

**LOWER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD, ELCA
SYNOD COUNCIL**

**Minutes
April 9, 2016**

The Lower Susquehanna Synod Council met for its regular meeting on Saturday, April 9, 2016, at 9:00 a.m. 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.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Bishop James S. Dunlop Lucinda L. Bringman
Thomas E. McKee Bruce E. Seagrist

Dana J. Blouch-Hanson Christine C. Lowe
Joel S. B. Folkemer Beth A. Schlegel
Joyce E. Frigm Kurt S. Strause
Virgil L. Gibson Stephanie M. Strauss
Jered L. Hock M. Jane Wigand
William K. Kirkpatrick

Staff present: Robert C. Blezard Linda L. Lubold
Sharron R. Blezard Charlie R. Roberts III
Debbie M. Clark Marsha L. Roscoe
Richard E. T. Jorgensen, Jr.

Consultant present: Donna Nicholson

Members excused: Zoe L. Clark Colleen Hoffman
J. Richard Eckert Susan L. McDonald
Brenda D. Hartzell Jillian E. Riddle

Liaison excused: Fred C. Bohls Stephen R. Herr

Will Kirkpatrick led the members of the Synod Council in devotions. He provided information about the Biblical and contemporary words for justice and mercy and their meanings. He read two Biblical passages that exemplified these meanings: the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 and the Parable of the Unjust Judge in Luke 18. He provided a framework for how we act in response to justice and mercy:

1) Listen; don't react; 2) Learn; don't judge; and 3) Love. He led the members of the Synod Council in prayer.

MINISTRY HIGHLIGHT: LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

The Rev. Glenn Beard, Lower Susquehanna Synod Coordinator for Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), provided information about LDR as our ministry highlight. Our Lutheran Disaster Network began in 2001. He distributed a document citing its mission statement and highlighting its history. We are one of 60+ Lutheran Disaster Response Affiliates in the ELCA; these affiliates are not always defined by synodical boundaries. Two ELCA staff persons support the work of these affiliates. Our network is composed of our three social ministry organizations, the bishop's office, the network task force, ELCA Disaster Response, congregational and conference leaders, Gettysburg Seminary, Lutheran Hands, Thrivent, and the Lutheran Camping Corporation. Diakon Lutheran Services serves as the fiduciary for the network under the leadership of Pastor Cindy Camp. Pastor Glenn Beard is the synod network coordinator. He is the person to contact to activate the network. He distributed the activation protocol

that is used by the Lower Susquehanna Synod LDR. Pastor Beard asked for help in identifying potential leaders from across our synod to serve on the Local Leadership Task Force. Currently there are eight members of the task force. He would like to identify at least one person from each conference to serve on this task force. Pastor Beard responded to questions from the members of the Synod Council.

The members of the Synod Council expressed their appreciation to Pastor Beard for his presentation.

CONSENT AGENDA

Pastor McKee asked that the approval of minutes be removed from the consent agenda. Vice President Bringman removed the approval of the minutes from the consent agenda.

Pastor Kurt Strause moved:

ADOPTED: That the Consent Agenda be adopted:
SC16.04.10.

That the Synod Council appoint Susan McDonald, SC, chair, to the Synod Administration Review Team for Christ Lutheran Church, Shrewsbury;

That the Synod Council appoint the Rev. J. Richard Eckert, SC, chair, to the Synod Administration Review Team for the United Lutheran Ministries of South East York County (St. James Lutheran Church, Brogue, and St. Paul Lutheran Church, Felton).

That the Synod Council elect the Rev. Andrew Geib to the board of directors of the Lutheran Camping Corporation of Central Pennsylvania, for an unexpired term, expiring in 2018;

That the Synod Council elect Thomas Sites to the board of directors of the Lutheran Camping Corporation of Central Pennsylvania, for an unexpired term, expiring in 2017;

That the Synod Council grant Laura Lengel Ramsey, diaconal minister, “on-leave-from-call-family leave” status from April 1, 2016, until April 1, 2017;

That the Synod Council approve the retirement request of the Rev. Ted A. Hummel, effective January 1, 2016.

MINUTES

Pastor McKee requested that the minutes be amended to show Pastor Joel Folkemer as excused.

Pastor Beth Schlegel moved:

ADOPTED: That the minutes of the February 20, 2016, meeting be approved as amended.

