kae, Jane, Dennis, Jack, Tom, Don, Mike, Rosean, Teri,

Opening Prayer/Regional Prayer

Holy One,
Enlivening Spirit,
In the wilderness of new,
root the Body of Christ
fully into our "Yes,"
blooming in Your Holy Season.
Together.

Regular Business:

1. Welcome any guests: Frank Pavlak,
2. Agenda approval/additions: Approval of September 2020 notes (pending via recording by Greg Y), approval of Oct. notes – approved by consensus
3. Personal connections: Share a pleasurable moment you experienced this month.
4. Financial Report: Income \$1304.73 tithes, Expenses vicar \$525. Balance: 12,765.41(including \$3800 COVID funds)
5. Vicar's Report (See Appendix A below) Highlights: Bishop Kedda offered to include COB's deacon ordination during one of their ordinations. Need to coordinate for dates.

Old Business:

1. Calling a local Bishop. Update from call team. Timeline? What's next?
 - a. **Who is eligible to vote for bishop? Decided by Region or by each community?** Eligibility to vote by age: discussion of 10 years old? Readability of ministry description scale indicates score of 15-16 years of age. Larger question: is it the RMRC that determines voting eligibility? Yes. Current draft of the local Constitution indicates that each community determines voting members. Consensus that **Any member of a community can vote; membership is determined by each community.** **Action:** We take this decision back to our communities. This response should be communicated to the bishop election team. It was noted that electing a bishop may be considered a special circumstance. Our communities are encouraged to consider this momentous occasion and make decisions accordingly. In particular, how do we look at empowerment of youth and encourage involvement?
 - b. **Criminal background checks: can the Region cover the cost?** Est. cost of \$15-25. **Yes.** The Council is the employer of record. Which background check is recommended – if local, then local; if the candidate has lived out-of-state then other states records may also be checked. Jack: CBI fingerprint check picks up most information. Jack can put us in contact with the State Dept if we need more comprehensive check. The ECC has inconsistent practice of background checks. We need to establish our own practices meeting at least minimum standards. If there is an alert, do we have a process for addressing it? Address it with the nominee first, then proceed. The Bishop Call Team is empowered in vetting the nominees and presenting the slate of candidates.

- c. Potential psychological evaluation and 360 evaluation of candidates: RMRC pays? **Yes** What level? An hour long general evaluation by a psychological professional. Plus a 360 evaluation: the team's confidential review of letters of recommendations, co-workers, and employers, references (not public request for information from community members). In the future, payment for the vetting costs needs to be considered in future budgets.

2. Discussion/impressions on the Synod?

Regional delegates gathering? **Action:** Perhaps delegates could meet in individual communities and share our general feedback at the next RMRC meeting in order to forward to the leadership council members.

Overall Request: Would appreciate a list of attendees and respective communities. **Action:** Michael will request the list.

Next steps in drafting constitution/statute amendments? In order to meet, do we have enough information or is it premature? Tom thinks a good start would be to clean up the current document with typos and grammatical errors (corrections) so that we have a clean document to begin. **Action:** Tom will present that idea to the ECC Leadership Council. Consensus to move forward.

3. CHF lay members to RMRC? MoM clergy delegate representative? pending

4. Ordinations? Confirmations? Coordination of Bishop Travel? Possible connection with Kedda for Alice.

New Business:

1. Is it time to call the Bishop Election Committee? What is the charter for that group? **Action:** The Bishop Call Team will craft the election committee charge. Create the team job description. Bring it back to the RMRC in the December meeting. Once approved, we'll get the word out that we are ready to form the committee. Reach out to any members whom you think might be interested. Perhaps retain one member from the Bishop Call Team to move on to the Election Committee to provide history and context. Preference to have representatives from all five communities. Jane volunteered for MoM! What is the authority/scope of the Election Team? Parameters, time frames, logistics, pandemic considerations, access,?
2. Regional newsletter deadline: **Action:** Perhaps share our plans for Advent/Christmas asap or by the Dec. meeting. Special edition to focus on candidates in January.
3. Community updates and short term (Christmas) plans? postponed
4. ECC Leadership Council highlights: consideration to add routinely to our RMRC agenda a report from Teri on the LC and she will take back info to the LC - **agreed**

Closing Prayer

Next meetings: Dec. 3: HF; Jan. 7: LOC; Feb. 4: StP; Mar. 4: MoM

Remember, when you host to send out the agenda, have a facilitator and scribe, bring opening and closing prayer, bring Consensus Document (Appendix C below), and send notes in a timely fashion.

