Minutes of the CSL Chapter

Saturday September 19, 2020

* Meeting was opened with a greeting by Abbot David, and prayer and remarks by our Bishop Visitor, the Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe.
* Abbot David explained how voting would operate using the chat function in Zoom.
* Annual Reports
  + Communications: Sr. Suzanna Margaret could not attend at the last minute due to a work issue but submitted a written report to Abbot David. He also highlighted other communications activities. Text of report is attached.
    - 3 newsletters were produced. Need assistance with articles and editing if it is to continue.
    - Tri-fold brochure was revised a couple of times due to membership changes.
    - Postcard was created.
    - Br. Florian reconfigured our email list and provided significant assistance with technology issues.
    - Sister recommends finding an alternate form of mass distribution because SimpleLists has size limits.
    - Need help keeping presence on Facebook, both public and private pages.
    - Abbot noted that the website continues to undergo updates and improvements.
  + Finance: Sr. Toni distributed a written report prior to the meeting via email. See report at end of minutes and PDF attachments of statements of financial position and accounts.
    - Gratitude was expressed to the Finance Committee, Sr. Toni, Br. Florian and Fr. Kamm for hours of searching for and through documents.
    - Some income/expenses are matters of timing such as background check fees—new member pays community in the spring, but community may not get the bill until the next fiscal year.
    - Called for volunteers for future vacancies on the Finance Committee.
  + Prior: Sr. Martha submitted a written report highlighting some of her projects and activities since May 2019. Report is included.
  + Abbot: Abbot David read a written report, the text is included in these minutes. Some highlights:
    - Sr. Joanna accepted appointment as Dean of Formation.
    - Br. James Rafael accepted appointment as Director of Oblates.
    - Would like to form a Communications Committee of 4-5 people to handle all aspects of communications and social media presence.
    - Proposing quarterly Chapter meetings, the next meeting will be in January 2021.
    - Planning a special Vespers service for the Feast of St. Luke and would like to have more such events.
  + Motion to accept all reports as presented was made by Br. Robert and seconded by Br. Stephen Frances. Motion passed
* Elections:
  + 2nd vote on proposed 2020 Constitution – motion passed.
  + Council Elections for a term 10/1/2020-6/30-2021:
    - Professed – Sr. Mary Magdalene and Br. Anskar
    - Oblates – Sr. Margaret
    - Postulants/Novices – Sr. Anah Elizabeth
* Discussions:
  + Begin quarterly Chapter meetings, next is Jan. 2021.
  + Pledge Drive – Presentation by Sr. Petra.
    - Think what community *could* become.
    - Goal is 100% participation, pledge *something* even if it is a small amount; try to equal last FY if possible, more if you are able.
    - Email Sr. Toni by 9/30/2020 with amount, frequency, etc.
  + Newsletter
    - Contributions always a struggle
    - Support to have one, just need to figure out how to put together.
    - Section suggestions included “News & Notes” about what people were doing, and book suggestions/reviews.
  + Divine Office and other services via zoom
    - Currently getting up to 12 people. How can we expand? Possibly make it a family event or do other Offices besides Vespers.
    - If additional Offices, need people to step up and lead. Contact Sr. Mary Magdalene if interested.
    - Recognition that Zoom not ideal for hearing impaired.
    - Book studies – send Sr. Mary Magdalene any suggestions.
* New Business
  + New Council stay briefly
  + Discussion about contribution to ERD toward natural disaster relief in honor of Abbot Basil. Motion to send $500 in his memory made by Sr. Martha and seconded by Sr. Anna Grace. Motion passed.

Motion to adjourn made by Sr. Martha and seconded by Br. James Rafael. Motion passed.

**Report to CSL Membership from Dean Of Communications Sr. Susanna Margaret OSB**

2019-2020

Published three newsletters with the assistance of Brother Thomas Anthony

Revised CSL brochure with updated text and photos

Produced postcard for CSL

Technology for community gatherings is handled by Br. Joseph Florian

Simplelists is managed by Br. Joseph Florian

2020-2021

Brochure will need to be updated again with graphics and photos which may be a challenge since we have not met in person for some time.

Alternative methods for mass distribution of the newsletter and community information/updates in place of Simplelists need to be considered. Simplelists is not reaching everyone on our distribution list and has size limitations.

Consideration should be given whether we want to continue with the newsletter, how many times a year and optimum publication dates.

Solicit additional people to assist with posting content and monitoring responses to the CSL private and public FB pages

Work with Abbot to update CSL webpage for content and links

**Dean of Finance  
Financial Report  
Fiscal Year 2019-2020**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With one exception, the financial situation of the community has changed relatively little over the last year, despite the changes in the world around us. We have been blessed with a knowledgeable group on the Finance Committee making decisions, developing policies and managing investments. I would like to recognize Brother Gregory, Sister Petra, Brother Robert and Sister Mary Magdalene for their work and contributions.

Attached is the year-end report for the fiscal year July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. Regular income was steady but expenses were lower since there was not Convocation in May. One big accomplishment of the past year has been the reinstatement of the community as a tax exempt organization with the IRS. Please thank Brother Joseph Florian and Brother Steven Joseph for their work in finding historical documents that allowed us to satisfy the IRS.

