

The Cluster Walk



Newsletter of the Komo Kulshan Cluster - an ecumenical partnership in the Skagit County between Christ Episcopal Anacortes, Celebration Lutheran Anacortes, St. James Episcopal Sedro-Woolley, La Iglesia Episcopal de la Resurrección, and St. Paul's Episcopal Mount Vernon.

June 2011

Changes on the Way

*Betty Anne McCoy
Cluster Council Chair*

The winds of change are blowing through the Cluster and as we heard in this Sunday's lessons the Holy Spirit is present – we can listen for and feel guidance as we enter this new phase of the Komo Kulshan Cluster. Your representatives gathered at the Cluster Council Meeting and I am assured that the Spirit is moving among us, we are strong and supportive of each other and we have a process outline to choose your future staff as openings come up.

We have the strong support and experience of the Diocese and the Synod in the persons of Rev. Joan Anthony and Jan Nesse. Joan was with us at our meeting and guess what, they have done all of this before. Admittedly, the Cluster represents certain challenges, but we have a broad body of people and gifts to draw from. We will work together to develop our mutual profile that will include our differences. We will select a Call Committee from all of you.

We have grown so much from the original vision set out by Tim Sexton in the late 1990's. The Cluster has been a saving grace in allowing our small congregations to have broader staffing with a variety of gifts that is normally only available in a large, wealthy congregation. We have each had our struggles in a variety of ways and the Cluster has been there to back us both financially and in spirit, to carry us through.

You have your Senior Warden and an additional representative on the Council and at our meetings; We have Terry and Vicki, Jo and Robin committed to guide us. Give them your input and ask them your questions as we move forward in this new direction. Feel the wind, and

listen for the Spirit. We can be confident with God at our back.



Christ Church at their outdoor worship

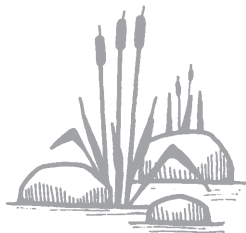
Vicki Wesen's Plans

The Rev. Vicki Wesen

I can't believe that this is my 10th year with the Cluster. I will finally fully retire between Christmas and Mid-Lent. I have a baby-sitting gig in Athens Greece during Holy Week and Easter Week 2012 that I can't refuse. Some of you know that I have leased an office in downtown Mount Vernon where I hope to offer Spiritual Direction. I have the Bishop's approval to do so. I have assured him that I will not do Spiritual Direction for anyone associated with the Cluster for at least 3 years. I am hoping to begin this work early in 2012.

Serving the Cluster has been a wonderful adventure. As a new priest serving 3 tiny congregations in rural North Carolina, I watched these churches struggle to each 'buy' a piece of my time. All of their resources went to supporting a priest and keeping up their buildings. They had nothing left money wise or energy wise to engage in ministry. I knew there had to be a better way to be church. I served the churches of Warren County for 7 years and then joined the Diocesan staff in Raleigh. Part of my responsibility was to help congregations become stronger and more fully engaged in ministry. I learned about the Cluster model and helped several groups of churches begin partnerships by sharing resources. About that time I heard about the Cluster forming in Skagit County. Tim Sexton invited me to join the Cluster staff. The summer of 2000 I resigned from the Diocesan staff, sold my house and with my son, Brian, our dog, Jake, and our cat drove across the country. I have never looked back.

Terry and I have worked together now for almost 8 years. It has been a great adventure watching your leadership and your partnership develop. I am immensely proud of how the Cluster has developed, the quality of leadership both in the individual congregations and in the Cluster Council, and how you support and engage the ministries of each other. I am particularly moved by the spirit of kindness, generosity and genuine care that I have experienced among you. I have learned so much from you and will take that with me in my new adventures.



What is Terry Up to?

The Rev. Terry Kyllö

With Rilla taking a new call and Vicki planning for full retirement between Christmas and Mid-Lent, you might want to know what I am thinking about.

I really enjoy my current ministry in the Cluster. I spend most of my time imagining, supporting, equipping and overseeing all the baptized in their ministry. It is so gratifying to see leaders and ministries growing and developing.

As you know, I tend to think about things in pretty broad terms. I have been thinking about the future of the Lutheran and Episcopal churches for a long time. I see major challenges ahead for the church.

