

**LOWER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD, ELCA**  
**SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**Minutes**  
**February 16, 2019**

The Lower Susquehanna Synod Council met for its regular meeting on Saturday, February 16, 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. Secretary Thomas E. McKee led the members of the council in prayer, using the four collects from the Conference Assemblies devotions. Vice President Bringman divided the members of Synod Council into two groups, one group using the responses from the January Conference Assemblies to edit the “Mission Snapshot” and one group using the responses from the January Conference Assemblies to edit “A Bishop’s Gifts for God’s Mission.” After the two groups finished their assignments, the meeting resumed at 10:15 a.m.

**ROLL CALL**

<b>Members present:</b>	Bishop James S. Dunlop Lucinda L. Bringman	Thomas E. McKee Joseph M. Stepansky
	Eric N. Anderson Matthew B. Best Joel S.B. Folkemer Kay A. Hinkle Emma L. Johns Jennifer R. Lau Linda J. Long	Stella Ludwig Timothy J. Seitz-Brown Stephanie M. Strauss Carlotta C. Strevig Allen P. Stump Zachary J. Weiss
<b>Liaison present:</b>	Lois A. Griffiths	
<b>Staff present:</b>	Robert C. Blezard Sharron R. Blezard Debbie M. Clark	Marsha L. Roscoe Charlie R. Roberts III
<b>Members excused:</b>	Dana J. Blouch-Hanson Virgil L. Gibson	Jillian E. Riddle
<b>Liaison excused:</b>	Fred Bohls	Jeremy Filus
<b>Staff excused:</b>	Richard E. T. Jorgensen Jr.	Jennifer Hope-Tringali

Emma Johns led devotions, reading from John 8:12 and from a devotion written by her grandmother about her mother in a 1979 issue of The Upper Room. Emma’s mother and grandmother were on a path, but the path became so weedy that Emma’s grandmother no longer knew where the path was. However, Emma’s mother pointed through the weeds to where the path led. Her grandmother stressed the importance of trusting the one who leads us to know the way. “Jesus Christ is the light of the world, we who follow will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” Emma shared that as a college student, she sometimes has difficulty finding time for God in her life; thus, she has trouble finding her way. She urged the members of Synod Council to make time for God in their lives. God will be their light for life. She led the members of the Synod Council in prayer.

Pastor Pam Illick, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Rouzerville, presented the Mission Highlight. Trinity is one of the congregations under Synod Administration for Redevelopment and has received some grants from the Bishop's Congregational Mission Fund. Pastor Illick began serving Trinity congregation in 2015 when she was a senior in seminary. When Pastor Illick began, the congregation was living in fear. They were enthusiastic about the work that they knew needed to happen but did not know how to begin. On her first day, she stood in front of the church building and wondered where was the community to which she was called to serve. There were no sidewalks, no downtown, and no gathering places. As she was contemplating how to get started, she heard the voice of God saying, "I am about to do a new thing." She began by building relationships, by getting out and meeting people. But how could she help her congregation get out, meet people, and form new relationships. Pastor Illick worked with the members of the congregation to strengthen their relationship with God, with each other, and with the community. The congregation strengthened its relationship with God through praying, preaching, hearing, learning, wondering, blessing, baptizing, offering, and worshiping. Even though many members of the congregation were long-term members, Pastor Illick found that they really did not know each other. The members of the congregation strengthened their relationship with each other by eating together, laughing together, serving together, and playing together. While Trinity always thought of itself as a congregation for the community, the members began strengthening their relationship with the community in concrete ways. They developed mission partners in the community. Over 900 persons in the Rouzerville community participated in Operation Undercover, gathering undergarments for those in need. They developed ecumenical partners who cooperated with Lenten Bible studies, Vacation Bible School, Pets and Blessings, and Bountiful Blessings. They found partners in the businesses of the community, among their neighbors, among the supervisors, and among the fire and rescue service. They found mission partners on Facebook and other social media. They began new ministries: Wednesday Prayer Day at the Subway in Walmart, Facebook Live, and Bread of Life Dinner Church. Today Trinity congregation still is afraid as it approaches the end of the covenant on May 31. They still have not achieved financial stability although they are beginning a stewardship campaign. Pastor Illick wished that the renewal could have started earlier when the members were younger. The congregation has received new members, but they also have lost active members to death and aging. Pastor Illick asked for continued prayers for the life of this congregation.