We experienced additional income in FY 2019-2020 from the generous gift left to the community by Brother Basil, our former Abbot, after his death on March 3, 2019. The community was named as a beneficiary on an annuity and a stock account and the total of the inheritance was $114,360. In the coming year, consideration will be given on the best way to use this gift and further the mission of CSL.

The budget for 2020-2021 is also attached. The Finance Committee wanted to develop a balanced budget and in order to do so, it will be necessary for members attending Convocation to pay half the costs with the understanding that there is a discretionary fund to help those who cannot pay half. Please see attached the statement regarding this policy change.

Going forward, members will have the opportunity to pledge their financial contribution for the remainder of 2020-21 with an emphasis on every member pledging some amount, no matter how small. It is important that every member have this sense of truly being part of the community.

The Finance Committee is also hoping that the community will begin a process of planning for the future of CSL. We are blessed to have financial security at this time so our operating budget is covered and it is time to consider how we can better serve our Brothers and Sisters in the community, our home churches and our brothers and sisters in the wider world.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **BUDGET VERSUS ACTUAL** |  |  |  |
| **FY 2019-2020** |  |  |  |
|  | **FULL YEAR** |  | **Draft Budget** |
|  | **BUDGET** | **ACTUAL** | **2020-21** |
|  |  |  |  |
| Pledges | 28,755.00 | 24,614.00 | 23,500.00 |
| Interest Income | 500.00 | 150.91 | 200.00 |
| Other Income |  | 74,225.14 |  |
| **TOTAL INCOME** | 29,255.00 | 98,990.05 | 23,700.00 |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Abbot's Discretionary Fund |  |  | 5,107.00 |
| Accounting | 2,000.00 | 282.40 | 500.00 |
| Administration | 250.00 | 405.29 | 450.00 |
| Background checks | 100.00 |  | N/A |
| Chaplain Expenses | - | 299.28 | 750.00 |
| Communications | 5,000.00 | 910.73 | 1,000.00 |
| Convocation expenses | 19,450.00 | 5,285.89 | 9,750.00 |
| NAECC Dues | 150.00 |  | N/A |
| Education | 1,000.00 |  | 500.00 |
| Gifts & Donations | 1,050.00 | 250.00 | 1,050.00 |
| Habits | 900.00 | 658.66 | 900.00 |
| Liability Insurance | 700.00 | 730.00 | 730.00 |
| Member Support | 700.00 | (48.00) | N/A |
| Taxes | 13.00 |  | 13.00 |
| Member Travel | 4,000.00 | 737.00 | N/A |
| NAECC | 1,800.00 | (105.00) | 1,950.00 |
| Superior travel | 2,500.00 |  | 1,000.00 |
| **TOTAL EXPENSES** | 39,613.00 | 9,406.25 | 23,700.00 |
|  |  |  |  |
| **NET INCOME(LOSS)** | (10,358.00) | 89,583.80 | - |
|  | Less: Bequest | 74,225.14 |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | Operating Income(Loss) | 15,358.66 |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Prior’s Report**

**May 2019-September 2020**

What follows is a brief summary of some of the projects I have undertaken and/or activities engaged in since my appointment last year.

Terminology – I agree with Abbot David that gender-based titles are not as significant as they once were, so going forward my title will be Prior. It does not change my role.

Activities – In 2019-2020 I supported 3 members in initial formation. I also participated as a member of Council and served as Clerk of Council.

Leave of Absence – In May 2020 I was named a Postulant for the Priesthood in the Diocese of Kansas. At that time, I requested and was granted a 6-month Leave of Absence so I could focus on my studies and get back in the swing of academia. I returned briefly in August to assist when Abbot David needed an unexpected month away. I will be resuming my LOA after this meeting and will return in January 2021.

Projects looking forward – Abbot David and I have discussed the following projects for 2021. All 3 were previously approved but put on hold in June. Volunteers will be sought for the 2 working groups after the first of the year.

* Beginning in January 2021, members in Annual Vows will send me their twice-yearly reports. I will also be their point of contact within the community for general questions and concerns that cannot be answered by their subject matter experts.
* A working group of no more than 5 members will be formed to review and possibly revamp our concept of Oblation and their valuable role within our community. I would like to have at least 2 current Oblates as part of this group.
* A working group of no more than 5 members, both vowed and Oblate, will be formed to review and possibly recommend revisions to our *Rituale* (booklet of transition rites)

Convocation – Assuming we are able to resume some type of regional or National/International in-person gatherings in 2021, I will continue to be the primary coordinator. I will be looking for assistance with some of the administrative tasks and will seek volunteers as those situations arise.

My Dear Brothers and Sisters, welcome to the CSL 2020 Chapter meeting. St. Benedict in his Rule directs that Chapter meetings of the whole community occur regularly to discuss, plan, and offer guidance to the Superior on the work and business of the community. This is an opportunity for all members, including our newest members to participate in discussions and ask questions of the leadership team and offer ideas for related to our future work.

