

LOWER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD, ELCA
SYNOD COUNCIL
Draft Minutes
September 21, 2019

The Lower Susquehanna Synod Council met on Saturday, September 21, 2019, beginning at 9:00 a.m. with Holy Eucharist in the chapel of the synod suite. Bishop Dunlop preached encouragement to us to keep Jesus central in all we do. Following worship, Pr. Beth. Martini led us in teambuilding. We then convened in the Board Room of the United Church Center, where Vice President Lucinda L. Bringman called the meeting to order at 10:22 a.m.

ROLL CALL*

* (z) by zoom

Members present: Bishop James S. Dunlop Lucinda L. Bringman
Beth A. Schlegel Joseph M. Stepansky

Meredith Killian Askey Daniel P. Picone
Debra K. Barrett Jillian E. Riddle
Dallas J. Barclift, Jr.
Joel S.B. Folkemer Carlotta “Chucki” C. Strevig
Virgil Gibson Zachary J. Weiss
Jack M. Horner Theodore D. Wolfe
Gretchen S. Ierien

Staff present: Robert C. Blezard Elizabeth G. Martini
Deborah M. Clark Marsha L. Roscoe

Liaison present: Lois Griffiths (WELCA)

Members excused: Matthew B. Best (R3) Kay A. Hinkle
Jennifer R. Lau (R3)

Staff excused: Dana Blouch-Hanson (R3) Charles R. Roberts III
Richard E. T. Jorgensen Jr. (R3)

MISSION REVIEW

Deacon Marsha Roscoe reviewed with us the Mission Snapshot that was developed in May 2016 and revised in 2017. We are always asking “What is God calling us to?” The three E’s -- Equipping Leaders, Encouraging Cooperation, and Engaging in New Mission – are the focus of our life together as the synod. These priorities were developed through discernment over more than four years of listening. They guide us to ask how our actions reflect these priorities and to let go of things that do not serve the mission. How we live into this mission varies from time to time and from place to place. The snapshot is posted on the synod website and if you have trouble finding anything, the staff will help you.

Equipping Leaders: This priority is reflected throughout the six renewal objectives. We are currently living into this with the following initiatives:

- Bishop’s Convocation, which is bringing in Tracy Radosevic and Paul Scott Wilson to teach about missional preaching.

- Certificate in Missional Preaching, which seeks to engage preachers in cohorts for effective proclamation of the Gospel. This is funded in the section of the budget which reflects the money we hold back from the ELCA mission support dollars as part of the pilot project which allows our synod to retain a part of mission support and designate it for mission initiatives within our synod. In the budget summary, the funds related to this are indicated by yellow highlighting.
- Certificate in Missional Speaking, which offers various online courses for lay people. Individual courses may be engaged *a la carte* by small groups and committees. This initiative supports our desire to equip not just pastors and deacons, but all disciples.

These two certificate programs are not offered by any seminary, and there are seminaries interested in them and interested in partnering with us to expand their reach. We don't see these as once and done programs, but initiatives that become an ongoing part of our culture.

- R3 Initiative –reForm, reNew, reVision – we are launching the second round of this program today.
- Readiness for Renewal, which is a series of workshops for congregations who are not ready to make the commitment of R3, but who want to take a step forward toward renewal.
- Stewardship courses through the Stevenson School for Ministry, a partnership with the Episcopal Diocese. Episcopal Bishop Scanlon called Bishop Dunlop with a proposal to contract with the Lower Susquehanna Synod to work with the Stevenson School. By entering into this partnership, we can equip leaders more quickly.

The question was asked, “Why are we not doing this with United Lutheran Seminary (ULS)?” Marsha responded that she was in contact with Chelle Huth from ULS, who informed her that the staff transitions in this early stage in the life of ULS means that such a certificate program would be expensive for participants and ULS currently lacks sufficient staff resources. Therefore, to partner right now with ULS would not be cost effective or allow us to move forward quickly. We will continue to be in conversation with ULS, as well as with other seminaries such as Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS) who have expressed interest.

- Anti-racism training
- Boundary training

Encouraging Cooperation: This priority is reflected in our partnership with the Episcopal Diocese. We also continue our efforts with assisting congregations as they propose new ways to cooperate.

Engaging in New Mission: This priority not only refers to new congregational starts, but also new ministries of existing congregations. Grants are made for new ministry initiatives outside traditional church buildings. One example is Communities of Hope, which began as gatherings of people returning from the foreign mission field who wanted to come together for prayer, Bible study, and fellowship. These gatherings popped up in coffee shops and VFW halls and persist as communities of faith that equip participants for mission.

