

**LOWER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD, ELCA
SYNOD COUNCIL
Draft Minutes
November 16, 2019**

The Lower Susquehanna Synod Council met for its regular meeting on Saturday, November 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.

ROLL CALL*

* (z) by zoom

Members present:	Bishop James S. Dunlop Beth A. Schlegel Matthew B. Best Meredith Killian Askey Dallas J. Barclift, Jr. Carlotta “Chucki” C. Strevig Virgil Gibson Jack M. Horner Jennifer R. Lau	Lucinda L. Bringman Joseph M. Stepansky Kay A. Hinkle Debra K. Barrett Timothy J. Seitz-Brown Jillian E. Riddle Zachary J. Weiss Theodore D. Wolfe	
Staff present:	Robert C. Blezard Deborah M. Clark	Elizabeth G. Martini Marsha L. Roscoe	Dana J. Blouch-Hanson Charles R. Roberts III
Liaison present:	Peggi Norman (WELCA)		
Guest present:	Jennifer H. Richards		
Members excused:	Daniel Picone Stella Ludwig	Joel S.B. Folkemer	Gretchen Ierien
Staff excused:	Richard E. T. Jorgensen Jr.		

DEVOTIONS

Carlotta “Chucki” Strevig led us in reflecting on Job 38, God’s response to the agonizing suffering of Job. These words remind us of God’s abundant provision for our needs even when things are going awry. Chucki related some of her times of suffering and encouraged us with the spiritual exercise she found helpful. She asks, “In the pain of life’s challenges, what can I give thanks for?” She gave us time to reflect with each other on times of pain in our lives and to share what helped give us hope. She closed with the original serenity prayer which calls for trusting in God’s will for all things.

MINISTRY HIGHLIGHT

Pastor Jennifer H. Richards from St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in New Cumberland and Communities of Hope presented the renewal ministry in those communities. St. Paul’s was involved in the initial R3 renewal process and has fully engaged the principles learned there. She provided handouts related to the Welcome Table Dinner Church, a recovery ministry of St. Paul’s, started by Pastor Elaine Dent and continued by Pastor Sharron Blezard. The Welcome Table Dinner Church emerged from a round-table meeting in response to the opioid addiction epidemic in New Cumberland. It meets semi-monthly for one hour just prior to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. Using resources from 12-step programs, the Dinner Church gathering begins with a study of Scripture texts, texts from 12-step literature, and story-telling. The group shares dinner and then moves into Holy Communion, in which the healing power of confession is manifest in being open about the brokenness of the self, the world, the institutional church, and sharing

the forgiveness of Christ with another. Pastor Richards led us in singing a paraphrase of the institution narrative set to Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" that is meaningful to the ministry.

Pastor Richards shared the work of the other ministry she cares for, Communities of Hope. Communities of Hope was started by Pastor Jennifer Hope-Tringali as a coffee shop ministry in Harrisburg. It became an opportunity for identifying and mentoring gifts for leadership. Those leaders were sent out to begin new ministries, including The Tribe, a martial arts ministry for middle-schoolers; a VFW Dinner Church, whose leader, Rose Tonkin, is now discerning a call to ministry; and Carol Caring, a hair salon ministry, whose clients meet once a month for Scripture study and once a month for Dinner Church. Pastor Richard Jorgensen mentors Pastor Richards and together they are planning an equipping retreat for all the Communities of Hope leaders, who themselves are a community. They are facing the challenge now of teaching stewardship to sustain these ministries, currently funded through grants. Virgil Gibson asked if Communities of Hope could be an internship site, since conventional congregations are in decline. Pastor Richards responded that such a ministry requires flexibility and spontaneity. Leaders themselves are a community gathered around Word and Sacrament and then sent out, gathered in again and sent out again. Bishop James Dunlop inquired about the Welcome Center at St. Paul's, a building project underway. Pastor Richards reported that it is being used in a variety of ways and they are looking to connect Communities of Hope there, as well. Jen Lau observed that as she coached St. Paul's in the R3 process, which focuses on relationship with God, relationship with one another and relationship with the community, there was always a spark among the people. They envisioned things and acted on them. Vice President Bringman said that Charlie Roberts noted that the congregations participating in the R3 process form a sense of community with each other and also see themselves connect with our whole synod, something we did not anticipate being part of R3. Pastor Matthew Best commented that it is good to be a host congregation for an R3 event, because of the hospitality.