During these past sixteen months of my tenure as your Superior a lot has happened that I’d like to review with you now:

* At the May 2019 Convocation we welcomed JoAnn Horton (now Sr. Cecilia), Holly Puckett (now Sr. Petra) as Postulants. In July 2020 they were named as Novices. We also welcomed Derin Kyle as a Postulant and he will be named very soon. Jeffrey Kasica was welcomed as a Novice-Oblate and is in his 2 year formation program.
* In the fall of 2019, The Right Reverend “Bill” Franklin notified me that he could not stand for re-election as our Bishop Visitor due to his work with the diocese of Long Island. In January 2020 The Right Reverend Alan Scarfe was elected to be our Bishop Visitor. WELCOME!
* This spring, Sr. Mary Magdalene and I began offering Vespers three evenings a week. This has been well received and will continue.
* In July we had our first community wide Vespers service that formally welcomed Marie Hughes as a postulant, Annual renewal of profession for members was accepted, Oblates renewed their promises and novices were named. This was followed by a virtual party. A good time was had by all!
* In January we began the process of recertifying each member in the safe church training program. This is a requirement of TEC House of Bishop’s Committee on Religious Orders. Because we are an international dispersed community, with members in various dioceses using different agencies to train people in churches, and because of the detailed records that are not shared between churches or dioceses; we have to require each CSL member take our program, even if this means a person has to take the course twice. To date, many brothers and sisters have not taken our free on-line course. You will be contacted directly to resolve this issue.
* Sr. Toni and our accountants completed the very large submission to the IRS for our non-profit religious organization. This was accepted and our IRS status as a non-profit has been established. This effort represents years of work and research by many members lead by Sr. Toni, for which I and all members offer a huge THANK YOU.
* The Finance committee, lead by Sister Toni created a financial structure that uses the tools for proper management of our finances. This includes using standard accounting and financial practices and regular financial reviews by an outside accounting firm. They are working to have the community live within our income, yet will be flexible to meet unexpected needs and plan for the future.
* A working group within council was created to review and update our Safe Community (Church) policy to conform with 2019 TEC recommendations. Sr. Julian reviewed the document and it was completed and distributed to the community in early 2020.
* A working group was created to review and update our constitution and customary that was about 8 years old and not reflective of who we are and how we work in 2020. Sr. Julian, Br. Robert, Br. Steven Joseph and myself made up the group. Sr. Julian spear-headed the group and her leadership and editorial efforts allowed us to complete the updates by March 2020. I approved the customary and the constitution will be up for the necessary second vote today. These documents will be distributed to the community by the end of the month. Thank you Sr. Julian for all your work!
* Sr. Martha has worked hard to schedule and plan our convocations. Unfortunately, COVID-19 changed these plans for 2020. It is not clear what will 2021 will be like, but she will continue to work on this as we learn more about the course of the disease, Conception Abbey’s plan and other factors.
* Sr. Kate did an excellent job working with our Formation Guides and managing our extensive formation program to be responsive to the needs and situations of all members in formation. However, she has prayerfully felt that God has plans for her beyond CSL, so she requested separation, which I granted. She will be missed.
* Sr. Joanna has accepted my appointment to assume the role of Dean of Formation effective October 1. Also, Br. James Rafael is now the Director of Oblation and will be working with Sr. Joanna.

Looking ahead for the rest of 2020 and 2021, I see it as a period of restructuring and rebuilding. This is caused in part by COVID-19; but, I have read that for many organizations, such as Lions clubs and other service organizations and even churches, 80% of the work is done by 20% of the membership. We are not a service organization we are a religious community whose Rule directs that all members should be involved in the work of the community. A community such as ours presents a level of complexity not foreseen by St. Benedict. However, I really want to expand the base of members doing the work that strengthens and binds us as a Benedictine community. To repeat an old saying: “Many hands make for light work”.

* We need to expand the finance committee by one. This is necessary because I want to have a full audit of our finances in Q1 of FY 2020-21 and this will take planning included creating a financial reserve to cover the cost. We have never had one done before so it is due.
* I want to have a communication committee of 4-5 members formed. This committee will assist the Dean of Communications in managing our digital communications (Facebook, websites, the LIST\_SERV, etc.). If a newsletter is recommended by Chapter, a person on the committee should be selected it’s editor to recruit content from members, and deliver it to Br. Thomas Anthony for layout and another to manage distribution. Other work could include advertising (not necessarily for recruitment but to inform the greater church about us), and our tri-fold for church track racks.
* Sr. Mary Magdalene will be discussing later in this meeting on our need to have 2-3 people lead our Vespers service and solicit your ideas about this community prayer opportunity so more people can participate.
* I will propose that we have Chapter meetings more often, so that the community will have more of an opportunity to contribute their thoughts and ideas on our work.
* I want to have more virtual community wide services, so I need to hear your thoughts on how to do this.

I want to emphasize that St. Benedict teaches that even the newest member can contribute to this work. So please prayerfully consider how each of you can help.

Thank you,

Abbot David