

Notes from Rocky Mountain Regional Council Meeting May 7, 2020

All of our communities were represented: Mother Kae and Dennis from C.O.B, Deacon Jane and Deacon Rosean from MOM, Fr.Teri and Jack from LOC, Fr. Don and Greg from St. Paul, Deacon Mike from Church of the Holy Family, and Vicar Michael.

Update from St. Paul Lutheran and Catholic Community.

St. Paul applied for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan and will receive \$1,000 per employee. Now that \$60 million more was allocated to this fund, the loan is expected. Greg is still waiting. They may or may not get it. On the Lutheran side, a Paycheck Protection Loan was applied for. St. Paul has used all their savings, as the offerings are not keeping up with the expenses. Salaries are not being covered. Greg is still looking for more money.

Vicar's Report

- Denver Pride is going virtual. We will participate at a Virtual Booth for the cost of a booth fee - \$30.00. Fee was approved unanimously by council members.
- Get word out to our communities to participate in the Census
- CCC is putting together Pentecost devotionals

Discussion of calling a local bishop

- Costs required for the commissioning were considered. Tapping into our communities' budgets right now will be a big challenge. Many expenses for vestments, miter, etc., might be covered by the bishop him/herself or by friends and family. Others might be offered as a gift by the Region. Greg will research costs of crossiers, rings, and pectoral crosses. If we coordinate commissioning with the Bishop's annual retreat, it will cost the Region less to host it, as bishops will already be in the area.
- How do we enter into the question of pluses and minuses of commissioning a bishop now versus putting this process on hold? What would be the benefit of going forward, and what would be the benefit of waiting? We need to check in with our communities. Greg says he could revive the issue -- but not push or rush it.
- Michael commented that financial issues should not be big stressors to commission a new bishop. Also vestments could be borrowed. We need to discern the positives and negatives of moving forward
- Dennis would like to move people to discern and pray about it. It is good to take our time.
- Michael wondered why the current crisis would have an impact on the discernment we have already done?
- It was suggested that while we have the undivided attention of the people while the safer at home restrictions are in place, we should get our communities re-excited about the issue. But we already have people who question the process. We are going to have to relearn why having a bishop is important. Many people

are exhausted. Until there is a vaccine, many people will not even be present for a discussion. To re-imagine the bishop process now may be too much. Mary of Magdala leaders said they felt it would be tough to muster the energy to engage in a local bishop process. Jack Wolfe agreed that the corona virus has sucked the energy out of the room. We have to build up our energy. Kae noted that we didn't have consensus around revving up the engines to start the local bishop process again. We need to ask our people to pray for guidance. Holding together as ECC communities is more important right now. We do have consensus to move forward in prayer. Kae offered to receive suggestions for a new prayer that could launch the process again. This prayer will be launched on Corpus Christi day, June 14. Teri and Jane will moosh the suggestions together to form a prayer.

- Asked if it will be necessary to revisit bishop ministry position documents, Jack said they will stand as they are.
- Jack sent an email regarding the court review of church actions. In a conflict between an ECC community or our region and the larger church, would religious laws or civil laws be followed? We are all independent churches, so if we have a problem with the national ECC, we might want to go through civil courts rather than ecclesiastical ones. However this would necessitate changing our constitution to read that we do not follow the constitution of the National ECC. No one wanted to do this. All agreed to be bound by the national ECC constitution. If, then, there is a dispute between regional and national entities in the ECC, the region will follow the rulings of the ECC. Jack suggested he would get some language around this for our June meeting.

Discussion about regional newsletter

- It was suggested that we ask our members for stories about how it is to be together as church right now.
- We want to hear both the plus's and the losses of how people are feeling.
- We agreed to extend the deadline for newsletter items until May 22nd so that we might get testimonials from our community members.
- The stories will be woven together into one common story.
- Testimonials will be sent to FR. Michael.

Comments/Info shared at end of meeting-

- FR Michael informed us that the next clergy call with our Governor will be on Tuesday, May 12th at 1:15 PM.
- Thank you to FR Michael for summarizing the Governor's to us each month!
- The Roman Catholic Arch Diocese is opening their churches to each person's discretion. Only ten individuals/Mass.
- FR Teri has a concern for those members who are doing ministry. This small population of people may burnout from all of the added responsibility.
- FR Don lead us in a beautiful closing prayer

Appendix A—Vicar Report for RMRC 05 07 2020

FORMATION/RECEPTION

Verified completion of COB ordination candidate file, awaiting affirmation of Presiding Bishop.

Corresponding with retired Navy chaplain with a D.Min. in Applied Theology and Christian Ethics inquiring about ordination. Lives in Erie CO. Encouraged relationship building with one of our communities as first step in discernment.

REGIONAL COLLABORATIONS

Participated in Old Catholic Zoom Seminar 4/28 and Independent Catholic Zoom gathering.

Have been disseminating outreach announcements from Capitol Hill United Ministries (CHUM) and Women's Homelessness Initiative (WHI) and participated in their Zoom meeting 5/6 to check in on participating congregations.

Denver PrideFest to be celebrated virtually. Relayed exposure opportunity at a fraction of the cost (\$30) to RMRC. We could direct viewers to our regional website with a specially designed home page for pride month across the region, as well as to our Facebook page.

Participated in legal discussions with RMRC and Polity Team impacting new Constitution.

Organized 5/6 Zoom gathering for former Pax Christi members.

Interviewed by Michael deYoanna of KUNC on elder caregivers and families during the pandemic, who recorded a window visit with Mom. Hopefully will air Mother's Day Weekend.

