Rocky Mountain Regional Council
Conference Call Meeting
April 6, 2017 Notes

Attendance: Buddy (COB), Mother Kae (COB), Bob (LOC), Winnie (LOC), Fr. Jim (MoM), Fr. Michael (PC)

Prayer: Bob

March Notes: Approved by email

Community Updates:

COB – Lenten outreach to Urban Peaks ("lots of loot for them"), Fr. Len is back in COB schedule. He is available to other communities for Mass, liturgies, retreats, etc. Five young people are beginning Confirmation preparation.

LOC – Lent has been a busy, prayerful time with Friday morning prayer and soup suppers. Triduum plans include joint services with Bethlehem Lutheran.

MoM – Lenten soup suppers at MoM also. Their annual meeting is set for May 7. Host church St. Paul’s Episcopal planning move, wanting MoM to move with them. A member survey is in progress to get input for future planning and visioning. The search is on for a new permanent home. Bishop Frank will be at MoM for Rosean’s ordination at 10 a.m. on Saturday, April 29. Rehearsal is April 28. Chrism Mass will be part of the celebration. Clergy dress for the event – white alb and stole. Each community will bring their own oil vessels.

PC – Because their members average fewer than ten persons each week, PC is looking at a monthly deficit of approximately $150 per month for 2017. If this does not turn around in some way, they may be forced to cease operations by the end of the year. Fr. Michael is asking RMRC to brainstorm at our next meeting about ways that we can help keep PC’s doors open, agreeing that it is important to maintain a presence in Denver proper.

Vicar’s Report: See Appendix A

Pride Fest: All systems are go for the parade and the booth. LOC is still working on the insurance coverage. Bob will check with Jessica. We are still seeking a 10 X 10 canopy, preferably with sides, for the booth.

Road Show: Mother Kae will send the final version of the letter regarding synod delegates’ participation in the Road Show to us, then to be distributed to leadership and delegates in all parishes. Action: Send delegate invitation out ASAP. Come prepared with research and reports to begin actual planning of this momentous event.

May Meeting: The rummage sale will be in full swing at COB on May 4. We are exploring other central location options. We will begin a half hour early, at 6 pm on May 4, to give additional time to comprehensively address the Road Show, the potential closing of PC, and of course, the usual agenda items. MoM will host the meeting. (That doesn’t mean the meeting will be in Fort Collins!)

Prayer: Winnie
DEACON FORMATION UPDATES

3/14/17 email to +Francis and Council to clarify expense coverage for CO trips; no reply as of meeting.

Dear Bishop Francis,

As you know, 3 trips are planned for this year:

- April ordination at MoM combined with Regional Chrism Mass.
- June (date tbd) ordination at CHF in conjunction with regional retreat.
- November confirmations at COB.

The Regional Council would like to clarify how your expenses might be divided.

- April's expenses divided between MoM and the Region (though part of your travel piggy backs with bishop's retreat).
- June is less clear. Certainly CHF has a share, but as the retreat is per your request does the Region have a share or is it covered as a OPB expenditure (or all three)?
- Nov. at present would be COB's expense, unless other churches are interested in having confirmations that weekend as well.

All those impacted, please feel free to weigh in. Thanks.

Nominated individuals for candidates’ final evaluation teams for +Francis’s approval. Also developed and forwarded draft liturgies to candidates, their pastors and the bishop. Fr. Jim facilitated communications with Episcopal Bishop O’Neil re Rosean’s ordination at St. Paul’s. +Rob appreciated curtesy but felt no permissions needed

CHF’s Pastoral Leadership Team has been very vigilant about my not having an unfair advantage over other pastor-candidates by virtue of my regional vicar position. In case conflict would present itself in my emceeing Bonnie’s ordination at CHF, Rev. Denise suggested that Dcn. Mike may be able to serve as an alternate. (To avoid any “unfair advantage” I also asked Fr. Jim if he would be willing to write something for the "Vicar's Musings" column in the next regional newsletter. Deadline 5/3.)

CLERGY GATHERING 3/25/17 Eight attended and shared reflections on “Leaving Ourselves at the Altar.” Deacon candidates shared stories of their calling.

