**Minutes of the PAX Community**

**General Meeting of June 4, 2023**

The meeting opened with a prayer at 10:50 A.M.

It was noted that the minutes of the last General Meeting on October 23, 2022 are posted on the PAX website

**There was a general discussion of the PAX liturgy schedule and format.**

* Mary Linda noted that the hybrid liturgies were much better in recent months due to technology improvements. She recommended that those members who are in person at hybrid liturgies should come on camera at some point to wave and interact with those participating by Zoom. Stephanie seconded that recommendation and said that such a gesture really makes the Zoom participants feel included. Marian agreed and Myrtle indicated that it would be helpful to know which camera would be best for such interactions. Mike said that there was only one camera and that the tech coordinator could facilitate the interaction. He recommended that Zoom participants respond to the liturgy at an early stage to remind those present in person to think about the Zoom participants.
* Mafalda indicated that the current Zoom/hybrid schedule seemed great. She asked whether the schedule was overly burdensome for the tech coordinators. Rhonda pointed out that for Zoom only liturgies, the bulk of the work is completed before the liturgy, whereas for hybrid liturgies the bulk of the work takes place on the morning of the liturgy. She said that she is perfectly happy with the current schedule. Amanda also said that the hybrid format took the tech coordinator’s time during the liturgy, but that Zoom liturgies took hours of work in advance. Mike noted that the job of the hybrid tech coordinator is more manageable now in comparison to what it required 6 months ago. He encouraged liturgy planners to take more responsibility for some of the planning activities that are sometimes left for the tech coordinators, such as preparing the Mass Sheet and finding visuals. Ann B. noted that in the past there were members who volunteered to help planning teams by preparing the Mass Sheet. Nellie suggested that a “library” of visuals with embedded music be created. Mike and Rhonda indicated that embedding the music in a slide is an easy procedure. Mike noted that having the Mass Sheet at an early stage is a critical factor for tech coordinators. He also urged mass planners to take a more active role in identifying visual images they would like to use. Catherine suggested that some elements such as individual Prayers of the Faithful could be inserted in the Zoom “chat” and then read out loud to ensure they are understood. Mary Linda noted that it was helpful to get planning materials to the tech coordinator in enough time to prepare the presentation. Stephanie pointed out the “Visual Resources” section of the planning section of the PAX website.
* Anne K. Said that though there may be some desire for more hybrid liturgies, a benefit to keeping our current schedule was that it relieved some pressure to have a sufficient number of ordained priests for additional hybrid Masses. She noted that we are likely to have a shortage of priests soon, and it was good that we had Zoom liturgies which provided more flexibility for celebrants.
* Marian discussed the “obligations” of PAX members to plan liturgies. She noted the best spirituality of PAX is in liturgy planning. She recommended that every PAX member consider making a commitment to plan a liturgy at least once per quarter. She also said that “signing up” for planning should be far enough in advance to give a two week period for the planning meeting with the presider. She said that virtual participation in planning was encouraged and that being remote was no barrier to planning—including a planning team composed entirely of remote planners. The Mass Planning Calendar on the PAX website identifies planning opportunities. To sign up to plan, contact Marian who will update the calendar. Mike noted that planners are welcome even if they may be unable to attend the actual liturgy.

**Membership Concerns**

* Anne K. said that in the face of a shrinking and aging membership she was very concerned about the future of PAX. She challenged us to think about PAX 10 or 20 years out and indicated that to survive, new members would have to be brought into the Community. Ann B. noted that Sylvia had forwarded to her an email from the NOVA Community regarding the process they were undertaking to address these same issues. The NOVA process has identified two differing opinions about how to address the concerns—one, undertake to expand the community by joining with or reaching out to like-minded or sympathetic groups, or two, by focusing on providing for the spiritual and community needs of the existing members. NOVA has indicated it will continue its discernment process going forward. Sylvia raised the question of PAX’s vision and how we act in the world that has changed since its founding. She questioned how PAX might “fit” in this changing world. She held up the NOVA process as something PAX could consider. Stephanie noted that she had a somewhat different perspective. She pointed out that 5 years ago no one would have anticipated the pandemic and how it would impact our community by introducing the widespread use of technology to bring together members from far away states and foreign countries. She noted that the religious women with whom she worked for many years faced reducing membership. They determined that they could not tell how they would look in 5 years, but they knew it would be different and they would evolve. Ann B. suggested that the Steering Committee seek input from the Community regarding these issues.
* Mike noted that while PAX has been enriched by Zoom connections, it has also lost some of its character as a physically connected community. PAX has not had in-person meetings, home masses and the like for some time. Mary Lou noted that the lack of physical connections was more prevalent in other modern day contexts as well. Our families and our culture especially among the younger generations is less focused on physical contact generally.

