

**LOWER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD, ELCA  
SYNOD COUNCIL  
Draft Minutes  
September 26, 2020**

The Lower Susquehanna Synod Council met for its regular meeting on Saturday, September 26, 2020, by Zoom, as the coronavirus pandemic continues. Vice President Lucinda L. Bringman called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**DEVOTIONS**

Bishop James Dunlop led us in Responsive Prayer and reflected on Acts 13:32-41. As Christians and church leaders, we are reminded to speak hope into the world. St. Paul's sermon in Acts 13 proclaims the resurrection of Jesus as our source of hope. When we are tempted to complain about the turmoil in our lives or in the world around us, we do well to remember that we have hope because Jesus set us free from our sins.

**ROLL CALL**

**Members present:** Bishop James S. Dunlop Lucinda L. Bringman  
Beth A. Schlegel Joseph M. Stepansky  
Matthew B. Best Kay A. Hinkle  
Meredith Killian Askey Debra K. Barrett  
Virgil L. Gibson Timothy J. Seitz-Brown  
Jack M. Horner Jennifer R. Lau  
Stella Ludwig Carlotta "Chucki" Strevig  
Jillian E. Riddle  
Joel S. B. Folkemer Gretchen S. Ierien

**Staff present:** Robert C. Blezard Dana J. Blouch-Hanson Marsha L. Roscoe  
Deborah M. Clark Richard E.T. Jorgensen

**Liaison present:** Lois Griffiths (WELCA)

**Members excused:** Daniel P. Picone,  
Theodore D. Wolfe, Zachary J. Weiss

**Staff excused:** Elizabeth G. Martini, Charles R. Roberts III

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Vice President Lucinda Bringman thanked the council members for patience with the many packets that were sent. She introduced the Consent Agenda and asked if anyone had questions or wanted to remove any items from the consent agenda.

Virgil Gibson moved, and Meredith Askey seconded:

**ADOPTED** That the Consent Agenda be adopted:  
**SC20.09.45.**

**That the minutes of the June 6, 2020, and July 1, 2020 meetings of the Synod Council be approved.**

**That the Synod Council appoint to the Candidacy Committee Ann Seitz-Brown and the Rev. Sarah E. Teichmann for a 1<sup>st</sup> five-year term, expiring 2025.**

**That the Synod Council appoint to the Compensation and Benefits Committee the Rev. Marleen E. Griffith-Stull for a 1<sup>st</sup> three-year term, expiring 2023.**

**That the Synod Council appoint to the Konde Diocese Committee Karen Deck for a 2<sup>nd</sup> three-year term, expiring 2023.**

**That the Synod Council appoint to the Lower Susquehanna Synod Mission Fund Committee the Rev. Brian A. McClinton for a 1<sup>st</sup> three-year term, expiring 2023.**

**That the Synod Council appoint to the Synod Worship Committee the Rev. A.J. Domines for a 1<sup>st</sup> three-year term, expiring 2023.**

**That the Synod Council grant disability status to the Rev. Courtney Ann Erzkus, effective August 18, 2020.**

**That the Synod Council grant on-leave-from-call status to the Rev. Susan J. McCarthy, effective March 1, 2020.**

**That the Synod Council grant on-leave-from-call-Family Leave status for the Rev. Laura L.M. Haupt, effective September 14, 2020.**

**That the Synod Council approve the retirement requests of Sister Davia Ann Evans, effective July 5, 2020; the Rev. Daniel O. Donmoyer, effective October 24, 2020; the Rev. Nancy L. Schwabe-Fry, effective November 1, 2020; the Rev. Beth Ann R. Hawk, effective November 22, 2020; the Rev. George M. Minick, effective December 1, 2020.**

**That the Synod Council appoint to the Assembly Planning Committee Stella Ludwig, chair, *sc*; Jennifer R. Lau, *acting synod vice president*; the Rev. Beth Schlegel, *synod secretary*, Charlie Roberts, *staff*; the Rev. Dana Blouch-Hanson, *staff, assembly manager*; Deacon Marsha L. Roscoe, *staff*; Catherine F. Deitrich, *assembly registrar*; the Rev. Matthew Best, *sc*; Daniel Picone, *sc*; the Rev. Edward J. Robbins; and Joyce Frigm.**

**That the Synod Council appoint to the Constitution Committee Chucki Strevig, chair, *sc*; the Rev. Beth Schlegel, *synod secretary*; \_\_\_\_\_, *sc*; the Rev. Jeffrey C. Compton; Jered L. Hock.**

**That the Synod Council appoint to the Finance and Budget Committee *Meredith Killian Askey*, chair, *sc*; Joseph M. Stepansky, *synod treasurer*; \_\_\_\_\_, *sc*; Dawn O. Frees; Joyce E. Frigm; Wayne R. Gongaware; \_\_\_\_\_ *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 Schlegel, *synod secretary*; the Rev. Eric Anderson; Debra Barrett, *sc*; the Rev. Douglas DeStephano; Holly Freas-Webster; Robert Walton; and Jane Wigand.**

**That the Synod Council appoint to the Mission Committee the Rev. Matthew B. Best, chair, *sc*; the Rev. James S. Dunlop, *bishop*; Jennifer R. Lau, *acting synod vice president*; the Rev. Richard E. Jorgensen Jr., *DEM*; Deacon Marsha L. Roscoe, *staff*;**

the Rev. Jack Horner, *sc*; the Rev. Jillian Riddle, *sc*; the Rev. Kathleen J. Baker; and Holly Freas-Webster.

That the Synod Council appoint to the Personnel Committee Zach Weiss, chair, *sc*; Jennifer R. Lau, *acting synod vice president*; the Rev. Martha Boyd; and Gary L. Laabs.