Some of these are external to the church:

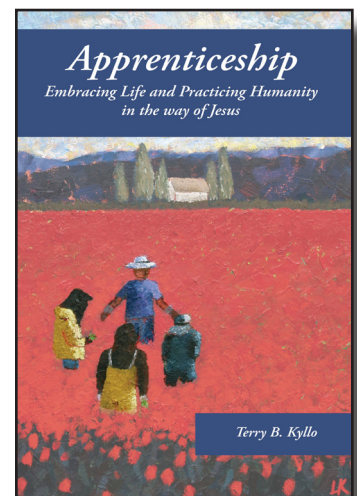
- 1) Increasing diversity of culture
- 2) Declining percentage of the population that is open to participation in a faith community
- 3) The decline of the middle class
- 4) Increased cost of energy

Some of these challenges are internal to the church:

- 1) Lack of clarity about Jesus' mission and our own
- 2) Confusion about the relationship between church and its host culture
- 3) The high costs of our congregational model which includes a building, staff, and paid clergy
- 4) Deferred maintenance on many of our facilities

Our faithful response to these and other challenges will require courage. We will need to go deeply into study of the Scripture, our traditions, and to engage our culture deeply. I think the Cluster is one interesting way that the church will be organized in the future: a partnership of congregations who support one another in ministry and whose staff is focused on supporting the baptismal ministry of all.

I have spent some of my free time these last several years working on



a new book that will come out soon. The book is my way of thinking through some of the issues I have listed above. The book is entitled: *Apprenticeship: Embracing Life and Practicing Humanity in the Way of Jesus*. It will be available in print form, audio book, and in the iPad and Kindle formats in July.

Toward the latter part of this book I outline an idea to try out an ancient form of the church: a congregation of house churches. Bishop Rickel and Bishop Boerger have encouraged me to explore this idea publicly and see where it goes. I think the idea would be a good addition to the models we currently use to organize the church. Like the Cluster, I see it as one faithful response to the challenges we face in the Episcopal and Lutheran churches.

Each clergy person in the Synod and Diocese is expected to spend a part of their time in leadership in the larger community and in the broader church. I intend to spend this time working on this house church idea. I don't know if this idea will lead anywhere, or what further ideas conversation about it might generate. I don't know if this idea will involve me as a staff person or not and I don't have a time-line if it did.

That being said, I have said for many years that the current staff the Cluster will not be around forever. This is a good and healthy thing! I think the call process to fill Vicki and Rilla's position can include some conversation about what gifts, skills, and values the next staff will need to support and lead the Cluster into the future. I intend to be a part of that process when it is healthy and good for me to do so, and to keep my hands off the process when that is needed. I feel a deep trust in the leaders of the congregations and in the Cluster. I feel a deep trust in the leadership of The Rev. Jan Nesse from the Northwest Washington Synod and The Rev. Canon Joan Anthony of the Diocese of Olympia who will guide the Cluster through the call process.

From our first days as Missioners in the Cluster in 2004 our goal was to prepare the Cluster congregations for the day when the Cluster would call clergy. Thanks to the hard work of many leaders and the support of the Diocese and Synod we now have a road map for how a call process might look like in a cluster setting. I am excited that the Cluster is really ready, in many ways, for a call process to take place. A big part of this readiness is the new Cluster organization that began in 2009. We have both excellent leaders and our Cluster-wide leadership process now has the right folks sitting around the table and honest, thoughtful conversation between congregational leaders.

All will be well!

For now I intend to be fully engaged in imagining, supporting, equipping, and overseeing all the baptized in their ministry in the Cluster. There is much to do, but it will be a joy to do it.

I look forward to my last months of ministry with

Vicki. I look forward to witnessing Rilla's journey with the people at Our Savior's Monroe. I look forward to my continued journey with you.

The future does hold many challenges and opportunities for Lutheran and Episcopal churches. It holds many challenges and opportunities for the Cluster and Cluster churches.

Even more certain, however, is that God is already preparing that future, and beckoning us to boldly step into that future in trust.

Short Term Staffing

The Rev. Terry Kylo

So we know we are going to begin a call process. This process as already begun as the Cluster Personnel Committee is beginning to organize the profile process, supported by Joan Anthony and Jan Nesse.

But how will staffing in the Cluster look like until that call process is complete?

