

LOWER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD COUNCIL
Draft Minutes
September 18, 2021 via Zoom

The Lower Susquehanna Synod Council met for its regular meeting on Saturday, September 18, 2021, by Zoom. Vice President Jennifer R. Lau was detained by technology and Bishop James S. Dunlop called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. He read Psalm 90 and opened the meeting with prayer.

ROLL CALL

Members present:	Bishop James S. Dunlop	Jennifer R. Lau
	Beth A. Schlegel	Joseph M. Stepansky
	Meredith Killian Askey	Debra K. Barrett
	Stacy L. Schroeder	Kathleen A. Kuehl
	Linda J. Long	Molly K. Haggerty
	Jack M. Horner	Barbara G. Miller
	Michael R. Zeigler	Kay A. Hinkle
	James F. Druckenbrod	Gretchen S. Ierien
	Zachary J. Weiss	Brian A. McClinton

Staff present:	Deborah M. Clark	Richard E.T. Jorgensen
	Marsha L. Roscoe	Elizabeth G. Martini

Liaisons present: Lois Griffiths (WELCA)

Members excused: Hans E. Becklin

Members absent: Laura A. Willoughby

Staff excused: Dana J. Blouch-Hanson, Charles R. Roberts III, Carla S. Christopher Wilson

DEVOTIONS

Vice President Jennifer R. Lau led us in devotions reflecting on the importance of vision. Vision is the compelling image of what God has in mind for us. We must be aware of the limitations of short-sightedness, side distractions, and seeing only our own perspective, praying for and seeking from God the capacity for panoramic vision that sees the big picture and discerns where to go and how to get there.

CONSENT AGENDA

Vice President Jennifer Lau introduced the Consent Agenda, noting that Joyce Frigm's name should be removed from the appointments to the Finance and Budget Committee since she resigned from the committee. She asked the council members if there was anything they wanted to remove from the Consent Agenda for further consideration, but there was nothing.

Secretary Beth A. Schlegel moved:

ADOPTED **That the Consent Agenda be adopted with the removal of Joyce Frigm from the**
SC21.09.39. **appointments to the Finance and Budget Committee:**

That the minutes of the May 20, 2021, and the June 9, 2021, Synod Council meetings, be approved.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Compensation and Benefits Committee Lynda Sherwood, 1st three-year term, expiring 2024.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Synod Worship Committee the Rev. Hans E. Becklin for a 1st three-year term, expiring 2024.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Synod Worship Committee the Rev. Jay W. Eckman for a 1st three-year term, expiring 2024.

That the Synod Council appoint to the World Hunger Committee the Rev. Godfred Effisah for a 1st three-year term, expiring 2024 and Keith Shively for a 1st three-year term, expiring 2024.

That the Synod Council appoint David Hoth to the Disability Ministry Task Force.

That the Synod Council elect to the board of directors for the St. Barnabas Center for Ministry the Rev. Ronald Costen for a special one-year term expiring December 31, 2022; the Rev. Thomas McKee for a special one-year term expiring December 31, 2022; Sandy G. Brandt for a 3rd two-year term expiring December 31, 2023; and Bettejean Weber for a 3rd two-year term expiring December 31, 2023.

That the Synod Council grant on-leave-from-call status to the Rev. Eric N. Anderson, effective May 25, 2021.

That the Synod Council grant on-leave-from-call status to the Rev. Michael Kenneth Fischer, effective June 24, 2021.

That the Synod Council grant on-leave-from-call status to the Rev. Patrick P. Wirick Jr., effective September 30, 2021.

That the Synod Council continue on-leave-from-call—family leave status for the Rev. Laura L.M. Haupt, effective September 14, 2021, until September 14, 2022.

That the Synod Council approve the retirement request of the Rev. Jonathan L. Jenkins, effective September 1, 2021.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Assembly Planning Committee the Rev. Kathleen A. Kuehl, chair, *sc*; Jennifer R. Lau, *synod vice president*; the Rev. Beth A. Schlegel, *synod secretary*, Charlie Roberts, *staff*; the Rev. Dana J. Blouch-Hanson, *staff, assembly manager*; Deacon Marsha L. Roscoe, *staff*; the Rev. Molly K. Haggerty, *sc*; _____(young adult), *sc*.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Constitution Committee the Rev. Brian A. McClinton, chair, *sc*; the Rev. Beth Schlegel, *synod secretary*; the Rev. Hans E. Becklin, *sc*; the Rev. Jeffrey C. Compton; and Jered L. Hock.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Finance and Budget Committee Meredith Killian Askey, chair, *sc*; Joseph M. Stepany, *synod treasurer*; James F. Druckenbrod, *sc*; Dawn O. Frees; ~~Joyce E. Frigm~~; Wayne R. Gongaware; Barbara G. Miller, *sc*; Michael R. Zeigler, *sc*; and Vicki Rutter.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Gifts Discernment Committee Kay Hinkle, chair, *sc*; the Rev. James S. Dunlop, *bishop*; the Rev. Beth A. Schlegel, *synod*

