

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL COUNCIL  
MEETING NOTES – November 7, 2019

Host: St. Paul  
Attendance: Total 16

RMRC Attendees:

Greg Yonker (chair)	St. Paul
Dennis Giblin	Church of the Beloved
Mother Kae Madden	Church of the Beloved
Jack Wolfe	Light of Christ
Fr. Teri Harroun	Light of Christ
Fr. Don Sutton	St. Paul
Fr. Michael Nicosia	Vicar
Jane Reina	Mary of Magdala
Deacon Rosean Amaral	Mary of Magdala

Guests:

Annie Hayes	Light of Christ
Chuck Howard	Light of Christ
Janell Flaig	Light of Christ
Alice Bradley	Church of the Beloved
Mary Lu Stenson	Light of Christ
Rosemary Nicosia	St. Paul
Jim Harrer (Scribe)	St. Paul

**Start 6:45 pm**

**Opening Prayer** – Greg. **Regional Prayer** – all

**Regular Business**

- Welcome Guests
- The Agenda was distributed and approved
- The Financial Report was presented
- No Vicar Report presented

**New Business**

- Church of the Holy Family.

Michael reported that after a Zoom conference call of church representatives with Bishop Francis who helped navigate several issues, Pastor Cynthia agreed to resign with a severance package. CHF will meet on November 16 to discuss future options, such as finding other office space for less rent and finding an interim pastor. Rev. Kathleen Gorman is shepherding the church, and other regional clergy have offered liturgy help. The CHF Community has a Council but no Chair or Vice Chair, and no single Point of Contact (POC) at this time.

Jane expressed concern on how best to share this news with other churches in the ECC community. Also, what can we do to further support CHF?

Teri: To continue to be an ECC priest in good standing, one should be connected to a community. There are various ways to do this.

Since we don't have a POC for CHF, how can we (the RMRC) approve events and proposals when they are not represented? Jane recommends we not go forward until after CHF holds its 16 November or December meetings.

Jack: What do we do if there is no solution in December? Should we plan for that?

Rosean: This is a shock to suddenly lose this pastor. Much time was spent by the call committee to find the right person; may Holy Spirit help us in this difficult situation.

One Minute of Silence

- Review of Polity Framework: Chuck Howard

**Floor to Chuck Howard. Polity Committee.** The Polity Committee had an overwhelming response of comments from members in the ECC community providing feedback on the 80/20 Polity Draft Document (PD). This document is important as it will become part of the RMR constitution, following input from the new bishop. The Polity Committee reviewed all comments and updated the PD with changes and made notations for things TBD (To Be Determined). Several persons worked on the Polity document: John, Gail, Chuck, Janell, Fr. Michael, Dcn. Mike, et al.

Chuck distributed three handouts for the members to review and discuss at the meeting:

**1. Discussion Guide for Draft Polity Document.** This guide was provided by the Polity Team to cover as much material as possible in a short period of time. It responds to concerns and issues from the ECC community, and the RMRC and Call Committee. Topics for discussion include: Mission, Removal of the Bishop, Synodal vs. Hierarchical Decision Structures, and work needed to finish the document.

**2. RMRC Discussion Items in the Order of the Document.** Thirteen sections from the PD were listed and serve to highlight comments and considerations open for discussion.

**3. Draft Polity – Rocky Mountain Region.** The current redlined 17-page 80/20 Polity Document.

These three documents are in the BCC Google Drive under “ECC Call Team Documents > Polity Team Documents” at:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/15tvAwvqFoP\\_hcqyYG-haFMuIXcBsdJmb](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/15tvAwvqFoP_hcqyYG-haFMuIXcBsdJmb)

Chuck led the meeting participants through the Discussion Guide.

Some of the conversation regarding the PD is paraphrased below.

The Discussion Guide is ordered in way to make this meeting most productive in the review of the PD. We want to hear from everyone. Hot topics include: Removal of the bishop, and hierarchical structures.