The Cluster Council approved the following plan:

- 1) Vicki Wesen from 1/3 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) to 1/2 time for the remainder of the year.
- 2) To hire an associate clergy at 10 hours per week on a contract basis until the end of the year. The Diocese and Synod have also approved this plan. We are currently in negotiations with The Rev. Gretchen Cohan to fill this position.
- 3) To save some money for the costs associated with a call process.
- 4) To pay Rilla Barrett fully through the first 1/2 of June.

We will keep you posted as we know more.



Celebration's Holden Evening Prayer

What our Call Process Might Look Like

Herb Sanborn

Cluster Personnel Committee Chair

In November of 2010, The Rev. Joan Anthony of the Diocese of Olympia and the Rev. Jan Nesse from the Northwest Washington Synod met with the Cluster Council at our request to think through a what a search process would look like given that we are congregations who are a part of a Cluster, and that this Cluster is an ecumenical one. Jan and Joan gave us a rough outline of a search process in that meeting. They both agreed that they could work together, and together help us to lead a very good search process in the Cluster.

The Cluster Personnel Committee met in December of 2010 to take what Joan and Jan had given us and put it on paper. In January the Personnel Committee sent this document to Joan and Jan, and they have returned it to us with comments and suggestions.

Below is the outline of what a search process might look like: it was approved by the Cluster Council on June 14, 2011. Jan and Joan will be coaching us through the process and they will help us to modify this process as we go, so that we can all participate in a healthy and effective call process. This is only an outline—it is intended only to give people a sense of what will happen as the Cluster searches for new clergy.

You might ask: What is the position we are looking to fill? We intend to answer that question in the “profile” portion of the call process. In developing a profile we will be looking at our staffing needs. After consultation with the Bishop Committees, Vestries, and Leadership Teams in the Cluster, the Cluster Council will make a decision on the staffing configuration we will need to move into the future.

Call Process for the Komo Kulshan Cluster

- 1) Notify Bishops of intent to start a call process
- 2) Cluster profile development (committee composed of the Personnel Committee and Cluster Executive council will develop profile with information provided by each parish and additional information about the cluster. Diocese/Synod will be involved with the profile development. Diocese/Synod and Cluster Council will have final approval of document) (may want to use the Lutheran profile)?

- a) What is the cluster and how does it work?
- b) Section on each of the congregations.
- c) Discussion of the partnerships and shared ministries between congregations.
- d) What is the role of the clergy in the Cluster.
- e) Cluster finances.
- f) Membership numbers.
- g) Vision for the future.
- h) Current Ministries.
- i) Gifts and skills needed.
- j) Get input from congregations along the way.
- k) Revise staffing plan/model (roles and FTE levels).
- l) Proposed revised budget supporting staffing plan (including salary/benefit guidelines).
- m) When the profile is completed the Bishops will meet with the Call Committee and the vestries, bishop’s committees, leadership team and cluster council to review and comment on the profile. Then the next phase is entered.

3) Call Committee

a) A clear job description for the Call committee will be developed by Personnel committee working with Diocesan/Synod consultants who will provide resources and advice along the way with Council agreement needed on final document.

b) Expectations including time commitment, anticipated duration of the call process, access to email, conference calling, etc, will be clearly presented to committee members.

c) Two (2) members will be selected by each of the 5 congregations as representatives on the Call committee. (It is recommended that the congregational representatives to the Call committee from each of the 5 congregations not be members of the Vestries, Bishop’s Committees or Leadership team. Additionally there will be no cluster staff on the committee)

d) Selection of members will be dictated by polity of each congregation.

e) Set timeline for Cluster and congregation profile development (see section 2).

f) There should be regular communication from the Call committee to the Council and also to the various congregations.

4) Diocese, Synod, and Cluster will Post the Cluster profile on web sites.

5) Regularly update the status of the call process and progress to the congregations and to the Diocese, Synod, and Cluster web sites.

6) Call committee will receive names from Diocese and Synod

a) Review resumes and other material provided by



*Bishop Rickel at St. Paul's -
Photo: Pat Thomas*



FIESTA NAVIDEÑA at Resurreccion

candidates.

b) Reduce applicants to a select group and then ask the selected group to respond in writing to questions developed by the Call committee. The questions developed by the committee need to include questions that are ask of all candidates so that there are comparable results. (questions will be developed with involvement of Diocese/ Synod representatives and perhaps members of the Personnel or Executive committees).