Meredith Askey asked whether the Stevenson School courses are accepted by ULS? Marsha responded that she is working with Dr. Largen at ULS and those courses are accepted as part of the ULS curriculum. She hopes that the partnership will continue to grow as both ULS and the Stevenson School stabilize following this transitional period.

CONSENT AGENDA

Vice President Bringman introduced the Consent Agenda and noted that additional appointments are listed in the supplementary packet.

Meredith Askey asked about Jennifer and David Hope-Tringali and whether they will be called to their work in Guatemala. Bishop Dunlop responded that because of ecclesial parameters defining the nature of a call, that question requires further discussion. Communities of Hope is being served by Jennifer Richards and the Hope-Tringalis will be on leave from call.

Meredith Askey moved, and Dallas Barclift seconded:

ADOPTED: That the Consent Agenda be adopted.
SC19.09.52

That the minutes of the May 11, 2019; May 22, 2019; June 8, 2019; and July 24, 2019 meetings of the Synod Council be approved.

That the Synod Council appoint Sister Davia Evans to the Compensation and Benefits Committee for a 1st three-year term expiring in 2022.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Synod Worship Committee The Rev. Sean S. Titus for a 1st three-year term expiring in 2022.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Board of the St. Barnabas Center for Ministry The Rev. Ronald Costen for a 1st two-year term, expiring December 31, 2021; The Rev. Richard Jorgensen for a 1st two-year term, expiring December 31, 2021; The Rev. Thomas McKee for a 1st two-year term, expiring December 31, 2021; Norbert P. Fry for a 2nd two-year term, expiring December 31, 2020; M. Jane Wigand for a 2nd two-year term, expiring December 31, 2020; Sandy G. Brandt for a 2nd two-year term, expiring December 31, 2021; and Bettejean Weber for a 3rd two-year term, expiring December 31, 2021.

That the Synod Council grant on-leave-from-call status to Deacon David Hope-Tringali, effective July 1, 2019, until July 1, 2020; The Rev. Jennifer Hope-Tringali, effective July 1, 2019, until July 1, 2020; and The Rev. Kurt S. Strause, effective November 1, 2019, until November 1, 2020.

That the Synod Council continue on-leave-from-call status for The Rev. Janice Marie Lowden, effective September 18, 2019, until September 18, 2020; and The Rev. Timothy J. Seitz-Brown, effective September 22, 2019, until September 22, 2020.

That the Synod Council rescind on-leave-from-call status for The Rev. Michael K. Fischer, effective May 23, 2019 since he is continuing employment with Country Meadows, York.

That the Synod Council approve the retirement requests of The Rev. Glenn D. Miller, effective July 1, 2019; The Rev. Thomas E. McKee, effective September 1, 2019; The Rev. Stephen W. Yambor, effective September 1, 2019; The Rev. Linda S. Trout, effective October 1, 2019; The Rev. William C. Snyder, effective December 31, 2019; and The Rev. Margareta M. Breden, effective January 1, 2020.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Assembly Planning Committee Stella Ludwig, chair, *sc*; Lucinda L. Bringman, *synod vice president*; The Rev. Beth Schlegel, *synod secretary*; Catherine F. Deitrich, *staff, assembly registrar*; Charlie Roberts, *staff*; The Rev. Dana Blouch-Hanson, *staff, assembly manager*; The Rev. Becca Ajer Frantz; The Rev. Matthew Best, *sc*; The Rev. Elizabeth George; Daniel Picone, *sc*; The Rev. Edward J. Robbins; and The Rev. Gwenn Trout.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Constitution Committee Chucki Strevig, chair, *sc*; The Rev. Beth Schlegel, *synod secretary*; Jen Lau, *sc*; The Rev. Jeffrey C. Compton; Jered L. Hock; and Joanne Wilhelm.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Finance and Budget Committee Virgil Gibson, chair, *sc*; Lucinda L. Bringman, *synod vice president*; Joseph M. Stepansky, *synod treasurer*; Meredith Killian Askey, *sc*; Dawn O. Frees; Joyce E. Frigm; Wayne R. Gongaware; The Rev. Gretchen Ierien, *sc*; Vicki Rutter; and William Shoemaker.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Gifts Discernment Committee Kay Hinkle, chair, *sc*; The Rev. James S. Dunlop, *bishop*; The Rev. Beth Schlegel, *synod secretary*; The Rev. Eric Anderson; Debra Barrett, *sc*; The Rev. Douglas DeStefano; Holly Freas-Webster; Robert Walton; and Jane Wigand.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Mission Committee The Rev. Joel Folkemer, chair, *sc*; The Rev. James S. Dunlop, *bishop*; Lucinda L. Bringman, *synod vice president*; The Rev. Richard E. Jorgensen Jr., *DEM*; Deacon Marsha Roscoe, *staff, director for mission interpretation*; The Rev. Jack Horner, *sc*; Jennifer Lau, *sc*; The Rev. Jillian Riddle, *sc*; The Rev. Matthew Best, *sc*; The Rev. Kathleen J. Baker; and Holly Freas-Webster.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Personnel Committee Zach Weiss, chair, *sc*; Lucinda L. Bringman, *synod vice president*; Dallas Barclift, *sc*; The Rev. Martha Boyd; The Rev. Elizabeth D. George; Gary L. Laabs; Linda Long; The Rev. Timothy W. Sadler; and The Rev. Timothy Seitz-Brown, *sc*.