CONSENT AGENDA

Vice President Bringman introduced the Consent Agenda.

Virgil Gibson moved, and Jennifer Lau seconded:

ADOPTED That the Consent Agenda be adopted.
SC19.11.55.

That the Synod Council approve the Minutes of the September 21, 2019 Synod Council meeting.

That the Synod Council elect to the Lutheran Camping Corporation of Central Pennsylvania Board of Directors Daryl Ackerman for a first term, expiring 2022; the Rev. Brenda Kiser for a first term, expiring 2022; the Rev. Stephen Herr for a first term, expiring 2022; and Cornelia Taylor for a second term, expiring 2022.

That the Synod Council elect to the SpiriTrust Lutheran Board of Directors (contingent on the SpiriTrust Lutheran Board of Directors approving these motions when they meet on November 26, 2019) Robert Bowen, for a first three-year term, expiring December 31, 2022; Angela Thomas, for a first three-year term, expiring December 31, 2022; and the Rev. Mark Oldenburg, for a second three-year term, expiring December 31, 2022.

That the Synod Council continue the on-leave-from-call status of the Rev. Cynthia Baxter, effective February 8, 2020, until February 8, 2021.

That the Synod Council approve the retirement requests of the Rev. Scott K. Davis, effective December 31, 2019; the Rev. Kathy A. Swords, effective January 1, 2020; and the Rev. Dennis L. Trout, effective January 31, 2020.

That the Synod Council approve that the total compensation paid to the Rev. James S. Dunlop for the period beginning January 1, 2020, shall include an annual payment of \$22,500 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 total compensation paid to the Rev. Robert Blezard for the period beginning January 1, 2020, shall include an annual payment of \$25,000 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 total compensation paid to the Rev. Dana Blouch-Hanson for the period beginning January 1, 2020, shall include an annual payment of \$21,000 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 total compensation paid to the Rev. Richard E. T. Jorgensen Jr. for the period beginning January 1, 2020, shall include an annual payment of \$19,000 to be designated as a housing allowance within the meaning of that term as used in Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code; and that the total compensation paid to the Rev. Elizabeth Martini for the period beginning January 1, 2020, shall include an annual payment of \$0 to be designated as a housing allowance within the meaning of that term as used in Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code.

SYNOD COUNCIL ACTIONS

Bishop James Dunlop moved, and Jennifer Lau seconded:

**ADOPTED That the Synod Council call the Rev. Katrina Holland as Intentional Interim Pastor
SC19.11.56. of St. James Lutheran Church, York, effective September 16, 2019, until September
15, 2020.**

Vice President Lucinda Bringman noted that intentional interim pastors receive specialized training and certification for this ministry and for that reason, they are called by the Synod Council. Pastors without specialized training are contracted for their interim service rather than called. Meredith Askey wondered how it is decided which type of interim pastor is asked to serve. Bishop Dunlop responded that intentional interim pastors are called when there are special needs for healing, such as conflict in the congregation or the end of a long pastorate. Virgil Gibson wondered if this call can be extended. Bishop Dunlop answered yes, if the call process is not resolved within the year, the call could be extended. The motion was adopted.

Bishop James Dunlop moved and Pastor Matthew Best seconded:

That the Synod Council call the Rev. Amy Wagner as Spiritual Care Coordinator for Heartland Hospice in Carlisle, effective December 2, 2019, until December 1, 2020.