7) Conduct interviews (Call committee only)

a) Could do some interviews by telephone or Skype.

b) Members of the Call committee may be chosen by the committee to visit candidates. The Call committee will need to develop a standard set of criteria so that results from visits are comparable (finance committee to include cost in budget)

c) Bring finalists to the Skagit Valley. At each stage the candidate list is reduced.

d) Review interview results with Diocese and Synod and make candidate selection.

8) Recommendation presented by Call committee to council and congregations (Each congregation will have to approve the selection to finalize the call since this is a call by the Cluster i.e. this is in the same way that we approve the Cluster budget. Final approval of the call is the purview of the Bishops).

9) Negotiations to Finalize Selection/Call – Personnel Committee/ Council Exec. Committee?

a) Salary/benefit discussion with selected candidate to finalize call

b) Fallback to secondary candidate if no agreement can be reached with first, or

c) Return to interview process if no suitable candidate identified.

10) Diocese and Synod – Post final clergy selection for congregations and public/media.

11) Thank committee(s) (Cluster Council, Call Committee, Parish Profile Committee, Diocese/Synod).

12) Celebration of new ministry (planned by Cluster Council).

Introducing Joan and Jan



The Rev. Jan Nesse has served as the Assistant to the Bishop of the Northwest Washington Synod since the year 2000, when Bishop Chris Boerger was elected. Jan works in many areas, but spends much of her time working with congregations and clergy in the search process.

You can find out more about the Northwest Washington Synod at <http://www.lutheransnw.org/>



The Rev. Canon Joan Anthony has served in the Diocese for much of the last decade. She first served as the Canon for Total Common Ministry. She has served as the Canon to the Ordinary since 2008. (The Ordinary is a term for the Bishop Diocesan.) She has many responsibilities, but she is very involved with congregations during change of clergy.

You can find out more about the Diocese of Olympia at their new website: <http://www.ecww.org/>



Celebration Members cleaning up a flower bed at the Depot Arts Center

FYI: The Cluster Memo- randum of Agree- ment

Komo Kulshan Cluster Memorandum of Agreement
Approved January, 2010

Article I – Name

The name of this organization shall be the “Komo Kulshan Cluster”, hereinafter, “the Cluster”. The chief place of business shall be Skagit County, and its office currently is at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Mt. Vernon, Washington. The Cluster term of existence shall continue until dissolved by a majority vote of the member churches.

Article II – Purpose

The purpose of this organization is to explore and develop the opportunities for shared ministry by combining resources and talents of its Member churches while remaining separate congregations, by opening our hearts to the Holy Spirit to fulfill our Baptismal vows and to grow as individuals as well as congregations.

Article III – Status

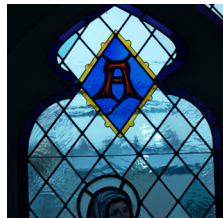
The Cluster shall maintain the status of a tax-exempt organization under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)3, and shall use its own employer identification number for all payroll, tax and other business purposes.

The formal relationship of the Cluster to the Diocese of Olympia shall be as defined by Diocesan Constitution and Canons and the Constitution of the Northwest Washington Synod.

Article IV – Membership

Section 1 Cluster membership. The members of the Komo Kulshan Cluster are: St Paul’s Episcopal, Mount Vernon; St. James’ Episcopal, Sedro-Woolley, Christ Episcopal Church, Anacortes, and Celebration Lutheran, Anacortes with La Iglesia de la Resurrección as a developing mission in the cluster.

Section 2 New members. A church may be invited to join the Cluster by unanimous vote of the Cluster churches (each church voting as one unit), and the approval of the Bishop of the Diocese of Olympia and the Bishop of the Northwest Washington Synod,



as well as the judicatory head of the entering church. Each member church shall follow its internal procedures to determine the vote of the church. When considering a church for Cluster membership, the Cluster churches shall also determine the role within the Cluster of the proposed new member’s clergy.

Section 3 Withdrawal of a member church. While a church may leave the Cluster, a withdrawing church is required to give written notice of its intent to withdraw to the Cluster Council no later than September 1, and its withdrawal shall not become effective until December 31 of the year in which notice is given. This provision is intended to provide opportunity for the other churches and the Cluster Council to adjust their budgets.

Section 4 Financial Partnership Each member church, with the exception of developing missions of the Cluster, contributes a share of its income to the Cluster. We begin with the diocesan assessment formula, except that the immediate prior year’s data shall be used, and the church’s income shall be net of the diocesan assessment for the year; i.e., net income = income reported to the diocese less the diocesan assessment or synod benevolence. From this point the amount of each church is to be negotiated in good faith in interaction between the Vestries/Leadership Team and the Cluster Council.

