

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA**

**SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – JANUARY 20, 2018**

**BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH, FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA**

**Call to Order** Vice President Crenshaw called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

- Devotion** Julie Hamre provided a devotional message based on Numbers 27, a message that was also inspired, in part, by the eulogy delivered by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on September 18, 1963, at the funeral for three of the four girls killed in the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.
- Greetings** Pastor Mwitanti greeted the members of the Synod Council and provided a brief history and profile of Bethlehem Lutheran Church. He introduced Dave Hartmann, a long-time member of the congregation, who provided a written summary of the congregation's history and its role in the Fairfax community and responded to questions from Council members.

Vice President Crenshaw presented the proposed agenda for the meeting.

**SC18.01.01:** To approve the agenda for the January 20, 2018, Synod Council meeting.

The draft minutes of the November 18, 2017, Synod Council meeting were presented to the Council for approval. Vice President Crenshaw asked for corrections or amendments. There were none.

**SC18.01.02:** To approve the minutes of the November 18, 2017, Synod Council meeting.

**1. Synod Council Primary Mission Table**

**a. New Connections Campaign Update**

Pastor Hirsch provided a brief update on the status of the New Connections Campaign, distributing a brochure that had been developed for use in the campaign. The vast majority of congregation councils have been contacted, and follow-up efforts are currently underway. Two more events have been scheduled relating to the campaign. On January 27, 2018, the second of two E-Vent trainings will be held at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Falls Church, Virginia. On February 17, a stewardship training will be held at Community Lutheran Church, Sterling, Virginia. Having completed the implementation of new data base software for use in

connection with the campaign, reports will be generated and distributed to show the status of pledges and contributions as of the end of 2017.

b. Review and Continued Authorization of Worshiping Communities

ELCA bylaw section 10.02.03. provides as follows:

Within the territory of each geographic synod, the synod—in keeping with criteria, policies, and procedures proposed by the secretary of this church, after consultation with the appropriate churchwide unit or units, and approved by the Church Council—may acknowledge certain authorized worshiping communities such as developing ministries, preaching points, or chapels as related to the synod and part of the synod’s life and mission. Such authorized worshiping communities of the synod shall accept and adhere to the Confession of Faith and Statement of Purpose of this church, shall be served by leadership under the criteria of this church, and shall be subject to the discipline of this church.

Pastor Hirsch provided information and background on the concept of synodically authorized worshiping communities (“SAWCs”), including a review of the three such communities authorized by this synod. In general, such groups do not have congregational status but may become congregations under development and then congregations of the ELCA. The purpose of the discussion was to act on the recommendation of the New and Renewing Missions Table, including Pr. Hirsch, to continue the status of each SAWC for an additional one-year period.

La Sagrada Familia (Spanish for “The Holy Family) is a Spanish-speaking gathering currently served by Pr. Rosario Hernandez, who has been called by Saint Luke Lutheran Church, Silver Spring, Maryland. This congregation also provides supervision of the SAWC, while the synod provides some financial support.

**SC18.01.03:** To approve the continuation of the authorized worshiping community known as “La Sagrada Familia,” pursuant to ELCA bylaw 10.02.03, for an additional one-year period, effective on the date of adoption of this resolution.

In Christ Fellowship of Washington, DC, is a Tamil-speaking gathering meeting at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, North Bethesda, Maryland. The prospects for this SAWC became somewhat uncertain following the sudden death of its pastor, Chandran Lite, on December 2, 2017. The SAWC has not received financial support from the synod for several years.

**SC18.01.04:** To approve the continuation of the authorized worshiping community known as “In Christ Fellowship of Washington, DC,” pursuant to ELCA bylaw 10.02.03, for an additional one-year period, effective on the date of adoption of this resolution.

The Swahili Lutheran Church is currently worshiping at Living Faith Lutheran Church, Rockville, Maryland. It has been in existence for approximately one year, and receives some financial support from the New Connections Campaign.

**SC18.01.05:** To approve the continuation of the authorized worshiping community known as “The Swahili Lutheran Church,” pursuant to ELCA bylaw 10.02.03, for an additional one-year period, effective on the date of adoption of this resolution.

## **2. Staff and Officer Reports**

a. Bishop Graham:

i. Roster Matters for Synod Council Action. Bishop Graham brought two roster matters to the Synod Council.