That the Synod Council appoint the following Synod Council liaisons to committees: Audit, Lucinda L. Bringman, *synod vice president*; Compensation and Benefits, Kay Hinkle *sc*; Criminal Justice System Ministries, Chucki Strevig, *sc*; Evangelism Mission Tables, Dallas Barclift, *sc*; Gift and Bequest Acceptance, Virgil Gibson, *sc*; Global Missions, Debra Barrett, *sc*; Konde Diocese, The Rev. Timothy Seitz-Brown, *sc*; Lower Susquehanna Synod Mission Fund, Jennifer Lau, *sc*; Stewardship, Zach Weiss, *sc*; Synodical Worship, The Rev. Joel Folkemer, *sc*; Towards Racial Justice, The Rev. Gretchen Ierien, *sc*; United Campus Ministries Shippensburg/Millersville, Daniel Picone, *sc*; World Hunger, The Rev. Jillian Riddle, *sc*; Lutheran Camping Corporation, Meredith Killian Askey, *sc*; Region 8 Steering Committee, Lucinda L. Bringman, *synod vice president*;

That the Synod Council appoint the following Synod Council liaisons to conferences: Chambersburg, Chucki Strevig; Gettysburg, The Rev. Timothy Seitz-Brown; Hanover, Kay Hinkle; Harrisburg, Meredith Askey; Lancaster, Debra Barrett; Lebanon, The Rev. Jillian Riddle and The Rev. Gretchen Ierien; North Lancaster, Stella Ludwig; North York, Jen Lau; Perry, Zach Weiss; South York, Daniel Picone; Upper Dauphin, Dallas Barclift; West Cumberland, Virgil Gibson; West Shore, The Rev. Matthew Best and The Rev. Jack Horner; and York, The Rev. Joel Folkemer.

That the Synod Council, through the bishop and the secretary, certify the minutes of the 2019 Synod Assembly as the official protocol of said assembly, to be deposited in the archives.

SYNOD COUNCIL ACTIONS

**ADOPTED That the Synod Council accept the reports of the independent auditors for fiscal
SC19.09.53 year 2018.**

Vice President Lucinda Bringman thanked Virgil Gibson for submitting the minutes of the Compensation and Benefits Committee with the recommendation regarding parental leave. Virgil moved the recommendation from the committee and Meredith seconded it. Virgil noted that there was a great deal of discussion in the committee. Pastor Jack Horner asked about the phrase “not less than six weeks”. Virgil responded that the committee wanted to give a range and deliberated at length about the wording. This recommendation precludes fewer than six weeks and allows for more than eight weeks, thus establishing a standard range but allowing flexibility. Vice President Bringman asked Secretary Schlegel for wordsmith suggestions and the secretary said she thought we should trust the committee’s deliberation. Bishop Dunlop clarified that the manual guides congregations at the start of a call, but we cannot mandate its provisions. If a congregation is outside of synod guidelines, the bishop talks with the congregation and rostered minister to plan a way forward.

**ADOPTED That the Synod Council adopt a change to the wording of section D.6. of the 2020
SC19.09.54 Rostered Ministers Compensation and Benefits Manual so that it reads, “A specific
Parental Leave Plan for rostered ministers should be carefully drafted. This plan
should include eight weeks of parental leave with full salary, housing, and benefits,
but not less than six weeks, to be taken within the first twelve months following the
birth of a child or the placement of an adopted child. Any other specific conditions
should be clearly defined in a written document.”**

