

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA**  
**SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – MARCH 17, 2018**  
**GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH, GAITHERSBURG,**  
**MARYLAND**

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

**Devotion** Bishop Graham provided a devotional message based on Numbers 21, in which Moses made a serpent of bronze and set it on a pole so that anyone who was bitten would look at it, be healed, and live. He noted that the bronze serpent had survived for hundreds of years and had become an idol for the people. It reappeared in 2 Kings 18:4, where King Hoshea cut down the sacred pole and broke the bronze serpent into pieces. Inasmuch as there was no indication that the serpents had left the people, the passages suggest that it is better to confront issues directly as they arise. Nevertheless, in our own lives there is likely to be a serpent or two.

**Greetings** Pastor Sonnenberg greeted the members of the Synod Council and provided a brief history and profile of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, a congregation consisting of approximately 400 households. He described its role in the Gaithersburg community, the congregation's participation in the New Connections Campaign, and the origins of the Synod's Building Puentes efforts in the congregation.

Vice President Crenshaw presented the proposed agenda for the meeting.

**SC18.03.09:** To approve the agenda for the March 17, 2018, Synod Council meeting.

The position of DC Conference clergy member of the Synod Council had been vacant since the incumbent, Pr. James Phillips, accepted a call to a congregation in another synod. The DC Conference had nominated Pr. Renata Eustis to fill the vacancy until the next Synod Assembly.

**SC18.03.10:** To elect Pr. Renata Eustis to the Synod Council to serve until her successor is elected by the 2018 Synod Assembly.

The draft minutes of the January 20, 2018, Synod Council meeting were presented to the Council for approval. Vice President Crenshaw asked for corrections or amendments. There were none.

**SC18.03.11:** To approve the minutes of the January 20, 2018, 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. Meetings with approximately 50 congregation councils have been held. The total amount pledged to the Campaign thus far is \$1,345,630. Aspects of the Campaign that are currently under development include the consideration of the best practices for the design of Web pages for congregations, the establishment of goals for engaging new people and following up with them, and a training event at Grace Lutheran Church, Washington, D.C., on April 28. The Campaign extends to June 2020.

### **b. Latino Ministry Opportunities**

Pastor Hirsch also provided an overview of Latino ministry efforts, activities, and opportunities within the Synod. He discussed the initiatives that had been undertaken by congregations to develop and support Latino ministries. The Synod staff is looking at various models for developing more multi-cultural ministries. One of the challenges in developing and supporting such ministries is that Latinos are not united by a common language. Demographic projections show that the territory of the Synod will become a majority-minority area (with white Americans constituting less than 50% of the total population) many years before the entire country reaches that point.

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

### **a. Bishop Graham:**

- i. 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 matters affecting the Synod's rostered ministers:
  1. The Rev. Derek Solberg was called to serve as Pastor of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Bethesda, Maryland, effective January 27, 2018;
  2. The Rev. David Slagle-Peck was called to serve as Pastor of Epiphany Lutheran Church in Burtonsville, Maryland, effective February 14, 2018;
  3. The Rev. Mark Edwards was called to serve as Pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Woodbridge, Virginia, effective March 7, 2018;
  4. The Rev. Lisa Hufford was called to serve at Lutheran Church of the Reformation in Washington, D.C., effective March 15, 2018; and

5. The Rev. Gretchen Ritola (retired) transferred to the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod from the Nebraska Synod, effective February 22, 2018.
  - ii. United Lutheran Seminary Update. Bishop Graham provided an update on the discord at the United Lutheran Seminary (Gettysburg and Philadelphia) that culminated in the recent departure of President Theresa Latini and the resignation of several members of the Board of Trustees, including the Board Chair. Bishop James Dunlop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod has been named the Acting President of the Seminary. Bishop Graham responded to questions and comments from the members of the Synod Council.
- b. Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Ortiz:
- i. Mobility and Candidacy Update. Pastor Ortiz reported that three congregations have extended calls, two more congregations are interviewing candidates, four other congregations are awaiting names of potential candidates, and five congregations are in the study process. From the current roster of the Synod, there are four pending retirements likely to take effect before January 2019. With respect to candidacy matters, there have been two approvals, three endorsements, and one entrance.
  - ii. Building Puentes Update. Pastor Ortiz reported that Pr. Ray Ranker had travelled to Puerto Rico for service and to build relationships. Pastor Carmelo Santos had previously spent time there as well. The Epiphany fundraising appeal raised more than \$6,000 for the effort. The upcoming Bishop's Convocation will be held in two parts. The first part is planned for one fall day in the District. The second part is planned for two days in Puerto Rico in the spring of 2019.
- c. Assistant to the Bishop and DEM, Pr. Hirsch:
- Pastor Hirsch provided a reminder to the Synod Council of the coaching efforts being made within the Synod. A new training session has been scheduled for April 10 and 11. Services are provided free of charge, and interested parties should consult the Web site for Metro DC Coaches, [www.metrodccoaches.com](http://www.metrodccoaches.com).
- Pastor Hirsch also reported on the current status of the Gifts of Hope program and on efforts to be made to improve the effectiveness of the program.
- d. Secretary's Items:
- i. Synod Territory/Proposed Bylaw Amendment. Secretary Kevin Anderson advised the Synod Council that the description of the territory of the Synod set forth in the Synod's Constitution should be updated to include additional independent

