

LOWER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD, ELCA
SYNOD COUNCIL
Draft Minutes
April 6, 2019

The Lower Susquehanna Synod Council met for its regular meeting on Saturday, April 6, 2019, in the Board Room of the Pennsylvania United Church Center, 900 S. Arlington Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17109. Vice President Lucinda L. Bringman called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Bishop James S. Dunlop Thomas E. McKee
Lucinda L. Bringman Joseph M. Stepansky

Eric N. Anderson Jennifer R. Lau
Matthew B. Best Linda J. Long
Dana J. Blouch-Hanson Stella Ludwig
Joel S.B. Folkemer Jillian E. Riddle
Dawn O. Frees Timothy J. Seitz-Brown
Virgil L. Gibson Stephanie M. Strauss
Kay A. Hinkle Carlotta C. Strevig
Emma L. Johns Zachary J. Weiss

Liaison Present: Fred Bohls

Staff present: Robert C. Blezard Elizabeth G. Martini
Debbie M. Clark Marsha L. Roscoe
Richard E. T. Jorgensen Jr. Charlie R. Roberts III

Guests present: Sharon Beard Ellen Willenbecker
Chad Butz Michael Williams
J. Richard Eckert

Members excused: Allen P. Stump

Liaison excused: Jeremy Filus Lois A. Griffiths

Staff excused: Jennifer Hope-Tringali

Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson led the council in a devotional period. She read Psalm 121, which was a meaningful verse for Dana when in seminary and which provided comfort and support for her during her chemotherapy and treatment. Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson said that this psalm is an assurance of God's constant presence. She asked, "Why fear? We are not alone. God is always with us." She led the members of Synod Council in prayer.

The Afterschool Program at St. Peter Lutheran Church, Middletown, was the Ministry Highlight. St. Peter Lutheran Church has received a commitment from the Lower Susquehanna Synod Mission Fund Committee to provide \$10,000 per year for three years to this ministry. Pastor J. Richard Eckert introduced the Ministry Highlight, reading a passage from Luke 1. The Word overshadowed St. Peter Lutheran Church as the Word did to Mary. They had prayed for that overshadowing. When it happened, they needed to discern to what was God calling them and what God was forming in them. God brought a spiritual renewal to St. Peter congregation. Pastor Eckert thanked the council for being missional partners

in this spiritual renewal in ways far richer than the financial gifts alone. He stated, “Our synod stands beside us when we are with the children.” The members of St. Peter consider their parking lot a gift. People, especially children, walk through it all the time. It is the place the congregation meets the community, where both groups stop, listen, talk, invite, and connect. The congregation has resettled several families from Vietnam and Burma. Many of these children play in the parking lot. The congregation members noted that the Burmese children needed help with the English language, so they began to tutor them, one on one. Amazing friendships developed. Soon the Middletown Area School District was referring more children to them. From there, the ministry just blossomed. Pastor Eckert shared the story of Dillion, a ninth grader who was part of this ministry for five years, asking “Eckert, Richard, Pastor” how his wife, who had suffered a fall, was doing. The delegation from St. Peter’s showed a video about the Afterschool Program and the ministries that flowed from it to the council. The youth in the Afterschool Program are in Kindergarten through ninth grade. They enjoy a meal, help with homework, recreation, and service. They have opportunity to share in other experiences, field trips, baseball games, and service projects like packing weekend food packs for children and youth in the school district. Sixty-five percent of the students in the school district receive free or reduced-cost lunches. It is the goal of the program that the children and youth will go out and share the love that they have received with others. Ellen Willenbecker explained the relationship that this ministry has with Communities that Care, Women, Infants and Children, Tri-County Action Program, and Head Start have space in St. Peter’s building, and they connect intimately with the community ministries that St. Peter does. Other churches, connected through an Inter-Faith Council and Penn State Harrisburg provide tutors and other volunteers for the ministries. The school district provides transportation from the schools to the church and volunteer drivers provide transportation for field trips. Some of these partners have come to ministry and some of the partners are those to whom the congregation reached out.

Deacon Marsha Roscoe thanked the presenters for their spirit-driven language and their faithful discernment of what God was calling them to be and do. Charlie Roberts pointed out that this was a renewal before our synod began its formal renewal process, R3.