Pastor Jillian Riddle asked why this was a one-year call when the Synod Council in February 2017 acted to issue three-year term calls to chaplains who are not yet endorsed or board-certified so that they could work to get their credentials. Why are we not issuing this call in the same way? Bishop Dunlop said he is willing to amend his motion. Pastor Riddle reported that Pastor Wagner is just starting the process and is meeting soon with Glenn Beard (Director of Church Relations and Pastoral Care at LutherCare). Vice President Lucinda Bringman explained that all pastors and deacons serve under call, either from a

Congregation Council, a Synod Council, or the Church Council. Chaplains on the Lower Susquehanna Synod territory serve under a Synod Council call. She said we will simply amend the motion to be consistent with the practice adopted in 2017.

ADOPTED **That the Synod Council call the Rev. Amy Wagner as Spiritual Care Coordinator SC19.11.57. for Heartland Hospice in Carlisle, effective December 2, 2019, until December 1, 2022.**

Vice President Lucinda Bringman circulated the list for the Mission Support Gratitude Tour, inviting Synod Council members to sign up to make congregational visits. Pastor Rob Blezard has sent an email with instructions about conducting these visits. Vice President Bringman gave a brief tour of the synod Minutes Book as a reference tool, indicating where to find contact information, committee membership, congregational information, and the constitution. The book of the minutes for the 2019 Synod Assembly will soon be available.

Pastor Matthew Best, member of the Assembly Planning Committee moved:

ADOPTED **That the Synod Council set the dates for the 2020 Synod Assembly of the Lower SC19.11.58. Susquehanna Synod as follows: Business Session on Saturday, June 6, 2020 at Messiah College and Edification Days on Saturday, May 16, 2020, at St. Peter Lutheran Church in Neffsville (Lancaster) and Saturday, May 30, 2020, at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in York.**

Vice President Bringman clarified that the Edification Days are identical, and we expect voting members of the assembly to choose one of those days to attend. Everyone is expected to attend the Business Session on June 6. These are also the expectations for Synod Council members, though we may choose to attend both Edification Days. Peggi Norman from the Lower Susquehanna Synod Women of the ELCA wondered what this meant for displays. Vice President Bringman responded that the Assembly Planning Committee decided to let each group decide for itself how to handle its displays. She anticipates that each of the edification sites will have space available for displays. Virgil Gibson noted that this schedule should lower the cost for congregations, since they don't have to pay for overnight lodging. Hopefully more people will attend. Vice President Bringman added that the Edification Days are open to anyone, not just voting members. The motion was adopted.

Kay Hinkle, liaison to the Compensation and Benefits Committee moved and Meredith Askey seconded:

ADOPTED **That the Synod Council adopt the revised Salary Development Worksheets for SC19.11.59. Ministers of Word and Sacrament and for Ministers of Word and Service.**

Vice President Lucinda Bringman explained that the worksheets are used by congregations to negotiate the salary for their rostered ministers. Bishop James Dunlop said that we previously used a salary grid based on experience alone; there would be a starting salary and a bump-up for each year of experience. About six years ago, we talked with other synods and discovered that many were including other factors in their calculations. The salary grid did not account for the value of second-career vocations, the level of education achieved, the longevity in the current call, or participation in continuing education. The grid was designed only to set the minimum salary. Vice President Bringman indicated that the starting figures at the top of the new worksheets were approved by the 2019 Synod Assembly. The Compensation and Benefits Committee looks at the inflation rate, consumer indices, comparative rates, and the like, and recommends changes to the minimum salary guidelines. Bishop Dunlop noted that this is a tool used by congregations when calling a rostered minister, when they are expected to meet the bottom figure as a minimum. Vice President Bringman noted the exception when a rostered minister is moving toward