Following a break for prayer concerns, Bishop Jim Dunlop led generative discussion regarding conference structure. He has been thinking about the structure of the ELCA as three interdependent expressions (churchwide, synods, congregations). There are 65 synods and 9,500 congregations. Since congregations are geographic units, in some places they are very densely situated and in others very scattered. The three expressions are interdependent, not hierarchical. Direction comes from councils (Church Council, Synod Council, Congregation Council). Each expression relies on the others, but they don’t direct each other’s activities. The ELCA has nine geographic regions consisting of several synods. We are in Region 8. Regions share resources for mission. The Lower Susquehanna Synod is divided into fourteen conferences, which are geographic clusters of congregations. Conferences play a role in collegial support for one another, in electing a bishop and in carrying out localized mission. The structure we built in 1987 was for a much larger church than we are now. The deans formed a task force to look at the possibility of restructuring the conferences. That task force proposed a new map with eight conferences. Conferences typically meet monthly during the day as a gathering of pastors and deacons; one conference meets in the evening and invites lay people to attend. The meetings are mostly for relational support, though some conferences work together on specific ministries, such as funding a Latino mission developer. Active conferences value the close relationships with one another and resisted the proposal to become larger. The bishop said that the new proposal was “hated” and so he abandoned it. At the recent Synod Assembly, the constitutional provision that requires the Synod Council to review the boundaries of conferences every six years came up for discussion. The provision needs to be revised and we have not

done a review since 1996. The floor debate was heated, and people wanted more input into the decision to restructure. Current conferences were not willing to change their boundaries. Bishop Dunlop noted that it is the same dynamic on the churchwide level when talking about restructuring the boundaries of synods. He noted that there is reluctance throughout the system to change the system and systems tend to perpetuate themselves. Synods cannot imagine not being what they are. There is “stuckness” at all levels. Bishop Dunlop thinks the church needs to be restructured from the bottom up, asking congregations “How would you like to be organized to do the mission of the church in this place?” He wants to experiment with the anchor church concept, whereby a larger congregation works together with smaller congregations around it. For example, Friedens, Myerstown (Pastor Robert Wallace) and four congregations nearby who are all in the Eastern Lancaster County School District. Could these five congregations work together to staff common ministry? Similarly, St. Paul, Lititz (Pastor Rob Myallis) as an anchor congregation. Staffing arrangements in such a model could include pastors, deacons and seminarians. Some of the work currently done by assistants to the bishop could be given to anchor pastors in these clusters, such as determining the need for a call. Where we now deal with individual congregations in matching candidates for call, in an anchor church model, the question would be, what is needed for the mission in that whole area? In this model, conferences would form around these natural clusters. Then the next level question becomes, what does the synod need to supply for the mission of these clusters and conferences to thrive? Bishop Dunlop was clear that this experiment is not a directive, but a possibility for experimentation and asked for our thoughts.

Deb Barrett said she likes the idea of starting from the bottom, but that we should go a step farther by asking congregation members what they are thinking about our life together.

Lois Griffiths reminisced about Lenten visits to other congregations that sparked the reaction from people that it was a synod plot to get people to cooperate.

Pastor Gretchen Ierien spoke about the Lebanon cooperative, in which one congregation responded negatively and is now dying. Other congregations have adapted and are working together, seeing benefits. Family systems are very hard to change, and cooperation demands hard, patient work.

Pastor Jillian Riddle noted that congregation members often view encouragement to cooperate as coming down from the pastor, placing stress on the pastor. She wondered what it would look like for the idea to come from the congregation.

Pastor Gretchen Ierien suggested that since the stress on pastors affects their health and ability to lead, perhaps intentional interim ministers could do this work in congregations.

Meredith Askey affirmed the value of the focus on asking questions, noting that for her, the best sermons are those in which the pastor poses a question for deeper reflection. She encouraged us to incorporate questions regarding the life of the church and the benefits of cooperation into sermons, classes, and the like; e.g. What does our community look like? How would you describe our relationship with other congregations? What does the church look like outside the building? When we encourage people to ask these questions it may spark the impetus to work with others.

Pastor Jack Horner noted how conversations among leaders outside the ELCA regarding the anchor church model discovered that there is much variety in how that model can work. One thing is clear: it cannot be the idea of the anchor church but must come from the smaller church. Experiments of this type have included ethnic specific clusters and economic clusters. There are various models.

Pastor Joel Folkemer affirmed that model is a good concept. We are talking about several good models: Heritage Communities with the idea of congregation living wills; the anchor or cathedral church model; *Synod Council Draft Minutes/September 21, 2019/page 6*

the multi-site model. He noted that as Union (York) has been in redevelopment and in conversation with other congregations about working together, he gave them some choices. He did not go to the members with a blank slate asking what they wanted to do, but rather outlined several possible courses of action with different outcomes. This sparked conversation to be proactive rather than reactive. He noted that we do poorly by sending people into mission solo instead of in pairs. When other churches do mission, they send at least two mission developers and often a team.

