

MN Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW)

Oct. 20, 2018

Peace UMC, Shoreview, MN

Meeting Minutes

PRESENT: Wilma Joan Roberts, Sandy Meyer, Mary Gwen-Lenth, Rennae Petersen, Cindy Saufferer, Susan Clark Harris, Cindy Tidball, Joyce Prudden, Nancy Novak, Betty Larson, Rev. Debra Jene Collum, Co-Chair, Faye Christensen, Co-Chair

DEVOTIONS: Cindy Saufferer read from the book, "An Alter in the World" by Barbara Brown Taylor. The group sang all 6 verses of "For Everyone Born" with Dave Tidball at the piano.

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Re-Imagining's 25th Anniversary (1993 – 2018) has been celebrated throughout 2018:

<http://re-imaginingcommunity.org/> for more information about these events

- Nov. 5, 2017: "Re-Imagining---Bringing the Fire Forward" @ Hennepin Ave. UMC
- Jan. 27, 2018: "Re-Imagining a World Without Violence" @ Plymouth Cong. Church
- March 1 – 2, 2018: "Re-Imagining: Embodiment" @ UTS
- March 19 – 20, 2018: "We're Persisting: Women's Ongoing Revitalization of Theology & Religious Studies @ UTS
- April 27 – 28, 2018: "Hearing Earth in Our Time: "Eco Womanism, African-American Women, and Earth-Honoring Faiths" @ Hamline University
- October 12 – 14, 2018: "Wisdom Ways Fall Soul Conference," @ Wisdom Ways Center for Spirituality, St. Paul
- Nov. 1 – 3, 2018: "25th Anniversary of Re-Imagining" @ Hamline University

Social Principles Feedback Sessions:

Aug. 2, '18, UMW had a feedback session regarding the Social Principles. The topic of inclusive language was brought up & Faye talked about the importance of expansive/inclusive language & suggested that an easy way to express this is to repeat "God" rather than "he"---e.g. "God saw everything that God (rather than *he*) had made,"

Church Women United:

The annual meeting of Church Women United will be held Sept. 14, 2019 at Discovery UMC, Chanhassen. Sandy M. will see if a speaker has been selected yet & if not, she will recommend Debra & Faye talk about expansive language.

MINUTES:

The minutes of the last COSROW meeting (May 30, '18) were approved by consensus.

BUDGET:

Faye reported that to date, COSROW has spent 65.25% of our budget & has a balance of \$920.93. The consensus of the group was that we will request \$2650 again this year. Our budget has remained at \$2650 for many years; however, in the past, our pre-conference speakers have been paid. This year, however, the pre-conference seminar of 2018 (#MeToo#ChruchToo) had no expenses.

NOTE: We anticipate that we will incur speakers' fees/honoraria for our 2019 pre-conference seminar.

MN UMW now has a Language Coordinator, Wilma Joan Roberts. Wilma is also a COSROW member. She speaks Portuguese, Spanish & English and is a retired United Methodist missionary to Brazil. In her position as Language Coordinator, she will be working with U. Methodist women in churches throughout MN with the objective being to encourage minority &

ethnic voices to be heard. The consensus of the COSROW members is to give \$450 to the MN UMW for the work of the Language Coordinator in supporting women of color. COSROW will also send \$100 to the Women's Consortium for their work with ethnic minority women.

COSROW DISPLAY:

Rennae stated that she has divided up the materials in the COSROW display so that each of the 5 districts will be able to take a COSROW display and materials to their meetings. The president of each district has been given the materials to give to one of their district officers. Rennae will request 55 copies of GCSRW's #MeToo materials for the displays.

MONITORING:

Susan distributed Clergy Demographics from the MN Conference Journals of 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. The data show that women are increasing in positions of both part-time and full-time local pastors.

PROPHETIC IMAGINATION:

Rev. Debra reported about a retreat she attended in Sept., entitled "Prophetic Imagination" at Erik's Retreat in the Twin Cities. Her expenses were \$250 which COSROW approved to pay.