**Website**

* Stephanie gave a report on the PAX website. She noted that in addition to the website resources for PAX members, there was also an external component of the website available to non-members. She said that the site had been enhanced to contain pictures that had been submitted by PAX members to reflect the various activities of PAX members, and she encouraged members to submit more pictures of both historical and new images of PAX activities. She reminded the Community that the current members of the Website Committee are: Stephanie, Paula, Mary Lou and Sylvia. Stephanie pointed to the recent posting of PAX’s Synod report on the external/public facing section of the website as being a very significant step for the Community. She also noted the section of the members only site conceived by Nellie called “Look for the Helpers: Stories of Service.” She suggested that others consider sharing their story by submitting a “Story” to Nellie.

**Celebrants**

* Anne K. reported on her efforts to find new priests and asked the Community to help identify new potential priests for PAX. She reported on contacts with potential priests who declined because they had already committed to another group (i.e. NOVA). Sylvia suggested that PAX consider a new model of leadership that was not tied to ordained priests. Ann B. noted that some of our current celebrants expressed concern about the potential loss of faculties if PAX were to have a Mass celebrated by a presider whose ordination was not recognized by the Arlington Diocese.

**Outreach Liturgies**

* Mary Linda Reported that as the outreach coordinator she was exploring different approaches to outreach liturgies. She indicated that Pastor Gibson was scheduled as the outreach celebrant for July 16. Mary Linda signed up for the planning team for that Sunday to provide some sense of how outreach liturgies are conducted. She also said that in December we have a Rabbi assigned for an outreach liturgy. She noted that it seemed appropriate to have a Rabbi during Advent, a time of waiting. Based on a suggestion from Molly, we are planning for an outreach liturgy in September with the Pastor from Good Shephard United Methodist Church in Dale City. The liturgy will utilize the lectionaries from both denominations. Mary Linda also reached out to Christ Crossman Methodist Church with whom we previously collaborated. However, their community is currently a bit overwhelmed and not in a position to plan a shared liturgy at this time. Mary Linda is also looking into a Women’s Catholic Priest organization in Baltimore for an outreach liturgy. She solicited additional recommendations from the Community, and indicated that she is exploring the use/exchange of worship space for some outreach Sundays.

**Food for Others/Benjamin Family**

* Ann B. reported on the Food for Others program. She said that although PAX is trying to spend the program donations, the funds keep “piling up.” She said that recently she has been donating funds for grocery cards for the Arlington Free Clinic. A $500 donation was also sent to Global Shout to support the local re-settled Afghan community. She has also contacted refugee relief organizations to determine whether to provide food donations to them. We are also still providing more limited support to the Randolph Elementary School Food Panty in the form of grocery cards and requested goods (paper products, toiletries, etc.)
* Ann B. also reported on the Benjamin Family which has been a long term recipient of PAX funds designated by contributors specifically for them. She stated that she received an update on the family from Claire and that she would make that update available in the weekly PAX announcements. She said that the family’s biggest current need in addition to continued pledged support for their house payment, was to accumulate enough funds to make a down payment on the purchase of a used car.

**Financial Report**

* Carl gave the Treasurer’s report. He stated that the Community was in good financial condition. The Community has approximately $31,000 in its accounts, approximately $20,000 of which is earmarked for specific programs. We have approximately $10,000 in general funds available for operating expenses such as celebrant stipends and rent. He suggested that the Social Needs Disbursement Committee plan to meet in late summer or fall to determine worthy organizations for PAX to provide support. He also noted a high balance in the Syrian Family program, and will follow up with Marian on that.

**Recording Liturgies/Communion Distribution/Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE)/Covid**

* Doug reported that the Steering Committee has considered the inquiries of some members regarding recording PAX liturgies. The Steering Committee was concerned about whether recording might cause some of our celebrants or members to be less willing to talk freely about certain issues, and also whether it might raise privacy concerns among members. The Steering Committee also questioned the usefulness of recordings as a general practice. It was noted that some celebrations such as memorial services could be recorded for those unable to attend. He also reported that Communion distributors were utilizing a method for distribution of bread that minimized potential spread of germs and viruses. Doug reported that Sylvia had brought to his attention Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE). Doug indicated that a link to the website for VOICE would be disseminated to the Community for consideration of PAX’s membership (https://voice-iaf.org/). Doug and Stephanie reported on a NOVA member’s recent concern about potentially infecting NOVA members with Covid. It was pointed out that members who are sick should not attend in person liturgies and if there is any concern they should wear masks.

**Miscellaneous**

* Marian thanked the Steering Committee for holding the General Meeting.
* Bob suggested that a brief summary of the Stories of Service be provided on a periodic basis.
* Marian noted that she puts many links to the website in the announcements, and she encouraged the Community to utilize the website.
* Marian also requested that members look at the list of prayer requests contained in the announcements and to advise her if any of the requests could be removed.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10.