Updated Regional website.

Presided/preached for CHF Zoom Passion paraliturgy 4/5. Preached/co-presided for MoM's Zoom Easter paraliturgy on 4/12. Preached for StP Zoom Sunday Service 5/3.

Populated regional **Facebook** page @coloradoecc and augmented **Instagram** and **Twitter** presence.

BISHOPS/VICARS CALL 4/15

2020 Synod

Rev. Delores asked, "Is Synod still going to be as planned or is it going to be virtual?" There are many aspects to this but one is definitely the economy, if we are going to in fact be in a depression. There is also the health situation as a factor. Bishop Francis said that we are having an active conversation about this and put off a definite decision until June 2020, unless there are some obvious concerns that will allow us to make the decision sooner. There is definitely a conversation concerning having a virtual meeting. Input welcome.

Regional check ins and COVID-19 Check Ins

- Rev. Delores: Rev. Kate has had a horrible accident and she is now in rehab and returning home. She would prefer no visitors or calls because she is unable to communicate. Rev. Ed and Rev. Elaine are hosting a virtual mass for St. Teresa's and Guardian Angels. Rev. Mark in New Mexico is very sick, he is coping with cancer and receiving treatments. St. Michael's is hosting zoom Communion Services with pre-distributed consecrated hosts, with active participation. Guardian Angels is hosting a live stream of a couple of people being in church, possibly over facebook.

- Bishop Kedda said her community has drafted a vision statement that her community is really excited about; working on mission statement, but in no rush in moving toward forming the diocese. Bishop Kedda also said this pandemic has created some new ideas that may involve a continued online presence, or a continued presence via zoom for people who live in regions without an established community.
- Bishop Kedda reported on California Diocese: big financial struggle given cancelation of revenue makers like quinceaneras. Applauded Bishop Armando's new ventures in social media broadcasts.
- Bishop Francis has had a good turnout for Sts. Clare and Francis worship services. There are still a handful of people who are older and they do not want to learn how to participate in zoom. He's been wondering with members of the congregation about how older members can be reached via phone or conference calls for people who do not want to deal with zoom. Members of the congregation are being invited to a conference call where anyone can join. Shared that Bishop Tom joined their Zoom Easter Vigil.
- Fr. Michael spoke about the Bishop Call process in Colorado. They had completed their constitution and the Bishop ministry description and they were working on putting out a call for nominations but it has stalled now due to focus on pandemic adaptations. Communities are doing a lot of zoom liturgies and one particular community is doing Facebook live liturgies. There are several prayer groups. Fr. Michael is hosting St. Paul's prayer group during Fr. Don's convalescence (now off vent, in regular room on regular diet, making select phone calls; months of rehab expected). Fr. Michael lifted up the creativity occurring. As an example parishioners are being asked to drive by slowly and there will be a post-Easter sprinkling rite that will be given, so they can see each other's faces.
- Kedda emphasized that with liturgies it's important to stress "there is no distance with God," and that we are the body of Christ and this is our action of remembering of bread broken and wine poured out, and said mass simply means "being sent out." That even when we use the words, whether they are not current terminology, around saying mass or para-liturgy, there is a certain amount of surrender to God after we make explicit what we are doing. Kedda emphasized this is forming us, whether we like it or not.
- Fr. Michael shared the joy of seeing people from across the United States and beyond to join virtual worship sessions and meetings. Wide viewership for Colorado Council of Churches Virtual Easter Sunrise Service at Red Rocks, for which he opened with a pre-recorded flute meditation.

COLORADO COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (CCC) Board meeting 4/28

Financials: We may have to return some of the money for the census grant because the drive is to end on June 1. In the meetings with the Judicatories, no-one is planning on cutting back their contribution.
Easter Sunrise Service. We only got \$600 from the Sunrise Service.

Census Hub Update: Megan Van Ens reported on the efforts for getting the faith community involved in **CENSUS 2020**. Nationally, the Bureau is reflecting about a 53.7% response rate; Colorado is at 57.6% in terms of response. We're still looking at a June 1st date to send field people out. Prioritizing reaching out to the churches again throughout May.

Virtual Sunrise Service. We had 7,000 views on our channel and then CBS-Channel 4 reported another 3,000 viewers. So, we reached about 11,000 people reached, all tolled. We had great feedback and reached people who otherwise would not be able to participate. Looking into getting analytics on who watched the service.

Doing our work virtually:

- We may have an opportunity to reach the people we don't usually touch. We could perhaps do sermons or other gatherings virtually. Also, could do some recordings around Faithful Thursdays.
- We then spent some time brain-storming how we could use this time to reach out to other groups of people, including reaching out to seniors. We also thought about how to reach out to the youth. A suggestion was for Adrian to do small segments on Soul Food and Spirituality that could go out to our constituents.
- We can also consider putting on a **remote Pentecost service**. (Subsequently, Judicators asked to submit 3- to 5-minute video devotionals for the project.)
- Adrian has put up a COVID-19 resource page for parishes and church communities. We then discussed how CCC might help/support the effort to get the word about options and directions out. Kristina shared Iliff's ReSource page on COVID-19 info for leaders and congregations: [ReSource 2020-Pandemic Toolbox - Iliff School of Theology](#) (which I disseminated to our ECC pastors).

Signing of Petition: The consensus of the group was that this initiative to declare churches an essential service would not be well received by the Judicatories. While we all agreed that church services and meeting together is essential, we also know the method of gathering can be accomplished in many different ways. In fact, most of the denominations are finding ways to gather virtually or with social distancing even through the end of the year.