PRE-CONFERENCE SEMINAR POSSIBILITIES:

1. Muslim women as our neighbors – Rennae P., Cindy S., Linda K. & Faye C. will be a team to work on putting this together.
2. DO NO HARM – Debra & 4 others from the MN Annual Conference attended this Train-The-Trainer workshop in San Antonio, TX, last weekend. It is a possible pre-conference seminar. The team of 5 will be getting together soon to discuss what their next steps might be.

19TH AMENDMENT:

Linda K. was not present but sent a handout regarding the 19th Amendment. 2020 will be celebrated as its 100th anniversary. How about if the GCSRW display at the 2020 General Conference in Minneapolis celebrated it in some way? Faye will talk with Dawn Hare about this possibility.

2020 GENERAL CONFERENCE:

- Endorsement: MN COSROW endorsed Cindy Saufferer for lay delegate to General Conference in 2020.
 - GCSRW Display: 19th Amendment? See above.
 - GCSRW workshops?
1. Park Square Theater is doing a play featuring Susan B. Anthony and other suffragettes. Is there a possibility that this play would be appropriate for a Gen. Conference workshop? Nancy Novak will check on this. (UPDATE: The play is going on right now. Cindy T. sent information about it: There are 2 actors in "Agitators" who portray Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglas. Excellent reviews in the Star Tribune. Faye wrote to Dawn Hare, Exec. Director of GCSRW, to ask if GCSRW might be interested in having a replay of "Agitators" as a workshop at the 2020 General Conference to celebrate the 100th year of the 19th Amendment).
 2. Julia Mann did a short workshop on growing up in a biracial family. She presents this topic through dance, singing & narration. She then answers questions. 'Very thought-provoking & entertaining.
 3. "Images of God" by Kay Schroeder Hacklander. Three years ago at COSROW's pre-conference seminar, Kay was asked about the possibility of performing this at a General Conference workshop. At the time, Kay was excited about the possibility and was going to

check with others. If GCSRW is interested in this as a workshop, we will need to followup with Kay.

ERA UPDATE:

Faye led a discussion about the fact that the ERA is still an issue after all of these 40+ years. The ERA was passed by Congress in 1972 & sent to the states for ratification. In order to be added to the Constitution, it needed approval by legislatures in $\frac{3}{4}$ (38) of the 50 states. In 1977, the legislatures of 35 states had approved the amendment. In 1978, Congress voted to extend the original deadline to 1982; however, no additional states voted yes before that date & the ERA fell 3 states short of ratification. Then, recently, a resurgence of the ERA has taken place: Nevada became the 36th state to ratify (March 22, 2017---45 years to the day after Congress passed the ERA) & on May 30, 2018 Illinois became the 37th state. ERA bills have been introduced in the legislatures of AZ, FL, NC, UT & VA.

STATEMENT ON SEXUAL ASSAULT & ABUSE:

- Bishop Ough's statement on sexual assault & abuse: Oct. 1,'18. This statement was in response to the much-publicized & watched Dr. Christine Blasey Ford's compelling testimony about Judge (now Justice) Brett Kavanaugh. Bishop Ough's words were powerful & compassionate. As Co-Chair of COSROW, Faye sent an email thanking him for shining a spotlight on this critical issue which is all too often draped in silence.