COLORADO COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Email to OPB and RMRC 3/14 re: CCC inquiry about signing NCC’s letter opposing changes to 501c3 limits on endorsing political candidates. +Francis to sign, approved vicar signing. CCC Board meeting 2/28/17 via phone; hot topic: hate crimes statement, concern raised of need for statement to include vulnerable, invisible populations. Asked to say prayer over Sunrise Service collection. Also redesigned service program (and working on new CCC banner and brochure).

Attended 3/16/17 Parker Palmer presentation, touched Base with Bishop Gonia (ELCA) and Bishop Oliveto (UMC) about CCC Judiciaries need to meet; forwarded to Adrian Miller. Board retreat with Judicators hopefully in late summer.

Boulder Community in Discernment

Invited to speak to community on May 7 about their question, “Why do we need the ECC?” As Mary of Magdala/Rochester recently joined the ECC, I sent an email request to Rev. Denise Denato asking for a chronicle of their discernment and rationales for joining; she agreed good idea for future reference Communion-wide.

ADVOCACY GROUPS

3/8 attended rabbi/pastor group, mini-course on Parker Palmer’s Habits of the Heart
3/9 attended SURJ/Denver’s Spiritual-activism group, charged with fleshing out education objectives
4/27 attended Abrahamic Initiative’s *Communities in Conversation* discussion at CO Islamic Center.

**NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY WITH CTA AND COR**

3/21/17 email from ECC Admin Jenn re regional staffing of ECC info table at Call To Action (CTA) conference September 8-9 in Colorado. Pax Christi offered to host with 6thAveUCC, but after miscommunication about conflicts with our Mass schedule they selected Jefferson Unitarian Church in Golden. “This would be a wonderful opportunity for the Rocky Mountain Region churches to get the word out about their communities and build relationships with other progressive Catholics in the area.” OPB to cover the cost of the vendor registration so there would be a table available to display our information and materials.

*We would need at least 2 people to help staff that table during the conference.*

+Francis sent request to region 3/31/17: Catholic Organizations for Reform (COR) is considering meeting after CTA conference for one of our twice yearly meetings.

1. If we were to do so, do you think folks from our Colorado communities might be *willing to house our delegates.* I’m guessing there would be 20 delegates or so; I’m not sure yet how many would want housing.

2. Also, do you think one of our communities would be willing to *provide a space* where we could meet from Sunday evening through Tuesday morning, Sept. 10-12?

**BISHOP/VICAR CALL 3/15/17**

1) 2016/2017 Tithing letters follow up
   a. Jennifer will send out an email to each Vicar/Bishop with the communities we still need budgets and tithe numbers from. Please try to follow up and get those in ASAP so we can update our 2017 estimates and financial reports. (All accounted for accept Pax Christi which is in the midst of lease renegotiations.)
   b. Also, if you know of any communities in your region/diocese who would like some help/resources on fundraising and financial stability/growth please let us know in the OPB. Art Bavoso is an ECC member who is part of our fundraising team (mostly through the Mary Magdalene Society) and is willing to work with individual communities to help them out as well.
   c. There was conversation about if this same process should be followed by diocese, and the response was yes. Because it is the national tithe it makes sense to come from the OPB and have the local bishop follow up with communities if needed.
   d. Fr. Michael mentioned Colorado church membership has decreased across the board which means the tithes will decrease as well.

2) Updates on Process for Electing a Woman Bishop
   a. There is a committee that has been looking at the possibilities for how to call a woman bishop in the ECC. There is no region currently ready or interested in calling a bishop for it to happen via a diocese. Another possibility would be to elect a woman vicarial bishop. This committee is in the process of writing a White Paper explaining the need for a woman bishop and a proposed process for moving us in that direction, as a response to a call from many members of the ECC as expressed at Synod.
   b. This has been discussed by both the Episcopal Council and Leadership Council and will continue to be discussed and discerned together in the months to come after everyone has a chance to read the White Paper.
c. The Theological Advisory group is also looking at the topic of a woman vicarial bishop and will share their research after the white paper.

d. The White Paper should be ready and shared by March 31st.
   i. Bishop Rafe requested that it go to the Episcopal Council and the Leadership Council first to review before sending out to the entire Communion. Bishop Francis will consider this and speak with the Committee writing the White Paper.
   ii. Bishop Rafe also brought up a concern about the difference between appointment to an office and ordination to a ministerial role such as bishop.