CONSENT AGENDA

Virgil Gibson moved:

ADOPTED: That the Consent Agenda be adopted.
SC19.04.19.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Candidacy Committee Joy Gross, the Rev. James Goodyear, and the Rev. Elizabeth E. Frey for first five-year terms, expiring 2024;

That the Synod Council reappoint to the Compensation and Benefits Committee the Rev. Thomas G. Bruner Jr. and June Wolf for second three-year terms, expiring 2022, and appoint Bruce Senft and the Rev. Barbara Barry, for first three-year terms expiring 2022;

That the Synod Council reappoint to the Global Mission Committee the Rev. Kevin Stout for a second three-year term, expiring 2022;

That the Synod Council reappoint to the Synodical Worship Committee Stephen Strauss and Debra E. Reeder for second three-year terms, expiring 2022;

That the Synod Council appoint to the World Hunger Committee Andrea Oslikova, Stephanie Johnson, Shirley McGowan, Keith Shively, the Rev. Ronald Costen, and the Rev. Godfred Effisah for first three-year terms, expiring 2022;

That the Synod Council reappoint to the Audit Committee Linda M. Bennett and Robert Rundle for second three-year terms, expiring 2022;

That the Synod Council reappoint to the Lower Susquehanna Synod Mission Fund Committee the Rev. Rob Myallis, Terry Snyder, and Angela Thomas for second three-year terms, expiring 2022, and appoint the Rev. Jack Horner and Rose Tonkin for first three-year term, expiring 2022;

That the Synod Council reappoint to the Congregational Leadership Resource Team the Rev. Daniel V. Biles III, the Rev. Caitlin Kurtz, the Rev. Tasha K. Genck Morton, the Rev. Constance L. Mentzer, the Rev. Mark L. Russell, and Lois D. Strause for second three-year terms, expiring in 2022 and appoint the Rev. Glenn Ludwig and the Rev. William C. Snyder to first three-year terms, expiring 2022;

That the Synod Council reappoint to the Konde Diocese Committee Martha Brunner and Linda Bell for second three-year terms, expiring 2022, and appoint the Rev. Clifton D. Eshbach as consultant.

That the Synod Council reelect to the board of directors of Luthercare the Rev. David Fisher, Stuart Smith, and Dr. Joan Harrold for second three-year terms, expiring 2022; reelect the Rev. Henry Herbener and Jim Smarilli for expanded terms, expiring 2020, and elect the Rev. Thomas McKee, David Stoudt, and Keith Boyer for three-year terms, expiring 2022;

That the Synod Council grant on-leave-from-call status to the Rev. Pamela Carnes, effective March 1, 2019, until March 1, 2020;

That the Synod Council continue the Rev. Nancy R. Easton on on-leave-from-call status for one additional year, until May 1, 2020;

That the total compensation paid to the Rev. Jennifer H. Richards for the period beginning May 6, 2019, shall include an annual payment of \$27,000 to be designated as a housing allowance within the meaning of that term as used in Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code;

That the offering received at the 2019 Synod Assembly be equally divided between the Lower Susquehanna Synod Mission Fund and the Konde Diocese Medical Needs Task Force for the purchase of an industrial washing machine for Itete Hospital; and

That the Synod Council approve the amended bylaws for Luthercare and the bylaws of Greenstone Living.

SYNOD COUNCIL ACTIONS

Bishop Dunlop moved the following Synod Council calls:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council call the Rev. Elizabeth G. Martini as Assistant to the Bishop, effective March 1, 2019, until August 31, 2019.

That the Synod Council call the Rev. Jennifer H. Richards to serve as pastor of Communities of Hope, effective May 6, 2019;

Virgil Gibson asked if this was a term call. He was wondering how long would we support this ministry. Bishop Dunlop said that he and Pastor Richards had met and were developing plans for sustaining this ministry. The bishop said that they had agreed to review progress in this area after one year. This mission start is at the stage now that development can and needs to occur. Pastor Richards has the gifts to lead this synodically authorized worshiping community into the next phase of its existence. Pastor Jorgensen said that within two years Communities of Hope must begin this process. He said that he envisions that in five years this ministry will be self-supporting.

The motion was before the Synod Council.

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council call the Rev. Jennifer H. Richards to serve as pastor of Communities of Hope, effective May 6, 2019.