That the Synod Council appoint the following Synod Council liaisons to committees and task forces: Audit, \_\_\_\_\_; Compensation and Benefits, Kay Hinkle *sc*; Criminal Justice System Ministries, Chucki Strevig, *sc*; Gift and Bequest Acceptance, Stella Ludwig, *sc*; Konde Diocese, Zach Weiss, *sc*; Lower Susquehanna Synod Mission Fund, the Rev. Jack Horner, *sc*; Synodical Worship, the Rev. Gretchen Ierien, *sc*; Toward Racial Justice Task Force, \_\_\_\_\_, *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, Jennifer Lau, *acting synod vice president*.

That the Synod Council appoint the following Synod Council liaisons to conferences: Chambersburg, Chucki Strevig; Gettysburg, \_\_\_\_\_; Hanover, Kay Hinkle; Harrisburg, Meredith Askey; Lancaster, Debra Barrett; Lebanon, the Rev. Gretchen Ierien; North Lancaster, Stella Ludwig; North York, \_\_\_\_\_; Perry, Zach Weiss; South York, Daniel Picone; Upper Dauphin, the Rev. Jillian Riddle; West Cumberland, \_\_\_\_\_; West Shore, the Rev. Matthew Best and the Rev. Jack Horner; and York, \_\_\_\_\_.

That the Synod Council, through the bishop and the secretary, certify the minutes of the 2020 Synod Assembly as the official protocol of said assembly, to be deposited in the archives.

### **SYNOD COUNCIL ACTIONS**

Bishop James Dunlop moved:

**ADOPTED** That the Synod Council renew the call of the Rev. Jacquelyn H. Roderick, as **SC20.09.46.** bereavement coordinator and chaplain of York Hospital and WellSpan Surgical and Rehab Hospital, without conditions of term, effective June 16, 2020.

Bishop Dunlop explained that the call of a chaplain generally requires chaplaincy certification, which Pastor Roderick completed in June. Therefore, this call may be renewed without conditions of term.

Bishop Dunlop moved:

**ADOPTED** That the Synod Council regularize the call of the Rev. Elizabeth G. Martini as **SC20.09.47.** assistant to the bishop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod until February 28, 2026.

Bishop Dunlop restated the motion as presented in his report due to anticipated staffing changes considering the departure of the Rev. Robert Blezard from the synod staff. Pastor Martini will increase her hours, shifting from half-time to three-quarter-time in her call as assistant to the bishop; 5 hours per week of her time are contracted to Region 8. The terms of regularly called assistants to the bishop end six months after the election of a new bishop.

Bishop Dunlop moved:

**ADOPTED**      **That the Synod Council renew the call of the Rev. Katrina Holland as Intentional Interim Pastor of St. James Lutheran Church, York, effective September 16, 2020, until September 15, 2021.**  
**SC20.09.48.**

Bishop Dunlop moved:

**ADOPTED:**      **That the Synod Council affirm the decision of the congregation of Grace Lutheran Church (Two Taverns), Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, to dissolve, having conducted their Congregation Meeting on February 14, 2020 and held their final worship service December 31, 2019.**  
**SC20.09.49.**

Bishop Dunlop explained that the congregation retained an attorney to assist with the dissolution process. Although they met and voted in 2019 to close, there was no official record of that action, as required. To create that record, a Congregation Meeting was held after the final worship service. Vice President Lucinda Bringman noted that the staff is exploring the possibility of identifying an experienced attorney to be a resource for congregations going through the dissolution process.

Bishop Dunlop moved:

**TABLED**      **That the Synod Council forgive Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Lancaster, the sum of \$56,700, proceeds from the Forrey Estate for the preceding eight years, designated for mission in the Konde Diocese of the Lutheran Church in Tanzania.**

Bishop Dunlop explained that the congregation is the recipient of a longstanding trust which designates half of the annual proceeds to support Lutheran Social Services (LutherCare in Lancaster) and half to support Lutheran global missions. Over the years, the congregation has spent the global mission funds in a variety of ways, including missionary support and, most recently, support for various projects in the Konde Diocese. Several years ago, there were transitions in financial leadership and funds from the trust for global mission remained unused because no direction was given for their use. Over time, the corporate memory regarding the designation was lost and the funds were used for congregation operating expenses. A recent audit discovered \$56,700 of the designated trust fund monies received over the past eight years had not been used for the purpose designated. To repay these funds would jeopardize the ongoing operations of the congregation. An attorney retained to assist the congregation in these matters suggested that if the intended recipient of the funds agrees, the debt can be forgiven. Bishop Dunlop noted that the council president of Emmanuel Lutheran church, Deb Barrett, is a member of the Synod Council and will abstain from voting on this matter.

Discussion included the question of whether conversation had taken place about a plan to repay the money. Deb Barrett clarified that several plans had been discussed and all of them include the proper designation of funds going forward. Repayment plans were paused when the possibility of forgiveness arose. The question of whether someone was expecting this money was answered in the negative. Bishop Dunlop noted that the synod was not aware of the existence of this estate. Deb Barrett underscored that the repayment of these funds would be a burden to the congregation.

Virgil Gibson moved, and Pastor Joel Folkemer seconded a substitute motion:

That the Synod Council create an interest-free loan of \$56,700 between Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Lancaster and the Lower Susquehanna Synod with a repayment schedule to be agreed upon by both parties at a later date.

Pastor Folkemer suggested amending the motion to include “for mission in the Konde Diocese”. Bishop Dunlop said that it is in keeping with the original intent of the trust to use the language of global mission.

It was clarified that this did not mean the ELCA Global Mission program, but international mission in general. The motion was amended:

**LOST** That the Synod Council create an interest-free loan of \$56,700 between Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Lancaster and the Lower Susquehanna Synod, designated for global mission, with a repayment schedule to be agreed upon by both parties at a later date.