Appendix A—Vicar Report for RMRC 11 05 2020

FORMATION/RECEPTION/CONTINUING ED

Watched Bishop Francis's 9/22 Old Catholic History and Theology Seminar video; participated in 10/27 class. PNW Diocese is making preparations for a transitional deaconate ordination soon; Bp. Kedda is open to include COB's ordinand (if we can get Alice up there and arrange for her lodging).

REGIONAL & NATIONAL COLLABORATIONS

Participated in ECC SYNOD2020 as StP HOP delegate and musician.
Submitted 3 draft Amendments of ECC Constitution to RMR Delegates.
Stepped down from Bishop Call Committee, but published a nomination reminder with their consultation.
Answered follow-up questions of Boulder doctoral student re faith and political advocacy.
Presided at MoM via Zoom 10/18 and attended their 310 Partners covenant celebration 10/25.
Participated in Oct. 19th "Mourning into Unity" Virtual Vigil hosted by CCC, and circulated video.
Participated in weekly regional pastoral ministers Zoom gatherings.
Populated Regional Facebook page with member churches' posts.

Attended Capitol Hill United Ministries (CHUM) zoom presentation "Non-violent Resistance...the most effective agent of Change" by peace activist John Dear, SJ, who advocates holistic non-violence of Jesus, MLK Jr and Gandhi:

1. Everyone's got to be non-violent toward oneself
2. and toward others including Creation
3. and have one foot in the global grassroots non-violent resistance

The above 3 practices and a life of contemplation safeguard against involuntary violent reactions to violence.

Non-violent Resistance may come at a personal cost—the way of the Cross; but we are the Beloved of God and have already won.

Resource: <https://wagingnonviolence.org/>

Disseminated to Region: CHUM meeting 11/1 to discern level of non-violent action at Capitol; discussion included:

- What members have found out about action that is being planned for Nov 4th (who, what, where, their purpose) - please do research to bring to this meeting.
- What action do we want to prepare for?
- Suggestion made that any action should not be after 4:00 and better around noon... due to light, concern for negative reaction, cold when sun goes down.
- How does the outcome of the election affect a decision for Nov 4?
- What long term work might we do as community regarding non-violent engagement?

Decisions of the meeting:

- Participants opted for plugging into other, more organized actions, being a leaven of spiritual activism and non-violent resistance. Opportunities sent to CHUM/WHI email list (and forwarded to ECC Region)
 - This Vicar asked to plan a daily Zoom meditation, "Holding our Nation in Prayer #Election2020"; composed, recorded and circulated on social media; available on my YouTube channel https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgLB8_6ZcFhkVFQEAVI2fsg/. Scheduled through Nov. 8; may be extended depending on needs of the community.

OPB BISHOPS/VICARS MEETING 10/21

Bishops debriefed about their participation in a Gathering of Independent Catholic Bishops. Zoom event included more participants. Topic was "Synodality" led by Bp. Francis; independent jurisdictions vary in their interpretation of synodality, few of them including the laity accept on the local community level.

Debriefed about ECC SYNOD2020. bemoan lack of interpersonal connections in Zoom webinars and Synod in general, but appreciated that many were able to participate virtually; California Diocese did have delegate participation beyond what was visible, joined in collectively with their HOL gathered around single computer and HOP around another.

Clarifications around RMR Bishop Call (forwarded to Bishop Call Committee):

- Bishop-elect assumes jurisdiction of the Region after the election, not after the consecration per tradition of Utrecht (contrary to Roman practice). This means they assume all the responsibilities of the local bishop apart from those sacramental.
- Synod affirmation: The above brings into question if this active administration makes Synod affirmation a simple rubber stamp. One interpretation is that Synod affirms that an ECC process was followed in the election, not the individual chosen; another is that the wider Communion has a say in whether or not they want this voice on the Council of Bishops. Further clarifications needed.
- Suggest transition period wherein out-going Vicar collaborates with Bishop-elect to familiarize her/him with duties; Bp-elect will also join monthly OPB calls and sit on Council of Bishops (probably as a non-voting member until after Synod affirmation—my speculation; this status on Council wasn't discussed at this meeting).