secretary; the Rev. Eric N. Anderson; Debra K. Barrett, *sc*; the Rev. Douglas L. DeStefano; Holly Freas-Webster; Robert Walton; and M. Jane Wigand.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Mission Committee the Rev. Matthew B. Best, chair; the Rev. James S. Dunlop, *bishop*; Jennifer R. Lau, *synod vice president*; the Rev. Richard E. Jorgensen Jr., *DEM*; Deacon Marsha L. Roscoe, *staff*; the Rev. Jack M. Horner, *sc*; Stacy L. Schroeder, *sc*; Laura A. Willoughby, *sc*; the Rev. Kathleen J. Baker; and Holly Freas-Webster.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Personnel Committee Zachary J. Weiss, chair, *sc*; Jennifer R. Lau, *synod vice president*; the Rev. Gretchen S. Ierien, *sc*; Linda J. Long, *sc*; the Rev. Martha S. Boyd; and Gary L. Laabs.

That the Synod Council appoint the following Synod Council liaisons to committees and task forces: Audit, Michael R. Zeigler, *sc*; Compensation and Benefits, Kay A. Hinkle *sc*; Criminal Justice System Ministries, the Rev. Kathleen A. Kuehl, *sc*; Gift and Bequest Acceptance, the Rev. Gretchen S. Ierien, *sc*; Konde Diocese, Zachary J. Weiss, *sc*; Lower Susquehanna Synod Mission Fund, the Rev. Jack M. Horner, *sc*; Synod Worship, the Rev. Hans E. Becklin, *sc*; Toward Racial Justice Task Force, Stacy L. Schroeder, *sc*; United Campus Ministries Shippensburg/Millersville, _____ (young adult), *sc*; World Hunger, the James F. Druckenbrod, *sc*; Lutheran Camping Corporation, Meredith Killian Askey, *sc*; LGBTQIA+ Affirming Task Force, Debra K. Barrett, *sc*; Disability Ministry Task Force, the Rev. Molly K. Haggerty, *sc*; Homelessness and Affordable Housing Task Force, the Rev. Gretchen S. Ierien, *sc*; the Immigration Ministries (AMMPARO) Task Force, Barbara G. Miller, *sc*; and Region 8 Steering Committee, Jennifer R. Lau, *synod vice president*.

That the Synod Council appoint the following Synod Council liaisons to conferences: Chambersburg, Michael R. Zeigler; Cumberland, the Rev. Jack M. Horner; Gettysburg, James F. Druckenbrod; Hanover, Kay A. Hinkle; Harrisburg, the Rev. Molly K. Haggerty; Lancaster, Debra K. Barrett; Lebanon, the Rev. Gretchen S. Ierien; North Lancaster, the Rev. Hans E Becklin; North York, the Rev. Brian A. McClinton; Perry, Zachary J. Weiss; South York, the Rev. Kathleen A. Kuehl; Upper Dauphin, Linda J. Long; and York, Barbara G. Miller.

SYNOD COUNCIL ACTIONS

Bishop James Dunlop moved:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council call Deacon David A. Hope-Tringali, as Director for SC21.09.40. Advancement and Communication for Tree 4 Hope, Harrisburg, for a six-year term effective November 21, 2020 and expiring February 28, 2026.

The bishop explained that the churchwide organization would not certify our previous calls to Deacon David Hope-Tringali and the Rev. Jennifer Hope-Tringali to serve as a synod global missionaries, because according to the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, synods are not permitted to extend calls to global mission; all such calls must be authorized by the Global Mission Unit of the ELCA and issued by the Church Council. The new position titles more closely describe their work in relation to the Tree 4 Hope ministry and comply with the expectations of the churchwide organization.

Bishop Dunlop moved:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council call the Rev. Jennifer A. Hope-Tringali, as Executive Director and Dean of Hope Academy for Tree 4 Hope, Harrisburg, for a six-year term effective November 21, 2020 and expiring February 28, 2026.

