

**Board and Staff Gathering
Composite Minutes September 12 - 15, 2022
Approved**

Present: Jenny Adamson, Pamela Begeman, Donna Cole-Struck, Mark Dannenfelser, Kathleen Gilgannon, Marie Howard, Phil Jackson, Pat Johnson, Jim McElroy, Carol Quest, Diane Ryan, Julie Saad, Matt Scrimgeour, Colleen Thomas, Mary Jane Yates

Next Conference

2024 offers the opportunity to combine the conference with a celebration of the 40th anniversary of COL. To begin the planning process the Governing Board and the Staff might each discern one member to be on the 2024 conference team. These two members would then discern the next steps while communicating closely with their respective groups. Also seek input from the network asking throughout the organism “what would you like to see from the next conference?”

Reflections on the Gathering with the Chicago Chapter

Following the afternoon with representatives of the Chicago chapter, the Board and Staff reflected on the blessings from that gathering. The Board and Staff acknowledge the importance of meeting in person and hearing people speaking for themselves about how the Holy Spirit is moving in their community. The Chicago representatives outlined their process for opening to diversity including diversity in leadership. Chicago began with dedicated prayer and continued praying until opportunities emerged. Their experience is a witness to seeking and following the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

As the Board and Staff discussed diversity and inclusion it seemed clear we all must consider what is our own work to do personally and our collective work within the organism. Moving toward racial inclusion in particular begins by asking, “What is the work white people need to do around diversity?” Building on prayerful intention Contemplative Outreach can take steps to learn and act, making space to lean into diversity through becoming informed and exposing ourselves to diverse populations.

Board and Staff Discussion: The Role of the Board

The Governing Board opened the discussion by offering two resources

1. Selection process for prospective Board members: The COL By-Laws state:

The Board Members select new members of the Governing Board after a discernment process that has included a broad-based search among the active members of the Contemplative Outreach Community.

The Board looks for prospective Board candidates with these qualifications

1. Established Centering Prayer practice
2. Involvement with and knowledge of Contemplative Outreach
3. Knowledge of the CO Vision, Theological Principles and Guidelines for Service
4. Collaborative communication skills, and other talents
5. Familiarity with Laloux's work, and the candidate's organization experience and openness
6. Vision: impact of Centering Prayer, personal vision and vision for COL
7. Diversity and complementary

2. Board comments on the document "The 2022 Contemplative Outreach Governing Board's Reflection on Its Role"

- As the organism is evolving and expanding so too does the role of the Board.
- The organism is non-hierarchical so the Board aspires to non-hierarchical leadership led by the Holy Spirit.
- The Board's role is the part the Board plays within the organism and specific responsibilities as defined in the bylaws.
- This document addresses both how we lead now and our vision for leading from the future.
- This document attempts to indicate the governance style leadership within COL.
- To ensure mission: The Spirit's guidance is primary, but we must respond.
- Document process: Consulted Bylaws, Vision and Principles and Guidelines, Non-Profit Organism models; and worked, prayed, and discussed for consensus.

Questions from Staff:

Vision statement: Who takes ownership of guiding the review and revision of the "CO Vision with Theological Principles and Guidelines for Service"? For example, is Theological Principle #9 properly inclusive?

Board response: Any one may suggest a review or revision. The Board leads response, seeking broad involvement and listening to what emerges.

Prospective Board members: What are the Board's plans for diversity and inclusion on the Board? Isn't it important to favor diversity over other qualifications? Did the Board look for a candidate with a legal background?

Board's response: We make a broad-based search among the active members of the Contemplative Outreach Community and select from those who are willing to serve. A member with a legal background is not essential since we have access to legal advice within and beyond the organism.

Board and Staff interaction:

The Board acknowledged the excellent work and value of the Staff. Both parties agreed that the opportunity to be together has been beneficial. The Board offered questions to further the conversation.

—As Staff what is your preferred method of communicating with the Board?

-The Staff is happy to attend Board meetings to discuss points of collaboration. (The Board responded that Staff members are welcome to join a regularly scheduled Board meeting.)

-The Staff will share messages from the broader community that affect the whole organism.

-Involve Mary Jane, as administrator, on communications about issues that affect the organism.

—How does the Staff see its collective role?

Perhaps a similar document discerned, collaborated, and written would be valuable. In general, however, we have the role of planning, implementing, responding to requests, communicating, coordinating and providing, stewardship with a strong implementation aspect. There is a benefit when intention and purpose are clear—this clarity radiates a certain feel.

—Where and how might the Board and Staff work together to benefit the organism?

-Board and Staff get the report from the bimonthly Zoom gathering of Service Team Leaders. - Service Teams participated in 2017 and 2019 Conferences. More involvement of Service Teams in planning the conference would be valuable.

-The COL volunteer dimension is changing—new leadership raised up locally is bringing new people including diversity.

