

Coordinator's 2021 Report to the GEMN Membership

Molly O'Brien, GEMN Interim Coordinator

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Greetings to all GEMN members! Whether you have been a member for many years or just joined yesterday, we're so glad you are here! You will have just heard in our President's Report from Titus Presler about the general landscape of global mission and how all of us are trying to find our footing anew after a year of profound change. Work has changed, church has changed, our personal lives have changed, and so of course, GEMN has changed too.

We need not fear change, though. As Titus noted, these changes have included blessings as well as challenges. In the face of many unknowns, GEMN has taken a few daring steps in the past year, and you, our members, have been right there with us. Thank you for that. Here are just a few of the ways that our membership has been right there with and for GEMN in the face of unknowns:

1. When we had to cancel our conference one year ago in the early days of the pandemic, the response was overwhelmingly positive and understanding. And here we are, one year later, with a record-breaking 150 registrants for our first-ever online conference. Our speakers and attendees come from at least ten (10) different countries, and no one had to get on a plane to be here. We expanded our reach while reducing our carbon footprint, which is important given the Creation Care theme of this year's conference.
2. Even when circumstances prevented us from doing as thorough a fall membership drive as we usually do, our existing members have renewed their support and new memberships have come in steadily in the first 4 months of the year. About 30 dioceses, 20 organizations, over 100 individuals and several seminaries hold membership in the network. Of those, 20 individual members, at least one organization and one seminary are new members since January.
3. When our executive director Karen took a leave of absence and then stepped down, and then when I took on the Interim Coordinator role in February, words of support and encouragement came pouring in, both for Karen and for me. Karen contributed so much to this organization, and I appreciate the grace you have all extended to me as I stepped into this role and tried to get up to speed as quickly as possible.
4. In this period of transition, the GEMN board has stepped up in big ways to take an active role in membership management, finances, conference planning, continuing the Mission Formation Program, planning more Mission Thursdays talks (after their

successful launch in the fall) and listening and discerning for the next brave step we might take together. The board is guided by the Executive Committee that monitors the work and plans the board meetings. The Staffing Committee will guide the board in the important work of creating a plan for the level and type of staffing that will best allow GEMN to serve our membership and “ignite, inspire, and proclaim the joy of God’s mission,” as our tagline says.

5. GEMN’s Bylaws are in the process of revision with the leadership of Martha Alexander. The revision will reflect the current types of membership and the current ways in which the Board and the network operate.
6. ‘Desired Future State of GEMN in 2021’, a one-page planning document developed in 2016 and revised twice since then, continues to guide the GEMN Board. At its 1 ½-day online meeting in September the Board assessed our progress and refined our priorities in light of the pandemic. We are moving forward joyfully during a challenging time when God is calling us to intensify our commitment to participating in God’s multi-faceted mission in the world today.

In summary, membership is steady and growing, the board is engaged, and we are embracing the uncertainty of the ongoing pandemic with a curiosity about what God is “up to” in our world and the courage to try different things as we figure it out together. The African concept of *ubuntu* is often understood as “I am because we are.” I would like to alter that just slightly to say that “GEMN is, because YOU are.” Thank you, Gracias, asante.