The members of the Synod Council thanked Pastor Illick for her presentation and her ministry with applause.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Pastor Matthew Best moved:

**ADOPTED:** That the Consent Agenda be adopted.  
**SC19.02.01.**

**That the minutes of the November 17, 2018, meeting of Synod Council be approved.**

**That the Synod Council elect to the board of directors of the Lutheran Camping Corporation Thomas Sites, for a first term, expiring 2021; the Rev. Dana Blouch-Hanson, for a second term, expiring 2021; Andrew Heaton, for a second term, expiring 2021; and the Rev. Lisa Leber, second term, expiring 2021;**

**That the Synod Council grant on-leave-from-call status to the Rev. Cynthia Baxter, effective February 8, 2019, until February 8, 2020;**

**That the Synod Council affirm the work of our Personnel Committee in reviewing our personnel policies;**

**That the Synod Council rename the Bishop's Congregational Mission Fund the Lower Susquehanna Synod Mission Fund; and**

**That the Synod Council designate the Lower Susquehanna Synod Mission Fund as the recipient of the offerings taken at the 2019 Synod Assembly.**

**SYNOD COUNCIL ACTIONS**

Bishop Dunlop moved the following Synod Council calls:

**ADOPTED:** That the Synod Council call the Rev. Eric Anderson to serve as Intentional Interim Pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church, Fisherville, Halifax, for the Messiah and St. Peter Lutheran Churches of Halifax, effective January 1, 2019, until December 31, 2019.  
**SC19.02.02.**

**ADOPTED:** That the Synod Council call the Rev. Daniel V. Biles III to serve as Intentional Interim Pastor of Calvary Lutheran Church, Dover, effective January 1, 2019, until December 31, 2019.  
**SC19.02.03.**

That the Synod Council call the Rev. Elizabeth Polanzke to serve as Intentional Interim Pastor of St. Mark Lutheran Church, York, effective January 28, 2019, until January 27, 2021.

Pastor Joel Folkemer asked why we are supplying this congregation another pastor when this congregation mistreated its former pastor. He wondered what our plan for this congregation is. Bishop Dunlop answered that he has had discussions with Pastor Polanzke and that she does have a plan for a process through which she will lead the congregation. Pastor McKee affirmed that Pastor Polanzke has developed a plan for the congregation that includes caring for the congregation's members and encouraging them to continue supporting the many ministries they support while discerning what God is calling them to do as a congregation.

The motion was before the council.

**ADOPTED:** That the Synod Council call the Rev. Elizabeth Polanzke to serve as Intentional Interim Pastor of St. Mark Lutheran Church, York, effective January 28, 2019, until January 27, 2021.  
**SC19.02.04.**

Secretary McKee moved the following on behalf of the Executive Committee:

That the Synod Council recommend to the 2019 Synod Assembly the adoption of the Proposed Rules of Procedure for the Election of a Bishop.

Vice President Bringman highlighted the most important steps in the proposed process for electing a bishop.

The motion was before the council.

**ADOPTED:** That the Synod Council recommend to the 2019 Synod Assembly the adoption of the SC19.02.05. Proposed Rules of Procedure for the Election of a Bishop.

Vice President Bringman asked for the Synod Council's help in interpreting Rule #5. Deacon Marsha Roscoe, assembly co-manager, informed the council that, if we were to copy the biographies of all seven nominees for all voting members, we would need to rent a second copier, which coupled with the cost of paper would be a large expense. It was the Synod Council's advice to post the biographies for all seven nominees on our synod's website, print a limited number of biographies for those whose biographies were posted previously, and to print 100 copies of the biographies for those whose biographies were not previously posted.

Pastor Timothy Seitz-Brown moved:

**ADOPTED:** That the election to fill an unexpired term on Synod Council be taken off the table.

Secretary McKee moved on the behalf of the Executive Committee:

That the Synod Council elect Dawn Frees to fill the unexpired term on Synod Council, expiring June 2019.