Discussion noted that this could place the congregation in debt to the synod for as long as 20 years. Diverse viewpoints expressed included the desire to honor the wishes of the donor to support international missions; and on the other hand, to recognize that the error was not malicious, but an oversight, providing an opportunity for mercy. There was concern voiced for the future mission of Emmanuel, which is an important city ministry, as well as concern for the support of the Konde Diocese. Questions were raised regarding the impact of repayment on the congregation and their relationship to the synod, as well as regarding the impact on future designated gifts if the synod is perceived as not upholding donor designations. Some feel that a decision that would create financial stress on the congregation is wrong for us to make. Others believe that it is vital to uphold the wishes of the deceased and thus there is a moral obligation for the money to be repaid. Additional comments centered on a racial justice aspect of the decision.

Vice President Bringman moved us to vote on whether to substitute the motion for a repayment plan. The motion to substitute was defeated. The original motion to forgive the debt remains.

Pastor Joel Folkemer moved, and Kay Hinkle seconded:

**ADOPTED** That the Synod Council table the motion to forgive Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Lancaster, the sum of \$56,700, proceeds from the Forrey Estate for the preceding eight years, designated for mission in the Konde Diocese of the Lutheran Church in Tanzania. until the February 2021 Synod Council meeting, to allow representatives of Emmanuel Lutheran Church and the Lower Susquehanna Synod to have conversation about repayment options.

Chucki Strevig, chair of the Constitution Committee, moved,

**ADOPTED** That the Synod Council recommend to the Synod Assembly the amendment of SC20.09.51. †S3.01. of the synod constitution:

†S3.01. The territory of this synod, as determined by the Churchwide Assembly, shall be the counties of Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, and York in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and the congregations St. Michael and Zion, **Klingerstown**, in Schuylkill County in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Chucki Strevig clarified that this specifies the location of the two congregations in Schuylkill County, to eliminate confusion.

Chucki Strevig moved:

**ADOPTED** That the Synod Council recommend to the Synod Assembly for adoption, the following amendments to the synod bylaws and continuing resolutions:

**S11.01.02.** *The Lower Susquehanna Synod Mission Fund Committee shall be composed of at least 7 persons: the bishop and the treasurer of this synod and at least 5 members (at least one of whom shall be an attorney) appointed by the Synod Council. At least three of the appointed*

members shall be lay voting members of congregations of this synod and **at least 2** shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament on the roster of this synod.

**S11.01.04.** The Committee on Candidacy shall be composed of **at least 12 15 to and no more than 20** persons, including the bishop of this synod and a seminary faculty representative appointed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**S11.01.05.** The Committee for Global Mission shall be composed of **a minimum of at least 8** persons.

**S11.01.06.** The Konde Diocese Committee shall be composed of **no more than 12 at least 7** persons.

**S11.01.07.** The World Hunger Committee shall be composed of **no more than 21 at least 7** persons.

**S11.01.08.** The Committee for Synodical Worship shall be composed of **at least 8 to 12 and no more than 15** persons, both ordained and lay.

**S11.01.09.** The Committee for Stewardship Education and Mission Support shall be composed of **no more than at least 7** persons.

**S11.01.10.** The Compensation and Benefits Committee shall be composed of **at least 5 to 7 9** persons, at least 2 of whom are **rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament on the roster of** this synod..

**S11.01.11.** The Committee for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs shall be composed of at least 8 persons, **both including at least 2** ministers of Word and Sacrament and **at least 5 laypersons.**

**S11.01.r.C16.** Consonant with the provisions of S11.01.15. these ministries may include:

2) ~~The Learning Ministries Team shall be composed of no more than 10 at least 7 persons who are — experienced Christian educators who currently serve or who have served in congregational, institutional or middle judicatory settings of the ELCA or that of an ecumenical partner.~~

4) The Leadership Support Team (LST), which shall be composed of **at least 8 9 to 12** persons, **both including at least 2** ministers of Word and Sacrament and **at least 6 laypersons.**

†**S11.02.** The Consultation Committee of this synod shall consist of at least six persons and not more than 12 persons, of whom half shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament and half shall be laypersons, who shall each be elected by the Synod Assembly for a term of six years without consecutive re-election. The functions of the Consultation Committee are set forth in Chapter 20 of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and in Chapter 17 of this constitution. The size of the Consultation Committee, in accord with this provision, shall be defined in this synod's bylaws.

**S11.02.01.** The Consultation Committee of this synod shall consist of **at least 10** persons.

†**S11.04.** The Mutual Ministry Committee shall be appointed by the Executive Committee of the Synod Council to provide support and counsel to the bishop.

**S11.04.01.** The Mutual Ministry Committee shall be composed of **at least 9** persons; **at least 4** ministers of Word and Sacrament and **at least 5** laypersons, with at least 1 of the 9 to be a representative of the Synod Council.

†S11.05. The Audit Committee of this synod shall consist of three to six persons, none of whom is a member of the synod staff. Up to half of the committee members may be Synod Council members. The Audit Committee members shall be elected by the Synod Council for a term of three years and be eligible for re-election to a second consecutive three-year term. The terms of the Audit Committee members shall be staggered. The Audit Committee shall be responsible for assisting the Synod Council in fulfilling its general oversight of the synod's accounting, financial reporting, internal control systems, and external audit processes as provided in †S15.31.

**S11.05.01.** *The Audit Committee shall consist of **at least 5** persons, at least 2 of whom should be certified public accountants if possible and all of whom shall have accounting or related financial management experience.*

Secretary Beth Schlegel reported that the committee was using an older version of the constitution that had not reflected actions taken by the Synod Council in 2019. At that time, the Learning Ministries Team was removed from the continuing resolution, and therefore should be removed from this motion.