Bishop Dunlop moved:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council call the Rev. Timothy J. Seitz-Brown, as Intentional Interim Pastor for Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Lancaster, effective July 1, 2021, until July 1, 2022, or until the congregation has called a permanent pastor.

Bishop Dunlop moved:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council call Deacon Jennifer Sue Murphy, as Chaplain for the Cross Keys Village – The Brethren Home Community effective July 12, 2021.

Bishop Dunlop moved:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council call the Rev. Daniel M. Yeiser, as Intentional Interim Pastor for Grace Lutheran Church, Red Lion, effective July 19, 2021, until July 19, 2022, or until the congregation has called a permanent pastor.

Bishop Dunlop moved:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council call the Rev. Katrina L. Holland, as Intentional Interim Pastor for the Lebanon Lutheran Cooperative Ministry including Hill (Cleona), Salem and St. James, Lebanon, effective August 11, 2021, until August 11, 2022, or until the congregation has called a permanent pastor.

Bishop Dunlop moved:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council call the Rev. Sarah E. Teichmann, as Partner, Director of Development and Relations for Kirby-Smith Associates, effective October 10, 2021.

Bishop Dunlop moved:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council call the Rev. Lois K. Van Orden, as Intentional Interim Pastor for Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, York Springs, effective November 1, 2021, until October 31, 2022.

Bishop Dunlop moved:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council renew the call of the Rev. Joel Folkemer to serve as Pastor of Union Lutheran Church, York, under the terms of synod administration, extension until December 31, 2021.

Pastor Richard Jorgensen explained that he recently met with the Congregation Council of Union Lutheran Church to review a revised covenant for renewal. There will be a Congregation Meeting on November 14, 2021, to adopt that revised covenant, and the Synod Council will have that on its agenda for the November 20, 2021, meeting. In response to a question regarding the relationship between Pastor Folkemer's involvement in public office and his call to ministry, Pastor Jorgensen responded that such

involvement in the local community is part of Pastor Folkemer's call to ministry with Union Lutheran Church.

Bishop Dunlop moved:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council affirm the decisions of St. Mark Lutheran Church, York, and Union Evangelical Lutheran Church, York, to merge, St. Mark into Union, effective August 8, 2021.

Bishop Dunlop explained that St. Mark had been under synod administration with synod-appointed trustees facilitating the congregation's process of holy closure, since they had no congregation council. Those trustees are the Rev. William Snyder, the Rev. Brenda Ritterpusch, and the Rev. Ron Costen. In this case, the decision of St. Mark Lutheran Church was to merge into Union Lutheran Church and Union agreed to receive St. Mark in a merger relationship. The trustees for St. Mark are still working on the legal details related to the merger. There is one worshipping congregation at Union Lutheran Church on W. Market St. in York; St. Mark's building on E. Market Street in York will be retained by Union for community outreach.

Secretary Beth Schlegel moved:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council, through the bishop and the secretary, certify the minutes of the 2021 Synod Assembly as the official protocol of said assembly, to be deposited in the archives.

Stacy L. Schroeder, Vice-chair of the Executive Committee, moved:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council retain RKL as the auditors for Fiscal Year 2021.
SC21.09.51.

DISCUSSION OF OUR MISSION PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

Bishop James Dunlop reminded us that we are the synod "where the hungry are fed as we have been fed by Christ." Our missional purpose is to foster the 3 E's: Equipping Leaders, Encouraging Cooperation, and Engaging in New Mission. This is what we do in being synod. How we do that is described by six mission priorities and key synod initiatives: fostering spiritual wellness, developing leaders, nurturing congregations, relating globally, growing justice outreach, interacting authentically. These areas will shape our strategic planning for the next four years, as we make sure that our work as the synod is aligned with these priorities, including our human and financial resources. Deacon Marsha Roscoe explained that these priorities provide the Synod Council with clarity about what we see God calling us to do so that as we make decisions, we are focused on the mission. They also provide talking points as we are ambassadors within the synod and are a basis for holding ourselves accountable to the work of God's kingdom. Bishop Dunlop indicated that the Fiscal Year 2023 budget is being developed to reflect these key mission priorities and initiatives. It was noted that with six priorities, not all of them can have equal value. Bishop Dunlop said that a process of ranking them has begun with the officers and is being continued with the staff. It will be clearer by the November meeting. In response to a question regarding whether the budget will be structured according to the priorities, the bishop affirmed such structuring as the goal, but noted the challenges of allocating staff time to those areas of mission. He is gathering data from a staff time study to inform that process. He further noted that most of the strictly program expenses in our current budget are grants to our ministry partners, such as ULS and others. He is in conversation with partners to see how their priorities align with our mission priorities and key initiatives. Deacon Marsha Roscoe showed an example of a narrative budget that shows visually how spending is allocated among various areas. We are working to develop such a presentation. Treasurer Joe Stepansky assured the