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retirement and wants a smaller church who cannot afford the minimum. Bishop Dunlop explained that the new worksheets cap the increases for longevity and adjust for congregational size. For ministers of Word and Sacrament, it also adjusts for staff ministry, since the scope of responsibility for a lead pastor is greater than that of an associate pastor. He explained the distinction between the calculation from the congregational size table and the formula calculation: since the break points on the table are so great, the formula mitigates the steep jump. He added that the calculations for ministers of Word and Service are like those for associate pastors, since there is no lead staff person. Meredith Askey asked whether it is more common for ministers of Word and Service to be part-time. Bishop Dunlop answered no, most are full-time. Meredith Askey noted that congregations need a pastor, so a base salary makes sense; but they can hire anyone for other staff positions. She expressed concern that establishing a minimum salary for ministers of Word and Service would be dehumanizing, since they might be passed over for less expensive candidates. Bishop Dunlop responded that this is a dilemma and we are encouraging congregations to call ministers of Word and Service as certified servants of and for the whole church. We also want to compensate our leaders fairly and justly. Meredith Askey also asked how these worksheets are used in multi-parish settings. Bishop Dunlop answered that the average worship attendance for all the congregations in the parish is used. He noted that there are other metrics that could be used, but average worship attendance is common to all congregations. Baptized membership is inaccurate because of inconsistent roll-cleaning. These worksheets were tested among a variety of scenarios and worked consistently. The old tool did not work at all for very large congregations. Pastor Tim Seitz-Brown wondered about the conversation last year regarding a more just process for deacons and sustainable compensation for all ministers. Bishop Dunlop responded that in developing the worksheets, the Compensation and Benefits Committee did not discuss the base salary, since that had already been determined by the Synod Assembly. A different recommendation may be made next year at the Synod Assembly, after coming to the Synod Council in the spring. Zach Weiss noted the change in compensation for years of rostered experience and wondered how the worksheet tool gives congregations a chance to renegotiate with the rostered minister. Bishop Dunlop said that in typical practice, the tool is used at the time of call and then the salary is increased annually by a certain percentage when the budget is presented; however, the tool can be used annually. The Letter of Call permits the compensation to be changed upward yearly by mutual agreement; it may not be changed downward.

The motion was adopted.

Chucki Strevig, Chair of the Constitution Committee, moved:

ADOPTED That the Synod Council approve the 2019 Bylaws of the Lutheran Camping Corporation of Central Pennsylvania.
SC19.11.60.

Vice President Bringman asked Secretary Beth Schlegel to explain why we approve these bylaws. Secretary Schlegel responded that because the Lutheran Camping Corporation is a ministry affiliated with the synod, their constitution requires it.

Zach Weiss, Chair of the Personnel Committee moved:

ADOPTED That the Synod Council set the 2020 base salary and housing allowance for Bishop Dunlop at \$101,178.
SC19.11.61.

Vice President Bringman noted that the bishop had requested no increase in his salary, but the committee overruled him. The motion was adopted; Bishop James Dunlop abstained.

Zach Weiss, Chair of the Personnel Committee moved:

ADOPTED **That the Synod Council authorize for Level I executives a 2.2 percent increase in their base salaries and housing allowances, and that the Synod Council set their base salaries and housing allowances for 2020 at: the Rev. Robert Blezard, \$67,050; the Rev. Dana J. Blouch-Hanson, \$63,365; the Rev. Richard Jorgensen, \$81,050; and the Rev. Elizabeth Martini, \$23,000 (15 hours/ week).**
SC19.11.62.

There was no discussion. The motion was adopted.

ADOPTED **That the Synod Council authorize a 2.2 percent increase in salaries across the board for all remaining staff in 2020.**
SC19.11.63.

There was no discussion. The motion was adopted.

CONVERSATION: SYNOD COUNCIL AND NOMINATIONS

Vice President Lucinda Bringman called on Kay Hinkle, chair of the Gifts Discernment and Nominations Committees to speak about that process. Kay told us that the committees are seriously looking for names for the positions in the Nominations Handbook. The challenge is determining who has gifts to serve and then giving them time to discern and fill out the information forms within a specified time frame. It is the duty of the Synod Council to suggest names, especially for Vice President. The Nominating Committee includes representatives from each conference. Vice President Bringman explained that we are seeking the names of pastors and lay persons, men and women, to serve on the Synod Council, as well as three pastors and two lay persons for the Consultation Committee. She delineated two issues regarding the Consultation Committee: First, Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson must go off the committee, since she is now an Assistant to the Bishop, so we will appoint someone to serve until the Synod Assembly; the Synod Assembly will elect five persons to serve for a six-year term, effectively staggering the terms. Vice President Bringman asked whether the Synod Council would permit the Executive Committee to make that appointment and called for a motion to that effect. Virgil Gibson moved:

ADOPTED **That the Executive Committee appoint a pastor to serve on the Consultation Committee until the 2020 Synod Assembly.**
SC19.11.64.