OTHER ACTIONS

Bishop Dunlop moved the following Synod Council calls:

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council extend a call to Rev. Robert Lowden to serve as intentional interim pastor of Jerusalem Lutheran Church (Rothsville), Lititz, effective January 15, 2016, until December 31, 2016;
SC16.04.11.

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council extend the Synod Council call to the Rev. Robert Ierien to serve as pastor of the Lebanon Lutheran Cooperative Ministry (Hill, Salem, St. James, and Zion Lutheran Churches, Lebanon), effective June 1, 2016, until May 31, 2017.
SC16.04.12.

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council approve the regularizing of the call of Catherine Smith, diaconal minister, by Zion Lutheran Church (Union Deposit), Hershey, removing from the original call its non-stipendiary nature.
SC16.04.13.

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

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council recommend to the 2016 Synod Assembly for adoption the beginning minimum base salary and housing allowance of \$48,700 for 2017 for pastors who serve full time at the time of their ordination and the beginning minimum base salary when housing is provided of \$33,900 for 2017 for pastors who serve full time at the time of their ordination.
SC16.04.14.

That the Synod Council recommend to the 2016 Synod Assembly for adoption the beginning salary of \$35,305 for 2017 for deaconesses, diaconal ministers, and associates in ministry who serve full time at the time of their consecration and commissioning.

Pastor Joel Folkemer moved to amend the motion:

To amend the beginning salary to \$40,000.

Pastor Folkemer spoke to his amendment, saying that he believes the recommended beginning salary to be too low. The assembly last year heard from a lay rostered leader who expressed this same concern. He provided for the members of the council a range of teachers' salaries with bachelor and master's degrees from a number of school districts on the territory of our synod as well as the educational requirements for associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers. Jered Hock supported the amendment by saying that our church undervalues its leaders when it recommends salaries not commensurate with those of like occupations with similar educational requirements. Pastor Kurt Strause said that the members of Synod Council should honor the committee's action and not change it without input from them. Jered Hock said that it is a recommendation from the committee that the Synod Council can amend. Bruce Seagrast asked, "What effect would this change have on those already called. The council discussed the number of deaconesses, diaconal ministers, and associates in ministry serving under call, the number under call to congregations, and the ratio of males to females in these calls. Pastor Strause stated that he recommends that this be referred back to the committee so that they may consider the impact of minimum salaries upon the whole church.

Pastor Kurt Strause moved:

ADOPTED: That the original recommendation as well as the proposed amendment be referred to the Compensation and Benefits Committee for reconsideration and for report back to the Executive Committee on May 4, 2016.

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

That the Synod Council adopt the proposed amendments to “Guidance for Pastors and Congregations of the Lower Susquehanna Synod Regarding Presiding at Same Gender Marriages.”

The members of the Synod Council discussed the second and third bullets on the second page of the guidance, wondering whether both statements were needed, whether they stood in opposition to each other, whether we were creating different and unnecessary categories. Bishop Dunlop stated that he believes that these statements recognize what the social statement says. Our church is not of one mind on this subject. We were trying to create a guideline to help congregations and pastors work through these important issues. Vice President Bringman reminded the members of the council that we were not asked to review the entire document, but only to adopt the proposed amendments to the guidance statement in order to update it to be current with legislation.

By common consent, the word, “to” was added as an editorial amendment to the fourth line of the proposed first paragraph, so that line would read, “and also desire to be faithful to Scripture...” The members of the council also agreed to remove the underline from the words, “may” and “and” in the second bulleted paragraph.

The motion was before the Synod Council.

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council adopt the proposed amendments to “Guidance for Pastors and Congregations of the Lower Susquehanna Synod Regarding Presiding at Same Gender Marriages.”

Pastor Schlegel, vice chair of the Synod Council, moved on behalf of the Executive Committee.

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council approve the proposed amendments to the bylaws of the SC16.04.16. Lutheran Camping Corporation of Central Pennsylvania as adopted by the board of directors of the Lutheran Camping Corporation on February 29, 2016.

Pastor Kurt Strause moved the following recommendation on behalf of the Finance and Budget Committee:

That the Synod Council approve a 5% distribution which is \$107,302 from the Vision of Mission Legacy Fund in 2016.