Bishop Dunlop moved the following call of an intentional interim pastor:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council call the Rev. Daniel M. Yeiser to serve as intentional interim pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Lancaster, effective October 1, 2018, until September 30, 2019, or until a new pastor is called.

Virgil Gibson, chair of the Finance and Budget Committee, moved the following on behalf of the committee:

That the Synod Council approve the amended Investment Policy for the Vision of Mission Legacy Fund.

Virgil Gibson described the changes from the original document that were being proposed. Language was removed from the former policy which tied the policy and our synod to one investment advisor. Also, the language about social responsibility in our investment policy was made clearer in order to meet the intent of Synod Assembly action in 1992, Resolution #8. Virgil Gibson noted it also is now in line with ELCA policy.

The motion was before the council.

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council approve the amended Investment Policy for the Vision of Mission Legacy Fund.

Virgil Gibson, chair of the Finance and Budget Committee, moved the following on behalf of the committee:

That the Synod Council approve a distribution of 5% of the value of the fund assets (as defined by the Statement of Policy for the Vision of Mission Legacy Fund) from the Vision of Mission Legacy Fund.

Treasurer Joseph Stepansky spoke in favor of the motion. He explained how the Finance and Budget Committee arrived at a three-year average. He spoke about the blossoming of this fund in the first three months of 2019 from \$2.05 million to \$2.36 million. If the Synod Council approves of a 5% distribution, \$108,599 will be divided among hunger ministries, Konde Diocese, seminarian scholarships, synod programs, and the Bishop's Discretionary Fund, according to the pre-determined percentages.

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council approve a distribution of 5% of the value of the fund assets SC19.04.24. (as defined by the Statement of Policy for the Vision of Mission Legacy Fund) from the Vision of Mission Legacy Fund.

Zachary Weiss, chair of the Personnel Committee, moved on behalf of the committee:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council set the annual salary and housing allowance paid to Pastor SC19.04.25. Elizabeth G. Martini for fifteen hours a week for the six months March 1, 2019, through August 31, 2019, at \$22,500 a year.

“THE FUTURE OF OUR FAITH”

Bishop Dunlop reported that at the Conference of Bishops he heard a presentation entitled, “The Future of Our Faith,” by Wesley Granberg-Michaelson. Bishop Dunlop adapted this presentation with permission and shared it with the Synod Council. This presentation looked at Christianity from a global perspective. When the church was formed, its center was in Jerusalem. By the 1500's, the center was in Europe. In 2010, the center was in Timbuktu, Mali. The center will be moving deeper into Africa in the future. One out of every four Christians are living in Africa. The church also is growing in Latin America and in Asia. Christianity has become a non-Western religion. What we fail to notice when we just consider the church in the United States is that the world is becoming more religious, more spiritual. He presented ten challenges: revitalizing withering congregations; embracing the color of the future; seeing the world through non-western eyes; perceiving the world as sacred; affirming Spirit filled communities; rejecting the heresy of individualism; de-Americanizing the gospel; defeating divisive culture wars; belonging before believing; and saving this world. What Bishop Dunlop has noticed is that the very things that Dr. Granberg-Michaelson suggests are the very things that we are doing through R3.

Bishop Dunlop provided the Synod Council information about trends within our synod. In 1989 the number of members was 150,509; in 2017 the number of members was 83,093. In 1980 the number of congregations was 279; in 2017 the number of congregations was 231. The average worship attendance in 1989 was 41,356; the average worship attendance in 2017 was 20,371. Total financial receipts in 1989 adjusted for inflation to 2017 dollars were \$70,967,809; total financial receipts in 2017 were \$61,508,992. In 1989 mission support adjusted for inflation to 2017 dollars was \$8,270,392; mission support in 2017 was \$2,600,768. In 1989 the percentage of mission support given to the larger church was 11.7%; in 2017 the percentage of mission support given to the larger church was 3.9%. Bishop Dunlop pointed out that there was a 70% drop in the support of the larger church. Congregations are more focused on themselves, on their own needs, needs made more urgent because of dwindling attendance, decreased offerings, and needs of aging church buildings. Therefore, our synod and our ELCA receive less funding. No one says to our synod you should be doing less ministry. We need to figure out what it looks like to be a church with a congregational focus. We need to wrestle with what it means to be a smaller synod

within a smaller church national body. The bishop stated that he would rather have a plan than have things happen by default.

