

LOWER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD, ELCA
SYNOD COUNCIL
Minutes
April 22, 2017

The Lower Susquehanna Synod Council held its regular meeting on Saturday, April 22, 2017, in the Board Room of the United Church Center, 900 S. Arlington Avenue, Harrisburg, PA. Vice President Lucinda L. Bringman called the meeting to order.

Prior to the meeting and during the later break members of the Synod council had opportunity to enjoy refreshments and fellowship in the Board Room. The vice president thanked the door keeper, Pastor Beth Schlegel, and those who provided refreshments, Christine Lowe, Pastors Rob and Sharron Blezard, and Pastor Thomas McKee. Periodically throughout the meeting, Vice President Bringman asked those present at this meeting to share their prayer requests.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:	Bishop James S. Dunlop Thomas E. McKee	Lucinda L. Bringman Bruce E. Seagrist
	Eric N. Anderson Dana J. Blouch-Hanson Joel S. B. Folkemer Joyce E. Frigm Virgil L. Gibson Brenda D. Hartzell Jered L. Hock	Colleen M. Hoffman Christine C. Lowe Susan L. McDonald Beth A. Schlegel Stephanie M. Strauss M. Jane Wigand
Staff Present:	Robert C. Blezard Sharron R. Blezard Debbie M. Clark	Richard E. T. Jorgensen, Jr. Charlie R. Roberts III Marsha L. Roscoe
Liaison Present:	Stephen R. Herr	Linda L. Lubold
Consultant Present:	Donna Nicholson	
Members Excused:	Zoe L. Clark J. Richard Eckert	Jillian E. Riddle Allen P. Stump
Liaisons Excused:	Fred Bohls	

DEVOTIONS

Susan McDonald provided devotions, centering her meditation on the theme, Popeye and Spinach Technology. She stated that we are tempted to think of God as spinach, the source of miraculous help, but she asked, "What happens when there are no miracles?" We either get turned off or we ask other questions and begin to rethink and reshape our faith. She affirmed that she relies on God's promises to provide light for our life's journeys. Susan McDonald led the members of the Synod Council in a prayer from her favorite prayer resource, The Lutheran Book of Prayer.

MISSION UPDATE

Pastor Sharron R. Blezard led the Synod Council in a discussion of fuller discernment and expression of the synod's mission. Pastor Blezard asked the members of the Synod Council, "Why are you here?" Some of the answers were: "Committed," "Called," and "Love Jesus." Pastor Blezard noted that it is the pursuit of mission that sets non-profits apart. The Synod Council must have clarity about its mission and purpose. Our synod is "where the hungry are fed as we have been fed by Christ." Our mission as a synod is "Together we are sent to feed a hungry world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ." Our purpose is to accomplish this by "equipping leaders, encouraging cooperation, and engaging in new mission." Pastor Blezard asked the members of Synod Council to form small groups and to write on post-it notes what ministries we do as the Lower Susquehanna Synod. She further asked the small groups to arrange the ministries under one of the three visions, and post them in the front of the room. When these tasks were completed, Pastor Blezard asked, "What values guide our synod's beliefs, principles, and ethics?" The answers included: "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus" and "tradition." She then reintroduced R3, saying that "we are Reformation people called to reFORM, reNEW, and reVISION; we believe that God is calling us to form a new vision." She shared the R3 Café Menu that includes Congregational Renewal Entrees (R3 Initiative and Resources and Consulting), Spiritual Renewal Entrees (R3 VibrantFaith University and Spiritual Events such as the Summer Institute for Ministry and the Lay School of Theology: Congregational Renewal for Lay People), Youth and Family Entrees (Consulting, Leadership Training Camp, and Faith Formation Events such as Alive, Winterfest, and the ELCA Youth Gathering), and Stewardship Entrees (Resources, Events, and Consultations). She asked, "Are we moving in the right direction?" The members of the council concurred that we were. Pastor Blezard provided members of the Synod Council with resources and encouraged members to become story tellers and share the story of our mission and purpose as a synod and how we are engaged in fulfilling that purpose.