Jered Hock asked whether the Finance and Budget Committee believes that distributing five percent at this time is consistent with the long-term preservation of the real value of the Vision of Mission Legacy Fund. Pastor Strause said that the committee had taken this into consideration in making this recommendation, and it believes that the real value of the fund will be preserved. Vice President Bringman shared the observation that Treasurer Seagrist made at the Finance and Budget Committee that seeing that the money distributed from the endowment fund is being put to good use will encourage others to give to this fund.

The motion was before the Synod Council.

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council approve a 5% distribution which is \$107,302 from the SC16.04.17. Vision of Mission Legacy Fund in 2016.

Pastor Strause moved the following recommendation from Finance and Budget Committee:

That the Synod Council recommend the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2017 in the amount of \$2,700,000 to the 2016 Synod Assembly for adoption.

Pastor Strause explained that the Lower Susquehanna Synod is one of five synods engaged in a pilot project that permits our synod to retain the moneys that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America would return to our synod for mission grants and the moneys that the ELCA would pay toward the salary, benefits, and other expenses of our director of evangelical mission. While we have committed to giving the ELCA 47% of the mission support received, they will receive only 35% from us because of designated funds we will retain. The areas of the budget where these changes are reflected are marked in yellow. The total of all moneys in these areas not spent must be returned to the ELCA. Treasurer Seagrist warned that this could lead to some budgetary problems. Virgil Gibson asked about not including CTIM in the budget for 2017. No money was included in the CTIM line item for 2017 because CTIM has been held every two years and therefore there will be no CTIM planned for 2017. Stephanie Strauss asked why there were no funds for young adult ministry since she understood that some exciting things were planned. Charlie Roberts stated that these things will occur but that they will be self-funded. Joyce Frigm explained the reallocation of the \$70,000 in the campus ministry line items. Penn State will receive \$61,000; Shippensburg United Campus Ministry will receive \$9,000; and Millersville United Campus Ministry will rely upon local funding.

The motion to recommend the proposed 2017 budget was before the council.

ADOPTED: That the Synod Council recommend the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2017 in the amount of \$2,700,000 to the 2016 Synod Assembly for adoption.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Dunlop provided a written report to Synod Council, a narrative report, and a written overview of the Conference of Bishops meeting. He addressed the relocation of our synod office. There is adequate space for our office at St. Mark Lutheran Church, Mechanicsburg. Don Main is currently assessing the cost of redoing that space to accommodate our needs. The bishop reminded us of two important ideas behind our relocation: to reduce costs and to witness to the fact that we are the church. Just walking into office space in one of our church buildings will remind others of our identity. As a synod, one of our goals is cooperative ministry. We will model that goal by building a cooperative ministry with St. Mark's. The tentative date for relocation is September 1, 2017. The bishop reminded the members of Synod Council that we are one of five synods who are part of an experiment to give synods greater management of mission opportunities on their territories. Mission within our synod has been underfunded for a long time; we need to concentrate on renewing, redeveloping, and developing mission opportunities in the territory of our synod. Bishop Dunlop provided information about the Task Force on Unification, which has been formed to find ways to provide theological education in a new way. Both Gettysburg and Philadelphia Seminaries announced their willingness to close and to begin a new school of theology. However, the Pennsylvania Department of Education has said that a new school could not be accredited for two years. During that time, no federal scholarships would be available to students and few

students would want to apply to such an institution. It has advised that it would be better to maintain one seminary and to close the other. However, this would cause some new problems including the problematic situation where one seminary's faculty would remain tenured, and the other seminary's faculty would not be tenured. The ELCA has been actively engaging in this entire process with Philadelphia and Gettysburg seminaries. Bishop Dunlop explained the initiative in which Bishop Eaton has asked our church to engage to determine the long-term future of the ELCA. This initiative is entitled, "Called Forward Together in Christ." The Mission Committee is planning a strategy to involve the voting members of our 2016 Synod Assembly in this initiative. The churchwide office also is initiating a new Mission Support Consultation Process to enable synods and churchwide staff to talk more constructively about mission support plans. The bishop informed the members of the council that Liberty Mutual is the new administrator of Portico Benefits Services' disability coverage. While Portico's policy about disability has not changed, the new administrator is following more stringently the guidelines in order to remove from disability those who may be no longer eligible to receive it. However, people are losing their disability benefits without receiving prior notice. The bishop has urged Portico to provide adequate notice to those who are being removed from disability so that they have time to make other arrangements to cover their living expenses. Bishop Dunlop shared that he has written and distributed a statement about the political climate in the United States and the importance of exercising wisely our right to vote.