Virgil Gibson shared that his congregation did a mission study with Dave Daubert as the consultant. The process asked open-ended questions and resulted in the affirmation to keep doing what they are doing. There was no conversation with their neighbors. He is conflicted about this model because it seems that smaller churches are overshadowed by larger ones.

Vice President Lucinda Bringman observed how people often pine for the church of the 1950s and 1960s, but that church is no longer present. How do we help people engage these questions without using lenses of nostalgia?

Meredith Askey suggested asking “How can we serve people who aren’t here yet?”

Pastor Gretchen Ierien noted that some congregations need to do reconciliation work. When congregations are just a few blocks from each other because of a fight over something decades ago, they need to work through that conflict and be reconciled.

Meredith Askey observed that old conflicts persist in congregational memory.

Bishop Dunlop noted that in congregational systems, some people will never change. Some will get angry and leave. He told the story of a Lutheran church that was sold to a Pentecostal congregation, but some of the Lutherans have stayed so that they could sit in the same pew they have occupied for years. It’s not about the message or the community, but about the pew; they just refused to change.

Pastor Joel Folkemer observed that whenever there is change, some people will leave – it just needs to be the right people who leave.

Pastor Jack Horner said it is important to keep things in perspective. When a congregation has dwindled to under forty, most of the change agents have already left.

Pastor Jillian Riddle cautioned us to beware of tunnel vision. It is important to keep asking, “Where is God in all of this?”

Zach Weiss returned us to the question of conference restructuring and wondered what the perceived repercussions were to the eight-conference proposal. Bishop Dunlop responded that the pastors didn’t want to do it. Vice President Bringman noted that the perception was that it was a top-down dictate.

Daniel Picone shared the experience of United Lutheran Ministry in southern York county. The churches in Felton and Brogue are doing joint ministry by sharing a pastor and worshiping together on the fifth Sunday. Each congregation has a unique identity, but they are building relationships intentionally. Although the cooperation was sparked by financial need, they are discovering joy in cooperating.

Vice President Bringman closed the discussion and distributed a sign-up sheet for refreshments and door duty for upcoming Synod Council meetings.

Vice President Bringman led generative discussion regarding lay representation at Synod Assembly. She noted that we are constitutionally required to be composed of 60% lay voting members, but we do not reach that because congregations do not send their full contingent of lay voting members. This problem is compounded by the roster of deacons now being considered ordained. It is a challenge because when the assembly is during the week, people complain that lay people work and when it is on the weekend, they complain that working lay people don't want to give up their weekend. Some smaller congregations don't send lay voting members because of cost. The responsibility of the Synod Assembly is worship together, do the business of the synod, and engage edification. The proposed schedule for assembly hopes to address the challenge of lay attendance by holding the business on one day at Messiah College and then having two edification days in churches (one in the East and one in the West). Voting members will be invited to register for the one-day business session and one edification day. This will lower the cost, since Messiah College charges per person per day. It will be a burden on staff, since it will mean three Saturdays for them. Hopefully, since it is only two Saturdays with no overnight, we will have more lay voting members attend.

Vice President Bringman noted that we would incur the cost to provide lunch for each day, but not five meals. She informed us that there are budgetary considerations that need to be taken into account. The registration cost for the assembly is more than just the actual costs for room, board, and equipment; it also pays additional costs related to per-person charges at Messiah College, as well as going towards costs of the synod staff for the extra time spent throughout the year as well as in May to prepare for and conduct the assembly.

Marsha informed us that 1/6 of the cost of the assembly goes toward the compensated registration costs covered by our synod for Synod Council members, synod staff, and retirees.

Bishop Dunlop noted that this proposal would save us about \$30,000 or about \$30-\$40/per person.

Pastor Gretchen Ierien wondered if there was another location that would be more cost effective? Vice President Bringman responded that we used to convert space and truck AV equipment in at significant expense, but now the space at Messiah College has all those systems in place, so it is cost effective.

Meredith Askey wondered how much space we need. Bishop Dunlop responded that typically around 600 people attend the Synod Assembly and the edification days would invite not only voting members, but any lay people who are interested. He is in conversation with some of the larger churches in the synod about hosting those days.

Stella Ludwig raised a concern regarding Saturdays in May because of graduations and related family gatherings. Bishop Dunlop said that is why there will be a choice. The proposed dates for the days of edification are May 16, 2020, and May 30, 2020, with Synod Assembly on June 6, 2020. The Synod Council meeting would be rescheduled for May 9, 2020.