Colleen Hoffman expressed that she experiences a spirit of excitement in our synod that is growing and spreading. Susan McDonald shared that she believes that congregations are beginning to understand that our synod is there to help them. Pastor Beth Schlegel stated that we are doing all of this to be able to tell better the story of Jesus.

CONSENT AGENDA

Pastor Beth Schlegel moved:

**ADOPTED: That the Consent Agenda be adopted:
SC17.04.16.**

That the Synod Council elect to the board of directors of Luthercare James F. Devine for a first three-year term, effective April 25, 2017, until April 2020;

That the Synod Council grant the Rev. Nancy R. Easton "on-leave-from-call" status, effective April 30, 2017, until April 30, 2018; and

That the Synod Council approve the retirement requests of the Rev. Randall J. Marburger, effective May 1, 2017, and the Rev. Warren C. Heintzelman Jr., effective July 1, 2017.

OTHER ACTIONS

Bishop Dunlop moved the following:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council extend the terms of the synod administration covenant for SC17.04.17. Salem Lutheran Church, Jacobus, and the Rev. Tina Minnich, effective July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2020;

Pastor Beth Schlegel moved the following on behalf of the Executive Committee:

That the Synod Council recommend to the 2017 Synod Assembly for adoption the following amendments to the bylaws of the Lower Susquehanna Synod:

- S9.01.01.** *It shall be the responsibility of the Synod Assembly to elect the following: (a) voting members of the Churchwide Assembly; ~~(b) members of the board of Gettysburg Seminary;~~ (e b) a member of the board of Susquehanna University; ~~(d c)~~ officers of synod; (e d) members of Synod Council; (f e) members of the Consultation Committee; and (~~g~~ f) members of the Committee on Discipline.*
- S9.03.02.** *The Synod Assembly shall elect members of the boards of the following educational institutions: ~~1) Gettysburg Seminary - four (4) members; and~~ 2) Susquehanna University - one (1) member.*
- S10.06.07.** *General Provisions: The Synod Council shall be responsible for:*
a. The election of members of the boards of SpiriTrust Lutheran and Luthercare - to be elected from nominees submitted by the respective agency in numbers required by the constitution of the respective agency;
b. The election of members of the board of the Lutheran Camping Corporation of Central Pennsylvania - to be elected from nominees submitted by the corporation in accordance with the constitution of the corporation;
c. The election of members of the board of directors of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches - in a number to be determined by the constitution of said council;
d. The election of a member of the board of the United Lutheran Seminary;
~~d~~ e. The election of representatives to other institutions and agencies as may be determined.

Pastor Eric Anderson asked for the rationale for these proposed amendments. Pastor McKee answered that it would align our governing documents with the bylaws of the United Lutheran Seminary that specify that each synod's Synod Council elect one member of the board of directors. Bishop Dunlop added that with fewer board members, the board will be looking for a person of a particular category and skill set.

Pastor Anderson stated that this will remove a congregation and its members further from the process of electing seminary board members. He expressed his concern that the people need to make these important decisions, and not the higher ups. This will promote a spirit of disenfranchisement.

Jered Hock questioned the number of board members in this accordion-sized board of between 14 and 25 board members. Bishop Dunlop explained that the reason for an accordion-sized board is the need for flexibility. We do not know the future of our synods or our church. There are at present 23 members, 15 elected by the Synod Councils of the 15 synods in Region 7 and 8, five elected by the ELCA Church Council, two bishops elected by Region 7 and 8 bishops, and the president of the seminary.

Pastor Stephen Herr explained that the same questions were asked when the bylaws of the United Lutheran Seminary came to the ELCA Church Council for approval. In investigating history and practice, the council members were informed that about half of the synods elect seminary board members at the Synod Assembly and that, in the other half, the Synod Council elects board members. The majority of the Church Council voted to stay with the bylaw proposal. All of the ELCA seminaries now have accordion-sized boards.

