

Report of the Synod Council  
 Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly  
 June 2017

The Synod Constitution and By-laws defines The Synod Council as “the board of directors of this Synod,” which serves as its “interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly.” (S10.02). The Council consists of four officers plus members (rostered, lay, and at-large) from the Synod conferences, the Synodical Women’s Organization and the Youth Organization representative.

The Council is more than a corporate board, and the members are more than dispassionate actors on matters of the world. We work at understanding the issues at hand and the spiritual calling that brings the issues before us. We come together to empathize, declare, affirm, commiserate, and study, and, ultimately, act with commitments of the Synod’s gifts (money, but also persuasion, honesty, and compassion) to grow the mission field in all its manifestations.

During the 2016-17 Council year, the Council members are:

- o Rev. Richard Graham, Bishop
- o Dr. John White, Vice President
- o Mr. Kevin Anderson, Secretary
- o Rev. Tom Knoll, Treasurer
- o Rev. Sarah Lewis (Montgomery Conference)
- o Dr. Cleophas Tsokodayi (Montgomery)
- o Rev. Sandra Kessinger (Virginia Conference)
- o Mr. Stanley Medikonda (Virginia)
- o Rev. James Phillips (DC Conference)
- o Mr. Larry Evans (DC)
- o Rev. Elijah Mwitanti (Fairfax Conference)
- o Mr. Nels Hendrickson (Fairfax)
- o Rev. Robert Lewis (Potomac Conference)
- o Ms. Cassandra Smith (Potomac)
- o Rev. Gary Rhinesmith (Maryland Conference)
- o Ms. Kimberley Watson (Maryland)
- o Rev. Gissel Espinosa (at Large)
- o Mr. Jackson Droney
- o Mr. Paul Kuller (at large)
- o Deac. Rebecca M. Kolowe (at large)
- o Ms. Cheryl Dwyer (Synodical Women’s Organization)
- o Mr. Samuel S.-R. (Youth Representative)
- o Rev Leila Ortiz, Assistant to the Bishop (ex officio)
- o Rev. Phil Hirsch, Assistant to the Bishop for new and renewing missions (ex officio)

For the last several years we have worked as a body constituting the Primary Mission Table. In this instantiation, we are free to use our minds and hearts and the nudgings of the Spirit to cover a wide variety of matters, involving the health of congregations, our mutuality with the ELCA, and emerging trends in discipleship and demographics and denomination. Our Assistant to the Bishop / Director of Evangelical Mission, Pr. Phil Hirsch, has opened the doors

to rapid congregation starts at the initiative of existing ones. Proposals have come before us for support for new gatherings such as: the Mosaic district of Merrifield, VA, a multi-site approach begun by Holy Trinity, Falls Church; and a multi-site King of Kings church spanning Fairfax and Loudoun Counties. The Council enthusiastically endorses these initiatives, as an awakening of a new impetus to tell the old, old story.

The New Connections campaign officially began during the last year. Through the planning of the Evangelical Mission and the commitments of all of us in this Synod, the Council has already been able to arrange the materials for creating these exciting new missions.

Even the apparently mundane actions of the Council seem to have an aura of the divine about them at times. Our Council has taken actions to streamline the accounting and accounts of our Synod's endowments and funds to enhance their effectiveness for addressing their intended needs. And we have acted on your behalf to maintain Synodically Authorized Worshiping Communities who bring the word and sacrament to communities with particular gifts and needs: La Sagrada Familia, In Christ Fellowship, and soon a Swahili Lutheran community.

My tenure as Vice President of the Synod is coming to an end. I have been awed by the competence of the Councils with whom I have sat, the preparedness of the staff, the thoughtfulness of Pastor Hirsch, the discernment of Prs. Sevimli and Ortiz, and the thoroughness of the officers who served with me. I am grateful for the many congregations who have hosted us in their church meeting rooms, for the representation of the Youth organization and the vibrant Synodical Women's Organization. I would have been (and often was) lost without the presence of mind and precise counsel of the Council Secretary, in particular Kevin Anderson. I especially wish to thank my friend and Bishop, Rev. Dick Graham, for his tolerance, discernment, and ability to turn weird Old Testament accounts into the wisdom stories they are meant to be.

When I wrote my first Synod Council Report for the year 2009-2010, I noted the breathtaking changes in the openness and acceptance of all of us into the full life of the church, but added, "Still your children wander homeless, still the hungry cry for bread" from the wonderful old hymn. They still do. But what has changed is the overt encouragement from seats of power to shun them, to blame them, to forcibly remove them. It is time for each of us (i.e., me) - lay and ordained - to take up our crosses (my cross) and follow Jesus. We must feed and clothe the hungry and help the homeless and dispossessed and those beset by now licensed bigotry, if for no other reason than Jesus told us to. The brilliant Ammparo campaign, LSS, LIRS, and World Relief programs will do wonders in our hands, as will the hundreds of local food banks, charities, and sanctuaries we can energize. I hope we (I) at the same time can allow that Spirit nudge to turn into the majestic indwelling of God's power that each of us will need in the days to come.

Respectfully Submitted,

John White  
Vice President  
Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America