Section 5 Removal of a member church. By unanimous vote of the vestries of the other member churches, a member church may be asked to leave the Cluster if: (a) it has demonstrated, over a reasonable period of time, that it is not financially able to participate; or (b) it has failed to pay its assessment for other than financial reasons.

Article V - Cluster Council

Section 1 Council Members The vestry/Bishop’s Committee/Leadership Team of each Cluster member church shall select two Cluster Council Members, each to serve a two year term, and one Alternate to serve a one year term. The Alternate shall serve with voice but without vote, except when attending a meeting in the place of the regular Council Member.

Insofar as possible, the Member terms shall be staggered. One Member shall be a Sr. Warden or equivalent and one member and Alternate shall be selected from the congregation at large. The Sr. Warden Council Member shall be the team leader for the congregation’s Council Members and is responsible for reporting on Cluster activities to the vestry and congregation. It is the responsibility of each Cluster church to keep its delegation to the Council up to a full strength. A Council Member may serve no more than two consecutive terms; provided, however, a Council Member may be elected again at a later date. Developing missions of the cluster shall have one rep-

representative who will have full voice and vote on issues relating to the partnership of cluster congregations and the governance of this partnership, but not on the budget, finances, or staffing of the cluster since the mission's budget and staffing are independent of the Cluster process. Terms of service shall be as determined by the developing mission(s).

The Clergy of the Cluster, including developing mission clergy, may participate in the Council meetings with voice but without vote.

Section 2 Duties of Cluster Council

The Cluster Council has four primary roles:

1. To facilitate the partnership of cluster congregations
2. Provide governance for this partnership
3. To create and manage the budget and finances of the Cluster
4. To oversee and support staff

The following shall be administered through a Standing Committee for Budget and Finance appointed by and reporting to the Council

- a) To propose Cluster budget to the whole council, oversee the receipt and expenditure of funds for the support of the Cluster program, staff, and office
- b) Obtain annually an audit or equivalent financial review of the Cluster records of the prior year's operation; the audit/review shall be in a manner consistent with the requirements of the Diocese, and shall be completed and distributed to Council members and all Cluster churches no later than the third quarter of the year in which the audit is conducted.
- c) The Cluster treasurer shall serve on this Standing Committee.

The following shall be administered through a Standing Committee for Personnel appointed by and reporting to the Council

- d) Prepare and maintain a Cluster Operations Manual, setting out processes for hiring staff, calling clergy, duties of staff and clergy, preparation of budget and approval of Cluster projects, and such other matters as fall within the purview of the Cluster Council.
- e) Hire cluster-wide staff in conjunction with the Missioner
- f) Shall make recommendation regarding grant applications and assist in preparation as needed
- g) Propose shared programs

The following shall be administered by the entire Council

- h) Make final recommendations to cluster congregations from the standing committees
- i) Oversee the governance of the Cluster partnership
- j) Explore a broader mission in Skagit Valley, looking beyond the Cluster church community borders; exploring new congregation development and social-service opportunities and engaging in collaborative networking with other councils and service organizations.
- k) Undertake a ministry study within the Cluster and make recommendations to the clergy and constituent churches.
- l) Present the Cluster vision and work with other churches in the Diocese considering the Cluster model.



St. James' Processional Cross on its new stand at Central United Methodist Church

Section 4. Duties of a Council Member. The Council Member shall: exercise judgment; provide advice and consent while serving as a sounding board for clergy decisions; serve as the eyes and ears of each congregation to the Cluster; and collectively represent the Cluster to his/her congregation. The position of Council Member is an opportunity for expanded communication. The Vestry Council Member is expected to communicate all Council projects to his/her vestry/bishop's committee/leadership team, in accordance with timelines for approved Council projects.