The recommendation was before the Synod Council for vote.

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council recommend to the 2017 Synod Assembly for adoption the SC17.04.18. following amendments to the bylaws of the Lower Susquehanna Synod:

- S9.01.01.** *It shall be the responsibility of the Synod Assembly to elect the following: (a) voting members of the Churchwide Assembly; ~~(b) members of the board of Gettysburg Seminary;~~ (c) b a member of the board of Susquehanna University; ~~(d) officers of synod;~~ (e) d members of Synod Council; (f) e members of the Consultation Committee; and (g) f members of the Committee on Discipline.*
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a. The election of members of the boards of SpiriTrust Lutheran and Luthercare - to be elected from nominees submitted by the respective agency in numbers required by the constitution of the respective agency;
b. The election of members of the board of the Lutheran Camping Corporation of Central Pennsylvania - to be elected from nominees submitted by the corporation in accordance with the constitution of the corporation;
c. The election of members of the board of directors of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches - in a number to be determined by the constitution of said council;
d. The election of a member of the board of the United Lutheran Seminary;
~~e. The election of representatives to other institutions and agencies as may be determined.~~

Joyce Frigm moved the following recommendations from the Assembly Planning Committee:

ADOPTED: That the assembly offering be designated for ABMN – Bishop’s SC17.04.19. Congregational Mission Fund.

That the Lower Susquehanna Synod plan a food packing event in conjunction with the 2018 Synod Assembly with a financial commitment not to exceed \$75,000.

Pastor Eric Anderson suggested that perhaps the amendment should be proposed that would read, “with an advance financial commitment not to exceed \$75,000.” This proposed amendment was not officially moved, but was accepted by the council as a friendly amendment.

Jered Hock offered that he has a philosophical problem with food packing events. They are a double-edge sword. It is very easy to see that we have packaged a large number of meals to alleviate the needs of local people. However, we forget two other important items that we must consider. The first is that World Hunger contributions continue to fall. The second is the continued need for advocacy and the need to use our vote to promote food equality and justice for all persons. It is really easy to become satisfied with what we are doing while forgetting the necessity of advocacy. Joyce Frigm and Bishop Dunlop shared how advocacy have been part of the last two food packing events and how LAMPa will be involved in petition-signing at this year's Fill the Truck: Feed the Children event. Jered Hock reaffirmed that the word about the importance of advocacy has to go back to our congregations.

The motion was before the Synod Council:

ADOPTED: That the Lower Susquehanna Synod plan a food packing event in conjunction with SC17.04.20. the 2018 Synod Assembly with an advance financial commitment not to exceed \$75,000.

Virgil Gibson moved the following on behalf of the Finance and Budget Committee:

That the Synod Council recommend the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2018 in the amount of \$2,700,000 to the 2017 Synod Assembly for adoption.

Bruce Seagrist moved:

That the discussion on this motion be postponed until after the report of the treasurer.

Bishop Dunlop asked for the reason that this discussion should be postponed. Treasurer Seagrist responded that he believed that there is a need to know where we are today before we can discuss where we need to go tomorrow.

Virgil Gibson spoke against the motion, stating that already a great deal of thought has gone into this proposed budget.

ADOPTED: That the discussion on this motion be postponed until after the report of the treasurer.

Virgil Gibson moved on behalf of the Finance and Budget Committee:

That the 2017 distribution of the Legacy Fund be 5% of the average of the last three years' balance in the fund.

The approximate amount of the distribution would be \$109,000, according to the draft minutes of the Finance and Budget Committee's April 20, 2017, meeting.

Jered Hock asked whether the principal of the fund would be maintained. Virgil Gibson answered, "Yes, the fund grew 5.3% percent on average over the last three years. As of March 31, 2017, the fund balance was \$2,201,371.

The motion was before the Synod Council:

ADOPTED: That the 2017 distribution of the Legacy Fund be 5% of the average of the last three years' balance in the fund.
SC17.04.21.