cities in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Synod territory as set forth in ELCA Bylaw 10.01.01. is as follows:

Synod 8.G—Metropolitan Washington, D.C. The District of Columbia; the counties of Calvert, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George’s, St. Mary’s in the state of MARYLAND; the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, and the independent cities within the territory of these counties in the state of VIRGINIA; BERMUDA.

In the Synod Constitution, the territory of the Synod includes an identification of the independent Virginia cities but omits two such cities.

**SC18.03.12:** To approve the amendment of †S3.01. of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Constitution as follows, and to recommend the approval of such amendment by the 2018 Synod Assembly:

The territory of this synod, as determined by the Churchwide Assembly, shall be the District of Columbia; the counties of Calvert, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George’s, and St. Mary’s in the State of Maryland; the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William and the independent cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, and Fairfax City, Manassas, and Manassas Park within these counties, and the independent City of Alexandria in the Commonwealth of Virginia; Bermuda.

- ii. Rules of Procedure for Electing 2019 CWA Voting Members. Secretary Anderson introduced the topic of the process by which the 2018 Synod Assembly will elect its voting members to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly, to be held in August in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He introduced Richard Ahlberg, who has served as the Synod Assembly Parliamentarian for many years. Based on the size of the Synod and the number of its congregations, the Synod is permitted to send eight voting members to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. One such voting member must be a person of color or person whose primary language is other than English (“PC/L”). Another voting member must be a youth or young adult, the latter of which is defined by the ELCA governing provisions as a voting member of a congregation who is between the ages of 18 and 30 at the time of election or appointment.

Under the representational principles set forth in the ELCA governing documents, not more than 40% of the voting members may be ministers of Word and Sacrament, and at least 60% of such voting members must be lay persons. Minister of Word and Service are considered as lay persons for purposes of this requirement. The Synod must achieve gender balance in its lay voting members to the extent possible, and any clergy voting members should include both males and females where possible. The synodical bishop and vice

president are automatically voting members, are included in the total of eight voting members, and must be taken into account in applying the representational principles. Taking all of these provisions into account, the 2018 Synod Assembly (1) must elect at least one youth or young adult, (2) may elect no more than two ministers of Word and Sacrament as voting members, (3) must elect at least four lay persons as voting members, and (4) must ensure gender balance among the lay voting members. The 2018 Synod Assembly is not required to elect a PC/L voting member, because the vice president's status as an automatic voting member satisfies that requirement.

Mr. Ahlberg provided additional background on these requirements and identified certain concerns with the manner in which prior synod assemblies have elected voting members to prior churchwide assemblies. Rather than continuing the historic practice of having separate "categories" of voting members and requiring all candidates to place their names in only one such category, Mr. Ahlberg has recommended that all candidates be placed on a single ballot. Members of the Synod Assembly would be permitted to vote for up to six candidates, and any candidate who receives a majority of the votes cast would be elected, provided that the ELCA representational principles can be satisfied by the election of that candidate as a voting member. Successive votes would be taken until all six positions have been filled.

An extensive discussion ensued. Members noted that the recommended process could result in the election of no clergy voting members other than the bishop. A consensus emerged that the principal policy decision to be made is whether the election(s) should ensure that the maximum number of clergy voting members allowed will be elected. In order to bring all constituencies into the discussion, Bishop Graham suggested that, through the Synod's Web site, the views of others would be solicited on this matter. A final decision will be made at the April 21 Synod Council meeting, and a recommendation will be made to the 2018 Synod Assembly in connection with the adoption of rules of procedure for the Assembly.

e. Treasurer's Report:

- i. Review of Year-End Financial Statements. Treasurer Julie Hamre distributed copies of the preliminary financial statements for the Synod's most recently completed fiscal year ended January 31, 2018. These statements reflect a deficit in undesignated receipts, compared with expenditures, of approximately \$78,000, compared with a projected deficit of approximately \$36,000 at the time the budget was approved by the Synod Assembly. Additional year-end adjustments reflecting 2017 mission support received after January 31 will reduce the deficit somewhat. The principal sources of the deficit were the costs of the 2017 Synod Assembly, to the extent such costs were not recovered

through registration fees and other receipts, and overages in the office operating expenses. Ms. Hamre also expressed her intent to disburse funds held for others on a prompt basis so that the balances in these accounts are kept to a minimum.

