

**WHAT:** Minutes of the Synod Council Meeting  
Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod, ELCA  
**WHEN:** April 16, 2011  
**WHERE:** First Trinity Lutheran Church, Washington, D.C.

**Present:** Bishop Richard Graham, Vice president Dr. John White, Treasurer John Handley, Secretary Dr. Marguerite Rourk, Wendell Anderson, Jim Brookshire, Rachel Carle, Shirley Gibbs, Pr. Joel Guttormson, Pr. Jane Halpern, Ruth Manchester, Deacon Kati Miller-Holland, Pr. Thomas O'Brien, Bonnie Priebe, Robert Schilpp, Pr. Kendall Summers, Barbara Topel, Amanda Wahlig, Pr. Michael Wilker, Gretta Williams

**Staff:** Assistants to the Bishop Pr. Phil Hirsch and Pr. Amy Sevimli, Synod Administrator Harold Sargeant. Administrative Assistant Amy Acland

**Absent:** Pr. Teka Fogi, Pr. Amsalu Geleta, Pr. Dax Jordan

Dr. White called the meeting to order, and Bishop Graham offered devotions.

Minutes of the Synod Council 19 March 2011 meeting were adopted as amended.

#### **Presentation on Compensation Guidelines** (see attached)

Barbara Topel noted that it is recommended that we increase the maternity leave from 8 to 12 weeks, and adopt the federal guidelines for unpaid leave. The current federal law applies to companies with more than 50 employees, and now applies to military personnel. How do we fit into that into what we do as a synod? Parental leave policies now apply to both parents, including childbearing and child care (see attached). Primary caregivers get more leave, but there can be a secondary caregiver as well. 8 weeks seems to be the most common policy. We need to have congregations consider these guidelines, especially those who are not familiar with any family leave processes. The synod already provides support for personnel on leave, especially in emergency situations. 12 weeks offers more time to heal or make other arrangements. The synod needs to have this in the guidelines so that we can have a conversation before people are hired or called. Barbara stated that the Synod Council needs to come up with a chosen option from among those presented here to approve and then recommend to the Synod Assembly that these stipulations be added to the Compensation Guidelines. She will communicate the Synod Council discussion to her group and they will formulate a prospective plan that the Synod Council can present for addition to the Compensation Guidelines.

#### **Report of the Bishop**

+ Roster matters: Ray Ranker (see attached) would be Pr. Elizabeth Platz's partner in ministry for a year, and, upon completion of seminary and approval by his Candidacy Committee, is to be issued a call to specialized ministry. Specialized ministry generally requires 3 years of parish service, but the ELCA Conference of Bishops has waived the three-year requirement in his case. **MOTION SC 11.04.01** to extend the call to Mr. Ranker to campus ministry was adopted.

+ Office relocation update - attempts to negotiate a move to a particular site have ended, and a search continues.

+ Resurrection, Kensington, voted to make the formal motions to close their congregation, with a congregational meeting on May 22 for a final closure vote. The motion would be to sell their property to the Oromo Christian Fellowship for \$50,000 (actual value \$1.7 million). Pr. Hirsch noted that the Kensington area is up and coming, and the hope is to establish an English-speaking congregation in that area.

### **Report of the Committee on Reference and Counsel**

+ The Council received a Summary of Resolutions (see attached) to be presented to Synod Assembly by Reference and Counsel.

### **Report of the Nominations Committee** (download this report and attach)

#### **Draft Budget**

+ Distributed (see attached). **MOTION SC 11.04.02** to present this draft of the 2012 budget to the Synod Assembly was adopted.