Vice President Bringman reminded the members of the council that we also had received a nomination information form from M. Jane Wigand. At the last meeting, the election to fill Brenda Hartzell's unexpired term on Synod Council was tabled until this time. Members of the council had requested an additional nomination, preferably someone who is serving on Finance and Budget Committee. Dawn Frees is a former member of Synod Council who is currently serving on Finance and Budget Committee.

The Executive Committee's recommendation was before the council.

**ADOPTED:** That the Synod Council elect Dawn Frees to fill the unexpired term on Synod Council, expiring June 2019.

Pastor Timothy Seitz-Brown moved the following on behalf of the Assembly Planning Committee:

**ADOPTED:** That the Synod Council recommend to the 2019 Synod Assembly the adoption of the SC19.02.07. Proposed Agenda for the 2019 Synod Assembly.

**ADOPTED:** That the Synod Council recommend to the 2019 Synod Assembly the adoption of the SC19.02.08. 2019 Proposed Rules of Procedure.

**ADOPTED:** That the Synod Council adopt the following complimentary packages for retired rostered ministers, rostered ministers on leave from call, rostered ministers called by the Synod Council whose agency or institution does not fund their attendance at Synod Assembly; seminarians under the care of the Lower Susquehanna Synod Candidacy Committee; lay officers, lay members of Synod Council, the Assembly Planning Committee, and the Worship at Assembly Committee who are not voting members of their congregations, and synod staff, who register by April 15, 2019: for residents, \$300; for commuters, \$240.

It was noted that we are no longer offering the spouses of our retired pastors a discounted registration for the assembly. The retired rostered ministers were informed last year that last year would be the last year that we were able to offer a discounted registration for their spouses.

Allen Stump moved the following on behalf of the Finance and Budget Committee:

That the Synod Council adopt a spending authorization, reducing the 2019 budget by \$135,000 from \$2,685,000 to \$2,550,000.

Bishop Dunlop informed the members of the Synod Council that our synod has been receiving a decreasing amount of mission support from our congregations. Ever decreasing mission support has become the trend. To deal with that trend, we have been cutting operational costs. We cannot continue to do that to the extent that we have had to cut operational expenses in the past. It is necessary for us to reduce the grants that we give to some of our partners by five to seven percent. By reducing the grants to some of our partners along with reducing expenditures in some operational areas of the budget, we were able to reduce our adopted 2019 budget by \$135,000.

Treasurer Stepansky said that it all depends on the mission support given by our congregations. When anticipated mission support goes below \$2.6 million, we need to adopt a spending authorization.

The motion was before the council.

**ADOPTED: That the Synod Council adopt a spending authorization, reducing the 2019 budget SC19.02.10. by \$135,000 from \$2,685,000 to \$2,550,000.**

Stella Ludwig, chair of the Gifts Discernment Committee, moved the following on behalf of the committee:

That the Synod Council nominate Lucinda L. Bringman for the position of synod vice president.

Lucinda L. Bringman explained her plan to resign as vice president after one year. She has adopted this plan so that the bishop's election and the vice president's election will be offset and will not occur at the same assembly. This also gives the Gifts Discernment Committee a year to advertise, educate, interview and recommend at least two persons for nomination as vice president. A new vice president then would be elected at the 2020 Synod Assembly and would serve a four-year term and be eligible to serve three consecutive terms. Lucinda will inform the assembly voting members about this plan and explain that this is the reason that there is only one nominee. It is possible for voting members to nominate others from the floor of the assembly if they disagree.

The motion was before the council.

**ADOPTED: That the Synod Council nominate Lucinda L. Bringman for the position of synod SC19.02.11. vice president.**

Stella Ludwig moved the following on behalf of the Gifts Discernment Committee.

