

RMRC MEETING, January 7, 2021

NOTES

Facilitator: Teri Harroun Scribe: Jack Wolfe

Those present on Zoom at 6:30 p.m. :

Greg Yonker - St. Paul,
Kae Madden and Dennis Giblin - Church of the Beloved
Teri Harroun and Jack Wolfe - Light of Christ
Rosean Amaral and Tom Moos - Mary of Magdala
Michael Nicosia - Regional Vicar

Teri opened the meeting with a prayer

John Immele from Church of the Beloved was welcomed as a guest.

December, 2020 Meeting Notes Teri noted that the notes had been distributed and approved, and that they had already been published.

Personal Connections Those present offered a particularly meaningful moment in their lives from the Holiday Season. During these offerings, Anne Grant from Holy Family joined the meeting; and Don Sutton joined the meeting later.

Financial Report Greg called attention to the December 31, 2020 Financial Report, which previously had been distributed. Discussion followed, and the report was approved.

A discussion followed about the upcoming 2022 Fiscal Year Budget, which begins April 1, 2021. **It was decided to include further budget discussions on the February agenda.** The communities should bring projections of their revenue, and hence contributions to the Region, to that meeting, along with a statement of the number of members in their community. There was **consensus that the additional Colorado Council of Churches dues/contribution from the region of \$60 per community and \$1.00 per member should be paid to the region in the first quarter of 2021.**

Vicar's Report Michael called attention to his report, which previously had been distributed. He noted that the Mary Magdalene Society was still looking for a volunteer with experience with Microsoft Publisher, and that the Region's concerns about virtual communities and extraordinary sacramental ministers were recognized on the Bishop's Call and scheduled for more discussion. He reported that the Colorado Council of Churches was thinking about drafting a statement about the January 6th events in Washington, D.C.

ECC Leadership Council Teri reported The subject of Ecclesiastical Minister Commissioning was discussed. Rosa Bufone contacted all regions about this, with mixed response. A communication with Bishop Rafe will take place to discuss the Rocky Mountain Region's concerns.

A Constitution Amendments committee was established to consist of Cynthia Drew, George Von Stamwitz, John Immele, and Rose Mary Volbrecht from the Northwest Region. To ensure input from every Diocese and Region, there is also a supporting Consultant Group which includes Tom Moos. As to whether amendments to be considered will be limited to only those that were discussed at the

Constitution Reconciliation Committee listening sessions, it appears that no official notes were taken at the listening sessions or at the Synod, so there may be no limits. Recordings were made of the Synod, but ECC Staff has to attend class to learn how to use them; so they are not presently available, but should still be coming at some point. There has been no date set for the reconvened Synod to consider amendments but it possibly could be sometime the end of June.

Bishop Francis is thinking about putting out a statement concerning the events in Washington DC on January 6th; the National Council of Churches is also working on a statement.

Community Updates: Rosean reported that MOM had asked its members to send in pictures of their home Nativity Scenes. These were then put into a slide show that was used to start the Christmas Liturgy, which was a joint liturgy led by Rosean and Jane. They also had Living Nativity evenings for each of the three communities sharing their space.

Teri reported on the LOC "Christ in the Streets" liturgy on the 4th Sunday of Advent, where she and Annie conducted the liturgy on Facebook Live while walking the streets in the vicinity of the church.

Kae reported that COB combined what has always been two Christmas liturgies into one, and did it on Zoom from the church sanctuary, for the first time since the start of the quarantine, that this was well received by the community.

Greg reported that StP was working to move to Youtube Live Stream, where the sound from the sanctuary is much better than Zoom. They will also be able to have the liturgy script on the screen. Christmas this way was successful with paid singers.

Ann reported that HF Christmas liturgy was a concelebration of four priests on Zoom. And members who have moved out of state were participating.

Teri applauded the cacophony of creativity shown by the communities.

