

Moderator's Report for 2021

Submitted to Governing Board Meeting 4th January 2022

2021 was a year that really showed us what resilience looks like, as MCCs around the world continued to share the message of God's inclusive love, found creative ways to offer worship and connection, and strived to bring hope and justice to the communities that they serve. A global pandemic, deadly floods, fires, storms and other natural disasters around the world, the storming of the US Capitol building and trials relating to US police killings of Black citizens are some of the significant events that we faced this past year.

At the denominational level, MCC staff have worked tirelessly to support and resource local congregations, clergy, church and Network leaders to carry out their ministry. I am immensely grateful to each one of them for their commitment to and enthusiasm for this work.

MCC is in a financially stable position moving into the new year, with 3 months operational reserves and over US\$200,000 in the endowment fund. This is a major achievement, given the turbulent times that we are in and the challenging state of the finances in July 2019, when I and the Governing Board were elected. In the future, interest from the endowment fund will provide an additional income stream to enable MCC to have more resources to support local churches, enable us to fund innovative ministry ideas and support social justice around the world. This is due to the great generosity of individuals and local churches who helped us establish the fund.

In March 2021, the Governing Board adopted 5 strategic aims for 2021 -2025. Here is a summary of work that I have done in each area:

Spirituality

Clear articulation of our queer, inclusive theology with rites and sacraments that reflect our values

- Worked with Council of Elders on justice statements on issues such as racism, climate change and reproductive rites
- Held regular prayer and reflection sessions on Facebook Live
- Recorded Easter, Pentecost and Christmas sermons for use in the local church
- Engaged with the Council of Elders on the "Authorized Pathways to Ministry" paper, which offers a new framework for ministry within MCC
- Issued public statements on issues such as conversion therapy, the Chauvin trial following the murder of George Floyd, same gender marriage and social justice
- Engaged with the MCC Theologies Team and the Council of Elders to find new ways forward for theological discussions in MCC
- Met with co-chairs of the Commission on Rites and Sacraments, Rev. Marie Alford-Harkey and Rev. Dr Axel Schwaigert to discuss the work of the Commission

Presence

Global presence which is locally appropriate and globally robust

- Engaged with the Council of Elders and Governing Board to approve new Criteria for the Affiliation of Churches, which offer greater flexibility on what it means to be "church" in MCC
- Worked with MCC staff, General Conference Core Team and General Conference Commission to imagine and start to create a global General Conference and online business meeting to enable more people around the world to participate

- Held discussions with the World Council of Churches and representatives from the Rainbow Pilgrims of Faith about MCC's participation in the 2022 WCC Assembly in Germany, working with Rev. Paul Whiting and Rev. Dr Axel Schwaigert
- Individual conversations with the President of the Unitarian Universalists Association (UUA), the Presiding Bishop of The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM) and the Moderator Elect of the United Reformed Church (URC) to share ideas and opportunities for ministry
- Began a partnership with the international organisation, Charter for Compassion, to develop its LGBTQI work
- Supported the 20th anniversary of the LGBTQ Religious Archive Network
- Participated in MCC network gatherings
- Participated in ICM Latin America monthly worship service
- Recorded over 40 videos for church anniversaries, ordinations, clergy retirements and memorial services

Diversity

Increased integration of diverse people in a holistic and measurable way

- Worked with staff and Governing Board to ensure that appointments to staff team, volunteer teams and Commissions reflect MCC's diversity as much as possible
- Co-chaired the Commission on Pathways of Healing and Reconciliation with Rev. Dr. Roland Stringfellow, which opened 3 pathways to enable MCCers around the world to share their experiences of racism and other issues within MCC. The Commission has now written its end of year report, which will set out work done to date and next steps
- Had discussions with Dr Elías Ortega, President and Professor of Religion, Ethics, and Leadership Meadville Lombard Theological School, on his experience of leading a listening process on racism and white supremacy within the UUA.
- Reviewed previous MCC Diversity and Inclusion reports with Governing Board and with Senior Leadership team, to see what recommendations can still be actioned
- Met with members of PAD – the next generation (People of African Descent) to hear their concerns and ideas for addressing racism within MCC
- With the Senior Leadership Team (Rev. Elder Hector Gutierrez and Rev. Dr. Kharma Amos) partnership working with National Trans Visibility Day (USA) and Queer Youth of Faith Day
- Participated in anti-racism training, including training for white spiritual leaders and the follow-up coaching circles and making Boards more diverse
- Discussed inclusion issues for those with differing abilities, as we plan General Conference 2022

Leadership

Robust recruiting, training and mentoring plans to raise up a new generation of leaders

- Appointed a new and diverse Council of Elders to serve for a 3 year term
- Completed recruitment to the staff team with the appointments of Diversity, Inclusion and Laity Development Co-ordinators
- Ensured that, wherever possible, appointments to volunteer teams and Commissions included individuals who have not served at a denominational level before and those who are under 40.

Resources

Abundant and appropriate resources that reflect and embody the generosity and creativity of our people

- Approved the redesign project of the www.mcccchurch.org website and the contractor proposed by Rev. Dr Kharma Amos
- Participated in meetings with the Governing Board finance committee and Henderson Financial Group to create MCC Endowment fund and develop relevant investment policies
- Engaged with our Partners in Hope supporters to thank them for their generosity to MCC
- Worked with members of Governing Board, Council of Elders and staff to update MCC judiciary process
- Worked with Council of Elders to find appropriate ways of offering spiritual and pastoral support to MCCers worldwide
- Started discussion on how to support those in MCC who are experiencing extreme financial challenges, due to ill health, natural disaster, for example

It continues to be a joy and an honour to serve as Moderator. I look forward to all the opportunities and blessings that God has in store for us all in 2022.

Respectfully submitted

Rev. Elder Cecilia Eggleston