**ADOPTED: That the Synod Council nominate Joyce E. Frigm, Nancy J. Martin, and the Rev. SC19.02.12. Beth A. Schlegel for the position of synod secretary.**

Secretary McKee moved the following motions on behalf of the Compensation and Benefits Committee:

**ADOPTED:** That the 2019 Synod Assembly set the 2020 minimum base salary and housing allowance for Ministers of Word and Sacrament with no years of experience and no parsonage provided at \$52,306 and set the 2020 minimum salary for Ministers of Word and Sacrament with no years of experience and with a parsonage provided at \$36,388, representing a 2.2% increase over the 2019 minimum salaries.

**ADOPTED:** That the 2019 Synod Assembly set the 2020 minimum base salary for Ministers of Word and Service with no years of experience at \$44,023, a 2.2% increase over the 2019 minimum salary.

Carlotta (“Chucki”) Strevig moved the following resolution from the special task course:

That the Lower Susquehanna Synod Council send the following resolution to the ELCA Church Council, asking for a Constitutional Amendment granting power to a bishop to discipline rostered ministers who commit a felony or who are indicated of child abuse:

**Whereas**, the health and safety of all God’s children are of the highest concern of this church;

**Whereas**, the current law requires reporting of all inappropriate behavior between adult and children;

**Whereas**, current statutes require evidence and appropriate due process, which may continue over an unduly long period of time;

**Whereas**, applicants cannot be entranced into the Candidacy Process if they cannot receive clearance to work with children or if allegations of inappropriate sexual behavior have been made against them;

**Whereas**, it is expensive to congregations to provide salary and benefits to rostered ministers when suspended and waiting for the outcome of legal action and disruptive to the congregation’s mission and ministry; therefore, be it

**Resolved**, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod Council request that the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America direct its Legal and Constitutional Review Committee to propose amendments to Chapter 20 of the ELCA constitution that would allow a synodical bishop automatically the options of disciplining a rostered minister who has been convicted of a felony or indicated in a child abuse situation by the government by private censure and admonition; suspension from the role and functions of a minister of Word and Sacrament or a minister of Word and Service for a designated period or until there is satisfactory evidence of repentance and amendment; or recommendation to Synod Council that the Synod Council remove the rostered minister from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church or the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church.

Pastor Rob Blezard stated that, in the resolved clause, the words “convicted of” should be amended to read “charged with.” There is a significant time delay between being charged and being convicted.

Jennifer Lau informed the members of the Synod Council that indicated is not an accepted concept across the nation. We need to use a term that is parallel across society. In the present case, we could use the word, “founded.” Indicated is shown in the loss of clearances.

Allen Stump wondered if we could be legally liable for adopting this resolution. Bishop Dunlop explained that our priority in adopting this resolution is to get action at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. An alternative could be a memorial adopted at the Synod Assembly. However, our Synod Council adopting a resolution to the Church Council is a more direct route.

Pastor Eric Anderson suggested that we clarify our intentions by adding additional whereas clauses.

Jennifer Lau moved:

**ADOPTED:** That the resolution be amended by replacing the words, “indicated of child abuse,” with the words, “named as a perpetrator in an indicated report of child abuse,” in the title and in the resolved clause.

The amended resolution was before Synod Council.

**ADOPTED:** That the Lower Susquehanna Synod Council send the following resolution to the SC19.02.15. ELCA Church Council, asking for a Constitutional Amendment granting power to a bishop to discipline rostered ministers who commit a felony or who are named as a perpetrator in an indicated report of child abuse.

**Whereas**, the health and safety of all God’s children are of the highest concern of this church;

**Whereas**, the current law requires reporting of all inappropriate behavior between adult and children;

**Whereas**, current statues require evidence and appropriate due process, which may continue over an unduly long period of time;

**Whereas**, applicants cannot be entranced into the Candidacy Process if they cannot receive clearance to work with children or if allegations of inappropriate sexual behavior have been made against them;

**Whereas**, it is expensive to congregations to provide salary and benefits to rostered ministers when suspended and waiting for the outcome of legal action and disruptive to the congregation’s mission and ministry; therefore, be it

**Resolved**, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod Council request that the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America direct its Legal and Constitutional Review Committee to propose amendments to Chapter 20 of the ELCA constitution that would allow a synodical bishop automatically the options of disciplining a rostered minister who has been convicted of a felony or named as a perpetrator in an indicated report of child abuse by private censure and admonition; suspension from the role and functions of a minister of Word and Sacrament or a minister of Word and Service for a designated period or until there is satisfactory evidence of repentance and amendment; or recommendation to Synod Council that the Synod Council remove the rostered minister from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church or the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church.

