

Moderator's Report March 2022

Submitted to Governing Board Meeting 5th April 2022

This month I attended an in-person conference for the first time since March 2020. The Global Interfaith Commission on LGBT+ Lives hosted the conference in London, UK, to discuss action against conversion therapy. MCC has been in the vanguard of protesting against this harmful and tortuous practice all over the world. It was good to see our global representation at the conference – Rev. Toni Kruger-Ayebazibwe (South Africa), Rev. Miak Siew (Singapore) and Rev. Dr. Brent Hawkes (Canada). MCC is currently active in the campaign against conversion therapy in Scotland, and I was able to connect the Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church with Rev. Elder Maxwell Reay, who addressed the Scottish Parliament on this issue. It is good to be developing more partnerships with other organisations. The voice of MCC is needed on the world stage to speak on justice issues, especially those concerning sexuality and spirituality.

MCC and the Unitarian Universalists Association in the USA already has a good working relationship. I met with Prof. Elías Ortega, President, Professor of Religion, Ethics and Leadership at the UUA Meadville Lombard Theological School, to discuss the interim report from the Commission on Pathways of Healing and Reconciliation. Prof. Ortega met with the Commission when it first began its work, as he served a similar body which addressed racism within the UUA. He offered some valuable insights into further areas that the Commission might explore. I am consulting with Commission members to see if they will be willing to serve until the end of 2022, so that we can go deeper in our work, and will bring a recommendation to the Governing Board, when I have responses. Members of the Commission have met with the different MCC kinships this month, to get more feedback about where racism has impacted and other issues that need to be addressed. Thank you to the Commissioners, the members of the kinship groups and to Rev. Stedney Philips for organising the meetings.

We held the second of our joint strategic planning meeting with staff, Governing Board and Council of Elders. Prior to the meeting, I had invited everyone to send their vision for MCC in 2030 and am grateful to those individuals who took the time to do this. There were several common themes – MCC being at the forefront of queer theology and social justice, a vibrant presence online, a truly global movement, excellent theological and other resources to support local churches and raising up inspiring, creative servant leaders. I am now crafting these various statements into one strategic vision statement, which will be used to guide our denominational work going forward.

General Conference planning is forming an increasing part of my workload. The Procedures Committee is continuing to examine how best to conduct the online business meeting. It is a joy to see the passion and commitment that there is for this work. I have regular meetings with Mike Haase and Rev. Lauren Bennett to discuss the many different aspects of putting on a global online conference. It is wonderful to see how many individuals and churches have contributed to the Go Global fund, which will support those who might have challenges getting online to participate in the Transformational Weekend and business meeting.

The atrocities from the war in Ukraine are a constant reminder that many people around the world do not live in peace. It has been moving to see the prompt and generous response from MCCers, who have donated to support LGBTQ+ people fleeing the conflict. Donations are still coming in and I have been working with our Finance team to send thank you emails.

Other areas of work include:

Connection with MCC churches and Networks

- Participated in taster session on “Living Well with Difference” with church leaders, exploring how to handle conflict well
- Recorded video greetings for church anniversaries
- Offered time of prayer and reflection on Facebook Live
- Individual conversations with MCCers around the world
- Providing pastoral support where needed

Diversity and Inclusion

- Worked with strategic Leadership working group to ensure that the leadership goals will engage with a diverse range of people within MCC
- Discussed present and future translation requirements with SLT, in order to plan an appropriate budget

Outreach

- Worked with James Hartman on press releases related to Anti LGBT legislation in USA, conversion therapy in England, and other issues

Strategic Planning

- Facilitated the Leadership working group to create goals for next 3 years
- Invited members of Governing Board, staff and Council of Elders to be part of strategic planning team to develop and oversee plan of work to 2030

Governing Board

- Chaired meeting of the Procedures Committee, which is working on the processes for the General Conference online business meeting. Ms Huey Lee, MCC Lubbock, USA co-chairs this committee with me
- Chaired working group of Council of Elders and Governing Board to discuss judiciary policy and procedures.

Staff

- Regular meetings to plan General Conference 2022
- Regular meetings with Rev. Elder Hector Gutierrez and Rev. Dr Kharma Amos as Senior Leadership Team
- Met with staff to discuss challenging situations in individual churches
- Participated in regular staff briefings and facilitated monthly staff meeting

Council of Elders

- Participated in Council of Elders meeting planning
- Participated in Council of Elders Pastoral Care team meeting
- Participated in Council of Elders meeting