ASSEMBLY PLANNING COMMITTEE

The members of the Assembly Planning Committee are: Bishop James Dunlop; Lucinda Bringman, synod vice president; The Rev. Beth Schlegel, synod secretary; the Rev. Dana Blouch-Hanson, synod staff/assembly manager; Stella Ludwig, synod council/chair; the Rev. Becca Ajer Frantz; the Rev. Matthew Best, synod council; The Rev. Elizabeth George; Daniel Picone, synod council; the Rev. Edward J. Robbins; the Rev. Gwenn Trout; Joyce Frigm; and Cathy Deitrich and Charlie Roberts, synod staff.

The Assembly Planning Committee, a constitutional standing committee, is required to plan the annual assembly’s agenda and program to fulfill the constitutional mandate for “worship, edification and the legislative business of this synod conducted with the greatest possible involvement to those entitled to participate.” To that end, the committee met in 2019 on October 3 and November 20 and in 2020 on January 21 and March 17 with plans for additional meetings to prepare and complete assembly preparations.

The committee was given the task to plan two Edification Days and a Day of Worship and Business. The Synod Council approved the dates for the 2020 Synod Assembly of the Lower Susquehanna Synod as follows: Business Session on Saturday, June 6, 2020, at Messiah College, and Edification Days on Saturday, May 16, 2020, and Saturday, May 30, 2020. The dates were adopted at the November 16, 2019, Synod Council meeting.

The committee proceeded with plans as follows: Saturday morning business with 11:00 Worship Service of Holy Communion with the Rite of Ordination and Necrology. The business meeting will be completed in the afternoon. The Edification Days (the content will be the same both days) will be held on Saturday, May 16, 2020, at St. Peter (Neffsville), Lancaster, and Saturday, May 30, 2020, at St. Matthew, York. The keynote speaker for our Days of Edification will be the Rev. James Hazelwood, bishop of the New England Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Our other meetings included planning the agenda for the business day, rules of procedure, registration rates, and other essential parts that make our days together run smoothly.

My heartfelt thanks to the members of the Assembly Planning Committee for their dedicated work to plan this year’s assembly. Doing a new format for the assembly took a lot of discussions and planning. THANK YOU! A very special thanks to Dana, Lucinda, Cathy and Charlie who guided me through the planning and meetings. It is our wonderful synod staff that makes planning and running this event run smoothly. Thank you for all you do!

Stella Ludwig, chair

NOTA BENE: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Edification Days as described above were cancelled by the Synod Council.
CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE

Joy and jocularity come together when the Constitution Committee meets. Our purpose is to review governing documents for the Lower Susquehanna Synod and its agencies and congregations, to propose amendments, and to clarify any questions that may arise.

The primary document to be reviewed was The Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Lower Susquehanna Synod, which underwent many changes following last year's Churchwide Assembly. Not only did we propose to the Synod Council the recommended amendments from the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, but we also recommended additional changes to our governing documents to bring them into alignment. Many changes involved updates in semantics and syntax. A report from the Synod Council indicating its recommendations for these amendments will be included in this year's assembly packet.

Among the proposed amendments recommended by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly is the allowance of special circumstances whereby a bishop may be compensated as an employee or contractor when serving in another expression of this church at the approval of the Synod Council and the clarification of the terms for synod administration of a congregation.

In addition to our work on the synod governing documents:

- Bylaws for LutherCare were reviewed and amendments proposed for consideration.
- Bylaws of Greenstone Living were reviewed and returned with several proposed changes and accommodations.
- Bylaws for the LCC (Lutheran Camping Corporation) were reviewed.

The committee members are Jennifer Lau, the Rev. Jeffrey Compton, Jered Hock, Joanne Wilhelm, Chucki Strevig and Secretary Beth Schlegel.