Bishop Dunlop clarified the role of the Consultation Committee in situations of conflict. Pastor Jillian Riddle wondered if the Consultation Committee worked together with the Committee on Discipline. Bishop Dunlop explained that procedures for disciplinary matters are stipulated in the ELCA constitution and that sometimes he needs the Committee on Discipline and at other times the Consultation Committee. Since he has been bishop, he has used the Consultation Committee only once. The motion was adopted.

Vice President Bringman clarified that the Nominating Committee is constituted to maximize opportunities across the synod. The Gifts Discernment Committee is tasked with identifying candidates for the office of Vice President. Synod Council lay members should discern if they have the gifts for this office and consider serving.

Vice President Lucinda Bringman reviewed the changes from the 2019 Churchwide Assembly that refer to ministers of Word and Service as deacons and places them on the roster as ordained. Our constitution often uses the term “clergy” and will need to be updated to reflect these changes. Secretary Beth Schlegel indicated that the Constitution Committee will be working on that. Vice President Bringman wondered, “Given these changes, do we want to designate a seat for deacons on the Synod Council?” Meredith Askey responded that she would like to see a designated seat for an LGBTQIA+ person, for example, but she sees doing so as limiting, since it is hard enough to find people willing to serve. Pastor Jack Horner asked whether we should be referring to “rostered ministers”? Bishop Dunlop admitted that the church has no clear definition of “clergy”. Pastor Horner stated that he does not think it is wise to designate a
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seat, but it would be helpful to use the clearer terms of pastor or deacon. Secretary Beth Schlegel clarified that the synod constitution +S10.01 does not specify the membership of the Synod Council beyond the officers of the synod. It is the Lower Susquehanna Synod bylaw S10.01.01 that stipulates the number of members in various categories. Vice President Bringman noted that a bylaw must be amended by the Synod Assembly but wondered if the Synod Council could enact a continuing resolution that would facilitate the participation of deacons. Secretary Schlegel indicated positively, that could be done. Pastor Timothy Seitz-Brown moved, and Virgil Gibson seconded:

ADOPTED **That the Synod Council enact continuing resolution S10.01.01.r.A19, stating that SC19.11.65. for the purposes of the 2020 election, the Synod Council understands “clergy” to include ministers of Word and Sacrament and ministers of Word and Service.**

The motion carried.

Vice President Lucinda Bringman asked whether we wanted to designate a Synod Council seat for an LGBTQIA+ person. She noted that the ELCA’s goal is to include 10% persons of color and/or language other than English. Pastor Matthew Best suggested that the Nominating Committee talk with people to see if they are comfortable with that. Chucki Strevig expressed concern that making such a designation could make us vulnerable to civil rights issues, since asking people about their sexual orientation could set us up for claims of discrimination. Bishop James Dunlop encouraged us to ask the Nominating Committee to be aware of our desire for diversity but not to set quotas about it. Secretary Schlegel noted that although we may set quotas for offices of pastor and deacon, that is distinct from a designation for personal qualities such as sexual orientation. Dallas Barclift spoke as a person of color that it is important to be aware, but we shouldn’t beat ourselves up about it. He said that often, there is more going on than we can control – cultural issues, how people perceive themselves, and the like. Meredith Askey said that openness about including people creates a culture of welcome that makes people feel more comfortable. Dallas Barclift said that people don’t want to be treated differently or placed in a category; they just want to be treated as a person. Meredith Askey asserted that it is important that we think about it so that we recognize our own biases.