**PD pg. 2, II, Mission Statement.** The Mission Statement is taken from ECC Constitution. It would be a hard job to write this from scratch, and could take a year or more.

Reviews of the PD recommend more sensitivity to gender groups in the Mission Statement. Say “people” to remain concise, but we probably should not mention individual groups (LGBTQ, children, etc.) Why leave in Lay and Ordained? Alice: this distinction may be extraneous or not inclusive.

Why should this be in the document; it creates a distinction between people that we don't want.

Michael: The Mission Statement needs gender balance; the “lay and clergy” term is desired but deciding about it should not hamstring the work from going forward. This shows the intent of Lay and Ordained, and points to equality of the two.

Don: ECC has ordained clergy; other churches do not. This distinguishes us. We are a priestly people of faith, both lay and ordained.... (through our baptism)

Janell – “people of faith” is more inclusive; it is just a document.

Mary Lu – likes the term “priestly people” rather than “people of faith”; it points to how to share and teach this, and is not just a document.

Annie – add additional words including baptism, communion, priestly people, etc.

Teri – Is the form of our church a 3 legged or 4 legged stool? There are 4 bullets, not 3, that are described: Laity; Bishop; Priests; Deacons.

Chuck – Suggests we move forward from here to other sections of the document. We will update the document to show “Priestly People” in red, and discuss at the next meeting.

Until there is consensus or near consensus, we will continue to discuss this document.

We had less discussion on the Polity team regarding the mission statement. This led to lengthy discussions.

### **PD pg. 6, Section 7. Removal of the Bishop.**

An error in law in the document was discovered in the earlier drafts and is now corrected.

The Polity Team copied bylaws from Florida and other states to create this section. The law about hiring and firing of personnel is different in Colorado and needs to be clearly stated. Employer to employee relation is the main clarification.

We are setting up a regional democracy, the Regional Council on behalf of the Region.

Are there other employees than bishop to be considered? (Yes, office assistants may be hired as the Region grows.) Can the bishop put together a committee and hire and fire people?

Jack will send the Polity Committee some words to clarify hiring and firing of members, bishop, etc.

We have voting members; when do they need to vote directly, or be represented?

Michael: **Section 5. Primary Duties.** The Local Bishop has no management duties and this should be clarified.

Chuck: some material may be pulled out from other ECC constitutions and put into this one.

Regarding avenues of appeal to the employee: are there enough or are more needed? We need ways to address a grievance.

Janell: Can the person (with a grievance) come to the Regional Council? The Regional Council is not setup to do this; a delegate or a trained team should handle a complaint, or outside professionals could resolve the conflict in such a way that we remain together. The outcome should not be to pay an employee to go away.

Chuck: We cannot afford a paid mediator. We can add words that the Regional Council can set up a group to mediate with authority and make a recommendation.

Janell: we need to have a mediation process that is applicable across the region. Both parties themselves should work for agreement. The Regional Council is the employer, and can terminate at will the employee, unless there is a contract. We should avoid statements that might imply a contract.

Holy Family recently resolved a process in an employee termination.

Janell is a certified mediator. A mediator does not make the decision; the parties can enter an arbitration and agree to accept whatever the arbitrator decides.

Michael: Any bishop we fire will still be a bishop and in relationship with the ECC.

Janell: I would prefer solutions (to grievances) be held in a local, regional way.

Jack: In the legal world, mediation is often part of a step-wise process. The managers of companies who are in conflict meet first. If that does not resolve things, then move to mediation, and if a resolution is still not reached, then you proceed to arbitration where a binding decision is made.

Don: Scripture advises us– talk to each other and pray over it.

Chuck: The text of the PD is complying with Colorado law. We don't have any text about "Dismissal for Cause." But, we may need an Ethical Code of Conduct. It should say not just the bishop, but all people in the pews, are held to ethical guidelines. COB has adopted a code like this.

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**8:30 pm. We decided to extend the meeting by 20 minutes, and consider another item of business: Review of the Call Process Documents.** (NOTE: time line and dates have been subsequently amended.)