Bp. Francis is available to meet with regional clergy and/or communities as requested;

Bp. Kedda noted value of having an “out-of-town expert” for education (e.g., Bp. Francis gave PNW Diocese a presentation on ecclesiology).

COLORADO COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Attended Board Meeting 10/28

Participated in Oct. 19th "Mourning into Unity" Virtual Vigil hosted by CCC, and circulated video.

Attended Oct. 21th “Changing the Legacy of Race and Ethnicity” hosted by Adrian/CO Humanities.

Easter Sunrise 2021 virtual. 2022 is 75th anniversary; putting off *75 for 75* fundraiser until post-election disruptions settle.

Adrian hoping to investigate pandemic mental health impact on clergy, elderly, et al.

Anecdotal: Rural Presbyterian clergy getting intense pressure to open up, but no one shows up when they do.

No unanimity among Judicators on 2 gaming initiatives.

Nebraska Interfaith Council closed due to lack of denominational support; Illinois also defunct.

WY, CO and AZ are the only States east of the Mississippi that have Council of Churches; strongest in the East; others have moved to Interfaith Councils.

New Iliff Center for Faith, Politics and Culture headed by Rev. Amanda Henderson (formerly Interfaith Alliance of CO executive director).

ELECTION INVOLVEMENTS

Statement from Judicators re call for peaceful voting and follow-up; draft composed by yours truly; much discussion about naming injustices without appearing partisan. (Appendix B)

Voter Suppression examples in CO? Rural communities have to travel to mail or drop-off ballots.

Floating idea of a “Post-Election Event for Healing” similar to “Mourning into Unity” Virtual Vigil.

Election Poll Chaplains offering a “prayerful presence at the polls”

- <https://religionnews.com/2020/10/27/poll-chaplains-plan-to-bring-a-prayerful-presence-to-the-polls-this-election-day/>
- <https://rac.org/election-protection-your-2020-toolkit>
- Election Defenders <https://actionnetwork.org/forms/apply-to-be-an-election-defender> affiliated with SURJ
- Together Colorado is requesting clergy to wear the garb and be a poll watcher to help promote a sense of peace at the polls. You can sign up with Kamau Allen at kamau@togetherco.org (never received email response re clarification).

Appendix B—Statement of the Colorado Council of Churches in this Election Season

Colorado was the scenic backdrop for Katharine Lee Bates’s “O Beautiful for Spacious Skies.” Its amber waves of grain and purple mountain majesties call to mind the many blessings of our State and our Nation, while succeeding verses both express gratitude for those who sacrifice for the common good and point out that there is always room for society’s refinement, mending and self-control in our pursuit of liberty and justice for all.

In this election season and in its wake, the Colorado Council of Churches joins her in asking God to shed grace on us and crown all that is good with a right relationship and peace “from sea to shining sea.”

As we head to the polls or drop-off boxes that have served the State of Colorado so well for years, and as we await the results of this, our civic duty, we offer an additional verse to Bate’s anthem lifting up all those who seek or hold public office and our evaluations of them.

*O beautiful for justice-sake we lift up those who’d lead,
And pray that they, our welfare take, and help the least succeed.
America! America! Raise up the very best
Whose works fulfill God’s holy will; their service be your test.*
(Verse by Father Michael J. Nicosia ©2010)

Every individual is a stakeholder in this communal enterprise and, having inherent dignity and worth, is deserving of access to our political process. It appears attempts have been made to disenfranchise some segments of our citizenry. Condemning voter intimidation and suppression, we call for fair and equitable elections.

We ask for patience as this process unfolds and each ballot is counted, and we call for peaceful and orderly transitions of power after the results are in. We acknowledge that each side will grieve some of the outcomes, but we cannot express more strongly that any displeasure must be expressed non-violently. May any challenges be fair and untainted by partisan machinations that only serve to increase the divisions among us.