Vice President Lucinda Bringman reported that the staff recently participated in racial justice training and she encouraged the Synod Council to consider setting aside time at one of our meetings to do similar work. Pastor Tim Seitz-Brown told us that the Toward Racial Justice Task Force is planning 8 or 9 trainings in various locations in the synod. He urged Synod Council members to participate and with their presence to support this effort. A schedule of the events will be distributed when it is available. Pastor Seitz-Brown reminded us that Dylann Roof, killer of the nine people at Emanuel AME Church, was raised in an ELCA congregation. It is possible that such a person is in one of our congregations. The Toward Racial Justice Task Force is addressing this.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Jim Dunlop provided a written report. The bishop reported that he has been working with treasurer Joe Stepansky to review the 2020 budget allocations and make changes within the bottom line approved by the Synod Assembly.

He reported that the Memorial we sent to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly regarding the Gold+ health care standard throughout the ELCA resulted in the Churchwide Assembly giving the task of making a recommendation to the Conference of Bishops with the Church Council and Portico. Bishop Dunlop, Portico CEO Jeff Thiemann, and ELCA Treasurer Lori Fedyk are working on this recommendation.

Bishop Dunlop updated us regarding Ben Leese, who was under review for misconduct last year, criminally charged in an indicated case of inappropriate contact with a child and who resigned from the *Synod Council Draft Minutes/November 16, 2019/page 7*

roster of ELCA ministers of Word and Sacrament. His case has been moving through the court system and he has been approved for the Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition (ARD) program for sex offenders. The district attorney will determine the next steps once Mr. Leese has completed the program. Due to the nature of the charges, he will never return to the ELCA rosters and he cannot work in any setting where there may be contact with children. Deacon Marsha Roscoe spoke with a police officer familiar with the case who told her that Mr. Leese had entered a guilty plea to qualify for the ARD program. He will spend the 23 months of that program in the county; otherwise it would go to the state. The ARD process does not guarantee expungement of his record and it is more difficult generally for sex crimes to be expunged at all. Vice President Lucinda Bringman said that his wife continues to serve as a pastor and the congregation has requested that Mr. Leese not attend. It is a difficult situation all around and requires our prayers. Kay Hinkle reported that her conversations with people from Garden of Grace indicate that they believe the situation was handled properly and thoroughly and that they are moving on in a positive way.

Vice President Bringman asked if there were any questions for the bishop. Meredith Askey, regarding the budget review, wondered whether the monies from Pastor Hope-Tringali's compensation that were reallocated for mission projects could in any way be redirected to her ministry in Guatemala. Bishop Dunlop said probably not. Those monies are being allocated to the Sudanese worshipping community and to a congregational community outreach. He acknowledged her concern and reported that he is working with the ELCA Global Mission Unit to designate Jennifer and David Hope-Tringali as "missioners". Then, we could call them to serve as "missioners of the Lower Susquehanna Synod in Guatemala." They lead a United Lutheran Seminary program in Guatemala. Vice President Bringman noted that we must be diplomatic in this matter, since there is a synod with a companion relationship to Guatemala. Pastor Jillian Riddle asked whether the Hope-Tringalis could be partnered with that synod? Bishop Dunlop responded that he wants to keep them on the LSS roster, since they may come back. He would also like to connect the synod with Guatemala.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

Vice President Lucinda L. Bringman submitted a written report. She inquired of Synod Council members what support they needed for the Gratitude Tour. Virgil Gibson reported visits he has scheduled. The bishop reported that he has done several visits, which have been positive. Treasurer Joe Stepansky reported a good experience at his visit, noting the comment that "the synod showed up". Deb Barrett reported that people are responding positively to the synod "paying attention to us." Vice President Bringman requested that Synod Council members making visits email her with the information regarding which congregations were visited, the date, and any comments.

