

WHAT: Minutes of the Synod Council Meeting
Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod, ELCA
WHEN: November 20, 2010
WHERE: Crusader Lutheran Church, Rockville, Md.

Present: Bishop Richard Graham, Vice president Dr. John White, Secretary Rev. Dr. Marguerite Rourk, Treasurer John Handley, Wendell Anderson, Jim Brookshire, Rachel Carle, Pr. TekabObsa Fogi, Shirley Gibbs, Pr. Joel Guttormson, Pr. Jane Halpern, Pr. Dax Jordan, Pr. TombO'Brien, Bonnie Priebe, Robert Schilpp, Pr. Kendall Summers,, Amanda Wahlig, Pr. Michael Wilker, Gretta Williams
Absent: John Bradford, Ruth Manchester, Deacon Kati Miller-Holland, Pr. Amsalu Geleta, Barbara Topel, Asst. to the Bishop Pr. Amy Sevimli (leave)
Staff: Asst. to the Bishop Pr. Phil Hirsch,, Synod Admin. Harold Sargeant, Adm. Asst. Amy Acland
Guests: Sue Clark, Pr. Phil Huber

The Council was welcomed by Crusader's pastor, the Rev. Sandra Shaw, who told of the parish history.

The September minutes were approved with the following amendments: Wendell Anderson was not present, and the term Ministry Spending Plan should be changed to "Budget," as the Ministry Spending Plan is what is actually presented to and passed by the Synod Assembly.

Sue Clark offered a presentation on Gifts of Hope, part of the Synod for 19 years. The United Lutheran Appeal (ULA) has been in operation for 6 years. Considering that Sue and Denise Wasemann, coordinator for the ULA, were doing essentially the same things, it was thought best to combine the two appeal efforts under the name Gifts of Hope. The beneficiary organizations have agreed to move forward with this merger. A Synod Constitution By-Law established the ULA, so a motion to change will be necessary. The Synod has helped by handling funds, and thus a part-time staff person is needed. The merger will give rise to new ideas and activities. The ULA emphasis that was previously in January or February would end now. Speakers would be available, and the website will also offer methods for online giving. Gifts of Hope will retain its Advent special emphasis, but move to a year-round appeal and thus be more effective. If all beneficiary organizations agree to this, then their dues will be less than previous ULA dues. The merger anticipates a budget of \$15,000 with all but \$2,000 being staff salary. There are plans to renew and upgrade the website, and to establish methods to accept credit card payments. Beneficiary organizations meet in December to explore best methods of organizational and dues structures.

MOTION SC10.11.01 to place this amendment before the Synod Assembly at its next meeting was carried unanimously: to amend the Synod By-Laws and combine the United Lutheran Appeal and Gifts of Hope. According to Synod Constitution S15.21.A02, the synod authorizes the establishment of a United Lutheran Appeal (ULA) to strengthen the financial support of member organizations through a unified education of and appeal to congregations and individuals of the Metropolitan Washington DC Synod. Further, this section directs the Synod Council to appoint ex-officio members to the ULA Board of Directors and it is the Council that shall approve any amendments to the Statement of Agreement which organized the ULA. The suggested change to S15.21.A02 would be *to authorize the Synod to establish Gifts of Hope to increase understanding and strengthen relationships between the beneficiary organizations, with the Synod Council appointing an ex-officio member to the Gifts of Hope Coordinating Committee, and the Council being charged with approving any changes to this statement of purpose.*

Report of the Bishop:

- + On November 18 a son was born to the Rev. Amy Thompson Sevimli, Assistant to the Bishop.
- + **MOTION SC 10.11.02** to place Pr. Kathy Hlatshwayo on a first year “on leave from call” was passed.
- + The reconfiguration of the ELCA continues in response to financial realities of significant downturns in receipts, with the new structure is much simpler and is expected to be more effective. It is hoped that a new Global Mission unit will help tell the ELCA story better. The division for Congregational and Synodical Ministries is a major component for working with evangelical missions directors such as Pr. Phil Hirsch, in order to assist with renewal of older ministries and the development of new ones. There are now more direct lines of reporting to the Presiding Bishop, with a leaner and more resilient ELCA. The new ELCA structure will help synods reorganize how they do their work.
- + The Lutheran Office of Public Policy is closing, as the ELCA decided not to continue giving grants to this ministry. In Virginia, the Virginia Council of Churches does this work, and in Maryland the state aims were aligning with the church goals, so grants were discontinued. Delaware/Maryland had contributed \$35,000, with the Metro DC Synod contributing \$6,000, but our monies would not keep the office open. Now Metro DC and Del/MD will put together a volunteer network, not so much to lobby in Annapolis, but to keep people informed about issues before us. Bishop Herz-Lane wants to work as much as possible through an advocacy group that already exists.
- + Peace, Bermuda, which relates to the ELCA through this Synod, was visited by the Bishop last week as Pr. Carsten Deckar was installed. Most Americans there are from closed military bases, and because the small island has no corporate taxes, and numerous large companies are based there.