Caffeinated Church Michael reported on this series of programs put together by the Communications Department of the Episcopal Diocese. They are on a variety of topics about a community's face to the outside world, such as branding, social media presence, websites, newsletter and bulletin ideas. Each of our communities could consider joining individually, or the Region could possibly join and share the content with the communities. If the latter approach is chosen, a regional point person would need to be chosen who would understand what sometimes are very techy presentations. The cost of a subscription to the series is \$60.00 per year. Following discussion, it was **Consensus: everyone needs to visit caffeinatedchurch.org before the February meeting to learn more, and come prepared to discuss how this might fit with the April 1st Budget.**

Local Bishop Dennis reported that two nominees, Kae and Michael, have accepted to become candidates. The Team is working on a time-line for introducing the candidates to the individual communities. He reported that StP and MOM had each turned in volunteers for the Regional Bishop Election Team and asked that those who had not yet turned in volunteers to work on getting two from each community. The team would start in about two weeks and would need to commit to about one hour per week for six weeks in order to complete development of the procedure for the election. He asked what role the Council wanted to play in development of the procedure. Following discussion, it was **Consensus that the Council would like to be able to review the progress of the team; that "election procedure" should be a part of the RMRC monthly agenda until the procedure is finalized;**

that the team should make two reports to the Council, once in the middle of its work and once at the end; and that if the team wants feedback from the Council at any point, it could send out a report/request for e-mail input between meetings to keep things moving.

He said that it was now permissible to announce the candidates at liturgies, and he and Greg would put together a formal announcement letter to send out to members.

ECC Constitution Amendments John reported on the recent Amendments Committee meeting, and a copy of his notes is attached hereto. He reported that all regions are not represented on the supporting Consultant Group, but that Bishop Francis said he was willing to add members from the other regions. He said that all on the committee were supportive of the idea that the tone of the constitution needs to be improved.

He talked about the process needed to prioritize and get the Colorado proposals formatted per Michael’s attached suggestion. We need volunteers to do this, but John volunteered to be the “traffic manager” for the work. **Consensus: a meeting of all Synod delegates is set from 9:00 to 10:30 by Zoom on January 23rd.** John and Tom will prepare a package of material to send out to allow the delegates to prepare for the meeting. **Action:** Teri will draft a invitation letter; Tom and John will send the package to Teri to include with the letter, and Greg will create a Zoom link for the meeting.

Ordinations and Confirmations There is nothing to schedule at this time.

RMRC meeting schedule The April 1 meeting will move to March 25 to avoid Holy Thursday; so:

February 4 StP	March 4 MOM	March 25 COB	May 6 HF
June 3 LOC	July 1 StP	August 5 MOM	September 2 COB
October 7 HF	November 4 LOC	December 2 StP	

Teri closed the meeting with the new Regional Prayer, and it adjourned at 8:33 pm.

Appendix A—Vicar Report for RMRC 01 07 2021

FORMATION/RECEPTION/CONTINUING ED

Met with woman discerning ordination who has been attending St. Paul Lutheran & Catholic Comm. of Faith. Participated in Bishop Francis’s Old Catholic History and Theology Seminar.

REGIONAL & NATIONAL COLLABORATIONS

Attended 12/7 Governor’s call with Faith Leaders and on Climate Change initiatives
Presided at MoM via Zoom 12/20, Dignity Denver 12/24.
Planned / led CHUM/WHI daily Zoom “Holding our Nation in Prayer” on Wednesdays until Inauguration.
Circulated Gov. Polis’s COVID-19 updates and discussions with Faith Leaders.
Participated in weekly regional pastoral ministers Zoom gatherings.
Populated Regional Facebook page with member churches’ posts.

OPB Call 12/16/20

Strengthening Our Future Initiative:

- Gratitude for responses to date end-of-year crunch; vicars asked to get updates from pastors; no pressure / based on ability to give (pastors contacted same day).
- Mary Magdalene Society in need of volunteer with knowledge of Microsoft Publisher.

Discussion re concerns raised about authorization of extraordinary sacramental ministers.

- More education important; only for pastoral necessity (especially during pandemic).
- Were pastors and laity consulted? Yes, on local level of need. Will be on agenda of new BC/HOP/HOL committee further developing ordination guidelines.
- Utrecht precedent? Episcopal and Canada Anglican precedents seem out of left field.
- Bishop Francis acknowledged these are all good questions, prompting further thought.

Virtual Communities: raised possibilities and concerns; other dioceses/regions have raised topic; discussion tabled for January meeting.

COLORADO COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Board Meeting 12/16/20

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- MLK, Jr. Day Weekend virtual program on race 1/17/21.
- Faithful Thurs kickoff 1/13 or 14 by Interfaith Alliance of CO; weekly “Legislative Minute” video updates / call to action; CCC to lead one closing session.

BOARD OFFICER VACANCIES—asking Pastor Barbara Berry-Baily about ELCA representation.