Section 5. Council Officers

- a) Chairperson of Cluster Council The Chairperson shall be selected by a discernment committee composed of the missioners and the vestry Cluster Council Member from each church. The Chair shall serve a two year term, beginning January of each odd-numbered calendar year. In the event of temporary disability of the Chairperson, the discernment committee may appoint an acting chair, or a new chair in the event of extended disability. If the Chairperson is already serving as an elected Council Member, the congregation shall elect a new member. The Chairperson shall have voice but not vote, except in the event of a tie. The Chairperson shall not be counted for the establishment of a quorum. The Chairperson shall call Council meetings and preside over such meetings; set the agenda; lead in the decision-making process, lead the council in appointing a chair

for the standing committees, appoint ad hoc committees; serve as coordinator between the senior wardens of the Cluster churches; at the request of the missionaries, act on behalf of the Council when necessary to do so between Cluster Council meetings.

b) Vice-Chairperson The Council shall elect a Vice-Chairperson from its members to conduct meetings and set agenda in the absence of the Council Chair. The Vice-Chairperson shall serve a one-year term. Except when serving in place of the Chair, the Vice-Chairperson shall have a vote and be counted for a quorum.

c) Secretary The Council shall appoint a Secretary for a term of one year; the Secretary shall not serve as a Council Member. The Secretary shall record the minutes of Council meetings, store an electronic and paper copy of those minutes in the Cluster office, and perform other related duties.

d) Treasurer The Council shall appoint a Treasurer for a term of one year. The Treasurer shall not be the treasurer of one of the member churches and shall not serve as a Council member while serving as Treasurer. The treasurer will oversee the bookkeeper of the cluster. The Treasurer shall serve on and report to the Standing Committee for Budget and Finance on a monthly basis. The Treasurer shall sign all checks on the Cluster account; checks larger than \$500 shall be co-signed. The Council shall appoint two Council members to be authorized signers on the Cluster account.

Section 6. Compensation

The Council officers serve without personal financial compensation.

Article VI - Missioner and other Clergy

The rights and responsibilities of the Missioner and other Clergy are defined by the canons of the Episcopal Church, and Letter of Agreement with each clergy person as approved by the Cluster Council and the Vestries and Leadership teams of the Cluster congregations.

All missionaries and clergy are accountable to the Bishop, the Canons, and Constitutions of the member churches. The Bishop appropriate to that congregation shall be notified and consulted if problems with the functioning of a Missioner or other clergy emerge.

Article VII - Council Meetings

Section 1. Regular and Special Meetings. Regular meetings will be held at a time and place set by the Chairperson, and shall be held at least four times a year. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson, or in the Chair's absence, by the Vice-Chair or the Bishop or designated representative, by notifying the Council

Members from each congregation at least three days in advance.

Section 2. Quorum and voting requirement. A quorum for transacting business the cluster shall be one plus one-half of the voting Council Members [e.g., with four member churches, and with each church having two voting members, a quorum is five]. The representative of the developing mission is not counted for the purposes of quorum. The preferred process for Cluster Council decision-making is by consensus. The Clergy, Cluster Administrative Coordinator, Treasurer, developing mission(s) council members and clergy, and the Pastoral Assistant of Resurrección, Secretary and Chairperson shall have a voice but shall neither vote nor be counted in the quorum; provided, however, the Chairperson and the Missioner may vote to break a tie. A vote shall be carried by a simple majority of the voting members present.

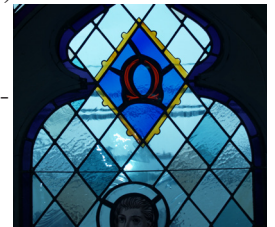
Section 3. Meeting Organization. To the extent possible, the meeting should be conducted in a way that allows partnership and governance of the partnership to be early in the meeting so that the representative of the developing mission may leave, if there desire, before the budget and staffing issues are discussed.

Article VIII – Finances

The Cluster Administrative Coordinator (CAC) shall serve as the bookkeeper for the Cluster, and manage all bookkeeping/accounting functions of the Cluster; provided however, the CAC shall prepare checks but shall not be an authorized signer on the Cluster account. All checks shall be signed by the Treasurer or designee, who must be an authorized signer appointed by the Council. The CAC shall maintain the financial records of the Cluster, and provide all information requested for monthly and annual financial review. The CAC shall provide to the Treasurer information necessary to verify the amount, payee and expenditure for all checks. The Cluster shall operate as a 501(c) (3) charitable institution.

Article IX -Amendment of Memorandum of Agreement

This Memorandum of Agreement may be amended by a majority vote of a quorum. Proposed amendments to shall be submitted to all Council Members in writing at least ten days in advance of the meeting at which the proposed amendments are to be voted upon.



Images from St. James' stained glass windows