Will Kirkpatrick asked why the bishops meet over weekends when they could be out in the congregations. Bishop Dunlop agreed that it is important for bishops to be in our congregations, but stated that the weekends when the bishops meet are few and usually are extensions of their working together during the week. He said that he himself has visited a large number of congregations. However, he found that his schedule did not permit him to prepare each week a sermon to preach in a congregation. His new schedule is as follows: preaching twice a month; presiding once a month; and visiting a congregation once a month. He has found this schedule to be more manageable. He further stated that he can only be away from our synod because he knows that the members of our synod staff will take good care of our synod's congregations and rostered leaders while he is away.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Treasurer Seagrist announced that the operating fund obligations are being paid in a timely manner. The annual audit has been conducted, and we expect to receive an unmodified opinion. The annual insurance review will occur soon.

The treasurer reviewed the Schedule of Financial Position as of February 29, 2016. The schedule reflected the advance of \$100,000 from the operating fund to the ABMN Temporarily Restricted Fund in accordance with Synod Council Resolution adopted in February 2016. The advance was needed because the campaign has failed to provide sufficient resources to fund direct campaign expenses.

The 2016-2017 budget has been administratively revised but had not been discussed with the Finance and Budget Committee or Synod Council. For clarification the Treasurer identified the changes made in the following line items: The revision reflects an \$ 18,500 decrease in IT expenses, a \$2,000 reduction in telephone expenses, an increase of \$17,250 in revenue over expenses for Congregations Together in Mission (CTIM), and an increase of \$37,750 for Human Resources. The treasurer also noted that the increase in Human Resources reflected the addition of the Always Being Made New Administrative Assistant to the operating payroll. Further the recently held CTIM reflected a \$6,800 of revenue over expenses which is \$10,450 under plan; an additional \$3,500 was utilized from other Synod restricted funds.

The treasurer reviewed monthly congregational giving to ELCA World Hunger during the ABMN Campaign. The treasurer indicated the ABMN goal for ELCA World Hunger Appeal is \$2,000,000 which represents a 20% increase of what the synod expects to receive over the five years of the campaign.

The treasurer provided a monthly analysis of congregational giving to ELCA World Hunger since the inception of the campaign. The analysis indicates the campaign is not only not achieving the 20% increase, but has fallen short by \$182,300.

The treasurer provided an analysis of the Recovery Plan adopted by the Synod Council in February, 2016. The analysis noted that total campaign expenses as of February 29, 2016 amounted to \$189,320. The analysis indicated in addition to the \$100,000 advanced from the operating fund, internal borrowings were made from other designed restricted funds. The campaign is not self-supporting and the Recovery Plan, as it currently exists, is not a viable mechanism to pay for campaign expenses.

The treasurer also expressed concern of the ability of the campaign to repay \$100,000 operating fund advance. No payment would have a significant negative impact on the finances of the synod.

While the Office of the Treasurer has not been provided with an executed contract for Hunger J.A.M., the synod will be required to \$50,000 payment to the contractor on April 19th and on June 3rd. As of April 9 only \$13,700 has been donated for Hunger J.A.M; the shortfall will require additional borrowing from internal sources.

The treasurer also discussed the recognition of “soft campaign” credits by ABMN. These include bequests and contribution directly to the ELCA and the Camping Corporation. The “soft campaign” credits do not provide resources to assist with the funding of campaign expenses nor is there any indication they result directly from the LSS campaign.

The inability of the campaign to generate sufficient resources to fund campaign expenses is beginning to have a negative impact on cash flow, and unless there actions taken the synod will be reaching the point where we will have no available funds from which to borrow to pay campaign costs.

The treasurer also indicated that a plan to limit campaign expenses to not to exceed \$350,000 has not been provide by the Bishop as required in the February 2016 resolution. In addition the treasurer reemphasized his continuous recommendation for the development of a formal ABMN campaign with established tasks, goals, and financial benchmarks.