Carlotta “Chucki” Strevig, chairperson
FINANCE AND BUDGET COMMITTEE
[constitution chapter S10.06.08.c]

This committee is composed of 9 members, 1 of whom shall be the treasurer and at least 3 of whom shall be Synod Council members. It shall oversee the financial affairs of this synod; confirm that all obligations are being met and that mission support is forwarded to the churchwide office; exercise oversight responsibility for this synod’s investments, insurance, and banking procedures; receive the annual audit and the accompanying financial statements; and make recommendations to Synod Council on financial matters. It shall project anticipated income for the coming fiscal year and, based on anticipated income, program requests, and adopted goals, develop a proposed budget for recommendation to Synod Council and Synod Assembly.

The committee typically meets three times between synod assemblies. We feel it is important that we keep a close watch on our financial position so that we can be more proactive in responding to any necessary changes. We receive electronic reports monthly from the treasurer and meet to discuss the status of our synod’s finances. At each meeting, we receive and review a current report of cash flow and statement of financial position from the treasurer, Joseph Stepansky.

During our first meeting after the Synod Assembly, we invite the synod’s investment advisor, Emerald Advisors, Inc., to present an update of the performance of the Vision for Mission Legacy Fund and to make recommendations regarding the current asset mix. The synod’s policy sets broad guidance to the advisor and we recommend context changes within that guidance. This year we asked for and received affirmation that the fund remains consistent with ELCA screens for responsible corporate investing.

At our next meeting, we review the operations to date and recommend a distribution rate from the Vision for Mission Legacy Fund. This year we recommended 5% because the fund had strong growth last year and we could make such a distribution without invading the ‘principal’ of the fund. The distribution supports synod ministries, based on a formula defined in the policy governing that fund. The Vision for Mission Legacy Fund supports the Konde Diocese, new worshiping communities, renewing congregations, and eliminating hunger, among other ministries.

Our final meeting each year is to receive the audit report and to consider the draft budget. The budget is developed with significant input from the bishop and staff and consideration for their recommendation to this committee. With changing conditions across the synod, it is difficult to project mission support two years out. With careful attention to trends in giving, honest assessment of expenses needed to carry out our mission, and trust in the Holy Spirit to guide our decisions, we present an annual budget to each year’s Synod Assembly. In years where the trend in mission support is declining, we may recommend to the Synod Council that a spending authorization be implemented. This action by the Synod Council sets limits within the previously approved budget to maintain the stability of the synod’s overall fiscal condition. If the mission support trend reverses, the spending authorization can be modified accordingly.

Heartfelt thank you to this year’s committee members: Lucinda Bringman, synod vice president; Joseph Stepansky, synod treasurer; Virgil Gibson, SC, chair; Joyce Frigm, secretary; Meredith Askey, SC; Dawn Frees, Wayne Gongaware, Gretchen Ierien, SC; Vicki Rutter, and Bill Shoemaker.

Virgil L. Gibson, chair
GIFTS DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

The task of the Gifts Discernment Committee is to identify individuals to be nominated for all open office positions. This year we needed to fill the nomination for vice president of the synod. It was the consensus of the committee to recommend Jennifer R. Lau for the position of vice president.

I would like to thank all those who serve as committee members: the Rev. Eric Anderson; Debra Barrett; the Rev. Douglas DeStephano; Bishop James Dunlop; Holly Freas-Webster, the Rev. Beth Schlegel, Robert Walton; M. Jane Wigand; and Deborah Clark, staff.

Kay Hinkle, chair
SYNOD MISSION COMMITTEE

The responsibility of the Mission Committee is to fulfill its charge as articulated in the synod’s constitution: to uphold the vision and goals of this synod by proposing, developing, maintaining, and promoting priority ministries and by advocating that these priority ministries receive adequate financial and human resources.

Prior to the 2019 Lower Susquehanna Synod Assembly, the Mission Committee was tasked with duties to follow the plan laid out in the process to lift up possible nominees for bishop.

“Mission Committee: Reference Process section #4 (current mission statement, mission documents- may need to include information from Renewal Team report, consider if SC has adopted any strategic planning). Develop set of questions designed to recognize conferences’ understanding of our synod’s mission (#5).”