Vice President Bringman spoke to the proposed policy on the Lutheran Disaster Relief Fund. The Executive Committee had some questions on the policy as the task force proposed it as well as some suggestions for clarification of the policy. They asked the task force to review these concerns and respond to the Executive Committee. However, due to the tight timing and Holy Week and Easter obligations, the task force was not able to accomplish this. Therefore the vice president is postponing action on this item until the May 18, 2017, meeting of Synod Council, when the response from the task force will be considered.

BREAK

At this point, the Synod Council recessed briefly, enjoying refreshments and fellowship. The agenda was resumed following the break.

CONVERSATION ABOUT MISSION SUPPORT

Bishop Dunlop initiated a conversation about mission support with the members of Synod Council. He led the council through the budget summary, highlighting certain aspects of the budget, especially line items that were significantly changed. The bottom line of the budget remains the same, \$2,700,000. During the past year, although there was hope that mission support might be increased, mission support remained flat. The bishop was asked if there are any data findings showing increased mission support from congregations in renewal. He responded that the mission support from some congregations in renewal has increased because of a more positive relationship with the synod as well as an increase in the congregations' stewardship practices. The bishop stated that he has been calling upon the congregations who provide the greatest mission support to see if they can do more; however, most have said that an increase in their mission support is unlikely at this time.

Pastor Herr asked if there are any assessable benchmarks in the covenant that our synod has with our churchwide expression. The bishop stated that if our synod can create a greater level of excitement about the ministries we are doing, he believes more congregations will give additional mission support. Pastor Herr responded that it is important to have that data. Bishop Dunlop added that he has shared with Bishop Eaton our R3 Initiative and that she found this to be exciting.

Pastor Anderson expressed his opinion that larger congregations get price breaks. He asked if any large congregations have become renewal congregations. The bishop answered that most larger congregations hire consultants. Pastor Anderson responded, "This reinforces the idea that they can do it on their own." Pastor Jorgensen contributed that some larger congregations have expressed an interest in being part of the R3 Initiative. Pastor Jorgensen has been urging larger congregations to pay attention to their spiritual vitality.

Pastor Folkemer asked, "What was the purpose of our synod at its conception?" Pastor McKee stated that the ministry of our synod was intentionally limited to the constitutional purposes; the only committees were those mandated in the constitution and bylaws. Everything else has been added since then. He offered his opinion that our synod has never gotten past its history of being the big, multi-resourced Central Pennsylvania Synod. Pastor Herr shared that the ELCA is involved in the same process of evaluating which ministries can be supported by the churchwide budget. He added that there are not many budget implications of reducing committees except for staff time.

Joyce Frigm reported that many of our congregations ask, “What does our synod do for us?” We do not do a good job of telling them what we do. Colleen Hoffman said that a percentage of our congregations do not use any synod resources. Bishop Dunlop volunteered that we are trying to build relationships with the pastors and leaders of these congregations. Colleen Hoffman offered that she does not fault the bishop’s office for not creating relationships; the pastor is the gate keeper in many congregations.

Pastor Anderson stated that congregational resources are stretched. They have many expenses including health care for their rostered ministers and families. The congregations feel squeezed, and they keep a greater percentage of their budgets to cover their own expenses.

Bishop Dunlop shared Pastor Rob Myallis’ assessment of what our synod and our congregations will look like in the future if nothing changes: smaller congregations with part-time pastors will be created; larger congregations will continue to exist; and mid-size congregations will disappear. Pastor Jorgensen stated that if we do our work, we will have fewer congregations. The congregations will merge or consolidate or form cooperatives. However, it is what motivates us for renewal that is important. Our motivation determines our future more than anything else.