Wrote STATEMENT OF THE JUDICATORIES on State’s decision to remove persons in the general incarcerated population off the vaccine schedule (Appendix B, below); gathering signatories led to delay beyond media window, so it will be circulated among CCC outlets.

Executive Director so impressed with my revisions to CCC END-OF-THE YEAR GIVING LETTER, that he attributed authorship to me; circulated on website and social media.

Attended 12/29 Vaccines Q&A Session with Dr. Josh Williams, hosted by CCC; will circulate recording.

Appendix B— Our Statement on Making Prisons and Other Congregate Settings a Priority in Colorado’s Vaccination Distribution

A Statement of the Judicators of the Colorado Council of Churches

As leaders within Colorado’s Christian community, we are deeply disturbed by the State’s decision to revise its COVID-19 phased vaccination schedule,¹ effectively keeping some of her most vulnerable citizens in harm’s way. We echo the Psalmist’s prayer, O God, “let the groaning of the prisoner come before you; according to the greatness of your power preserve those who are doomed to die” (Ps 79:11).

The impact of COVID-19 has cast darkness upon the nations, and many of us feel as if we are prisoners of the pandemic. With news of effective vaccines, light fills us with hope—but our true redemption cannot be achieved apart from the demands of justice.

While it seems an equitable path to prioritize all health-compromised individuals wherever they reside, such is not the only consideration. The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine does advise putting inmates over 65 in Phase 1b, but recommends that all inmates be included in Stage 2, recognizing that their health typically falls below that of the general population [as does their access to quality healthcare,] and that their living settings make transmission deterrents like sanitation and social distancing impossible, thus increasing potential exposure.² Note that health compromised persons are in Stage 2 of Colorado’s revised schedule, while long-term care facility staff and residents are in Phase 1b *specifically because* they are at higher risk due to confined living conditions beyond their control.

Incarcerated populations in our jails, prisons and detention centers are at the same risk and should be an equal priority.

The State's first schedule for distribution recognized this. Following the NASEM guidelines, the October draft of the Colorado Interim COVID-19 Vaccination Plan³ had identified those in "congregate housing (including individuals living in high-density housing who may have challenges with social distancing)" as a critical population. The American Medical Association makes clear that "these individuals should be prioritized in receiving access to safe, effective COVID-19 vaccines in the initial phases of distribution."⁴ The official "equity" rationale and supportive commentaries for treating all health-compromised individuals equally totally disregards the higher situational risk of incarcerated persons; the fact that prison staff are in line before the inmates only accentuates the inequity.

Worthiness is not a meter for our compassion. We fully appreciate the emotional reactions to the assumption that "prisoners will get the vaccination before Grandma." These are trying times, but the natural urgency we feel in regard to the welfare of our personal loved ones must be tempered by true equity and concern for the common good. While focusing on individuals who have committed egregious crimes may seem particularly unjust to some, it only sensationalizes the issue and ignores the plight of lesser offenders and those in our jails and detention centers who remain innocent until proven guilty.

In these holy days leading up to Christmas, many of our churches recall the words of Isaiah, Chapter 42, and the promised coming of God's Anointed One. "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights....he will faithfully bring forth justice." The passage goes on to say that this "light to the nations" will "bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness." Let the light of hope shine into even the darkest of places.

We are grateful for the work of Governor Polis and his team as they try to serve the common good, and appreciate how difficult the task before them is. May our challenge on behalf of those living in congregate settings beyond their control lead to a just distribution of the vaccine.

Signed (as of 12/29/2020),

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

Presiding Elder Anthony Hill, Kansas District, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

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

Bishop Karen Oliveto, Mountain Sky Conference, United Methodist Church

Rev. Denise Pass, Executive Presbyter, Presbytery of Plains and Peaks

Adrian Miller, Executive Director, Colorado Council of Churches

¹ Here is the revised schedule: <https://covid19.colorado.gov/vaccine#PhasedApproach>. Local news coverage of the issue can be found at [Prisoners moved down on Colorado's vaccine priority list](#).

² <https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/2020/10/national-academies-release-framework-for-equitable-allocation-of-a-covid-19-vaccine-for-adoption-by-hhs-state-tribal-local-and-territorial-authorities>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/downloads/colorado-jurisdiction-executive-summary.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.ama-assn.org/press-center/press-releases/ama-policy-calls-more-covid-19-prevention-congregate-settings>