-The 2014 move from the “Circle of Service” was an intended movement toward equality.

-Clear points of collaboration include:

—planning intentions (already some work has been done)

—finding ways to increase diversity and inclusion

—looking at language used in the Centering Prayer Introductory Program

—Is your work a spiritually nourishing and inspiring experience?

-The consequences from working remotely emphasize the need to finding ways to connect.

-Covid creates challenges in connecting. In person conferences offer many opportunities to connect.

-We as Staff are working together more and more. Staff meetings offer sharing on the work of each other.

-In staff meetings we communicate in a non-hierarchical way.

-Staff meetings can be a deeply spiritual experience. This gathering also is a spiritual experience.

—What are COL relationships with other contemplative organizations? How are they evolving?

- Various staff have relationships with various organizations.
- Several COL staff participate with the current CAC process.
- Mary Jane as administrator engages with various “partner” organizations.
- We might renew the “Contemplative Exchange” by calling together contemplative partners.
- Colleen commented that many younger people practicing Centering Prayer connect through their own organizations rather than COL.
- The Podcast Colleen and Mark are working on may be one way to strengthen COL’s connection with these younger people who practice Centering Prayer.

2023 Budget Priorities and Planning Process

Flowing and flexible: Kathleen described the budget input process. She pointed out that this process is flowing and flexible, allowing funds to be moved from one category to another as needs shift during the financial year.

The Board indicated that part of this flexibility includes the existence of an undedicated fund to be used to support investing in the Divine Economy as unforeseen opportunities arise.

Initially Board and Staff would plan separately: The Board and Staff agreed on a two step process for drafting budget priorities. First, each group will work separately using the three 2022 Board Intentions as categories for identifying priorities for-financial resources

1. to invest in the Divine Economy
2. to serve those who are serving
3. to broaden our reach to those groups currently underrepresented

Second, the Board and Staff would meet together in November to compare budget priorities to identify areas of overlap and address differences.

Involving broader input: Matt proposed adjusting the budget process to be less hierarchical by opening it to broader input within the organism. For the 2023 budget this opening to broader input will be accomplished through a “Granting Process.” Matt, Pamela, and Kathleen will draft an initial plan for how this process will be implemented. The Board will decide the total funds available to grant in 2023 and approve the actual distribution.

Gift Committee Discussion

The Gift Committee has important accomplishments in the last two years.

1. Securing Homebound Publications as the publisher for Keating's last five books previously "self-published." Through Homebound Press these works will be more widely available. All that remains is to monitor this work to completion.
2. Many of Keating's books are no longer available in various formats. Time consuming work led to a new contract being signed with Bloomsbury that includes print, e-books and audible books, as well as translation rights, for all of Keating's books that they publish. A similar contract is now being negotiated with Lantern Publishing & Media.
3. Paul Banger, copyright attorney, is working for COL pro-bono on these contracts and other copyright and publishing issues.
4. Mary Jane is now taking the lead on next steps to encourage publishers to actually make the various formats of books available. For example the e-book of Open Mind Open Heart is scheduled for release on Oct. 27 and an audio version will be released likely by end of the year. Efforts also continue to ensure publishers are proactive in negotiating translation rights (for example right now MJ is supporting our Finnish community in negotiating translation rights to Open Mind Open Heart, including an offer to pay for these rights as needed).
5. Contemplative Outreach controls the rights to all the contents while most of the royalties are split between COL and St. Benedict's Monastery.

Going forward The Gift Committee agrees to oversee the task of exploring how to ensure the Thomas Keating archive at Emory University is complete.

—Thomas Keating archives at Emory are not easily available. COL has offered to pay for a graduate student to catalogue the archive and make the contents accessible from a website. We are hoping this person will be hired and the work completed this fall.

—Emory will make a visual exhibit to explain what the archive is and how to access it.

—The bibliography of the archive shows the archive is missing much of Keating's work. They are only cataloging what they have. At this point, the archive is mostly visual recordings.

—Every time something new is published—including translations—it must be added to the archive. Someone from COL needs to take responsibility for sending everything new to the archive.

—A healthy archive would allow scholars to study and work with all that Keating wrote and published. Unlimited spiritual insight could be gleaned from Keating's work. Each sentence holds a treasure. For example, you could make a whole book on *utmost charity*. A concordance could be created listing all of Keating's comments on specific topics like dark night, utmost charity, the human condition, etc.

—This is some of the most important work for COL. Father Thomas entrusted us with this work. This is a responsibility for the long haul. The Gift Committee could lead the process. Pamela is interested in working along side the Gift Committee. Perhaps partnering with a PhD student to study a specific focus. Designating and funding someone to monitor the ongoing archive work; solicit advice from those who have used Keating's work (Frenette, Bourgault, Kess Frey, etc.).

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Quest, secretary