Vice President Lucinda Bringman called on Pastor Joel Folkemer, vice-chair of the Executive Committee.

Pastor Folkemer moved:

**ADOPTED** **That the Synod Council strongly encourage all congregations to adopt the minimum salary guidelines recommended to the 2020 Synod Assembly for use in congregational budgets for 2021.**  
**SC20.09.53.**

Vice President Lucinda Bringman clarified that since the Synod Assembly was not able to act on these proposed guidelines, and we do not have that authority, it would be helpful for the Synod Council to act in strong support of the proposed guidelines with our affirmation.

Pastor Folkemer moved:

**ADOPTED** **That the Synod Council direct that the minimum salary guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and for Ministers of Word and Service be published on our synod website and the Compensation and Benefits Manual 2020 Salary Development Worksheet be updated to include the 2021 minimum salary figures for congregation treasurers' use.**  
**SC20.09.54.**

Vice President Lucinda Bringman clarified that the synod cannot tell congregations what to do except when calling a pastor or deacon. Congregations calling a pastor or deacon are expected to provide at least the minimum compensation according to the guidelines.

Pastor Folkemer moved:

That the Synod Council direct that the updated Salary Development Worksheet include notation that the recommended salary guidelines were unable to be adopted by the Synod Assembly due to its cancellation related to the COVID-19 pandemic, but that the guidelines were recommended by the Compensation and Benefits Committee and the Synod Council, and that the 2020 Salary Development Worksheet also be included in the Compensation Manual as the last adopted by the Assembly.

Vice President Lucinda Bringman indicated that this motion has specifically to do with the Compensation Manual and what is presented there. It does not affect the materials available on the website.

Kay Hinkle moved, and Bishop Dunlop seconded:

To amend the motion by removing the last clause.

Vice President Bringman reported that the Executive Committee acted with a desire to advocate for rostered ministers as well as recognizing that there was no Synod Assembly approval of the proposed guidelines. The Compensation and Benefits Committee met after the meeting of the Executive Committee and believe that having both the 2020 approved guidelines and the 2021 proposed guidelines in the current Compensation Manual is too confusing. The amendment would remove the 2020 version of the worksheet from the 2021 edition of the Compensation Manual. Both versions remain available on the website. The amended motion passed.

**ADOPTED**     **That the Synod Council direct that the updated Salary Development Worksheet SC20.09.55. include notation that the recommended salary guidelines were unable to be adopted by the Synod Assembly due to its cancellation related to the COVID-19 pandemic, but that the guidelines were recommended by the Compensation and Benefits Committee and the Synod Council.**

### **DISCUSSION ON A POTENTIAL SYNOD OFFICE RELOCATION**

Vice President Bringman yielded the floor to Bishop James Dunlop. Bishop Dunlop said that conversations in the synod staff have explored the possibility of moving out of the United Church Center into another space. He reported that the synod has been a tenant of the United Church Center since 1968. Trinity Lutheran Church, Camp Hill, owns an adjacent house that it would like to retool for church use. The congregation intends to gut the house and fit it out for new use; the congregation would like for the synod to be the new tenant. The estimated cost of the modifications needed to make it suitable for our use is \$200,000. Bishop Dunlop sees several advantages to making a move here: it is close to one of our congregations; there is good parking; there is first floor accessibility; we would not pay for space we do not regularly use, as with the current chapel and larger meeting spaces; we would have access to the chapel and meeting spaces in the main church building; and there is a significant reduction in annual rent. It is estimated that the annual rental cost would be reduced from our current \$60,000/year to about \$36,000/year, a savings of \$24,000. Although plans are not finalized, the bishop is looking for Synod Council support so that plans can move forward. The timeline would anticipate moving late next summer. Bishop Dunlop said he has been in conversation with the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches, owner of the United Church Center, regarding the possibility of relocation.

Vice President Bringman indicated that a formal Letter of Intent is not yet ready, but if we wait for that to indicate support, the conversation with the architects and obtaining necessary permits cannot move forward, delaying the timeline. The question was raised regarding the availability of meeting space when we begin to resume in-person meetings. Pastor Jack Horner, pastor of Trinity, indicated that with the dates set a year in advance and on Saturdays, there should be no problem. The question was also raised regarding the impact of our move on the United Church Center. Bishop Dunlop indicated that we need to give a one-year notice of terminating our lease, which allows much time to find new tenants. It is currently 99% occupied and there are often tenants waiting for available space. Bishop Dunlop explained that the original vision was for all the Protestant judicatories to be located together, but that vision was never fulfilled. Currently, the only denominational judicatories at the United Church Center are the Lower Susquehanna Synod and the Penn Central Conference of the United Church of Christ. The Pennsylvania Council of Churches is exploring the wisdom of keeping the building.

Treasurer Joe Stepansky reinforced the savings impact on the synod if we make this move. Vice President Bringman noted that if we remain in the current building, we would also incur costs to reconfigure the space yet again to reduce our footprint.

Bishop James Dunlop closed the discussion noting a sense of support for the relocation to Trinity, Camp Hill, and the intention to move forward.



## **REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT**

Vice President Lucinda L. Bringman submitted a written report. She noted that the synod vice presidents normally meet annually, but this year's gathering was cancelled by the churchwide Office of the Secretary due to the coronavirus pandemic. Instead, the vice presidents decided among themselves to meet monthly by Zoom, to keep informed and to be a voice on the churchwide level. Synod constitutions give vice presidents the responsibility of chairing the meetings of the Synod Council, but delineate little else, except that there is no salary. The role of synod vice presidents has expanded over time and that group wants to have more of a unified voice in churchwide affairs. To that end, the vice presidents are organizing themselves to be a visible unit in the structure of the church.