3) Regional updates
   a. **Church attendance/membership** – There was some conversation about if numbers in parishes are declining and possible reasons for that. As reported above, RMR has seen decline; SW Region reported there has been an increase for the more progressive Christian churches in the last year (“Trump bump”), or at least staying pretty even. In the East, Holy Spirit lost a few members, but Mary Magdalene, St. Luke, and All Souls seem to be stable.
      i. Some reasons discussed are: people move, people’s spirituality/faith calls them somewhere else; not being fed by Catholic liturgies; people leave and new people aren’t coming in – hard to get our name out there; conflict or division that arises within the community.
      ii. Some of the ideas of how communities are getting their name out are interfaith work, local press coverage of events, active and creative PR committees, and special events like retreats/speakers to invite in new people.
      iii. Once we get people in the door, have to think about what they are encountering, because that is what will determine if they stay or not.
   b. **SW Region** – Bishop Francis wrote a letter to the SW Region reflecting on his recent visit with them and sent it to the local pastors to review before sending out to the wider churches/region. Rev. Sue will follow up with local leaders on this letter to get it out soon.
   c. **East Coast** – Rev. Denise Donato reported to Bishop Francis that Mary Magdalene just recently voted to officially become an ECC community! This is great news, ending a six year journey towards this point. They will now work with the OPB to get all the needed paperwork together.

**ECC - REGIONAL FORMATIONS**

The parishes and missions in Arizona and New Mexico are beginning a process to determine what sort of future they may have together as a region within the national structure of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion asked for input of pastors of other communities around the country.

Looking around the country, it seems that there are several models:

1) a loosely organized region with a vicar,
2) a more closely organized region with a vicar,
3) a loosely organized region with a vicarial bishop, and
4) a more-or-less full-fledged diocese with a diocesan bishop.

They are interested in knowing why various regions made the conscious decision to follow one of these paths. They will be establishing a regional council later this spring (the first meeting will probably be in early May) and one of the first steps for this group will be to prepare a list of pros and cons for each of these four alternatives and to perhaps come up with a fifth.
Response from Mthr. Kedda of Pacific Northwest on Mar 27 at 6:16 PM

Greetings. You may have heard from others in our region. We are the Pacific Northwest Region and we are loosely organized, with an elected suffragan bishop/vicar. There is somewhat of a divide between the west and the east side of the Cascade Mountain range. This is a natural phenomenon due to the mountains, and the distance between the western communities and the Spokane community. The west side laity and clergy have been getting together as a region for several years, as we had no communities on the east side. When St. Clare’s began in Spokane, Tom joined us by Skype. Now that he is bishop, he flies over from Spokane and joins us on the west side of the mountains. We seem to be meeting quarterly at this time. On occasion we meet by phone with laity and clergy from both west and east side communities. Again, we are loosely organized. Our favorite regional activity is a regional retreat. We are in the process of planning one now.

We chose to elect a bishop, even though we were not ready to become a diocese, because we felt a need for a bishop for ordinations. As the Presiding Bishop became busier, we found it more difficult to schedule ordinations in a timely manner. It may be a while before we are ready to consider becoming a diocese.

Response from Michael for the RMRC on March 28 at 9:54 AM

Attached is the Rocky Mountain Regional Council's Foundational Document (2011 update) and our current Mission Statement (2013).

Our region's past experiences of oppressive leadership and intimidation under the Roman Catholic Archdiocese has corrupted some members' understanding of Catholicism and church structure, leaving wounds in need of healing and concepts in need of re-envisioning/reclaiming. This, together with the fierce independence of "the Wild West" psyche, has been behind our historic resistance to forming a diocese and calling a bishop.

At present the Council is drafting components of "The ECC Road Show," a 2-part traveling seminar to increase ownership of the benefits of ECC membership and our identity/unity/vision as a region. ECC 101 will hopefully help all of the communities be on the same page regarding our understanding of the ECC's history/tradition (including Utrecht model), and help to dismantle the baggage associated with the historic Roman use of terms like bishop/diocese/clergy/laity and reclaim them as accountability partners. Such education will be a springboard for ECC 201---fresh discussions around a common vision/identity for our future as a regional church.