Bishop Dunlop asked for questions and conversation about this presentation. Linda Long asked, “Can we get copies of this? What are we to do with this?” The bishop assured Linda that she could have a copy of this and answered, “Think, ask questions, and pray.” He said that he believes that our church will have to deal with the issues of race. We remain the whitest denomination. We must concentrate on becoming a multi-racial church. Virgil Gibson stated that if we think that these issues are trivial, try removing the American flag from some of our sanctuaries. Bishop Dunlop said that we cannot remove our church from our context, but we should be aware that most of the world does not like what we are and what we do. Pastor Timothy Seitz-Brown shared that we have a great opportunity to learn from our native-African pastors. Pastor Joel Folkemer stated that as Union congregation becomes more diverse, he is exploring how our fairly-preferential differences make it difficult to come together. Most traditional Lutherans come to faith through the heads; most newly churchd have come through the heart. Neither are right nor wrong. The end is the same. Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson said that we go into this struggle with open minds and hearts. We are called to listen to each other. Kay Hinkle said that Trinity Lutheran Church in East Berlin is mainly a white congregation. When they move out into the community, they still experience a mainly white community. We need to go beyond our local communities. Jennifer Lau agreed that we need a much bigger lens. Linda Long said that we need to fight the we-versus-them philosophy and to demonstrate what it means to love one another. She stated that she is not certain that she has the skill-set to do this. Pastor Matthew Best invited us to look around the table; he informed the council that we are missing important voices that are needed to make important decisions. Pastor Thomas McKee reminded the members of the council that it is all our responsibilities to raise up persons of color and those whose primary language is other than English, youth, and young adults to serve on Synod Council and the committees of our synod. Charlie Roberts gave the example of how the Youth Ministry Network made an intentional commitment to involve persons of color; now 20% of the members in the network are persons of color.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Dunlop provided a written report as well as a report from the Conference of Bishops. The bishop informed the members of the Synod Council that the items which he wanted to discuss are found elsewhere in the agenda. He asked for any questions; there were none raised at this time.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

Vice President Lucinda L. Bringman submitted a written report. During the meeting, the vice president asked the members of the Synod Council for their prayer requests. Vice President Bringman thanked the members of the Synod Council and synod staff for participating in the work of the two Conference Assemblies held in each conference. She asked them to remind voting members that on the first ballot, the names of those nominated for bishop must be identical with their names on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament. She stated Deacon Marsha Roscoe already plans to add a link to our Minute Book where there is a list of pastors rostered in our synod as well as to the ELCA website location to search the full roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

Virgil Gibson asked the vice president if there would be posted a report of those lifted up in each conference. Vice President Bringman answered that is not the procedure we have prescribed. This is not to be a popularity contest but a lifting up of persons who have gifts to be bishop to aid the voting members in their discernment process prior to the first ballot. The biographies and pictures of all those lifted up who have agreed to submit their biographies will be placed on our website on April 22.

The vice president reminded the members of Synod Council to not make copies of the bulletin of reports until after May 17.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Treasurer Joseph M. Stepansky submitted a written report and a Statement of Operational Activities. Treasurer Stepansky said that our synod had a surplus of approximately \$39,000 at the end of FY2018. This is the first surplus that we have had since 2014. He stated that he is rather confident as we go into FY2019. We have reduced expenses and put in place a spending authorization. Even though our mission support for the first month is down, our operating fund assets are up. The treasurer informed the council that the \$3,400 remaining in the restitution fund has been added to the Legacy Fund to support the five areas of ministry that receive distributions from this fund. The audit was performed March 20-22. The report will be posted prior to the Synod Assembly following the meeting of our Audit Committee with our auditors. He thanked Cathy Paul and Denise Ferguson for their valuable help in preparing for the audit and in answering the auditors' questions.

Bishop Dunlop commented on research he had done on mission support. About 100 of our congregations increased their mission support while 60 congregations kept their mission support the same and an equal number of congregations decreased their mission support. The biggest portion of the decrease in mission support was from four large congregations that significantly decreased their mission support.

