

Points of Communication from the Council of Advice

Zoom meeting Thursday May 16, 2024 12 noon

The Council of Advice and Convocation staff set our intentions together in prayer and the spiritual nudges we each discerned from the upcoming Epistle for Pentacost, Romans 8: 22-27.

Diocesan Council topics covered during the meeting included:

Huge thanks to Sophie Plé for her persistence and time spent in gathering, collating and submitting the information required for our unique non-diocese situation. The data provided in this annual exercise indicated that the Convocation has come back healthily from Covid but pledging needs encouragement. Bishop Mark suggests that we need to help parishes with Stewardship strategies. Suggestions were made for a possible future APL. He noted that we already have materials available but which have not been widely utilized. Training and greater communication about our resources is needed.

An update regarding the continuing process in a final contract for Soccoro, our new Program and Administrative Manager of the Refugee Grant Program.

Consideration of a new software platform to manage the Refugee Grant program. Fully understanding the need as requested by Giulia and Soccoro, our two leaders administering the program, Bishop Mark has been talking with Episcopal Relief and Development about how we may use some of their tools. The initially requested software for our continued independent processing of all the required reports is beyond our budget.

An update regarding the launch of our new website. Audrey has written that she plans the initial front page launch date for June 1. The new site includes a library of Convocation resources, and individual sections for each ministry including a news section that can be self published. As she continues to update the site, Audrey requests more photographs, especially each time Bishop Mark is on visitation or whenever there are Convocation events. A Dropbox folder will be created where photos can be sent, but remember, all people in photos must be asked to give written consent before anything can be posted online. There was considerable discussion of other aspects of GDPR and the Convocation, with attention to a possible GDPR audit in the future.

Standing Committee conversations focussed on items highlighted from quarterly written Liaison Reports which were gratefully received this month.

COMC reminds mission congregations that COMC is prepared to offer financial assistance for two *additional* members of their congregation's delegation to Convention. This assistance will be to attend the Festival of Gathering and fund transportation, registration, and one night of housing.

Audrey Jolivet-Habiby, President of the Bishop's Council of our mission in Paris, was interviewed about Palestinian Christians on Fréquence Protestante radio (our parishioner Laurence Moachon's "Samedi Magazine"). This aired on March 23rd and is available on podcast and replay. All are encouraged to listen: <https://frequenceprotestante.com/events/les-chretiens-de-palestine/>

Council praised the dedicated and varied ministry of Rev. Clair Ullman over many years to our Convocation. Clair wrote that from 18 May the [Chapel of the Holy Family in Muhlbach](#) will be open for the summer season. Her local ministry will continue but she and Rainer plan to step back from Convocation activity after the next Convention.

Rev. Dumond thanked Bishop Mark for his support of Dumond's exploration of ecumenical partnership with the Saint-Jean Lutheran Church in Paris. It was agreed that these efforts to access all possibilities of ecumenical partnerships are increasingly important throughout the Convocation.

Council of Advice

Bishop's Report: Concerns and topics:

The situation in Georgia. [St. Nino's mission in Tbilisi](#) is in our prayers regarding the current political situation, as well as structural reasons related to transitions of clergy within the Convocation. Bishop Mark and Archdeacon Baer are following this closely as St. Nino's also transitions to new lay leadership and as Thoma Lipartiani heads to seminary in August. A new clergy support team will need to be identified.

Transitions in the Convocation. [Frankfurt](#) is nearly ready to call their chosen candidate. [St. Pauls in Rome](#) is beginning the process of their search with a parish-wide survey to clarify the qualities sought in their new priest. Meanwhile, they have a fabulous interim in place. [All Saints' Waterloo](#) is just beginning their process which involves complex requirements according to the laws of Belgium's officially recognized faith tradition.

Housing developments. The Board of Foreign Parishes (BDFP) has now entered into a "promesse de vente" to purchase the property identified for continuing housing for Convocation bishops. As reported in April, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Convocation and the BDFP, is still being refined to cover the complicated legal concerns of this real estate purchase across international borders, and protecting the different concerns of the Convocation and BDFP. The team previously identified: Denis, Ward, Lois and Bishop Mark, will continue to perfect a final contract agreeable to all parties. Council of Advice will be asked to vote on this, perhaps remotely before the signing next month.

Update from the Board of Foreign Parishes: In addition to all the work related to the purchase of the apartment in Paris for the Bishop's housing, the Board has announced that it is embarking on a fundraising campaign. We are grateful for this support for something that will solely benefit us, especially as capital campaigns are not possible in our European context.

Bishop's sabbatical: Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has informed Bishop Mark that he is entitled to a 3 month sabbatical which he will probably plan for next year. He does not expect us to be left without necessary support and is now exploring how this will work.

Other Business:

The Crew platform that we tried to use for leadership communication has now been closed. Please ignore all emails asking for input from Crew.

The Call to Convention is nearly ready for distribution. Those eager to book hotels, please be patient, it is on its way, expected early June.

The next Council of Advice meeting will be held during the Heads of Ministry meetings in Bühl, exact time TBD.

Upcoming Events and Opportunities to publicize

- **Digital ministry grants from the Convocation continue to be available** and are part of our annual Convocation budget. These specifically oriented requests for digital ministry support may be considered separately from other granting needs. Use the form available at this link: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfCp3Agh1kRA5rZXQHdsDRD7-lz2qv-HqJHdEwOJrAxpDlxw/viewform>

- **Heads of Ministry Meetings in 2024:**

Don't forget to plan your travel **June 13-15** for meetings to be held at **Hotel am Froschbächel in Bühl near Baden-Baden, Germany**. The meetings begin and end with lunch.

- **Next Academy for Parish Leadership (APL) event: scheduled 24-26 May** at Schloss Fürstenried, Munich, Germany. The topic has been set - "Healthy Congregations: Practical Tools for Congregational Vitality". Registration is now closed.

- **Part-time staff opportunity:** Help us find the right person: a new Convocation-wide Coordinator of Ministry with Children and Youth. Details soon on the new website. If you know a potential candidate, reach out to your Council liaison with information.

- **The Convocation website:** See above. The new site is almost ready to launch. Audrey Shankles is working with our partners in the Episcopal Church Offices in New York to update and make it more user-friendly. Bear with us when it is down and look forward to helpful changes. Currently, to find this document monthly, it is posted after each COA meeting at the beginning of the Council of Advice section under the Convocation heading. <https://www.tec-europe.org/convocation/the-council-of-advice/>