Vice President Bringman noted that this is her last Synod Council meeting and thanked everyone for being a wonderful group to serve with. The council members expressed their appreciation for her leadership.

## **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

Treasurer Joseph M. Stepansky submitted a written report and a Statement of Operational Activities. Treasurer Stepansky noted that in the spring, we were concerned about mission support and the decreased forecast; but due to steady mission support revenue, the forecast was revised upward over the summer. The forecast for the fall was also increased. The December forecast is still very conservative and there is room to increase it. The mission support coming in for September might exceed the forecast.

The Legacy Fund investment balance of \$2,663,852 as of 9/14/2020 is higher than any time in the fund's history.

The \$234,127 PPP loan is now in the forgiveness process. Treasurer Stepansky provided the requested information and is now waiting while the forgiveness application is in review.

Sales tax exemption forms are nearly all distributed.

Treasurer Stepansky anticipates a potential \$140,000 surplus of revenue over expenses by the end of the year, assuming the forgiveness of the PPP loan.

Vice President Lucinda Bringman reminded council members of their fiduciary responsibility to read the Treasurer's reports. She also confirmed the appointment of Meredith Askey as chair of the Finance and Budget Committee.

Treasurer Joe Stepansky referred to the proposed new allocations for the Legacy Fund, noting that a rebalancing was necessary to create a new designation for Christian Education from the Christine Mummert Estate. In accordance with the Endowment Policy, there is an annual distribution of 3%-5% of the fund proceeds, based on the average fund year-end balance of the previous three years.

Treasurer Joseph Stepansky moved, and Meredith Askey seconded:

**ADOPTED**     **That the distribution percentages from the Vision of Mission Legacy Fund be changed as follows to create a new allocation for Christian Education in accordance with the terms of the Christine Mummert Estate:**

	<b><u>CURRENT</u></b>	<b><u>NEW</u></b>
<b>Eliminate Hunger Initiatives</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>31.50%</b>
<b>Support of Konde Diocese</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>31.50%</b>
<b>Seminarian Scholarship Support</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>17.75%</b>
<b>Synodical Program Support</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>11.75%</b>

**Bishop's Discretionary Fund  
Christian Education**

**6%**

**6.00%  
1.50%**

Treasurer Stepansky explained that the percentages were originally established according to the donations that went into the fund. However, donor records were lost during the defalcation and the basis for the distribution percentages was rebuilt based on Synod Council minutes. There is always room for new monies to be added to the fund.

The question was raised regarding how the Christian Education distribution will be handled. Vice President Bringman indicated that the 2013 policy does not stipulate how the distributions will be managed, but Synod Council minutes designated who would be responsible: Seminarian Support is handled according to need through the assistant to the bishop responsible for the candidacy process; Support of the Konde Diocese is handled through the Konde Diocese Committee; Eliminate Hunger Initiatives is managed through the World Hunger Committee; the Synod Council designates the distribution for Synodical Program Support; and the bishop manages the Bishop's Discretionary Fund. Vice President Bringman believes the matter of responsibility for the distributions should be part of the policy. Thus, the Finance and Budget Committee should review the policy and bring a recommendation. Bishop James Dunlop indicated that the recommendation will likely be to give the responsibility for the Christian Education distribution to Charlie Roberts, who oversees Faith Formation, the Resource Center, and other aspects of Christian Education ministry.

**ADOPTED     That the Endowment Policy relating to the Vision of Mission Legacy Fund be  
SC20.09.57.     referred to the Finance and Budget Committee for review.**

### **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop James Dunlop provided a written report. Vice President Lucinda Bringman commended the bishop and staff for their support of rostered ministers during this time of pandemic. She referred to a recent survey of worship practices and the plethora of guidance and information provided to assist rostered ministers and congregations. She underscored the importance of rostered ministers and congregation leaders asking the synod for help. When asked how the synod is caring for the synod staff, Vice President Bringman responded by saying that the staff had a daylong retreat and are encouraged to take vacation time. Bishop Dunlop noted the importance to him of expressions of prayer and notes of support.

Bishop Dunlop told the council about the departure in November of Pastor Rob Blezard and commended him on his work and partnership in ministry. The bishop is making changes to the staffing to care for the ministry. Pastor Beth Martini has agreed to take on more hours, and will be managing mobility, that is, keeping track of congregations needing rostered ministers, ministers who want to move into or within our synod, and caring for those in transition. Deacon Marsha Roscoe, who had been on loan to the Episcopal Church as associate dean of the Stevenson School for Ministry, has now returned to us and will manage communications and mission. The staff configuration is still in process.

Bishop Dunlop reported regarding Sattazahn Lutheran Church, Jonestown, and its intention to leave the ELCA. The decision to leave was made a year ago, but they could not hold Congregation Meetings due to the coronavirus pandemic. In early summer 2020, in accordance with the constitution, Bishop Dunlop and conference dean, Pastor Robert Wallace, went to Sattazahn for a consultation with the Congregation Council. The council members had misinformation regarding the mission and ministry of the ELCA which Bishop Dunlop and Dean Wallace countered. The congregation scheduled a congregational vote on July 12, 2020 to leave the ELCA, which Bishop Dunlop and Pastor Rob Blezard attended. They had a consultation with the assembled congregation regarding the polity of the ELCA. There were no questions asked by the congregation of the bishop. The vote at that meeting was 31-1 to leave the ELCA and join

the NALC. Pastor Ted Hummel, retired, is committed to moving to the NALC. The congregation has been an inactive member of the synod for many years, having sent no one to synod assemblies in 20 years. The constitution calls for a second consultation. Bishop Dunlop believes that their decision will not be changed by a second visit and asked if the Synod Council thought it was necessary. While there was a general sense that it was not necessary, Secretary Beth Schlegel indicated that the consultation required by the constitution does not necessarily require a physical visit; it could be accomplished with a phone call and letter.