Pastor Joel Folkemer said that he thinks this proposal for Synod Assembly is an idea worth trying. He also urged that, unless it is a huge disaster, we should try it for several years. Sometimes we give up too quickly when making changes and don't give them enough time to establish.

The question was raised whether this schedule could accommodate a major election. Vice President Bringman noted that we will cross that bridge later. Bishop Dunlop said that for a bishop election, for example, we would need multiple days. The question came whether a multi-day assembly would solve the 60/40 representation issue. Vice President Bringman noted that some synods reduce the number of retired pastor voting members.

The consensus was that we try this model.

Pastor Rob Blezard led us in prayer before lunch.

After lunch, Vice President Bringman and Pastor Rob Blezard circulated a list of congregations to be visited by Synod Council members and thanked for their mission support. The bishop and executive staff identified congregations who have increased or maintained their giving at significant impact levels and those whose giving has seen a marked increase over the past year or two. These visits would thank them for their partnership in mission. The bishop would like them completed by the end of the year. They may be visits to the congregation on Sunday morning or at a Congregation Council meeting. Visitors will be provided with an elevator speech. Vice President Bringman shared that she usually includes the fact that a portion of mission support dollars are shared with the churchwide expression and that the remainder funds our mission to Equip Leaders, Encourage Cooperation, and Engage in New Mission.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Jim Dunlop provided a written report. He told us that his email has been spoofed and that unless it is his jdunlop@lss-elca.org address, it is to be ignored. He does not request gift cards or other assistance by email.

Bishop Dunlop observed that retirements tend to come in waves and there has been a recent wave, with five requests coming in a week's time. Based on the demographics of our pastors and deacons, we can expect 125 retirements in the next ten years, or an average of twelve per year.

He noted the ongoing efforts for anti-racism and boundary training and a new initiative for sexism training that is coming soon.

On October 19, there will be an event to provide information and encourage discussion around the actions taken at the recent Churchwide Assembly. Deacon Marsha Roscoe noted that the event will most likely be held at the seminary.

Bishop Dunlop rejoiced at the deepening relationship with the Episcopal Church, noting that instead of downsizing, we are leveraging our staff for mission that also brings financial relief to us. Not only does this involve the Stevenson School for Ministry, but also outdoor ministry. The Episcopal Church has no camps, so there is an opportunity to make our camps available to the Episcopal church. He is in conversation with the Lutheran Camping Corporation about this possibility. Such a partnership could also address the concern of declining camp attendance in our synod.

Bishop Dunlop reported that LAMPa feels it does not spend enough time in the space it rents at the United Church Center and has decided to move out. We will house their files in our synod suite.

Bishop Dunlop made us aware of a very rough, preliminary, draft concept called Heritage Community that has been proposed by Pastor Liz Polanzke. She is the intentional interim pastor for St. Mark in York, which has been in decline for a long time. It is in a changing neighborhood, but the congregation has not changed along with it. They are asking, "Is it time for us to close or is there a way for us to renew in this place?" Pastor Polanzke wondered if there is an intentional way of assisting older, declining congregations in that position. She developed the concept of Heritage Community as one possible approach and is applying for a grant to fund the experiment. As she envisions it, congregations would choose to engage the process of being a Heritage Community. The process would include the creation of a congregational Living Will. The first six months of the proposal would work with the Synod Council to establish criteria for Heritage Community. Based on Pastor Polanzke's draft, we have about 35 congregations that might fit the preliminary parameters she outlines. The Living Will acknowledges that

Synod Council Draft Minutes/September 21, 2019/page 9

when certain benchmarks are present, procedures for closure are initiated. This relieves the burden of making that decision, which otherwise might fall to just a handful of people remaining. It encourages the congregation to ask, “How will ministry be fed by the legacy of this community?” Bishop Dunlop noted that we need to be careful in communicating about this, since people will interpret it as “Synod wants to take my stuff.” Vice President Bringman strongly asserted that the synod does not want anyone’s stuff. The bishop affirmed that we need a plan to help congregations hope for renewal and plan for their legacy when they can no longer function effectively. Pastor Jillian Riddle noted that the health care industry calls this Advance Care Planning. Meredith Askey noted the benefits of creating heritage photo albums when disposing of things and wondered if a remembrance celebration event could be part of the Heritage Community process. The bishop thought that was a good idea. Dallas Barclift thinks the Heritage Community concept is a good one. He shared that he had attended a summer discernment meeting at St. Mark and was heartened to see them working through these issues but was disheartened to see their struggle to let go of the past. Bishop Dunlop noted that this is a very preliminary concept and that Pastor Liz Polanzke is still waiting for grant funding. He further stated that regardless of the grant, we will continue the conversation around this issue and work on it. The Synod Council will be part of that work.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

Vice President Lucinda L. Bringman submitted a written report. She apologized for omitting the name of Pastor Jack Horner from the list of new Synod Council members.

