

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA
SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING - 9 JULY 2011
MAR-LU RIDGE CONFERENCE AND EDUCATION CENTER
JEFFERSON, MARYLAND

Present: Bishop Richard Graham, Vice president Dr. John White, Treasurer John Handley, Secretary Pr. John Bradford, Former Secretary Dr. Marguerite Rourk, Jim Brookshire, Pr. Terrie Hannon, Deacon Kati Miller-Holland, Bill Johnson, Pr. Gerry Johnson, Pr. Charles Oberkehr, Bonnie Priebe, Robert Schilpp, Gretta Williams

Staff: Admin. Asst. Amy Acland

Absent: Assistants to the Bishop Pr. Phil Hirsch and Pr. Amy Sevimli, Synod Admin. Harold Sargeant, Wendell Anderson, Rachel Carle, Shirley Gibbs, Ruth Manchester, Pr. Christine Stephan, Amanda Wahlig, Pr. Michael Wilker

Guest Ms. Sarah Leffler, Mar-Lu Ridge Executive Director

Dr. White called the meeting to order AT 9:15 AM, AND Gretta Williams offered devotions.

Minutes of the Synod Council on 6 May 2011 were adopted as amended.

The orientation segment was postponed until lunch time, and will include, as Dr. White noted, information about Council liaisons with Synod committees, offices and units,

Report of the Bishop

+ Roster matters - **MOTION SC 11.07.01** was adopted to accept section one of the roster information (attached) concerning pastors who are retired, to be removed from the roster, going on leave from call, and or who are transferring into or out the synod.

+ As the synod's current office lease expires in November, the search for new office space continues, and the King Street area of Alexandria close to the metro and parking is being investigated. The Federal Chaplaincy office is being considered for continued inclusion in the synod space as they have been with us since the beginning of the ELCA.

Executive Committee

+ **Motion SC 11.07.02** was adopted to appoint new Executive Committee members Deacon Kati- Miller-Holland (rostered-lay) and Robert Schilpp. Dr. White will contact Pr. Emmanuel Grantson to ask if he is willing to serve on the Executive Committee.

+ Presentation on Youth Haven, a ministry of Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area, by Deacon Kati Miller-Holland and Outreach Intern Ariel Gamen-Rosen. They explained how Youth Haven supported children, teens and young adults who are HIV/AIDS positive or who are living with an infected person, and how Youth Haven helps them shake off the stigma attached to such infection. Participants enjoy three weekends each year for retreat and education, and they are encouraged and enabled to use their own gifts and talents in coping with their life experience. There is a traditional summer camp week at Mar-Lu Ridge, and this week there have been 15 campers. Their goal is to have 40 campers, and some teens are already training to be counselors for the younger children. Both women expressed their gratitude to Mar-Lu Ridge and emphasized the importance of Mar-Lu Ridge being willing essentially to underwrite the camp event that enables LSSNCA to offer this program to so many young people.

Reports of the Assistants to the Bishop

+ Mr. Handley gave a report for Assistant to the Bishop Pr. Phil Hirsch:

- Resurrection, Kensington, is closing and as an act of mission is selling their property to the Oromo Christian Fellowship (OCF) for \$50,000. Settlement cannot take place until August, and therefore the Synod is providing OCF with a bridge loan for \$60,000 - \$100,000 to cover the \$50,000 property price plus loan and closing costs, all of which is to be repaid to the Synod within 90 days of settlement. **MOTION SC 11.07.03** was adopted to implement this financial plan. The OCF has funds, but this loan enables them to keep those funds available for repairs, renovations, or unforeseen expenses. Resurrection plans to use their \$50,000 for close-out

costs and for distribution to as gifts to the synod, to the National Lutheran Home, and to ministries they have supported through the years. Resurrection will hold their final service on Sunday, July 31, at 4:00 pm, with Pr. Phil Hirsch preaching.

- Ministries among Prince George County (PGC congregations. Gretta Williams presented information packets (attached) on PGC ministries which include a map showing congregations and information from the meeting of those working to insure that these ministries continue to serve people in PGC. She noted that congregations struggle primarily for three reasons: transience, diversity and economic issues. The synod plans to focus on the African American community in PGC because it is so large, but there are also growing populations among diverse groups of Asian and Hispanic cultures to be considered. It is hoped that various congregations in or near PGC can be clustered for more cohesion in planning and ministry. The task force plans to meet again soon and to talk with pastors and lay leaders about how to get congregations on board with plans that would support, uphold and benefit all. The Bishop noted that we are concerned because Bethany, Forestville, was such a large part of its community for a long time. PGC is the wealthiest predominantly African American county in the US. There are nearly one million citizens in PGC, and therefore there can be no such thing as "a" mission plan. However, congregation "clusters" have worked together in the past, and the arena and possibilities for action now are ripe. It is important for us as a church to say that this matters, and that we can do this. Each cluster has at least one strong congregation, and, while the synod is not attempting to use such congregations to prop up weak or struggling congregations, it is vital that we examine our resources available to us now and to partner in order to the best mission and witness that we can. Pr. Hirsch is working on this and will report more later.