### **Report of Assistant to the Bishop Pr. Phil Hirsch**

+ Proposed theme for 2012 is *To See Ourselves As Others Do*

+ Secret Visitors program

+ Re-Presenting Our Faith - to try to help people form words to speak authentically about who they are, Why Jesus?, Why Church?, and Why My Congregation? Are the three questions to enable deeper conversations. Pr. Hirsch asked for Synod Council's endorsement for this theme that the staff has brought about. Re-Presenting Our Faith would begin in January 2012, and present itself as appropriate for Lenten themes and programs also. There are to be speakers such as Brian McClaren at Together in Mission event who can help us answer Why Jesus? And Who Is Jesus? *The First Word and the Word After That* is his book on eschatology. They hope to have Pr. Chris Nelson (who spoke at the Bishop's Convocation last year) to speak next year at Synod Assembly about Why Church? And they hope to have Phyllis Tickle to speak on Why Come to My Church? For spring 2012 it is hoped to have Joseph Meyers speak on *The Search to Belong*.

+ Spark Grants & Go Grants. Ideas out of New and Renewing Missions Table encouraging congregations to try new things. They have a little "venture capital" to inspire such ideas for new programs. No longer is there to be "top-down" programming, but rather up-from-the-bottom with pastors leading congregations to think creatively. Matthew 28 is connected with the Go Grants, as in we are to go and make disciples. We have already given out grants to two congregations that have made proposals. Epiphany, Burtonsville, wanted coaching to do evangelism and reach out to their community. They are in partnership with Emmanuel, Vienna, for a two-day workshop on evangelism that will be open to the whole synod - "How to Get More Members" is planned for October 28 and 29. To be announced at Synod Assembly is the Luther Place, DC, request for funds to hire outreach worker to build community with artists and studios along 14<sup>th</sup> street where young adults have been congregating. They have hired a worker to liaison with these communities and young adults. They intend to share with others what is working and what isn't. The monies for this "spiritual venture capital" is to come out of endowment funds. After Dr. White recommended that the Spark and Go Grants proposal presented by Pr. Hirsch and implemented by the New and Renewing Mission Table, **MOTION SC 11.04.03** was adopted, approving the recommendation and the funding of the program from endowment funds as determined by the Finance Committee.

Pr. Kendall Summers stated that Bethany's council president went to Our Savior's, Temple Hills, under the impression that a promise had been made to use all resources left at Bethany primarily for African American ministry in Prince George County (PGC). Would all of that money go toward such ministry or would 10% be tithed and the remaining 90% go into the general funds of the Synod? What are the synod's intentions? Pr. Hirsch noted that ministry could continue in PGC, and that at least some of these funds would certainly be used for ministry there. It is possible that there was another person or two who thought that there was a promise from the

synod representative that all funds would be used in PGC, but Pr. Hirsch stated that there was no such specific promise.

In actuality, Bethany approved a motion that the funds be distributed as follows: 10% will go to charities of Bethany's choice, 10% of the remaining 90% will be forwarded to the ELCA, with the remaining funds going to mission and ministry of the Metro DC Synod with the majority of those funds being used for ministry in PGC. However, the Synod Council continues to discuss and work on this to formulate a plan, as we do not yet know the exact timing of all dimensions of the closure; neither is the amount of post-closure funds available, nor when such funds would be available. The synod must be clear about its communication with folk involved in parish closings. Also, Pr. Hirsch suggested that when such funds are available they should be placed into a separate fund category and not be combined with existing funds, and thus the intention to fund ministries in PGC can be implemented. He also noted that the synod must be careful not to attach too many stipulations or restrictions to such funds. Pr. Hirsch will bring forward at a future Synod Council meeting some plans appertaining to Bethany's intentions, and he will continue to work on a communication strategy with congregations about closure plans and funds.

### **Report of Assistant to the Bishop Pr. Amy Sevimli**

+ The Young Adult program is still working with several congregations in the synod who are interested in focusing on beginning a ministry in a more direct way rather than simply small groups. The synod office is a resource to help people understand the difference between small group ministries and those focused ministry with young adults.