She requested of Synod Council members that when they have made their congregation mission support visits, to send her an email letting her know who was visited.

Vice President Bringman instructed committee liaisons that they do not have to attend each meeting, but they do need to be in touch with the committee chair so that they can submit a summary report to the Synod Council. They should not submit committee minutes, but liaison reports should include any recommended actions. Committee recommendations should be submitted prior to Executive Committee meetings so that any background work needed can be done.

Vice President Bringman referred to the comments regarding the bishop election process. The comments help us understand the feedback. She noted that we have been through the preliminary process of identifying gifts two times, once with a new bishop and once with a sitting bishop. She observed that the election process at Synod Assembly is brutal on a sitting bishop, since the bishop both runs the meeting and participates in the election process. It is possible to change the five-vote process to something else. Meredith Askey affirmed that she likes the ecclesiastical ballot because it allows each voice to be heard. Pastor Jack Horner stated that he does not like identifying persons ahead of time. He thinks the ecclesiastical ballot is sufficient for raising up names of persons deemed to possess gifts for the office of bishop. He thinks the process is uncomfortable for both sitting bishops and those whose names are lifted up. He also thinks the rule mandating exact spelling of names is excessive. Vice President Bringman reported that Pastor Tom McKee experienced increased grumpiness in conferences during the preliminary identification process. He thinks it invites negativity. Virgil Gibson said he thinks it is a good process because it encourages conversation. Joe Stepansky noted the hassle of trying to reach nominees who are outside the synod (and sometimes outside the country!) as is required of the election process. Virgil Gibson said he doesn’t think we give the Holy Spirit enough time to work. Secretary Beth Schlegel noted that the comments reflect confusion regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in the ecclesiastical balloting process. She also noted that there is confusion regarding the preliminary process which was envisioned to identify gifts for the office of bishop, not persons. Vice President Lucinda Bringman said that ELCA Secretary Chris Boerger told her that the process for election should be included in the governing documents to avoid questions of transparency. Vice President Bringman wondered if there was the possibility of a vote of confidence. Secretary Schlegel asserted that the constitution mandates both the

Synod Council Draft Minutes/September 21, 2019/page 10

term (six years) and an election but affirmed that the ecclesiastical ballot *per se* is not mandated. Vice President Bringman said that we could have a vote of confidence at year five and then, if positive, a simple election at year six. Pastor Gretchen Ierien was concerned that if a vote of confidence is negative, the last year of the bishop's terms would result in pastors posturing to run for the office. Vice President Bringman asserted that we need a task force to explore these questions and invited participation. Its work would begin next year. She observed that the process as we experienced it this year resulted in a loss of momentum, since the bishop could not reorganize staff in advance of the election.

Vice President Bringman invited Synod Council members to consider their willingness to serve on a task force to evaluate our bishop election process and to contact her if willing.

REPORT OF THE SYNOD SECRETARY

Secretary Beth A. Schlegel submitted a written report. Retired Secretary Thomas E. McKee submitted a written report. Secretary Schlegel said that a revised Nominations Handbook would be posted and encouraged Synod Council members to nominate people. We will be electing a Vice President, Synod Council members, and Consultation Committee members.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Treasurer Joseph M. Stepansky submitted a written report and a Statement of Operational Activities. He reported that in his report on the Legacy Fund, the date and amount were incorrect. As of September 20, 2019, the value of the Legacy Fund is \$2,277,454.

Treasurer Stepansky explained his strategy of investing in staggered \$100,000 3-month CDs to preserve liquidity. He also informed us that the congregational remittance forms would no longer be printed and mailed but would be available as online forms. Pastor Jack Horner asked whether emails would be sent to advise when the online forms would be available. Treasurer Stepansky indicated that treasurers and pastors were notified in July through their mailed mission support updates that we would no longer be printing the Treasurer's Remittance Forms, and that notification would go out again in October.

Vice President Bringman noted that our fiscal year runs from February 1 to January 31. She described the four funds: Unrestricted/Undesignated Funds are for current operations; Unrestricted/Designated funds are special giving for designated ministries; Temporarily Restricted funds are donations that go in and out, such as disaster response, World Hunger, etc.; Endowment fund are the Legacy Funds and there is a policy for their use.