Bishop Dunlop continues to consider the budget for next year. The challenge is that we do not know the future impact of the pandemic on mission support. He indicated that current forecasts could signal a shift from a \$2.4 million budget to a \$2.25 million plan. The shortfall poses challenges and potential hard decisions. He would rather not cut staff and later discover that the money came in to fund the work. He noted the reserves that might be available – a \$57,000 surplus from FY2019 and potentially \$140,000 from FY2020. He wondered about the possibility of funding the budget shortfall with this year's surplus, i.e. \$50,000-\$75,000. Bishop Dunlop asked whether the Synod Council would consider a proposed budget balanced with reserves rather than mission support. He doesn't want to prepare such a budget if the council would not consider it. Discussion included acknowledging the challenge of adopting a budget in November for FY2021 and then immediately beginning to plan for FY2022. Treasurer Stepansky said that we have a surplus because of the PPP loan. There was a dip in mission support at the beginning of the pandemic, but it has been increasing since then. Further discussion expressed support for using the surplus under these circumstances, noting the importance of keeping as full and active a staff as possible during this time of crisis to respond to congregational stress. Vice President Bringman reminded council members that the Synod Council is responsible for governance and the bishop is responsible for administration, including staffing. The consensus reached was in support of using the surplus to fund next year's budget. The 2021 budget will be brought for action at the November 2020 Synod Council meeting.

Bishop James Dunlop reported that the intention of the churchwide organization to undertake a restructuring, including a potential 20% staff reduction, was announced in July to the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council. There was resistance from the Church Council and communication issues have created anxiety in the system. The intention is to break down silos and facilitate collaboration, but the conversation did not include many stakeholders, so the proposal is being reworked. The next Church Council meeting is in November. Bishop Dunlop and others have wondered if the ELCA needs to be reconstituted. The current governing documents foster organizational stability because they are so well-defined and call for uniformity across the church. Change is difficult and slow to achieve. The current age, the bishop believes, calls for greater nimbleness, that is, the ability to make changes quickly. Churchwide leadership is wrestling with these issues.

Bishop Dunlop thanked Pastor Rob Blezard for his work on the staff, particularly in finding gifted leaders to serve in this synod. Thanks to Rob's work, this synod is a place where people want to serve. The bishop expressed deep sadness at his departure from the staff.

Bishop Dunlop thanked Lucinda for her able leadership of the Synod Council, noting that this is her last meeting. He said that she has been a gift to the bishop and that he values the deep trust that they have built over time. The good teamwork on the synod staff was a result of Lucinda's commitment to collaborative working. Her service in the synod was a calling for her and she will be missed. He commented that he and Lucinda share a sense of agitating for good to shape ministry in both the synod and the wider church. Thank you, Lucinda!

## **CONVERSATION REGARDING CONGREGATIONAL VIABILITY AND CONSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

Bishop Dunlop referred to the information sheet provided with his report and reviewed the history of the situation. St. John (Franklin), Dillsburg, voted 4-3 in July 2019 to close by July 31, 2020. The bishop expected the congregational leadership to take the necessary steps toward closure, but no such steps were taken. Communication with the council president was very difficult. On July 26, 2020, the congregation voted 7-1 to remain open. Bishop Dunlop and Pastor Rob Blezard both attended that meeting and prior to the vote, spoke about the mission and polity of the ELCA and what is expected of congregations. The vote to remain open is disappointing, since the congregation's viability is severely curtailed. They have ten voting members and eight of those are serving on the congregation council. The council met three times in 2019, meeting in a nursing home, since one of their members lives there. They have reported an average attendance of nine prior to the pandemic. The congregation has \$193,000 in resources divided among operating funds, building funds, memorial funds and a cemetery fund. Efforts to establish a separate cemetery association were halted by the pandemic, so the cemetery continues to be owned by the congregation. Bishop Dunlop reported that supply pastors have refused to lead worship there because oftentimes only one person comes to worship.

Conversation with ELCA General Counsel Tom Cunniff referred to the synod constitution †S13.24.

†S13.24. The Synod Council, itself or through trustees appointed by it, may take charge and control of the property of a congregation of this synod to hold, manage, and convey the same on behalf of this synod, if any of the following apply:

- a. The congregation has disbanded, ceased to worship, or otherwise ceased to exist as a congregation.
- b. The congregation has abandoned its property.
- c. The remaining members of the congregation decide that it is no longer possible to function as a congregation or that they are unable to provide required governance.
- d. The Synod Council determines that the membership of a congregation has become so scattered or so diminished in numbers that it cannot provide required governance or that it has become impractical for the congregation to fulfill the purposes for which it was organized.
- e. The Synod Council determines that it is necessary for this synod to protect and preserve the congregation's property from waste and deterioration.

The congregation shall have the right to appeal any such decision to the next Synod Assembly.

Attorney Cunniff stated that the Synod Council could invoke items (a), (d) and (e) of the provision, given the circumstances of the congregation. Bishop Dunlop said that during his tenure as bishop, we have not exercised this authority and he is not sure if we want to begin down this road, since there are other congregations that could fall into this same situation. He wondered if a process like the Heritage Community that had been proposed by Pastor Liz Polanzke might be more fruitful in the long run. In the case of St. John (Franklin), the council president is convinced that the congregation can survive. The question is whether it can fulfil its mission and provide required governance. Bishop Dunlop believes we need a more comprehensive approach to dealing with these situations. He said that it is the responsibility of the Synod Council to make the decision to invoke †S13.24. and opened the matter for discussion.