Beyond this election cycle, as our Nation moves forward we call for a return to collaborations across partisan divides in service of the common good... “till all success be nobleness, and every gain divine.”

Signed,

Rev. Sue Artt, Conference Minister, Rocky Mountain Conference, United Church of Christ

Rev. Joan Bell-Haynes, Executive Regional Minister, Central Rocky Mountain Region, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The Rev. Jim Gonia, Bishop, Rocky Mountain Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Anthony C. Hill, Presiding Elder, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Kansas District

Rev. Olivia Hudson Smith, Stated Clerk, The Presbytery of Denver

The Right Reverend Kym Lucas, Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Colorado

Father Michael J. Nicosia, Vicar to the Rocky Mountain Region of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion

Bishop Karen Oliveto, The Mountain Sky Conference of The United Methodist Church

Rev. Denise D. Pass, Executive Presbyter, Presbytery of Plains and Peaks, PC(USA)

Rev. Vickie Samland, Western Plains District Representative, Church of the Brethren

Rev. Dr. Steve Van Ostran, Executive Minister, American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains

Adrian Miller, Executive Director, Colorado Council of Churches

Appendix C—RMRC Adopted Practice of Consensus Decision Making – Final May 2, 2019

Overall: The council definitely prefers *face to face* meetings rather than email discussion or conference calls. Zoom visual technology may help but if at all possible, we need to meet in person. Meetings begin and end with prayer.

1. Our *general practice* during meetings will be to slow down and engage each person around the table, listening, asking or responding to clarifying questions and engaging with Love, respect, emotional strength and intelligence, commitment to the common good and foregoing personal agendas.
2. Facilitators will ask if there are any opposing views *on every decision* and wait for a response, and also to *call on those not vocal* during issue discussions. If the facilitator prefers, s/he may ask for a volunteer to take the role of assuring that we are hearing from all voices during the meeting.

Members may request to abstain from a particular decision if there are unusual circumstances such as a conflict of interest.

If the group is divided, we will: Yield. Stop. Pray. Listen. Try to identify how a problem emerged, if it is local or regional, and the source of resistance by going around the table. Honor no cross-talk as each person responds uninterrupted. After hearing from everyone, if there is not clear consensus, use the 5-finger model:

5. I love it. I insist on it. I can't live without it.
 4. I prefer it. I like it. But I can live without it.
And if it is the group's decision... I will support it
 3. I am neutral on the question. I have no preference.
And if it is the group's decision... I will support it
 2. I prefer not to do it/support it. I don't like it. But I can live with it.
And if it is the group's decision... I will support it
 1. I hate it. I insist against it. I can't live with it. I veto it.
3. Repeat :) We cannot move forward if 1s or 5s are present. We listen again and amend.
 4. If consensus cannot be reached, hit the pause button and postpone the decision until the next meeting. At the next meeting, if we still can't reach consensus we may resort to voting as we continue to listen to the minority voices (see below). If consensus is blocked and no new consensus can be reached, the group may stay with whatever the previous decision was on the subject, or does nothing if that is applicable.
 5. Major philosophical or moral questions that will come up with each affinity group will have to be worked through as the group forms and re-forms with each new member.

Difficulties in reaching consensus: If a decision has been reached, or is on the verge of being reached that you cannot support, there are several ways to express your objections:

- **Non-support** ("I don't see the need for this, but I'll go along.")
- **Reservations** ("I think this may be a mistake but I can live with it.")
- **Standing aside** ("I personally can't do this, but I won't stop others from doing it. ")
- **Blocking** ("I cannot support this or allow the group to support this. It is immoral." If a final decision violates someone's fundamental moral values they are obligated to block consensus.)
- **Withdrawing from the group.** Obviously, if many people express non-support or reservations or stand aside or leave the group, it may not be a viable decision even if no one directly blocks it. This is what is known as a "lukewarm" consensus and it is just as desirable as a lukewarm beer or a lukewarm bath.

***The facilitator of the meeting is responsible to bring a copy of this document to the meeting.