council that the standard spreadsheet will also be available. The treasurer also indicated that shifting to a different mission approach makes accounting more complicated and poses challenges. Additional discussion centered on the need to care for all congregations and people of the synod, including those who do not agree with the mission direction: providing opportunities for discussion and input, building consensus as appropriate, respecting diverse viewpoints, acknowledging disagreement without diminishing those who hold opposing views. Bishop Dunlop said that he sees this as a journey of about four years, when his term expires. The election of a new bishop will provide a new opportunity for visioning. In the meantime, these mission priorities and key initiatives function as a road map for leadership.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop James Dunlop provided a written report. He highlighted the relocation of the synod offices, praising the staff for their work in downsizing and expressing deep thanks and appreciation for the intensive labor of Deborah Clark and Charlie Roberts, who coordinated and directed the year-long effort. Bishop Dunlop indicated ongoing concern for the high level of stress experienced by rostered ministers. He wrote a letter to congregations asking them to recognize this stress and to care for their rostered ministers. He noted that due to Pastor Carla Christopher Wilson's serious illness, the staff retreat has been postponed to October.

Bishop Dunlop presented a primer on call status and ordination. He noted that ordination is not automatic once someone has completed seminary studies; a call must be issued and accepted. That is how someone is placed on one of the rosters of ordained ministers. Calls to pastors and deacons are issued by the Church Council for roles within the churchwide organization or on behalf of the whole church; by the Synod Council for roles within or on behalf of the synod; and by a congregation for a role within that congregation. Without a call, a deacon or pastor cannot serve. Once rostered, a deacon or pastor may apply to be on leave from call for a period of up to three years (six years for family leave or graduate study). Disability status may be granted indefinitely. Finally, rostered ministers may be called to retirement, though such a call may be revoked by the Synod Council if a person does not serve the mission of the synod.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

Vice President Jennifer R. Lau submitted a written report. She noted that the orientation to the Synod Council had been held and the handbook is available for reference. She reviewed the important role of liaisons and encouraged committee liaisons to use the liaison report form as a guide to providing reports. A list of conference deans was provided by email for conference liaisons to make contact. The communication role of liaisons is very important, she emphasized. Vice President Lau also encouraged all Synod Council members to subscribe to WE*News and to encourage their congregations to do so. She invited Synod Council members to make short videos of introduction for posting to our website. She referred to the Covenant of Commitment and the Whistleblower policy, both of which should be signed and returned to Deborah Clark, Jennifer Lau and Beth Schlegel. They will be sent separately in an email.

CONVERSATION ON COMMUNICATION

Vice President Lau invited council members to brainstorm regarding ways to improve our communication within the synod. She considers Synod Council members as ambassadors for the synod, interpreting the mission of the synod to those in the congregations and communities of our synod. She listed the various channels of communication we currently use, including Facebook, website, WE*News, Constant Contact email, and videos. How can we more effectively connect with people? Comments included the value of storytelling, sharing our faith and telling others how God is working in our lives. Getting people's attention often means offering what they need. There has been expressed desire for devotion resources for use with congregation councils and committees and newsletter articles. Suggestions included using Facebook to provide prayers and Bible verses, as well as developing short videos. Videos of pastors

leading the daily prayer offices would be appreciated. Podcasting is another avenue to explore. Concern was voiced to consider the needs of those who are not connected through technology and to maintain relationship through print materials and phone calls or visits, especially to retired rostered ministers. It was suggested that a print devotional could be developed occasionally. Some pastors recognize that people have vision problems and make material available through audio recordings. We acknowledged that the cost for print mailings can be very high. Any communication strategy will need to be multi-faceted and seek to reach people in a variety of ways. It was noted that we make accommodation for people with physical disabilities; perhaps we should consider technology accessibility issues in the same way. As we encourage adaptation to new methods, sometimes innovations also need to be adaptive to others' needs.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Treasurer Joseph M. Stepansky submitted a written report and a Statement of Operational Activities. He noted that while the year started off on a par with 2020, giving dropped off in May and mission support is currently \$100,000 below what was budgeted. He has reduced the mission support forecast by 5% for August through January. The giving patterns are too uncertain for him to predict the future. His report states, "Let's put this in perspective using prior years. From 2017 to 2019, mission support declined by about 3% per year. But then 2020 and the 2021 forecast have seen accelerated declines of about 6% per year. I understand that 2020 was an unusual year, but I'm not sure why the trend has continued into 2021. Another question is, given the current 2021 forecast, whether the 2022 estimate is a realistic number. I really don't know."