In summary, Bishop Dunlop asked, “What is our purpose? Are these the right things? What might we have to back away from?” He stated that our hope is in renewal as we move forward. The bishop announced that he has begun a conversation with staff about staff reorganization. Vice President Bringman noted that we had not talked about increasing mission support.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop James S. Dunlop provided a written report to Synod Council, including a report on the Conference of Bishops’ meeting. He reviewed the call process: Two congregations have congregational meetings scheduled to vote on a pastoral candidate. Three others are interviewing. We received two persons in the assignment process beside the two candidates who were restricted to our synod. All four are in call processes. The bishop hopes that there will be five ordinations, including one person assigned to another synod, and one consecration at the Synod Assembly. Three congregations have completed their profile and are awaiting candidates. Twenty-one congregations are in transition. Ten of these congregations can enter the call process for a full-time pastor. Eleven of these congregations will need additional support to determine future staffing. Thirteen additional congregations will be in transition soon due to planned retirements. Bishop Dunlop explained that we are a destination synod into which many rostered ministers desire to transfer. This has helped us maintain our clergy and deacon rosters. Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson noted that some synods are head-hunting in our synod.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

Synod Vice President Lucinda L. Bringman submitted a written report. She informed the members of the Synod Council that she is working on an evaluation of Bishop Dunlop according to the schedule to which she and Bishop Dunlop had agreed. She urged the members of the Synod Council who had not registered for Synod Assembly to do so, noting that they would be responsible to pay for any additional fees above the early-bird rate.

REPORT OF THE SYNOD SECRETARY

Secretary McKee provided a report. He took this opportunity to thank the Synod Council for his sabbatical and to thank the many people, volunteers and staff members, who fulfilled his obligations while he was on sabbatical. He especially thanked Jered Hock for taking Executive Committee and Synod Council minutes and Debbie Clark for coordinating the distribution of his duties.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Treasurer Bruce E. Seagrist provided a written report to Synod Council. He noted that expenditures for FY 2016 exceeded revenue by \$48,000, further reducing our operating fund balance to a negative \$2,949. He distributed a report of the moneys that our synod has received and will receive as part of our covenant agreement with the ELCA: \$222,619 in 2016-2017; \$330,903 in 2017-2018; and \$507,727 in 2018-2019. During those same periods our ELCA mission support will decrease from \$1,022,000 to \$761,273, or from 38.9% of our budget to 28.2%.

Bishop Dunlop explained that he will be bringing Pastor Jennifer Crist on staff as director for evangelical mission for new starts. He has asked her to do the same coaching work that she has done at Communities of Hope across our whole synod while continuing to coordinate the ministries of Communities of Hope.

At this time, Vice President Bringman returned to the discussion of the proposed FY2018 budget.

Virgil Gibson had moved the following motion on behalf of the Finance and Budget Committee:

That the Synod Council recommend the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2018 in the amount of \$2,700,000 to the 2017 Synod Assembly for adoption.

Bishop Dunlop spoke to the concern about why the proposed budget has been developed in the amount of \$2,700,000 when mission support in FY 2016 was only \$2,550,611. He has talked to our congregations and has asked them to increase mission support. He would like to hold the budget at this level for FY 2018. If in 2018 we need to invoke a spending authorization, we can do it then. Pastor Folkemer asked, "Do we have a policy that 100% of our grants are given regardless of the financial state of our synod?" At one time that was our practice; however, the last spending authorization was across the board including grant recipients. Jered Hock asked, "What is being done to eliminate or reduce the deficit balance in the operating fund?" Bishop Dunlop stated that the staff is closely watching the budget and that he will seek an early intervention if necessary. Vice President Bringman stated that Finance and Budget Committee and Synod Council may have to meet over the summer to deal with this issue. Bishop Dunlop shared that we will be reducing occupancy costs by giving up our offices on the south side of the corridor and reconfiguring our office space on the north side of the corridor.

The motion on the proposed budget was before the Synod Council.

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council recommend the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2018 in the amount of \$2,700,000 to the 2017 Synod Assembly for adoption.