Treasurer Stepansky explained the revenue forecast and reported that after last week's staff budget review, he forecasts a \$91 surplus. He invited questions, noting that he is most available by email, but also by telephone.

REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Audit Committee provided a written report from its May 29, 2019 meeting.

REPORT OF THE SYNOD COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Synod Council Executive Committee provided draft minutes of its September 4, 2019, meeting.

REPORTS OF THE LIAISONS

Synod Council Draft Minutes/September 21, 2019/page 11

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 for Mission Interpretation.

Pastor Robert Blezard offered a written report.

Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson was excused to lead the R3 event and provided a written report.

Pastor Beth Martini provided a written report.

Charlie Roberts was excused from the meeting.

Pastor Jennifer Hope-Tringali provided a final written report as Director for Evangelical Mission for New Mission, noting that it has been a joy and honor to serve on the synod staff. She and her husband, Deacon David Hope-Tringali, are launching Hope Academy in Guatemala.

Pastor Richard Jorgensen was excused from the meeting to lead the R3 event and provided a written report.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Compensation and Benefits Committee provided minutes of its May 16, 2019, meeting.

The Committee of Conference Deans provided minutes of its May 13, 2019, and September 9, 2019, meetings.

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Vice President Lucinda Bringman referred us to the AMMPARO Resolution noting that we voted on this and now need to implement it. Bishop Dunlop said he is putting together a task force and will be using synod communications to invite volunteers to be a part of it. He wants Synod Council members to serve on that task force. Once he has a list of volunteers, he will appoint the task force with consideration to balance of gender, context, etc.

He noted that congregations are in an uproar regarding issues surrounding immigration and particularly the "sanctuary denomination" label. Pastors are hearing about it from all quarters. At the same time, there is positive response, such as the woman who entered a Lutheran church with questions about immigration because after the decision was made at the Churchwide Assembly, she felt the Lutheran church was a safe place to ask questions. Pastor Jack Horner stated that concerns are raised about the politicization of the term "sanctuary" rather than grounding it biblically. People feel hurt. It is an issue that deserves attention. Vice President Bringman noted that the Churchwide Assembly was not able to say what "sanctuary denomination" means. People are concerned that the church is telling us to break the law. Pastor Jack Horner asserted that people are feeling that the ELCA, usually balanced in its approach, has become imbalanced on this issue. Vice President Bringman explained how the label came to be: a memorial from one synod was submitted for consideration by the Churchwide Assembly. The Memorials Committee included it with *en bloc* resolutions, but the assembly pulled it out for separate consideration. In the *Synod Council Draft Minutes/September 21, 2019/page 12*

discussion that ensued on the assembly floor, an amendment was proposed by a voting member to add the designation “sanctuary denomination” and that amendment passed. Virgil Gibson noted that the action will not change his congregation’s openness to immigrants, since they will be baptizing an immigrant family on Sunday.

Vice President Bringman read the Resolution on Ending Homelessness. She reported that in the conversation in the committee of deans, there was the sense that there is too much going on for them to implement something else. She asked, “How do we live into this?” Pastor Gretchen Ierien noted that it is hard to implement within the conference structure since the work is being done in neighborhoods in partnership with community groups. Virgil Gibson suggested sharing success stories. Bishop Dunlop suggested that we could address this on the edification days to get ideas. Lois Griffiths encouraged us to lift up advocacy, noting that it is effective in changing laws. Advocacy would be contacting legislators with postcards to urge them to raise minimum wages so that people can afford shelter. She encouraged participation in Lutheran Day at the Capitol on May 18, 2020. Bishop Dunlop described that event as a morning at Trinity, Camp Hill, with speakers and introduction to advocacy and then an afternoon bus ride to Harrisburg to meet with legislators about the issues that concern the church. Pastor Jillian Riddle suggested that if you cannot attend, your congregation could do an offering of letters (such as Bread for the World) to be taken to the Capitol. Vice President Bringman said that LAMPa will come and assist with letter-writing campaigns.

NEW BUSINESS

Virgil Gibson asked how liaisons can find out who the chair is of their assigned committees. Vice President Bringman said to call Debbie Clark. Liaisons can also check the staff description on the website for their assigned committee and find out on the calendar when committees meet.

Vice President Lucinda Bringman thanked Debbie Clark, Stella Ludwig, and Beth Schlegel for helping her with hospitality for the lunch.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice President Bringman led the members of the council in the Lord’s Prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Beth A. Schlegel
synod secretary
9/21/2019