Questions were raised regarding alternatives to the synod exercising authority to close congregations and whether the Heritage Community approach would be helpful in this instance. Bishop Dunlop indicated that the Heritage Community proposal could establish mutually-agreed-upon benchmarks early in a congregation's struggle, relieving the emotional freight of determining when the time has come for a final

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decision. Vice President Bringman reminded us of the current resource for discernment, *At Risk to Risking Mission*.

Responding to a question regarding the status of a cemetery when the congregation who owns it closes, Bishop Dunlop indicated that the formation of a separate cemetery corporation with a board of directors to manage the cemetery is encouraged.

The question was raised about the cost of implementing the Heritage Community process. Bishop Dunlop said it would cost staff time and legal advice, noting that the grant Pastor Polanzke applied for was for \$50,000.

Other staff members observed that St. John (Franklin) has been on this path of decline for a long time, and staff has spent a lot of time working with them.

Concern was raised about taking action to intentionally accompany congregations in decline during this season of pandemic, when staff time and energy is critically needed to support all congregations and active rostered ministers.

The question was raised: In situations like this, when congregations won't acknowledge their condition and resist accepting the counsel of synod staff, is it our responsibility to hold them accountable? Considering the constitution and our ecclesial polity, yes, we are responsible. That could be accomplished by establishing benchmarks such as in the Heritage Community process.

Bishop Dunlop concluded that his office will talk with the leadership of St. John (Franklin), not to close them, but to accompany them. He noted that there will always be those who resent synod action to close congregations.

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

Secretary Beth A. Schlegel submitted a written report.

#### **REPORT OF THE SYNOD COUNCIL COMMITTEES**

The Synod Council Constitution Committee provided minutes of its September 2, 2020, meeting and notes from January 2020 meetings. The Synod Council Executive Committee provided minutes of its May 26, 2020, meeting and draft minutes of the September 9, 2020, meeting.

#### **REPORTS OF THE CHURCHWIDE AND RELATED ORGANIZATION LIAISONS**

Lois Griffiths reported that the churchwide WELCA triennial was cancelled, but a Zoom Bible Study on Just Love, Just Time, and the Holy Land was held. There were no other liaison reports.

#### **REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE STAFF**

Deacon Marsha Roscoe reported that she is happy to be back on staff and will be resuming work in communications, mission, and spiritual renewal.

Charlie Roberts provided a written report.

Pastor Robert Blezard provided a written report.

Pastor Beth Martini was excused from the meeting.

Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson provided a written report.

Pastor Richard Jorgensen provided a written report. He also reported that while we did not receive the Lilly Foundation grant, God is providing what is needed. He called our attention to his report, where he noted emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities.

### **REPORTS OF COMMITTEES FOR THE MINISTERIUM AND MISSION**

**The Committee of Conference Deans** provided minutes of its September 14, 2020, meeting.

**The Compensation and Benefits Committee** provided a liaison report.

**The LSS Mission Fund Committee** provided a liaison report.

**The World Hunger Committee** provided a liaison report.

**United Campus Ministries** provided a liaison report. In response to the question raised in the report regarding the status of funding, Bishop Dunlop explained that in the spring, we were holding back some grants because our finances were precarious, but we can release those funds now.

### **REPORTS OF TASK FORCES**

Vice President Bringman informed us that the Bishop Election Evaluation Task Force has just issued a survey and urged us all to respond.

### **AFFIRMATION OF ACTING VICE PRESIDENT**

Vice President Lucinda Bringman brought the first item on the agenda under New Business to the floor at this time in the meeting.

**ADOPTED** That the Synod Council affirm the bishop's intention to appoint Jennifer Lau as the **SC20.09.58.** acting synod vice president, subject to Executive Committee approval, until the next Synod Assembly.

Vice President Bringman explained that when a synod officer resigns between synod assemblies, according to S8.55., the bishop is responsible for providing for the appropriate care of the responsibilities of the office until the Synod Assembly can elect a new officer. Since she tendered her resignation in April and it was accepted by the Synod Council, but no election was held at the Synod Assembly, this provision applies. The bishop will seek approval of his intended appointment at the November Executive Committee meeting.

### **RESIGNATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

Vice President Lucinda Bringman brought the second item on the agenda under New Business to the floor at this time in the meeting.

**ADOPTED** That the Synod Council accept the resignations of Dallas Barclift, Virgil Gibson, the **SC20.09.59.** Rev. Joel Folkemer, and the Rev. Timothy Seitz-Brown as members of the Synod Council effective no later than October 1, 2020.

We proceeded to the election of two ordained members of the Synod Council. Vice President Bringman stated that Pastor Jim Polanzke and Pastor Carla Christopher Wilson had withdrawn their names from consideration. Secretary Beth Schlegel provided the ballot showing the Rev. Brian McClinton, the Rev. Molly Haggerty, the Rev. Hans Becklin and the Rev. Kevin O'Bryan. Vice President Bringman instructed Synod Council members to use the Zoom chat to direct a private message to Debbie Clark or to text her by phone. The votes were tallied and Debbie Clark reported 16 ballots cast as follows: Pastor McClinton

(13); Pastor Haggerty (11), Pastor Becklin (5) and Pastor O'Bryan (3). Needed to elect were 9 votes. Vice President Bringman declared the Rev. Brian McClinton and the Rev. Molly Haggerty elected to the Synod Council.