The members of the Synod Council enjoyed a fifteen-minute break. The meeting resumed at 12:15 p.m.

### **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop Dunlop provided a written report. The bishop announced that Benjamin Leese resigned from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament on January 25, with an effective date of February 22, 2019.

The bishop expressed his appreciation that the news articles did not center on the Church. He expressed his appreciation to Deacon Marsha Roscoe for the marvelous job she did working with the media. Vice President Bringman commended Bishop Dunlop and Deacon Roscoe on their dedicated work around this issue. The members of the Synod Council shared their appreciation with applause. The vice president also expressed her heartfelt thanks to Jason Roscoe for quickly updating our website as these events transpired. The bishop shared that this incident has been all consuming. He feels that this is the only thing that we did for the past six months. Many things remained undone during this period.

Bishop Dunlop announced that Pastor Sharron Blezard's health remains a major concern and that she is going on short-term disability beginning March 1, 2019. He plans to cover her responsibilities with our existing staff and, if necessary, secure some temporary help. His restaffing efforts are hindered by the bishop's election. He cannot ask someone to serve on synod staff since they could find themselves without a call at the end of February 2020.

The bishop told the Synod Council and he and Treasurer Stepansky are working with a task force of the Compensation and Benefits Committee to update the salary development worksheet. He does not believe that pastors learn as much during their later years of ministry as during their more formative early years of ministry. When rostered ministers with more experience yearly add the supplemental salary adjustments, they soon price themselves out of available calls.

The bishop informed the members of the Synod Council that in April he most likely will bring a motion about restructuring our conferences. Pastor Jennifer Hope-Tringali has been working with a task force of deans looking anew at our congregations and how they can relate together with those in close proximity around an anchor or anchor congregations. The recommendation is that our 14 conferences become eight. The one problem may be some congregations that will find themselves relating to a different group of congregations.

Bishop Dunlop explained a difficulty that arose with retired rostered ministers who look to Well Span for medical services. These are most of our retired rostered ministers and spouses living in the southern tier of our synod. Portico contracted with Humana to provide supplemental medical insurance for Medicare recipients. However, Well Span would not bill Humana for services rendered. Those covered by Humana would need to pay the cost of their services before the services would be provided. The bishop along with Portico president and CEO, the Rev. Jeffrey D. Thiemann, the CEO and CFO of Well Span and Humana, worked things out through scheduled telephone conferences. However, Well Span did not inform all their providers that they would accept Humana Portico, so our rostered retired ministers and spouses were denied services or forced to pay the cost of care prior to treatment and reimbursement from Humana. Another round of negotiations appears to have corrected this problem and Well Span providers are now accepting Humana Portico patients and billing Humana. If anyone still encounters a difficulty, Debbie Clark can provide them with a toll-free telephone number to call to speak to a liaison at Humana. The bishop thanked Debbie Clark for helping so many of our retired rostered ministers and spouses receive the medical treatment that they needed.

Treasurer Joseph Stepansky congratulated Bishop Dunlop and Connie on their fortieth wedding anniversary. The members of Synod Council congratulated them with their applause.

### **REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT**

Vice President Lucinda L. Bringman submitted a written report. The vice president urged the members of the Synod Council to register for the Synod Assembly by April 15, 2019, to avoid any late fees. She asked the members of Synod Council to be able to explain her decision to resign as vice president after

one year, the Proposed Rules of Procedure for the Election of a Bishop, and all information about the Synod Assembly at the Spring Conference Assembly. All members of Synod Council will receive a script, which will provide them with assembly information.

