

Members of the Needlework Guild of Minnesota,

As your Retreat Chairs for 2021, we have spent a great deal of time over the past few months coordinating with the Retreat Center and our teachers, as well as monitoring the COVID updates and progress on vaccines. We delayed making a decision as long as we could - this was not an easy decision to make - but we have concluded that it is in everyone's best interest to cancel the 2021 Retreat. While we were all hoping for a different outcome, it's not prudent to proceed when taking all the various factors into consideration.

Our decision is based on the following factors:

- Restrictions at the Retreat Center have not changed over the last few months; they do not expect any change to restrictions in the foreseeable future.
 - ◊ We would be limited to a capacity of 61 people.
 - Participants would need to wear a mask and maintain a 6-foot distance from other participants at all times.
 - Many of the smaller meeting rooms we normally use would be limited to an occupancy of only 3 or 4 people.
- Survey results indicated that only 42 members would likely register for Retreat, and of that number, only 25 were interested in taking a class.
 - This number (25) is not enough to support the cost of bringing three teachers to Retreat.
 - Our Retreat contract requires a minimum number of 51 participants; our survey results suggest we may not meet this minimum.
 - Based on our Retreat budget, the per person cost of Retreat for 51 participants would be at least \$100 more than past Retreats.
- While there are many positive signs as more and more people are getting vaccinated, there is still uncertainty surrounding the vaccine's effectiveness in stopping the spread of variants. COVID cases and hospitalizations are rising again in Minnesota and other parts of the country.
- As many of you know, ANG recently announced cancellation of its annual seminar which was scheduled for the same week as Retreat. Their notice cited some of the same reasons, including concerns about the new COVID variant strains, continued uncertainty, and a 50% decline in registration numbers relative to previous years.

We feel strongly that the Needlework Guild of Minnesota Retreat is about the experience. It's a community building event that brings our membership together once a year for fellowship and fun, in addition to our needlework. That sense of community would not be possible given the smaller number of attendees and the guidelines that would need to be followed at the Retreat Center.

When we are reunited again at the 2022 Retreat, we will have much to celebrate. The Needlework Guild of Minnesota will be celebrating its 50th anniversary and we are optimistic that the pandemic will be behind us so that we can gather together and celebrate in Buffalo in the manner to which we are accustomed.

Thank you for your patience and understanding. We wish you continued good health and time with your needle!

Regards,

Cathy Boyd and Marie Zaczkowski (retreatchairs@needleworkguildmn.org)