Treasurer Stepansky reported that the Legacy Fund investments have continued performing very well. Through September 3 our investments were valued at \$3,326,685, a \$253,521 (8.2%) increase from the fiscal year 2020 year-end balance of \$3,073,164. This is **after** withdrawing \$264,313 for the annual Legacy Fund distribution and investment management fees.

Treasurer Joe Stepansky referred to his written report regarding the budgeting process for the FY2023 budget, which will be driven by the mission priorities and presented visually.

He also reported on the pass-through spending via numerous restricted accounts such as World Hunger, Konde, and Disaster Response. These are designated offerings from congregations that are forwarded to the specific projects.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Secretary Beth A. Schlegel submitted a written report. She highlighted the Nominations Handbook and the plea to the deans to appoint someone from the conference to serve on that committee. The work will begin in November. The Gifts Discernment Committee will be assessing the committees and exploring ways of inviting people to serve in the work of the synod.

REPORTS OF THE SYNOD COUNCIL COMMITTEES

The Executive Committee provided minutes of its May 5, 2021, meeting and draft minutes of its August 31, 2021, meeting.

Other committees of the Synod Council did not meet over the summer.

REPORTS OF THE CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION LIAISONS

Women of the ELCA synod unit liaison Lois Griffiths indicated that this is her last Synod Council meeting. She has been experiencing long-term effects of COVID-19 and is stepping down as president of the Lower Susquehanna Synod Women's Organization. The Camp Hebron retreat was again postponed to 2022. The council expressed gratitude for Lois' faithful attendance at Synod Council meetings and her investment in the life of the synod. We will miss her.

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REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE STAFF

Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson provided a written report.

Director for Evangelical Mission, Pastor Richard Jorgensen provided a written report and highlighted the upcoming launch of the Hybrid Church Academy, as well as the Bishop's Convocation and Certificate in Preaching and Trauma. His report noted a number of trends in church life, including vocational struggles with fatigue and burnout, congregations declining and closing, the opportunities advanced by technology and online faith formation, and the potential for growth of "micro-churches". He concludes with this: "Prior to COVID-19, the church was already in the midst of a seismic change in our ministry. The pandemic has accelerated that change, but I believe that God is still at work in our midst, and I still have great hope for the future of the church. We know that we will look different in the future, but our core purpose and calling remains the same: We are called to love God and neighbor; to bear witness to ongoing presence of the Risen Lord in our midst and to invite others to follow Jesus."

Pastor Beth Martini provided a written report. She invited Synod Council members to consider being trained to lead congregation call votes.

Deacon Marsha Roscoe provided a written report.

Pastor Carla Christopher Wilson provided a report of the Justice Ministries.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES FOR THE MINISTERIUM AND MISSION

The Committee of Deans provided the minutes of its September 13, 2021, meeting.

REPORTS OF TASK FORCES

The Bishop Election Evaluation Task Force provided a written report of its ongoing work, including work to revise the continuing resolution S9.04.A18. that describes a preliminary identification process leading to the election of a bishop.

The Justice Ministries provided a written report.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Vice President Jennifer Lau referred to the written plan provided by Debra Barrett from Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Lancaster, for repayment of the funds from the Forrey Estate over a 10-year period. This matter is now resolved.

Pastor Richard Jorgensen gave a report on the Heritage Community Initiative, noting that the group has met and is defining how we help congregations live faithfully into the ministry they are called to in a time of fewer resources. The more choices declining congregations have for determining their future, the more likely they are to engage such a process.

NEW BUSINESS

Vice President Lau referred to the resignation letter from Daniel Picone and asked for questions. She indicated that we need to fill that young adult position. That person will be liaison to United Campus Ministries and work with the Assembly Planning Committee. An election will take place at the assembly.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:24 p.m.

Beth A. Schlegel, Synod Secretary, 9-23-2021