The Bishop Call Committee (BCC) has completed the Bishop Position Description (BPD) and Cover Letter, which goes for review to Regional Council tomorrow, November 8, 2019. The Team is also developing a Nomination Form. The BPD and Cover Letter would ideally be published in the Regional Newsletter.

Mary Lu – We need the documents received by next Tuesday (November 12, 2019) at all our local ECC churches, especially Light of Christ, Holy Family and Mary Magdala.

January 1, 2020 is the last day for nominations for Bishop. Then there are four months for community discernment of the Nominees.

Don: Getting all the documents approved and sent out by next Tuesday is a tight deadline; we could give seven or ten more days so Mary Magdala, Holy Family, Light of Christ, etc., can review.

If the documents go out tomorrow, then Holy Family can review them at their November 16 Community Meeting.

Is there a copy of sermon by Bishop Francis at the October 30 joint service with ELCA and ECC Bishops? Council would like it included in the newsletter. Pictures are available online on the St Paul Lutheran and Catholic Community of Faith website. <https://www.saintpauldenver.com/>

### **Back to Chuck; Continue with the Review of the Polity Document From the Discussion Guide: Synodal vs. Hierarchical Structures.**

Chuck: The ECC is not following the Roman model of hierarchy, where the bishop does all, but the bishop must have enough authority to do the work, and to speak (but not act) on the behalf of the region. The ECC bishop should be able to speak with same level of authority as do protestant bishops (Lutheran, Episcopal). Don: They do not act unilaterally, but consult their respective leadership bodies. Chuck/Michael: In practice, all of the Bishops (ELCA, Episcopal, as well as ECC) will carry an idea back to their respective councils for approval.

Chuck: regarding bishop authority: the bishop needs enough authority to get things done. Should the bishop have more authority for certain things regarding morality and ethics? For example, counter to the Council, the Bishop should have the right to veto, especially in matters regarding morality and ethics.

Fr. Don: this smacks of creeping infallibility. I would rather have a consensus model or a 2/3 simple majority.

Janell, Dennis: a veto power is not hierarchical, but a check and balance for moving forward.

Don: People not in agreement often step aside so the majority can move forward. But I will live with it if consensus wants the veto power for the bishop.

Chuck: most pastors do not even have a vote on the council, and no veto regarding faith and morals issues.

Chuck, Janell: it makes for a more collegiate operation to have a number of conflict resolutions, including veto power of the Bishop.

Michael: Veto power of bishop not needed, even for matters of faith and morals.

Chuck: we will sit with it and make decision in a week or two.

Don: In reference to Section VIII, pg. 11. **Relationships of Servitude.** The word "servitude" actually means "slavery." Could we change this word to servanthood, servant or service?

Michael re Presbyteral Circle: As Vicar, I know about the need of getting clergy together periodically; could we include deacons and lay ministers in these meetings. If not included now, the language could be added later in updates to an ongoing constitution.

Kae – This does not need to be defined in the constitution. This is already described in the BPD.

In the PD, there is no mention of a budget. Council and Officers typically have an office of the budget.

Dennis: We need a sit-down meeting with BCC and Polity Teams to discuss matters of compensations budgets, etc.

Action: Chuck and Greg will schedule a meeting a month out for a joint meeting of the BCC and Polity Teams.

This document (the PD) will not be final until after the election of bishop, and a local Synod finalizes it. It is 80% complete and ready to present to the bishop, who may also edit or change some things upon review. A completed Constitution is not required for incorporation with State of Colorado.

The Polity Team's discussion is concluded.

**Next Meetings:** Dec. 5, MoM; Jan. 2, COB; Feb. 6, CHF; Mar, 5, LOC; Apr. 2, StP

Don – Ends with a prayer.

**End: 9:15pm**

Action Items:

- 1) Jack will send the Polity Committee some words to clarify hiring and firing of members, or bishop, etc.
- 2) Chuck and Greg will schedule a meeting a month out for a joint meeting of the BCC and Polity Teams.