Lastly, the treasurer asked the members of synod council to reflect on the following questions:

1. Is internal borrowing of \$160,000 to fund campaign expense a healthy financial practice?
2. Is there a written plan to limit the campaign expenses to \$350,000?
3. What action should be taken when borrowing exceeds the \$100,000 from the operating fund?
4. Why isn't there a formal ABMN campaign plan with tasks, goals, and financial benchmarks?

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

Synod Vice President Lucinda L. Bringman submitted a written report. She reminded the members of Synod Council that to take full advantage of the complimentary rate for Synod Assembly they must register by April 15.

REPORT OF THE SYNOD SECRETARY

Secretary McKee referred to his written report.

REPORT OF THE SYNOD COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee submitted draft minutes of its March 30, 2016, meeting.

REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEES OF SYNOD COUNCIL

The Finance and Budget Committee presented minutes of its March 17, 2016, meeting.

REPORTS OF THE LIAISONS

Lutheran Men in Mission liaison, Pastor Robert Blezard, provided an oral report. Lutheran Men in Mission will hold a summit on Saturday morning, May 14, 2016, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Harrisburg. Breakfast will be provided, and Bishop Dunlop will speak. The Lutheran Men in Mission's website has been updated.

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, provided a written report.

REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE STAFF

Marsha Roscoe, Director of Resource Ministries, provided a written report.

Charlie Roberts, Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry, presented a written report.

Pastor Robert Blezard, assistant to the bishop, submitted a written report.

Pastor Sharron Blezard, assistant to the bishop, offered a written report.

Pastor Richard Jorgensen, director of evangelical mission, provided a written report.

REPORTS OF CONSULTANTS

Donna Nicholson, our fundraising consultant for the Always Being Made New Twenty-fifth Anniversary Campaign, provided a report of her activities and a report of the campaign to date. She informed the members of Synod Council that when we receive additional information from the ELCA about donations given directly to the churchwide office for Always Being Made New, there will be a real difference in our campaign totals.

Committee of Deans provided minutes of its March 14, 2016, meeting.

Compensation and Benefits Committee submitted draft minutes of its February 8, 2016, meeting.

Konde Diocese Committee liaison, Pastor Beth Schlegel, submitted a written report.

Global Mission Committee liaison, Stephanie Strauss, submitted a written report of its March 31, 2016, meeting. She noted that this committee has been working with LAMPa on the Sunday events prior to the Lutheran Day at the Capitol. She encouraged members of Synod Council to register for these events.

REPORTS OF TASK FORCES

There were no reports from task forces.

REPORTS OF AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS

Lutheran Camping Corporation liaison, Zoe Clark, submitted a written report.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

Vice President Bringman thanked Pastor Beth Schlegel, Pastor Thomas McKee, Virgil Gibson, and Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson for providing snacks.

Stephanie Strauss invited members of the Synod Council to attend her coffee house on April 30, 2016, from 6:30 until 10:00 at St. Peter, Highspire. Her goal is to raise \$3,000 for Hope for Justice and Blood: Water Mission.

Virgil Gibson asked if it will be possible to access videos of Shane Claiborne's presentations at CTIM. Charlie Roberts answered that the full presentations will be available on our website soon. The Learning Ministries Team also is taking segments from these presentations and making available study guides and discussion questions on the important themes of his presentation. Pastor Beth Schlegel stated that she appreciated the \$10.00 reduced rate for youth coming to CTIM.

The vice president reminded the Synod Council that we will need 1,200 volunteers for Hunger J. A. M. She encouraged members of the Synod Council to join teams to help with this food packing event. She reminded members about the Grace Gathering Event that will happen simultaneously with the Churchwide Assembly in New Orleans this August. Pastor McKee added that each congregation may send a Congregational Observer to the Churchwide Assembly.

Vice President Bringman commented that everyone was really engaged in this meeting. Everyone participated in the discussions. She stated that we are working together better. Will Kirkpatrick suggested having a summer picnic or other informal gathering this summer, especially to help new members become acquainted with the continuing members of the council. Joyce Frigm offered her cabin outside of Gettysburg as a possible site if we have a picnic.

ADJOURNMENT

The members of the Synod Council joined together in the praying of the Lord's Prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Thomas E. McKee
synod secretary
4/9/16

Approved by Synod Council, May 19, 2016