Vice President Bringman noted that the date of the May Synod Council meeting was changed to Thursday, May 7, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. to free up a Saturday, since two are filled with Edification Days and another is an R3 event. She noted with a smile that the May meeting is usually a light agenda.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Secretary Beth A. Schlegel submitted a written report. She noted that the required amendments to the Synod Constitution are in effect and no action needs to be taken.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Treasurer Joseph M. Stepansky submitted a written report and a Statement of Operational Activities. He reported that Mission Support receipts are down two percent under last year, which is about \$50,000. He revised the forecast to 97% of last year's revenue. He looked for November to be better than October, but we might not see an increase until December. He thinks we may be looking at a \$2.4 million forecast for coming years. The value of the endowment investments as of 11/16/19 is \$2,323,046. Treasurer Stepansky reported that there will no longer be paper remittance forms. They are now online and are

fillable. Just print twice for a copy. He is working toward a completely paperless system. He forecasts the deficit this year to come in at \$24,793 with \$2.479 million in revenue.

CONVERSATION: SYNOD MISSION

Vice president Lucinda Bringman opened a conversation regarding the mission of the synod. She noted that the Mission Committee is working on this, but she wanted us to be aware of some of the issues. The specific role of the synod in raising up leaders is exercised in the areas of candidacy and mobility. She asked the bishop to clarify those areas. Bishop Dunlop explained that the Candidacy Committee discerns whether candidates have the gifts for ministry. This is a very hard-working committee, recently spending two days at the seminary with candidates in the discernment process. The committee accompanies and examines candidates for ministry through three stages of discernment: entrance into seminary, endorsement prior to internship, and approval prior to ordination. At any stage, it may be that the committee determines that someone is not moved forward in the process. Once candidates are approved for ordination and graduate from seminary, they are placed into a pool of candidates and assigned by the Conference of Bishops to regions throughout the church. Region 8 bishops believe the current assignment process does not work. This year, there were 120 candidates from the seminaries. Of those 120, 90 were restricted to particular areas, leaving 30 available to the whole church. Of those 30, Region 8 got three; and of those three, Lower Susquehanna Synod got two. The process worked well when most candidates were in the “pipeline”: college to seminary to call. Now, more candidates are second career, more are restricted because of an employed spouse, and this affects the distribution of candidates. Region 8 is now pulling out of the assignment process. Instead, all Region 8 students will go back to their synod of origin and will either be placed there or made available to the wider church. This is the way it used to be done in the LCA. Bishop Dunlop further explained that there are some areas that are producers of church leaders and some areas that are consumers. Our synod is neutral in that regard. We would not force people to stay in this synod if they really felt called to go elsewhere. Currently, if one synod in a region allows restrictions, it lowers the number of students assigned to the whole region. Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson commented that now is a good time to make a change, since the ELCA recognizes that the process is not working. Bishop Dunlop related that North Carolina produces more leaders than they need and invest a large portion of their resources to that effort. The Upper Midwest, on the other hand, has the greatest need for leaders. Pastor Blouch-Hanson reported that in our candidacy process, there are fourteen inquirers, that is, individuals who are discerning whether going to seminary is an appropriate step for them. This is exciting! Bishop Dunlop commented that Pastor Blouch-Hanson has taken over the Candidacy work that was done formerly by Pastor Tom McKee. She has done a great job managing candidates’ anxiety over the loss of their mentor.

Vice President Lucinda Bringman described mobility as the area of work when rostered ministers want a change of call, including those from other synods who want to come here. Mobility also includes working with congregations who are seeking to call a rostered minister.

Vice President Bringman summarized by reminding us of our mission: We feed the hungry as we have been fed by Christ. Our mission priorities are the 3 E’s: Equipping leaders, Encouraging cooperation, and Engaging in new mission. If something is not consistent with that mission, we don’t do it. She also reminded us of the R3 process – although it started in 2017 in connection with the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation under the banner of reFORM + reNEW + reVISION, it is now refocusing on its core premise: *Relationship* with God, *Relationship* with one another, and *Relationship* with the community. Pastor Tim Seitz-Brown reinforced that R3 is not a program; it is a spiritual process involving scripture, prayer, and building relationships. He noted that we need Pastor Richard Jorgensen to review what the R3 process is. We must address the mistaken perception that it is “just another program” that will run its course, as well as the perception that the synod does not care about congregations that are not involved in R3.

REPORT OF THE SYNOD COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Synod Council Executive Committee provided draft minutes of its October 30, 2019, meeting.