**ELECTED**     **The Rev. Brian A. McClinton and the Rev. Molly K. Haggerty to vacated seats on SC20.09.60.     the Synod Council.**

### **DISCUSSION OF THE REGION 8 STEERING COMMITTEE QUESTIONS**

Vice President Lucinda Bringman explained that the steering committee meets at least annually and when it last met, all synods seemed open to exploring possible changes to the structure of the church within the region. A letter was sent out asking synod councils to consider possibilities, but the response was lukewarm. Four synods indicated that it had taken them 32 years to get this far and they are not interested in making major changes at this time. Metro DC indicated that it didn't fit in with the rest of the synods and wasn't interested in collaborating on structural changes. Three synods agreed to explore possibilities: Lower Susquehanna Synod, Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, and Delaware-Maryland Synod. Given these responses, the steering committee is not looking to pursue changes to the physical structure of synods within the region, but the new bishop of Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod proposed consideration of the following questions:

Where do we as synod see growth?

Where do we as synod see decline?

(Possible supporting questions: How do we apply resources to both? What do we mean by growth/decline?)

The vice presidents will gather the responses and summarize for the steering committee.

#### **Where do we see growth?**

- Congregational participation in renewal programs
- Congregations sharing their stories
- Spiritual growth through the R3 process
- The impact of engagement with John Roberto in faith formation and Dave Daubert in mission renewal
- Development of spirituality in congregations
- Staff has done a good job of laying out directions as seeds – and sometimes seeds take time to grow
- Willingness to take risks and seize the opportunities for growth potential in rethinking what it means to be church
- Individual discipleship
- Diversity
- In opportunities for new worshipping communities and future growth in diverse populations
- In opportunities opened up by increased use of technology
- In congregations cooperating for ministry
- The trends noted in the Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission, Pastor Richard Jorgensen:
  - ❖ I would like to offer what I believe will be some significant trends for ministry in the coming year and beyond. I offer these not as prophecy, but based on personal experience and observation, statistical data and emerging trends throughout the church. This is not prophecy or prediction, and local results may vary, but these are some of things we will want to anticipate as we move into the future together:
    - ❖ In-person gatherings in our congregations will not return to pre-COVID-19 levels even after a vaccine becomes available. Currently, in-person gatherings tend to be

between 15-40% of pre-COVID numbers. We anticipate after a vaccine is widely available, we might see perhaps 70% of our pre-COVID in-person attendance.

- ❖ At the same time, online ministry will remain essential as we move into the future. We do need to be intentional not to call it “virtual,” because it is real ministry. The online platform will expand our mission in some exciting ways but will also require great intentionality if we are to be effective.
- ❖ It will become increasingly important for congregations to develop a strategy for Hybrid Ministry which incorporates both on-the-ground ministry and online ministry in ways which allow us to be effective in both. This will require a great deal of adaptability and flexibility to do both well.
- ❖ So far this year, 80% of congregations in the ELCA are maintaining similar income levels to pre-COVID-19 levels (while 20% are struggling), but we anticipate that there will be a significant stewardship crisis for many congregations in 2021. Part of this is because of a deep sense of fatigue and the prolonged nature of the pandemic.
- ❖ Developing intentional strategies for increasing engagement in ministry will be essential for the future of the church in the United States.
- ❖ We will see widespread burnout, depression and anxiety among both rostered and non-rostered leaders in the church.
- ❖ We anticipate the largest wave (percentage-wise) of clergy retirements since the post-World War II era as a direct result of the pandemic.
- ❖ Approximately 20% of existing Christian congregations in the United States will close as a direct result of the pandemic.
- ❖ At the same time, we will see emerging new mission possibilities. This will require greater collaboration among congregations and other ministries. We also may expect to see an increasing emergence of micro-churches.
- ❖ We will observe an emerging spiritual crisis for many people. This will not always be bad. Some people will experience great spiritual growth, and others will also face a sense of disconnection and doubt.
- ❖ There will be increasing conflict within congregations, as people are faced with competing options and viewpoints for paths forward in ministry.
- ❖ In all things, we remember that God is still God and God is still at work in our midst and will work through us and among us in this season and always.

#### **Where do we see decline?**

- In our struggle for diversity
- In congregations struggling to maintain mission and ministry
- In youth participation in church life
- In the sustainability of the 1 pastor/1 building model of church – we need to move toward more cooperation
- In trust in institutions in general and the institution of the church

We discussed the positive impact of asset-based approaches to shaping the future. We need to get out of the bubble and share resources. The church may need a business model that provides more options. We should invest in the things that provide hope and opportunity, such as new starts and creating new ministries. When will we learn to ask what God wants?

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**



There was no unfinished business.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Vice President Bringman introduced the ballot for Synod Council Lay Woman by indicating that Jen Lau was no longer under consideration, since she will be appointed acting vice president. There is one seat to fill now, and the nominees are Linda Long and Stacy Schroeder. Debbie Clark reported 16 ballots cast with Stacy Schroeder receiving 10 votes and Linda Long receiving 6 votes. Vice President Bringman said 9 votes were needed to elect, so she declared Stacy Schroeder elected.

**ELECTED**     **Stacy L. Schroeder to a vacated seat on the Synod Council.**  
**SC20.09.61.**

Vice President Bringman indicated that there are two open seats for lay man and two nominees. Stella Ludwig moved and Meredith Askey seconded to elect both men to the Synod Council.

**ELECTED**     **James F. Druckenbrod and Michael R. Zeigler to vacated seats on the Synod**  
**SC20.09.62.**     **Council.**

Vice President Bringman reminded the council that the next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for November 4 and the next Synod Council meeting for November 21. An updated roster and calendar of meetings will be sent out.

Vice President Lucinda Bringman thanked Pastor Richard Jorgensen and Deacon Marsha Roscoe for their work on the Lilly Foundation grant. There were 862 applications for the grant. It was hard work and holy work and it will inform our synod going forward. She asked Pastor Rob Blezard to close in prayer.

She excused all but those who had attended the June 6, 2020, executive session.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Synod Council entered executive session to approve the minutes of the June 6, 2020, executive session.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 1:32 p.m.

Beth A. Schlegel  
synod secretary  
10/8/20