The committee met in order to help form the questions shared with conference assemblies in preparing and reviewing the documents provided to our 2019 voting members for the election of bishop. Our committee put together six questions. Three questions for the document titled “A Bishop’s Gifts for Mission” and three for the document titled, “Mission Snapshot.”

February of 2020, the Mission Committee gathered to begin reviewing and asking questions about how we are living into our 3 E’s, equipping leaders, encouraging cooperation and engaging in new mission. We began thinking of questions around a synod with less staff and less mission support income. We talked about future configuration of the synod, priorities of conferences, cohorts, and/or anchor congregations. We talked briefly about churchwide and regional based ministries and how shared staffing or structures may need to change as we look into the future. The goal throughout all this conversation, as we begin to explore these questions in 2020, is to never lose focus on God’s call to be the public church and share the Good news.

As always, the Mission Committee is only a partner in the many wonderful ministries that are happening in the congregations, and by the people of our Lower Susquehanna Synod. We are united by Christ in doing God’s work in this place.

The members of the Mission Committee are: the Rev. Kathleen J. Baker; the Rev. Matthew Best, Synod Council; Lucinda Bringman, synod vice president; the Rev. James S. Dunlop, bishop; the Rev. Joel Folkemer, chair, Synod Council; the Rev. Jack Horner, Synod Council; the Rev. Richard Jorgensen, Director for Evangelical Mission; Jennifer Lau, Synod Council; the Rev. Jillian Riddle, Synod Council; Deacon Marsha Roscoe, Collaborative Mission Center Director; and Holly Freas-Webster.

The Rev. Joel Folkemer, chair
PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Colossians 3:23 reads, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord…” The Personnel Committee of the Lower Susquehanna Synod serves to care for those who work with all their hearts in ministry through our synod office. The committee reviews salaries, position descriptions, personnel policies, and other pertinent documents to ensure the staff of our synod are best able to live as examples of God’s love in the realities of our world. The committee works with Synod Council and other related committees by receiving and proposing recommendations to that end. Those who have served on the Personnel Committee in the past year include: the Rev. Thomas McKee, personnel officer; Bishop James Dunlop, personnel officer; Lucinda Bringman, synod vice president; Dallas Barclift Jr., SC; the Rev. Martha Boyd; the Rev. Elizabeth George; Kay Hinkle, SC; Gary Laabs; Linda Long, SC; the Rev Timothy Sadler; Zachary Weiss, SC, chair; and Joanne Wilhelm.

2019 saw a number of personnel changes for our synod staff, prompting the Personnel Committee to be active in its role. While Bishop Dunlop returned to serve another term, following the election at Synod Assembly, the Rev Sharron Blezard has stepped back to be on leave, the Rev Jennifer Hope-Tringali has moved to Guatemala to administer Hope Academy, the Rev Thomas McKee celebrated his retirement, and (in early 2020) Deacon Marsha Roscoe has moved to a part-time call as she takes on responsibility as Coordinator of the Collaborative Mission Center. Joining synod staff are the Rev Dana Blouch-Hanson and the Rev Elizabeth Martini.

Based on recommendations from the bishop and discussion, the Personnel Committee recommended the following salary and housing allowances for 2020 to Synod Council: Bishop Dunlop, $101,178; the Rev Robert Blezard, $67,050; the Rev Dana Blouch-Hanson, $63,365; the Rev Richard Jorgensen, $81,050; the Rev Elizabeth Martini, $23,000 (15 hrs/week). This represents a 2.2% increase from last year. Bishop Dunlop abstained from voting on his own salary. Also recommended was a 2.2% increase for all remaining staff. All salary recommendations were approved by Synod Council.

The committee also reviewed newly written and revised position descriptions that reflect the changes in responsibility under a different staff structure. The Personnel Policies were examined and discussed with some changes (mostly to better reflect current language and practices) being recommended to Synod Council for approval. Looking towards 2021, the committee recommends a 3% salary and benefits increase for synod staff to the Finance and Budget Committee

The Personnel Committee is dedicated to supporting the staff of the Lower Susquehanna Synod and is energized by the ministry we share together.

Zachary J. Weiss, chair