REPORT OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Synod Council Personnel Committee provided draft minutes of its October 30, 2019, meeting.

REPORTS OF THE CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION LIAISONS

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

REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE STAFF

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

Pastor Robert Blezard offered a written report.

Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson provided a written report.

Pastor Beth Martini provided a written report.

Charlie Roberts provided a written report.

Pastor Richard Jorgensen was excused from the meeting and provided a written report.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Compensation and Benefits Committee liaison, Kay Hinkle, provided a liaison report.

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

The Gift and Bequest Acceptance Committee liaison, Virgil Gibson, provided a liaison report.

The Konde Committee liaison, the Rev. Timothy Seitz-Brown, provided a liaison report.

The LSS Mission Fund Committee liaison, Jennifer Lau, provided a liaison report.

United Campus Ministries liaison, Daniel Picone, provided a liaison report.

Vice President Lucinda Bringman thanked all the committees and liaisons for their reports. It helps us know what is happening.

REPORTS OF TASK FORCES

The Toward Racial Justice Task Force provided a written report.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Vice President Bringman said that the Rev. Matthew Best had requested continued discussion regarding the Resolution on Ending Homelessness, since he was not here at the last meeting. The resolution called for conferences to form task forces around the issue. Pastor Matthew Best exhorted us to attend to this issue, since it will affect all congregations. He reported hearing statistics that in the next five years, the *Synod Council Draft Minutes/November 16, 2019/page 10*

number of elderly persons experiencing homelessness will double; in ten years, it will be three times what it is now. He proposes the formation of a synod task force to work through this issue and make recommendations about effective response. Several pastors in the West Shore Conference are working on discovering what resources are available, what advocacy is needed, and what possibilities exist for increasing affordable housing. Pastor Best is looking for people willing to work with him on this task force. Pastor Matthew Best moved and Pastor Timothy Seitz-Brown seconded:

ADOPTED **That the Synod Council authorize the formation of a Task Force on Homelessness and Affordable Housing.**
SC19.11.66.

Virgil Gibson wondered if we need this, given the resolution already calls for the synod to encourage conference task forces. Pastor Best indicated that this synod task force is the mechanism for that to happen. Bishop Dunlop noted that some conversations are happening in some conferences but having a synod task force will foster resource-sharing and help coordinate efforts. Secretary Beth Schlegel shared the story of an impoverished congregation member who was rendered homeless this past week, having been evicted because her house was condemned. The community agency responsible for working toward housing for such people is backed up two years. This is a real concern. Pastor Jillian Riddle agreed to serve on the task force. Virgil Gibson suggested working with the C.A.R.E.S. initiatives in some communities. The motion carried.

Vice President Bringman reviewed the status of a Bishop Election Evaluation Task Force. She spoke with the deans but there were no volunteers; later, one of them contacted her with comments. She commented that if the deans would not serve on the task force they could not complain about the work required of the conference. The task force members so far are Jennifer Lau, Pastor Tom McKee, Treasurer Joe Stepansky, Pastor Katrina Holland, and Pastor Alex Martini.

NEW BUSINESS

Chucki Strevig asked whether the agenda could include page number references for the packet. Vice President Bringman indicated that since the packet and the agenda are in flux until just before being sent, it would be a significant effort to accomplish that and she will not ask Debbie to do that. Pastor Jack Horner asked if the word “page” could be inserted before the page number, making it easier to navigate the packet.

Vice President Bringman asked process questions regarding the availability of materials, the information provided at the meeting, and the flow of the deliberation. No comments were expressed. Meredith Askey inquired how to find contact information for people in the synod. Vice President Bringman referred her to the Minutes Book.

Vice President Lucinda Bringman thanked Debbie Clark for hospitality, prayer lists, name cards, and “everything!” She thanked Virgil Gibson for coming early for door hospitality and she thanked Deb Barrett, Joe Stepansky, and Meredith Askey for refreshments.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice President Bringman led the members of the council in the Lord’s Prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Beth A. Schlegel
synod secretary
11/16/2019