Report of the Treasurer (attached):

- + We have not received 75% of our expected income at this time, but have reached 74% of expenses. The deficit stands at \$57,000, but there is a modest reserve left from the old Gettysburg/Roanoke Synod Assembly system. We have used \$23,000 so far this year to cover Synod Assembly costs and other shortfalls. Good news is that all receipts are up over last year, even though benevolence has declined slightly (as has been the case each year since 2007).
- + The owners of our Synod office building have notified us of next year’s rent increase. In response to a tenants’ group trying to negotiate a rent level, the owners have made some offers, but none good enough to entice the Synod to remain there.

Report of the Vice President:

- + The list of Synod Council liaisons is available.
- + Previous Synod Initiatives were distributed (attached). We must extract the best from those initiatives and inculcate them within our current plans, i.e. missions tables. More conversation is to follow.

Report of Assistant to the Bishop Pr. Hirsch:

- + Congregations that have been declining and are now on the edge of viability need to make decisions about their future as they are running out of funds. St. John, Riverdale, and Resurrection, Kensington, are thinking about closing as an act of mission. Closing is not a congregation’s death, but rather the end of a cycle of life in their history. Can having a vision for the ongoing mission of the church prompt those congregations to give their assets to the church? Some are willing to try a radically different approach to ministry at St. John, as its 80 year old neighborhood has radically changed but the congregation has not, and they have left only about 12 months of funds. Resurrection, Kensington, is at a similar decision point. Pr. Hirsch will share more at the next Synod Council meeting. He will speak to a congregation pulling back from being a chartered congregation but giving funds toward the mission of the church in the world. La Plata was to be a new mission via the old form with a mission developer and new relationships.

The Mission Table has decided to change from doing things exactly the old way, as that is becoming increasingly more difficult. It is hoped is now to start with a small group that begins in prayer and bible study to that point when a developer might be put in place, as there develops a base for a beginning. This could be in La Plata or possibly somewhere just south of there.

+ There is great joy on the other side: 501 Church (First Trinity, DC's address) and Pr. Wendy Moen took part in a workshop last weekend on starting a new ministry. They are looking at some evaluation about 6 months down the road. Can they reach a critical mass of 60 or 70 to begin worship?

+ Christus Victor and Christ, Bethesda, are our synod's first re-developments. The Synod would contribute resources and the ELCA would be asked to do so. Both congregations are in high growth areas, in pastoral transition, and both have a leadership core that's willing to change - they should fit well into our redevelopment pattern. Belmont Ridge and the Oromo congregation are still in development, and there is much foment in the area. At some point next year we will look at leadership and help with mission development. Christ, Bethesda, is considering tearing down the traditional existing church and building a more multi-use facility that meets mission and neighbor needs. Shepherd of the Hills in Haymarket, looking to build for so long, has about 100 in worship now, but building an initial facility is very difficult.

St. Matthew, DC - Pastor Phil Huber gave a detailed and extensive presentation of St. Matthew, DC, its current situation and plans for buildings and ministry. All depends upon favorable funding structures being put in place, and offering their facilities for multiple uses by neighboring communities, organizations and businesses. Pastor Wilker noted that it was a challenge to hear and understand where Synod Council fits into St. Matthew. Do we have a connection? Pr. Huber is not under call from the Metro DC Synod. He is technically a consultant contracted out to St. Matthew by the Delaware/Maryland Synod. One of the Council's concerns is St. Matthew's vision itself: is it the vision of the entire St. Matthew congregation? Is the congregation viable enough to sustain and support this vision and the mission once the facility is built?

Women of the ELCA Report (attached):

+ The 2011 Spring Convention will be at Abiding Presence on May 7, but there could be some adjustment in that date, as that is during the Synod Assembly.

+ WELCA is endeavoring to raise funds for Lutheran camps and outdoor ministries, and they hope to raise \$5,000 for Mar-Lu Ridge and Caroline Furnace.

+ WELCA has various education grants available for women in undergraduate through graduate levels.

Pastor Wilker graciously agreed to postpone his presentation until the January Council meeting.

Harold Sargeant brought copies of the Synod constitution for any who needed one.

The next Synod Council meeting will be Saturday, 29 January 2011, at Christ, DC.

The meeting adjourned with prayer at 12:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Dr. Marguerite M. Rourk
Secretary of the Synod