- ii. Capitalization Policy Resolution. Ms. Hamre recommended that the Synod's financial statement capitalization policy be updated.

**SC18.03.13:** That it shall be the policy of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod that fixed assets with a purchase price of \$2,000 or more shall be capitalized in accordance with standard general accounting procedures.

- iii. Authorized Account Signature Resolution. Due to the election of Ms. Hamre as Treasurer, effective September 1, 2017, updates to the authorized signature resolutions on certain of the Synod's accounts are required.

**SC18.03.14:** That the following persons are hereby authorized to be signers on the indicated accounts in accordance with the policies of each financial institution:

Endowment Fund of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Fund for New and Renewing Congregations)

Richard H. Graham, Bishop  
Leila M. Ortiz, Assistant to the Bishop  
Julie P. Hamre, Synod Treasurer

Thrivent Trust Company (Faith Fund)

Richard H. Graham, Bishop  
Philip C. Hirsch, Assistant to the Bishop  
Julie P. Hamre, Synod Treasurer

- iv. Audit Committee Resolution. Ms. Hamre recommended that individuals be formally elected to the Audit Committee of the Synod pursuant to the Synod's governing documents.

**SC18.03.15:** That, pursuant to S11.05. of the Constitution of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod, the following persons are hereby elected to the Synod's Audit Committee and charged with general oversight of the Synod's accounting, financial reporting, internal control systems, and external audit processes:

Wendell Anderson (first term expires September 2019)  
John Feldman (first term expires September 2020)  
Suzanne Blume (first term expires September 2021)

- v. Fund Combination Resolution. Ms. Hamre also brought forward recommendations for the combination of two previously separate funds and the use of such funds.

**SC18.03.16:** WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod created the Mission Endowment Trust to hold planned gifts made to the Synod, and those funds were invested in the ELCA Pooled Trust; and

WHEREAS, in September 2012 the Synod Council approved a distribution plan in which four percent of the value of the Trust was to be transferred to a distribution account to be used at the recommendation of the New and Renewing Mission Table; and

WHEREAS, with the establishment of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod of the ELCA, funds received from the predecessor synods (Virginia Synod, Lutheran Church in America; Maryland Synod, LCA; and Eastern District, American Lutheran Church) were designated as the Mission Development Trust by the Synod Council and deposited in an ELCA Mission Investment Fund account; and

WHEREAS, the Synod Council determined that distribution of the interest on that account is to be spent at the request of the New and Renewing Mission Table; and

WHEREAS, in January 2016 the Synod Council voted to combine the two funds;

BE IT RESOLVED,

Establishment of the Combined Account

That the name of the combined fund shall be the Fund for New and Renewing Congregations (hereafter the N&R Fund);

That the balances in the corpus accounts of both funds shall be combined into the existing ELCA Pooled Trust account; and

That the balances in the two distribution accounts shall also be combined into the existing ELCA Pooled Trust account.

Use of the N&R Fund

That the New and Renewing Mission Table shall be authorized to spend up to ten percent of the value of the N&R Fund as of December 31 during the following calendar year without further approval of the Synod Council;

That the Synod Treasurer shall inform the N&R Mission Table by January 31 of each year the amount that may be expended during that calendar year;

That the N&R Table may recommend expenditures in excess of the ten percent allowance to the Synod Council, which must approve any such distribution.

- vi. **Mission Support Update.** Bishop Graham provided an update on the Synod's participation in the churchwide pilot program to reduce churchwide mission support to 35% in exchange for the Synod's assumption of the costs of compensation for the Director for Evangelical Mission and for grants within the Synod. The pilot was originally intended to be in effect for three years for five synods and to be evaluated before the expiration of this period. Because the data to facilitate the reevaluation process have not yet been compiled, the Synod has been assured that it will be permitted to continue to operate under the pilot program for a fourth year. This assurance will permit the 2018 Synod Assembly to consider and adopt only one form of budget for the next fiscal year, using the reduced churchwide mission support. There is no assurance that the pilot program will continue for a fifth year.

### **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 invitation made to Spanish-speaking sisters to attend the 2018 SWO Convention to be held on May 5 at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Springfield, Virginia, and an ambitious goal by the Women of the ELCA to raise \$3 million for Katie's Fund by the start of the 2020 triennial convention.

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

No report.

### **5. New Business**

None.

**The meeting adjourned** with the Lord's Prayer at 12:16 p.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting: April 21, 2018; Saint Stephen Lutheran Church, Silver Spring, Maryland.