+ Mr. Handley also gave an update for Assistant to the Bishop Pr. Amy Sevimli.

- Bethany had their final service, but they are still together as a corporation until they sell the property. The synod continues to manage the property and employ their parish administrator, helping them to collect rents, etc. The synod will make other decisions once the property is sold.

Report of the Treasurer (attached)

Earlier in the spring income was not matching expenses, and currently we are challenged as unrestricted congregational benevolence receipts are lagging due to the worst June in five years. Therefore, we must consider how to limit expenditures in accord with income, and some cuts may yet have to be made. Mr. Handley hopes to have recommendations for how to get expenditures to match receipts and be able to project better for the rest of the year. We are 5/12 of the way through the year, but we have spent at 42% of planned expenditures. This is not a spending problem, as we have followed our spending plan; it is an income problem. We have spent more at Belmont Ridge, and while we have ELCA grant funds to help with that, we must spend some from our endowment funds to support Belmont Ridge. The ELCA has committed \$38,000 in funding to us for the rest of the fiscal year, but they have planned for only \$30,000 in grant funds for next year, and even that commitment cannot be considered firm.

+ Shepherd of the Hills is in the process of obtaining loans for building on their land. They have some complicated transactions involving agreements concerning property they own. Currently they cannot qualify for the full amount they need for building, and they have asked the synod to co-sign on a loan that will help them realize their goal. As they are well positioned to grow, the Synod has agreed to pursue the option to cosign, but the Synod Council must approve this action to assist them in borrowing about \$600,000. The Synod need not expend any funds on this, but will execute an agreement with Shepherd of the Hills stipulating that if they cannot make their payments, they agree to submit to synodical administration. **MOTION SC 11.07.03** was adopted authorizing synod officers to cosign with Shepherd of the Hills a mortgage for an amount up to \$600,000 to finance their building program.

+ The Lutheran Planned Giving Consortium (LPGC) has had the National Lutheran Home (NLH) keep their books for many years, but NLH is no longer able to do this. There, Mr. Handley proposed **MOTION SC 11.07.04** authorizing the synod bookkeeper to assume LPGC financial arrangements such as disbursement for payroll and expenses. The motion was adopted.

Report of the Women of the ELCA (attached)

+ Bonnie Priebe reported that their synod unit convention was held on Saturday, May 7 at Abiding Presence in Burke. Their attendance was somewhat smaller this year, as their date coincided with Synod Assembly. They have already enacted a by-law change that gives them flexibility in choosing their convention date so as to avoid such a schedule clash in the future. Their worship offering was \$1,509, with half being sent to the churchwide unit of the Women of the ELCA and half being sent to the Lutheran World Relief Malaria Initiative. Many in-kind gifts have been sent on to Mar-Lu Ridge and to Carolina Furnace. Each outdoor ministry also received \$745.50 from their 2010-2011 campaign. The WELCA Triennial Gathering will be held July 14-17 in Spokane, Washington, and fifteen women from our synod will attend. Their principal focus for the next two years (2011-2013) will be to add \$5,000 to their endowment at Roanoke College in Salem, VA.

Future Sessions of the Synod Assembly

+ The Fall Session of the Metropolitan Washington DC Synod Assembly will be on Saturday, September 24, at Redeemer, McLean. The agenda is still being planned. United Methodist pastor Leonard Sw2eet is the keynote speaker. There will be no business transacted, and therefore congregations may substitute persons for their spring session voting members who cannot attend. Registration will begin soon for this event which will include workshops, Bible study and festival Eucharist.

+ The 2012 Synod Assembly Spring Session will be at the University of Maryland with Dr. Phyllis Tickle as keynote speaker, and the 2012 Fall Session will be at Lord of Life in Fairfax.

+ The 2013 Synod Assembly will return to Roanoke College, and, because it is an episcopal election year, there will be only the spring session.

+ The 2014 spring session Synod Assembly will return to the University of Maryland.

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 12:08 with a table grace.

+ During lunch the Council was welcomed by Mar-Lu Ridge Executive Director Sarah Leffler who described some of the changes, improvements and current projects at Mar-Lu Ridge. They are currently enjoying an upsurge in numbers of campers, programs and events.

+ In an informal orientation time, Bishop Graham thanked new Council members for their willingness to serve. He explained that the Council consists of representatives of the entire synod and is the legislative body for the synod that acts on behalf of the synod assembly when it is not in session. Dr. White noted the purpose of Council liaisons with the synod committees, units and offices of the synod, and how the liaisons can facilitate communication among the various entities of the synod. The Bishop further reminded Council members of respecting confidentiality, and he also encouraged all members to bring to discern and use their own gifts and talents for the sake of the work of the synod and for the good of the church.

The session adjourned with prayer at 2:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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

The Rev. John Bradford
Secretary of the Synod