**SC18.01.06:** That:

1. The Rev. John Bradford be placed on the retired roster, effective January 1, 2018; and
2. The Rev. Eva Steege be placed on the retired roster, effective January 1, 2018.

ii. Roster Matters for Information. Although not requiring any action on the part of the Synod Council, Bishop Graham’s written report to the Council noted the following additional matters affecting the Synod’s rostered ministers:

1. The Rev. Ronald Zschoche (retired) transferred to the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod from the Southwestern Washington Synod, effective January 8, 2018;
2. The Rev. Anthony Prinsen transferred to the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod from the Southeastern Synod and was called to serve as Lead Pastor at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Vienna, Virginia, effective January 15, 2018;
3. The Rev. Robert Lewis transferred to the Delaware-Maryland Synod, effective January 1, 2018;
4. The Rev. Robert Holum (retired) transferred to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, effective January 8, 2018; and
5. Daniel Rinehart was ordained December 16, 2017, and was called to serve at Hope Lutheran Church, Clinton, Maryland, effective January 2, 2018.

iii. National Lutheran, Inc. Bylaws. Bishop Graham noted that the synod is one of three members of National Lutheran, Inc. (“NLI”), the parent organization for The Villages at Rockville and other affiliated organizations. The Board of Trustees of NLI had approved a series of amendments to its bylaws and submitted them to each member for its approval. The text of the bylaws,

showing all of the language that had been added, deleted, or modified, had been provided to the Synod Council in advance of the meeting.

- SC18.01.07:** To approve the revised bylaws of National Lutheran, Inc., a Maryland nonprofit and nonstock corporation, in the form presented to the synod by the corporation with a revision date of October 2017.
- iv. Housing Allowance Designations. Bishop Graham brought to the Synod Council recommendations for the designation of housing allowances for each of the clergy members of the synod staff for the calendar year 2018.
- SC18.01.08:** That for the year 2018, \$40,000 of the compensation paid to Bishop Richard H. Graham, \$48,000 of the compensation paid to the Rev. Philip C. Hirsch, and \$35,000 of the compensation paid to the Rev. Leila M. Ortiz be designated as a rental/housing allowance in accordance with the provisions of section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code.
- v. Building Puentes Update. In the absence of Pr. Ortiz, Bishop Graham provided a brief update on the coordinated relief efforts among the synod, its congregations, and the Caribbean Synod following the significant damage caused by Hurricane Maria. One of the next steps in the effort will be to send people to Puerto Rico to provide on-the-ground assistance.
- b. Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Ortiz:
- No report.
- c. Assistant to the Bishop and DEM, Pr. Hirsch:
- Pastor Hirsch provided a brief update on the status of River of Grace Lutheran Church, a congregational restart of a prior congregation that is expected to become self-supporting in 2018. He also noted that a Latino Ministry Summit will be held at Saint Luke Lutheran Church, Silver Spring, Maryland, on February 3.
- d. Treasurer's Report:
- i. General Updates. Treasurer Julie Hamre noted that the synod is approaching the end of its fiscal year, *i.e.*, January 31, 2018. Congregations are encouraged to remit their mission support as soon as possible, inasmuch as the churchwide organization seeks to receive its full share of mission support from synods for the same fiscal year by February 15, 2018. The "field work" in connection with the examination of the synod's financial statements by its independent certified public accounts is scheduled to begin in April.

- ii. Review of Year-to-Date Financial Statements. Ms. Hamre also distributed copies of the financial statements for the first 11 months of the Synod's current fiscal year, *i.e.*, the period ended December 31, 2017. These statements reflect a deficit in undesignated receipts, compared with expenditures, of approximately \$118,000. This position is expected to improve somewhat during the month of January, although a deficit for the full fiscal year is nevertheless expected.
- iii. Spending Plan/Budget Status. In light of the projected deficits for the current and ensuing fiscal years, Ms. Hamre raised the prospect of presenting an amended budget to the 2018 Synod Assembly. Alternatively, the Synod Council may be called upon to determine the extent to which items of approved spending authority should be deferred or eliminated altogether. That discussion will take place after the current fiscal year has concluded and the financial results for that year have been finalized.

### **3. Synodical Women's Organization**

Cheryl Dwyer provided comments to supplement the written report that had been provided to the members of the Council in advance of the meeting. In particular, she noted the 2018 SWO Convention to be held on May 5 at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Springfield, Virginia, and the Women of the ELCA 2018 Synodical Presidents' Conference, to be held in Chicago, Illinois, from February 23 through 25.

### **4. Youth Organization Report**

Samuel S. identified upcoming youth events, including a Mental Health Clinic at Lutheran Church of the Abiding Presence, Burke, Virginia, on February 10, the National Youth Gathering in Houston, Texas, in June 2018, and Shekinah in early 2018.

### **5. New Business**

Bishop Graham and Secretary Anderson provided an update on plans for the 2018 Synod Assembly, to be held on June 16. The churchwide representative to the Assembly had recently been identified as Christina Jackson-Skelton, Executive Director, Mission Advancement. A Synod Secretary will be elected, along with approximately one-half of the Synod Council, four members of the Consultation Committee, and voting members for the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

**The meeting adjourned** with the Lord's Prayer at 11:33 a.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting: March 17, 2018; Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Gaithersburg, Maryland.