DISCUSSION OF REVENUE SOURCES

Bishop Dunlop provided the members of the council with his thoughts about how our synod could increase its revenue by looking to other sources than mission support from congregations. The first way is appeals. Bishop Dunlop believes that a one-time appeal for one cause will work. He is proposing in the 2020 budget a \$125,000 appeal for new missions and renewals. This appears in the 2020 proposed budget as a grant from the Lower Susquehanna Synod Mission Fund, the funds for which will be raised through an appeal. The second way is grants. We with the Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania are applying for a five-year grant from the Lilly Foundation for our certificate in missional preaching, for the courses being offered through the Stevenson School, and for the R3 program. There are multiple other grants for which we could apply. The third way is building the legacy fund by being more proactive in soliciting bequests and stressing estate planning. The fourth way is to outsource our staff to other synods. We could contract with other synods to provide the R3 program, R3 Generosity, and boundary training. We could have a deeper staff if we could also outsource them to other synods. Bishop Dunlop jokingly added that he came up with two additional ways during his presentation: fines and sponsorships or naming rights.

Kay Hinkle liked the idea of special appeals. Her congregation had supported the Always Being Made New Campaign, but, when this campaign was ended, they began a new campaign for congregational needs. If there was another appeal planned prior to this decision, her congregation probably would have supported this appeal instead. Deacon Marsha Roscoe provided a history of how and when the funds were received for the Always Being Made New Campaign. She also noted that members of our synod have committed \$4.6 million to our synod's ministries through estate planning. Pastor Matthew Best stated that he loves these ideas. They may be sparks for the congregation to explore other sources of income. Charlie Roberts reminded the members of the Synod Council that the Always Being Made New Campaign will not end until our commitment to youth and young adult ministries has been fulfilled. Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson reminded the council that two products of our synod's ministry to youth and young adults are now members of the Synod Council (Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson and Pastor Jillian

Riddle). Pastor Joel Folkemer asked, “What will we be borrowing against in the next budget?” Bishop Dunlop replied that he added the appeal for the Lower Susquehanna Synod Mission Fund to this year’s *Draft Synod Council Minutes/April 6, 2019/page 8*

budget because he was confident that, with all the excitement over R3 and other renewal ministries, we will meet the \$125,000 goal of this appeal. Pastor Eric Anderson explained that he is a bit conflicted about selling services instead of sharing them. Bishop Dunlop replied that he will not be charging our congregations for services but making them available to other synods. Other bishops have indicated that they would be willing to purchase services instead of hiring and training staff members to perform these services. Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson expressed concern for the staff, that they maintain healthy boundaries and that our synod does not oversell or overcommit them. Bishop Dunlop answered that we may need to increase staff.

REPORT OF THE SYNOD SECRETARY

Secretary Thomas E. McKee submitted a written report. Secretary McKee reminded the members of the Synod Council who receive complimentary packages to register for the Synod Assembly before April 15. He announced that the reports of the committees, agencies, institutions, and synodical units of churchwide organization and the reports of the nominees have been posted on our synod’s website. Officers’ reports, memorials, and resolutions are due by May 1. The secretary welcomed Pastor Beth Martini to our staff and thanked her for her willingness to serve our synod in this way and for the fine way she already has become a vital part of our team. He also thanked the members of Synod Council for calling her and for approving her salary. He invited the members of the Synod Council to attend the Renewal of Vows liturgy on Thursday, April 11, 2019, at 10:30 a.m. at Trinity Lutheran Church, Camp Hill.

REPORT OF THE SYNOD COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Synod Council Executive Committee provided draft minutes of its March 21, 2019, meeting.

REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEES OF SYNOD COUNCIL

Constitution Committee submitted minutes of its March 25, 2019, meeting.

Finance and Budget Committee provided minutes of its March 18, 2019, meeting.

Personnel Committee offered draft minutes of its March 21, 2019, meeting.

REPORTS OF THE LIAISONS

Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO) was represented by Emma Johns. She informed the members of the council that members of the LYO would be serving as pages at the Synod Assembly. Confirmation Camps and Leadership Training Camp are planned for this summer, and ALIVE is planned for September.

Lutheran Men in Mission liaison, Fred Bohls, reported that the executive director Doug Haugen has retired. He has been replaced by John Stamford, who has had extensive experience in fund raising. The June 1 annual meeting will be conducted by teleconferencing. The meeting is open to all men who have made a \$100 contribution of record to Lutheran Men in Mission. Fred Bohls stated that in our synod he and Bill Schirmer are holding down the fort. They are seeking additional men, non-rostered, to join them in raising up the importance of men’s ministry in our congregations. Lutheran Men in Mission is supporting the Camping Corporation’s Men’s retreat scheduled for the first weekend in May 2019.

REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE STAFF

Deacon Marsha Roscoe provided a written report as Director of Mission Interpretation.

Charlie Roberts submitted a written report of the Office for Faith Formation and Youth Ministry.

Pastor Robert Blezard offered a written report.

Pastor Elizabeth Martini provided a written report.

Pastor Jennifer Hope-Tringali submitted a written report.

Pastor Richard Jorgensen provided a written report.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Committee of Conference Deans provided minutes of its March 11, 2019, meeting.

Konde Diocese Committee liaison, Allen Stump, provided a liaison's report of the committee's February and March meetings.

World Hunger Committee provided copies of thank-you letters written by those who had received Legacy Fund Grants for hunger projects.

REPORTS OF TASK FORCES

No reports were submitted.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Conference Realignment was discussed. The Committee of Deans, meeting March 11, 2019, adopted a recommendation to Synod Council that Synod Council recommend to the 2019 Synod Assembly that S12.01.01., which numbers and names the fourteen conferences, be removed from our governing documents. Since that time, Bishop Dunlop has received reports about some conferences being in turmoil about this subject. He stated that many people do not want to change our conferences even though some conferences are becoming too small to function. The bishop stated that he misjudged the amount of emotion that would surface around this. He stated that he does not want to cause a heated discussion over this at Synod Assembly. He believes that this needs more conversation and more discernment before any action should be taken around conference realignment. Therefore, he urged the Synod Council not to act on the Committee of Deans' recommendation at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

Bishop Dunlop moved the following resolution submitted by Pastor Jennifer Hope-Tringali:

LOWER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD 2019 RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE AND RESPOND TO THE PLIGHT OF CENTRAL AMERICAN MIGRANTS

WHEREAS, the ELCA has spoken in its Social Statement, "Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture" about its commitment for "the effort to start and to support ministry in African American, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, or multicultural settings; the effort to recognize and to empower pastoral leaders while honoring their cultures; the effort to provide resources in languages other than English" and to engage in "public policy advocacy at state, federal, and international levels that seeks to eliminate racial or ethnic discrimination;" and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Social Message on Immigration for this church to strengthen its ministry with the most vulnerable, particularly in the ministry that "resettles refugees, counsels to persons without legal status, aids persons with the citizenship process, and helps newcomers learn to live in a new country," and reminds us "that hospitality

for the uprooted is a way to live out the biblical call to love thy neighbor in response to God's love in Jesus Christ," and

WHEREAS, the ELCA's 1993 social statement, "Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture" recognizes: "This church clearly shares the brokenness of a society that has responded to cultural diversity through fear and efforts at assimilation. Our society has melded many European ethnic groups into mainstream America, but it has included people of other cultural identities only insofar as they have taken on the values and behavior of the dominant culture. A wall of hostility stands intact"; and

WHEREAS, violence, lack of economic opportunity, environmental displacement, food insecurity and poverty as well as state-sanctioned oppression has led hundreds of thousands of people including women and children to flee the countries of Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala in recent years; and

WHEREAS, the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly overwhelmingly adopted a strategy on Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities or AMMPARO (based on the Spanish word "Amparo," meaning the protection of a living creature from suffering or damage), after witnessing the plight of children who are forced to flee their communities because of complex and interrelated reasons, including chronic violence, poverty, environmental displacement and lack of opportunities, with a primary commitment of the strategy to uphold and guarantee basic human rights and safety of migrant children and their families; therefore, let it be

RESOLVED, that all congregations in the Lower Susquehanna Synod be encouraged to reach out to those of ethnic and/or racial minorities in their own communities, seeking to increase mutual understanding and learning how to both welcome and offer appropriate support to and advocate for those who are most vulnerable; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Synod Council of the Lower Susquehanna Synod appoint a task force to develop a comprehensive AMMPARO strategy in consultation with Churchwide leadership, synod leaders, congregations and other church and ecumenical partners and organizations, with a progress report to be presented to the 2020 Synod Assembly.