+ The Base Realignment and Closure program includes realignments over all the greater DC area. She is working with Pr. Eric Wester who is researching and heading up groups to look into what ramifications the base realignment holds up for new missions and existing congregations as well. It could make sense to focus on more renewal of ministries rather than just new mission starts. Pr. Wester will be more available later on and will continue his research through the summer prior to a fall meeting/workshop opportunity.

+ Bethany, Forestville - Pr. Sevimli and Pr. Hirsch met with them after our last Synod Council meeting and their official last service will be on Pentecost Sunday, June 12, at 3:00 pm. It is hoped that the Council will attend and invite as many as possible to be there for this final service. We are asked to pray for the people of Bethany. They need strong backs and muscles as they go through all their materials and supplies. They have also asked for help to coordinate a reception after the last service, and help from all congregations in their conference and throughout the synod would be greatly appreciated. At this point the synod is not receiving their building, but they are to sign a listing agreement with a realtor and we will help them with that process. They are a Maryland not-for-profit corporation and will remain so until after the sale of the property. Pr. Dick Reicherd is walking with them through this process, as they wrestle with where to go after their closure. His wife is helping Bethany members sort through all their materials. Mr. Handley stated that the synod is paying their bills, as all invoices are now being sent to the synod office. The synod is dealing with the renting entities, and they are remitting their payments to the synod. The synod is also assisting with all administrative matters. Pr. Reicherd is now being paid as a part-time interim as Pr. Sevimli noted, as she emphasized that such a closure is an extremely emotional and complicated process.

### **Report of the Treasurer (attached)**

Mr. Handley wants to see how the synod does through Easter before initiating any spending limits. We are short about \$49,000 so far this year, which is somewhat an excess in deficit over previous years. There is no immediate action necessary, however. He is trying to complete all matters for 2010 before Synod Assembly. Money spent for Shekinah has not fully come in yet, and next month will look better as those funds are sent in.

+ We have not yet received any grant money from the ELCA for Belmont Ridge. We are waiting for Belmont Ridge to sign their covenant, which action should take place soon.

+ Mr. Handley noted that the grand total on Schedule 2 is a bit ahead of the pace. Schedule 3 shows that as of the end of March we had spent a bit over \$2,000 at Bethany to help them move toward closure.

+ Gifts of Hope monies have mostly been spent, but international entities' money has not yet been sent. There are delays with only two, and Mr. Handley will disburse those funds next week.

+ Stewardship education shows a significant increase. Two years ago Abiding Presence, Burke, received a grant to help them with their stewardship plans, and they have repaid those funds.

### **Synod Assembly Planning/Agenda Report**

+ Amy Acland presented the Metro DC 2011 Synod Assembly Draft Agenda which the Synod Council adopted with **MOTION SC 11.04.04**. All registration materials have been sent out, and she encourages people to register as soon as possible.

### **Report of the Synod Administrator**

+ Harold Sargeant stated that a proposal for increases for rostered persons was to have been included in the Compensation Guidelines. That increase was reported yesterday at 2.7%, but he will verify this. The draft budget proposes a 3% increase. Mr. Sargeant noted that he would make all necessary adjustments to the Compensation Guidelines so that they can be posted.

### **Women of the ELCA Report**

+ Bonnie Priebe reminded the Council that the Metro DC Synodical Unit of the WELCA will hold its annual convention on Saturday, May 7 at Abiding Presence, Burke.

+ Their board has held a second vote on a by-law change for a secondary date for their annual convention that will provide them with some flexibility in scheduling so that their gathering does not conflict the Synod Assembly again.

### **Other Business**

+ It was moved to divide the offerings from Synod Assembly worship between Lutheran World Relief designated for the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church and the ELCA AIDS Initiative. MOTION SC 11.04.05 was adopted.

+ It was reported that a Synod By-Law change necessary to combine the United Lutheran Appeal and Gifts of Hope will be ready for presentation at the Synod Assembly in May.

The meeting adjourned with prayer at 12:15 pm.

+Respectfully submitted,

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