### **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

Treasurer Joseph M. Stepansky submitted a written report and a Statement of Operational Activities. He announced that the current estimated surplus is about \$62,000. Mission support continues to decrease. Our investments are currently around \$2.3 million. The Treasurer's Office is preparing for the annual audit. The audit is scheduled for the third week of March. It is being conducted earlier this year to ensure that we have an audit report for the Synod Assembly.

Vice President Bringman thanked Treasurer Stepansky for the fine job he is doing. She appreciates that he provides regular updates on our financial status. The members of the Synod Council expressed their appreciation to the treasurer with their applause.

Pastor Timothy Seitz-Brown asked if things are similar around the church in other synods and in other denominations especially among our ecumenical partners or are we unique in seeing a decline in mission support. The bishop reported that conditions are similar across the church. Our ELCA is 40% smaller than it was when the ELCA was formed, and yet we still have the same number of synods. The ELCA needs to restructure itself. Ministry today is exciting. However, it will take time to turn the current trends around. We need to strengthen and stabilize our congregations. We need to realize that some congregations will close, and we must let them go. The big picture is that the church is not growing in the United States or Europe. However, the church is growing in Africa, South America, and Asia. There are more Lutherans in Tanzania than in the United States.

Pastor Seitz-Brown said that he is hopeful today because of Pastor Pam Illick's presentation. There are hopeful and exciting things happening in our synod. Treasurer Stepansky shared the story of the merger of Zion Lutheran Church, Penbrook, into the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Paxtang. The merged congregation is a stronger congregation. The merger has resulted in beginning many new ministries. Bishop Dunlop said a congregation selling its building and merging with another congregation is a show stopper. Pastor Rob Blezard put in a plug for the stewardship resources that he has produced and that are available to all congregations.

### **REPORT OF THE SYNOD SECRETARY**

Secretary Thomas E. McKee submitted a written report. Pastor McKee shared that he is very pleased that the Gifts Discernment Committee interviewed six very competent individuals who were willing to accept nomination as synod secretary and that the Synod Council nominated three very dedicated and qualified individuals for the secretary's position. He stated that it is a comfort to him to know that the work of the synod secretary will be in fine hands when he retires. He stated, while he will miss everyone and the work he has done, he has begun checking off tasks and events as he completes them for the last time.

### **REPORT OF THE SYNOD COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The Synod Council Executive Committee provided draft minutes of its January 24, 2019, meeting. Vice President Bringman stated that she has appointed a task force to develop the biographical form for those identified as having gifts to be bishop and finally for all bishop nominees and to compile a list of questions to be asked on the biographical form and in the question and answer period with the final three nominees. Those on this task force are Jennifer Lau, Virgil Gibson, and Lucinda L. Bringman.

## **REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEES OF SYNOD COUNCIL**

**Assembly Planning Committee** provided minutes of its December 13, 2018, and its February 7, 2019, meetings.

**Finance and Budget Committee** met January 28, 2019, meeting.

**Gifts Discernment Committee** provided minutes of its January 6, 2019, a summary report of the process used to determine nominees for synod vice president and secretary, and minutes of its February 9, 2019, meeting.

**Personnel Committee** offered draft minutes of its January 10, 2019, meeting.

## **REPORTS OF THE LIAISONS**

**Lower Susquehanna Synod Women of the ELCA** liaison, Lois A. Griffiths, provided a written report. Vice President Bringman welcomed Lois Griffiths as the liaison of the Lower Susquehanna Synod Women of the ELCA.

## **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 Sharron Blezard provided a written report.

Pastor Jennifer Hope-Tringali was excused from the meeting.

Pastor Richard Jorgensen is on sabbatical.

## **REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

**Compensation and Benefits Committee** liaison, Virgil Gibson, submitted a liaison's report of its January 31, 2019, meeting.

**The Committee of Conference Deans** provided minutes of its January 14, 2019, meeting.

**World Hunger Committee** liaison, Pastor Jillian Riddle, provided a liaison's report on this ministry.

**Konde Diocese Committee** liaison, Allen Stump, provided a liaison's report of the committee's November and January meetings.