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod will implement AMMPARO using strategies unique to their context to include the following commitments:

- praying for migrant children and their families as they struggle with violence and economic uncertainty
- becoming a "Welcoming Synod" accompanying children and families throughout their journey to the US in the challenges and difficulties they face
- advocating for just and humane policies towards migrant children and families on state and national levels
- sharing resources and opportunities to congregational leaders seeking to serve Central American migrants to include, but not limited to language skill improvement, cultural competency, and providing links on the website of the Lower Susquehanna Synod for further information to the ELCA Social Message on Immigration, the AMMPARO strategy (working with unaccompanied minors), and LAMPa and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service resources; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Congregations of the Lower Susquehanna Synod be encouraged to implement AMMPARO strategies unique to their own unique contexts.

The members of Synod Council discussed this resolution. Bishop Dunlop said that, considering the presentation on the Future of Faith, he believes that we should adopt this resolution for Synod Assembly action. It is important for us to state publicly that we welcome immigrants and refugees into our society and want them to be a vital part of our life together, realizing the gifts that they bring. He stated that a task force would be formed to develop a strategy through which we would become a welcoming synod.

Pastor Tim Seitz-Brown echoed the words of Bishop Dunlop that these are gifted people to whom we are being encouraged to reach out; they will enrich our lives if we seek mutual understanding and an appreciation of different cultures. We must welcome and help those who are most vulnerable. Deacon Marsha Roscoe questioned whether we might include working with ecumenical partners as a way of addressing this resolution.

The resolution was before Synod Council for action.

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council adopt the Resolution to Recognize and Respond to the SC19.04.26. Plight of Central American Migrants for submission to the 2019 Synod Assembly for action.

LOWER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD 2019 RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE AND RESPOND TO THE PLIGHT OF CENTRAL AMERICAN MIGRANTS

WHEREAS, the ELCA has spoken in its Social Statement, “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture” about its commitment for “the effort to start and to support ministry in African American, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, or multicultural settings; the effort to recognize and to empower pastoral leaders while honoring their cultures; the effort to provide resources in languages other than English” and to engage in “public policy advocacy at state, federal, and international levels that seeks to eliminate racial or ethnic discrimination;” and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Social Message on Immigration for this church to strengthen its ministry with the most vulnerable, particularly in the ministry that “resettles refugees, counsels to persons without legal status, aids persons with the citizenship process, and helps newcomers learn to live in a new country,” and reminds us “that hospitality for the uprooted is a way to live out the biblical call to love thy neighbor in response to God’s love in Jesus Christ,” and

WHEREAS, the ELCA’s 1993 social statement, “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture” recognizes: “This church clearly shares the brokenness of a society that has responded to cultural diversity through fear and efforts at assimilation. Our society has melded many European ethnic groups into mainstream America, but it has included people of other cultural identities only insofar as they have taken on the values and behavior of the dominant culture. A wall of hostility stands intact”; and

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other church and ecumenical partners and organizations, with a progress report to be presented to the 2020 Synod Assembly.

RESOLVED, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod will implement AMMPARO using strategies unique to their context to include the following commitments:

- praying for migrant children and their families as they struggle with violence and economic uncertainty
- becoming a “Welcoming Synod” accompanying children and families throughout their journey to the US in the challenges and difficulties they face
- advocating for just and humane policies towards migrant children and families on state and national levels
- sharing resources and opportunities to congregational leaders seeking to serve Central American migrants to include, but not limited to language skill improvement, cultural competency, and providing links on the website of the Lower Susquehanna Synod for further information to the ELCA Social Message on Immigration, the AMMPARO strategy (working with unaccompanied minors), and LAMPa and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service resources; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Congregations of the Lower Susquehanna Synod be encouraged to implement AMMPARO strategies unique to their own unique contexts.

Trustworthy Servants of the People of God was shared with the members of the Synod Council in the email packet of pre-meeting information. This proposed document would replace Vision and Expectations and would be a guideline for the ethical behavior of rostered ministers. Bishop Dunlop reported that it has been recommended that the ELCA Church Council refer this document back to the Domestic Mission unit. Most of the discussion around this document has been about the process and who should be at the table discussing these things.

Vice President Bringman thanked Pastor Richard Jorgensen and Virgil Gibson for tending the door and Bishop Dunlop, Secretary McKee, Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson, and Vice President Bringman for providing the refreshments.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m. with the praying of the Lord’s Prayer.

Thomas E. McKee
synod secretary
4/1/19