REPORT OF THE SYNOD COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee submitted draft minutes of its April 6, 2017, meeting.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES OF SYNOD COUNCIL

Assembly Planning Committee distributed draft minutes of its April 20, 2017, meeting. Joyce Frigm, committee chair, provided information about the Fill the Truck: Feed the Children project. Volunteers are still needed to assist with packing the food donations and loading the truck. Persons may volunteer to help by completing the volunteer form on the assembly website. Donations of money as well as food items are being accepted. Bishop Dunlop announced the Sock It Up Higher campaign. For everyone who wears red socks to the assembly, Bishop Dunlop and Connie will give a \$5.00 donation to World Hunger. Zion, Enola, will add a \$1.00 for each person who wears red socks to the assembly.

Finance and Budget Committee presented draft minutes of its March 16, 2017, and April 20, 2017, meetings.

REPORTS OF THE LIAISONS

Lutheran Youth Organization liaison, Zoe Clark, presented a written report.

Lower Susquehanna Synod Women's Organization of the Women of the ELCA liaison, Linda Lubold, presented a written report. Linda announced that registrations for the women's Annual Day of Renewal were cut off at 90 registrants. Previous attendances have averaged only 40 women.

ELCA Church Council member, Pastor Stephen Herr, provided a written report of the March 30-April 2, 2017, meeting of the Church Council. He also shared the document, "Called Forward Together in Christ, ELCA Strategic Directions 2025." He noted the two priorities, leadership and congregational vitality. The 2019 Churchwide Assembly will be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE STAFF

Marsha Roscoe presented a written report.

Charlie Roberts presented a written report.

Pastor Robert Blezard presented a written report. Pastor Rob Blezard affirmed his willingness to help congregations with stewardship.

Pastor Sharron Blezard presented a written report. She challenged the members of Synod Council to take the R3 cards and have conversation with and give a card to at least three persons by the end of the assembly.

Pastor Richard Jorgensen presented a written report. He stated the methodology for the R3 Initiative would be the action-reflection model. We will educate, receive teams, train them, and have them practice, meet with cohorts and coaches, and have them practice again. He thanked Donna Nicholson for the Always Being Made New events centering on redeveloping congregations. Some congregations learned about redevelopment and decided that they could do likewise; others decided that it would not be for them.

REPORT OF CONSULTANT

Donna Nicholson, ABMN Comprehensive Campaign, presented a written report.

REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEES AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS

Compensation and Benefits Committee liaison, Jered Hock, presented a liaison report.

Committee of Deans provided draft minutes of the March 13, 2017, meeting.

diakonia liaison, Allen Stump, submitted a liaison report.

Konde Diocese Committee liaison, Pastor Beth Schlegel, provided a liaison report.

Synodical Worship Committee liaison, Pastor Richard Eckert, offered a liaison report.

REPORTS OF TASK FORCES

Review Team for Union, York, presented a written report.

Racial Justice Task Force provided an update.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

Joyce Frigm asked if there were any memorials and resolutions received to date. Pastor Stephen Herr responded that one resolution was received from the North Lancaster Conference, asking our synod to create a task force on the use of electronic attendance at meetings within our synod, conferences, and clusters of congregations. He is working with the conference to learn the full intent of the resolution and any cost implications. Debbie Clark stated that, when we have tried to use skyping, often times the difficulties come from outside complications and not from our synod's technological resources. Vice President Bringman said that the Synod Council will look at memorials and resolutions at its May 18, 2017, meeting.

Stephanie Strauss invited Synod Council members to attend her coffee house on April 29, 2017, from 6:30 p.m. until 10:00 p.m., at St. Peter Lutheran Church, Highspire.

Pastor McKee invited Synod Council members to support him or another St. Barnabas board member on the Highmark Walk for Healthy Communities on May 20. The proceeds will provide scholarship money for the participants in the summer day camp program.

2016 Minute Books were distributed to those who requested them.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:35 p.m. with the praying of the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Thomas E. McKee
synod secretary
4/24/17

Approved: May 18, 2017