EXPANDING LANGUAGE:

- Rev. Cindy Gregorson wrote an article entitled, "Social Media and the Story We Are Telling the World" in the MN AC Connect. This was written in reaction to a tweet regarding the closing worship at MN Annual Conference: "How is it that the MN AC has the authority to change the Apostles' Creed?" Cindy's answer focused on the millennial generation & the social networking which has become such a phenomenon in our world today. Debra & Faye wrote to Cindy about 2 issues raised in our minds. They asked if there was a policy about when & how to change the wording of creeds & other liturgical elements of worship used during annual conference, since we were not aware of such a policy. The other issue raised in the article had to do with inclusive language & the importance of encouraging & teaching expansive language for God. A *letter to the editor* response to Cindy's article was also sent. The email sent to Cindy concluded with: *Please know that COSROW is willing and able to work with you and others in the annual conference when questions such as this one arise about expanding our images of God.*
- Debra will craft a resolution regarding creeds & how through the centuries they have been enhanced & changed. She will send it out to the COSROW members for input.

RELIGIOUS COALITION FOR REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE:

Joyce Prudden, COSROW's representative to RCRC, reported that she has been in contact with National RCRC for their new brochures (they will be sent to us for the COSROW display). RCRC was started many years ago by a diverse clergy group representing both Jewish & Christian denominations. *The RCRC is a broad-based, national, interfaith movement that brings the moral force of religion to protect and advance reproductive health, choice, rights & justice through education, prophetic witness, pastoral presence and advocacy* [RCRC 2018 brochure]. Joyce said that there are a couple of annual conferences which have passed resolutions regarding their support of RCRC. Upon talking with them & the MN RCRC, it was decided to wait at least until after the special general conference at the end of Feb. before considering putting forth a resolution supporting RCRC. The MN RCRC received a very generous gift from someone they didn't know. The RCRC board is in need of new members. If you know of a clergy member who is solidly pro-choice & may be interested in RCRC, let Joyce know.

DO NO HARM:

The DO NO HARM train-the-trainer seminar was held in San Antonio, TX, Oct. 11 – 13. The seminar was sponsored by the GCSRW Sexual Ethics Task Force. About 250 international people attended. Debra Collum attended as COSROW's representative. We are grateful to the Golden Cross grant of \$500 which we received to make it possible for her to attend, along with MN COSROW funds. Four other women appointed & paid for by the MN annual conference were sent. This made a team of FIVE from MN! Cynthia Williams, D.S., one of the team, will be getting the team together soon to discuss their next steps. The seminar participants were divided into these working groups:

1. Boundaries Training
2. Response Teams
3. Supporting Alleged Perpetrators & Victims
4. Administrative Process---i.e. What to do with complaints?

ENDING DEVOTIONS:

Cindy S. read "The Lord's Prayer" which was translated by Robert Batm and Annie McGregor from the Aramaic language which Jesus spoke. It is found in the book "An Alter in the World" by Barbara Brown Taylor. It begins with "O Birther, Creator..." Words which are very feminine.

COSROW Purpose

¶ 644. There shall be in each annual conference, including the central conferences, a conference commission on the status and role of women or other structure to provide for these functions and maintain the connectional relationships.

1. The responsibility of this commission shall be in harmony with the responsibility of the general commission (see ¶ 2103), with the following objectives established as guidelines for adaptation to the needs of the respective annual conferences:

- a) To be informed about the status and role of all women in the total life of the conference. Data shall be gathered that relate to all structural levels of the conference, including the local church. Such information will be regularly updated and disseminated.
- b) To initiate cooperation with United Methodist Women at the annual conference level and other levels as appropriate in order to achieve full participation of women in the decision-making structures.
- c) To develop ways to inform and sensitize the leadership within the conference at all levels on issues that affect women, which shall be projected into and through all districts within the conference by the commission.
- d) To focus on major priorities of issues related to women, which may include sexual harassment policies and procedures, and to enlist the support of the bishop, cabinet, and conference staff in policies, plans, and practices related to those priorities.
- e) To advise the general commission about the progress and effectiveness of efforts to achieve full participation of women in the life of the Church.
- f) To participate in connectional programs and plans initiated or recommended by the general commission, and to utilize the resources available from the general commission as needed.

United Methodist Publishing House (2013-01-01). *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2012* (Kindle Locations 9540-9554). United Methodist Publishing House. Kindle Edition.