**Nominating Committee** provided minutes of its January 23, 2019, meeting.

## **REPORTS OF TASK FORCES**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Pastor Thomas McKee moved:

That the Synod Council amend the Sexual Misconduct Policy Pg. 9, part D, paragraph 5 by striking the phrase “either with or without pay” and the phrase “If the accused refuses, the bishop may ask the congregation to place the accused on involuntary leave of absence, or,”. The bishop also may ask the accused to take a leave of absence, ~~either with or without pay~~, until the investigation and/or disciplinary proceedings are concluded. ~~If the accused refuses, the bishop may ask the congregation to place the accused on involuntary leave of absence, or, in~~ In extreme circumstances, the bishop may ask the accused to resign his or her call or to resign from the roster of the ELCA.

Vice President Bringman explained the reasons for these amendments. The bishop cannot ask a rostered minister to take a leave without pay. A congregation cannot place a rostered minister on an involuntary leave of absence. Both are forbidden in ELCA polity.

Pastor Joel Folkemer requested that this document and all our policies be reviewed to ensure that we are using gender-neutral inclusive language.

The motion to amend was before the Synod Council.

**ADOPTED:** **That the Synod Council amend the Sexual Misconduct Policy Pg. 9, part D, SC19.02.16. paragraph 5 by striking the phrase “either with or without pay” and the phrase “If the accused refuses, the bishop may ask the congregation to place the accused on involuntary leave of absence, or,”. The bishop also may ask the accused to take a leave of absence, ~~either with or without pay~~, until the investigation and/or disciplinary proceedings are concluded. ~~If the accused refuses, the bishop may ask the congregation to place the accused on involuntary leave of absence, or, in~~ In extreme circumstances, the bishop may ask the accused to resign his or her call or to resign from the roster of the ELCA.**

The amended paragraph reads as follows: “Depending upon the circumstances, the bishop may ask the accused to voluntarily agree to certain restrictions upon his or her ministry – such as agreeing not to have contact with children – until the investigation and/or disciplinary proceedings are concluded. If the accused refuses, the bishop may ask the congregation to impose the restrictions upon the accused. The bishop also may ask the accused to take a leave of absence until the investigation and/or disciplinary proceedings are concluded. In extreme circumstances, the bishop may ask the accused to resign his or her call or to resign from the roster of the ELCA.”

Pastor McKee moved:

**ADOPTED:** **That the Synod Council adopt the amended Sexual Misconduct policy. SC19.02.17.**

Pastor McKee moved:

That the Synod Council adopt the Child Protection Policy as reviewed by Synod Council as of February 16, 2019, pending further review by counsel.

Pastor Joel Folkemer stated that this Child Protection Policy is too complex and not very useful to most of our congregations. He further stated that his congregation's insurance carrier said that it was better not to adopt a policy if the congregation cannot fulfill its stated obligations in the policy. He asked what we are doing to help our congregations adopt a policy that is very basic to their own individual needs. Vice President Bringman said not to follow one's own policy would make leaders liable. Pastor Blezard informed Pastor Folkemer that he is available to meet privately with congregations to help them decide on the scope of their child protection policies and that he has various materials and a variety of options for their consideration.

The motion was before the Synod Council.

**ADOPTED: That the Synod Council adopt the Child Protection Policy as reviewed by Synod SC19.02.18. Council as of February 16, 2019, pending further review by counsel.**

Charlie Roberts requested that a statement be added to indicate that these two policies were reviewed on February 16, 2019.

The members of Synod Council discussed the changes to the documents, "Mission Snapshot" and "A Bishop's Gifts for God's Mission." Working as a committee of the whole, the members of the Synod Council authorized amendments to these documents. Deacon Marsha Roscoe will take this information and reformat these two documents, readying them for use at the Spring Conference Assemblies.

By consensus, the Synod Council authorized that, along with these two documents, all the conference comments about these two documents and the constitutional duties of the bishop be posted on the website.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Vice President Bringman thanked Zach Weiss for serving as the greeter at the front door and Pastor Eric Anderson, Emma Johns, Stella Ludwig, and Chucki Strevig for providing refreshments.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m. with the praying of the Lord's Prayer.

Thomas E. McKee  
synod secretary  
2/19/19