

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

## SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – JULY 18, 2020

### ELECTRONIC/ZOOM MEETING

**Call to Order** The meeting was held electronically, using the Zoom platform, in light of the public-health recommendations to avoid in-person meetings involving more than ten individuals. Interim Vice President Droney called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The roll was called to verify attendance.

**Devotion** During the portion of the meeting ordinarily set aside for an opening devotional message, Interim Vice President Droney led the Synod Council through an extensive discussion of the fourth through sixth chapters of the book *Quietly Courageous: Leading Church in a Changing World*, by Gil Rendle.

Interim Vice President Droney presented the proposed agenda for the meeting.

**SC20.07.24:** To approve the agenda for the July 18, 2020, Synod Council meeting.

Two sets of draft minutes were presented to the Synod Council for approval. The first minutes are from the May 30, 2020, Synod Council meeting. The second minutes are from an electronic vote of the Synod Council conducted during the period of June 3-5, 2020. Interim Vice President Droney asked for corrections or amendments. There were none.

**SC20.07.25:** To approve the minutes of the May 20, 2020, Synod Council meeting and the minutes of the electronic vote of the Synod Council conducted during the period of June 3-5, 2020.

#### 1. Synod Council Primary Mission Table

##### a. New Connections Campaign Overview and Update

Pastor Bailey described the efforts in process to wind down the Campaign, including the planned elimination of the position of Campaign Director as of June 30, the consolidation of all Campaign materials and records, and the preparation and mailing of expressions of gratitude for those who have been closely associated with the Campaign.

Members of the Synod Council had prepared a formal resolution of thanks and gratitude for the service of Ms. Hartigan as the Campaign Director, and presented it to the full Council for consideration and approval.

**SC20.07.26:** WHEREAS, Ms. Christy Hartigan, a member of Good Samaritan Lutheran Church in Lexington Park, Maryland, has faithfully served as Director of the New Connections Campaign for the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod from November of 2016 through June of 2020; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Hartigan has exercised effective and personable leadership of the New Connections Campaign by developing relationships, making connections, and serving as a coach to pastors, lay leaders, and congregations; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Hartigan has assisted congregations and individuals to increase their generosity to the mission of the church; and

WHEREAS, the 2020 Synod Assembly, at which Ms. Hartigan ordinarily would have been recognized and thanked for her service, has been cancelled; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Synod Council expresses its heartfelt thanks to God and deep appreciation for the ministry of Ms. Christy Hartigan with the New Connections Campaign.

b. New Connections Campaign Financial Reports

Financial reports for the Campaign had been distributed to the Council in advance of the meeting.

**2. Staff and Officer Reports**

a. Bishop Ortiz:

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

**SC20.07.27:** That:

- 1. The Rev. Joseph Vought be placed on the retired roster, effective November 1, 2019; and
- 2. The Rev. Daniel Rhinehart's status as on leave from call be extended for one additional year, effective September 1, 2020.

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

- 1. The Rev. Allison Michael transferred from the Upstate New York Synod, effective January 21, 2020;

2. The Rev. Elijah Mwitanti transferred from the New Jersey Synod, effective May 1, 2020;
  3. Deacon Kristin Vought transferred to the Lower Susquehanna Synod, effective May 30, 2017;
  4. The Rev. Stephen Heetland transferred to the Rocky Mountain Synod, effective June 15, 2020; and
  5. The Rev. Conrad Braaten transferred to the Grand Canyon Synod, effective June 15, 2020.
- iii. General Updates. Bishop Ortiz identified several events and initiatives completed or in process, as well as selected updates, including the following:
- (a) The series identified as “Imago Dei: Embracing the Image of God” has been well attended, with a majority of registrants from outside of the territory of the Synod.
  - (b) The synod staff members are aware of some congregations that are struggling financially in light of the current circumstances. The Disaster Accompaniment Loan Fund may assist these congregations in alleviating their financial challenges.
  - (c) A Synod-wide service on All Saints Day (Sunday, November 1, 2020) will be held.
  - (d) In lieu of continuing to hold Reformation Sunday services at the Washington National Cathedral, the responsibility for planning and holding such services will be rotated among the six conferences for the next several years. The 2020 service will be the responsibility of the Virginia Conference.
  - (e) A celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ordination of women in the ELCA (and its predecessor churches) will be held on Saturday, November 21, 2020, jointly sponsored with the Delaware-Maryland Synod.
  - (f) In advance of the meeting, Synod Council members received a draft document identifying five ministries and opportunities to carry out the mission of the Synod, as follows:
    - (1) Racial, Gender, and Creation Justice;
    - (2) Leadership Academy;
    - (3) Latinx Ministries;
    - (4) Youth Ministries; and
    - (5) Donor Relations and Development.

b. Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Swenson-Reinhold:

Pastor Swenson-Reinhold reported that, since the onset of pandemic-related restrictions on in-person meetings, a second congregation (St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Silver Spring, Maryland) has successfully completed a virtual/remote congregational meeting to call a pastor. A third congregation, Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Fairfax, Virginia, will conduct a meeting in August. Augustana Lutheran

Church, Washington, D.C., is currently interviewing candidates. Two other congregations are developing their Ministry Site Profile (MSP) for use in their own call processes.

The first call process is being revamped. The process for identifying and interviewing potential candidates for an administrative assistant to support (primarily) the two Assistants to the Bishop will be resumed.

c. Assistant to the Bishop and DEM, Pr. Bailey:

Pastor Bailey provided an update on the work of two tables and one team. The New and Renewing Missions Table will be meeting in the following week to begin the process of administering the Disaster Accompaniment Loan Fund. A subcommittee may be formed to provide for more efficient administration. This table is also engaged in a pilot project to provide a technology seed grant to fund equipment and software to improve the quality of online worship in light of current circumstances.

Pastor Bailey also serves as the liaison to the Racial Equity Team. This team will be updating and improving its Web page, as well as providing resources and direction for congregations and leaders. The Creation Care and Climate Justice session was completed.

The Stewardship and Mission Support Table continues to organize itself. A virtual educational opportunity will be scheduled for the fall, entitled "Beginning a Culture of Generosity." The event will be held in partnership with Mike Ward, of Gronlund Sayther Brunkow (GSB) Fundraising. Consideration will be given to inspiring generosity among youth and young adults and to an event to be held in 2021 to assist congregations in managing generosity.

d. Interim Vice President's Report:

Interim Vice President Jackson Droney had distributed a written report in advance of the meeting and did not elaborate further on the contents of that report, with two exceptions.

First, he invited the members of the Synod Council and staff to enter into a contemplative conversation regarding how the Synod Council may respond to recent events involving issues of racial justice. The central question is whether the members may be willing and able to agree on a written statement to be developed and approved at a subsequent meeting. The discussion began with remarks by Bishop Ortiz, and continued with remarks by Interim Vice President Droney. Other participants were invited to speak to the entire group on the subject.

At the conclusion of this process, he prepared a brief written summary seeking to capture the sense of the group. After soliciting comments and revising the summary, he advised the members that the Executive Committee would meet in August to further develop the statement and would report back to the full Synod Council at its regular September meeting.

Second, the written report set forth a proposed schedule of Synod Council meetings for the ensuing 12 months. Continuing with its historic patterns, the Synod Council will meet every other month (in the odd months) in addition to the months of April and June. Interim Vice President Droney asked for a motion to approve the proposed schedule.

**SC20.07.28:** That the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Council shall hold its regular meetings on the following dates for the 2020-21 Council year:

- September 19, 2020;
- November 21, 2020;
- January 16, 2021;
- March 20, 2021;
- April 17, 2021;
- May 15, 2021;
- June 2021 (immediately preceding the start of the 2021 Synod Assembly);  
and
- July 17, 2021.

Finally, Interim Vice President Droney renewed his encouragement for Synod Council members to arrange and hold one-on-one conversations among members during the periods between regular meetings.

e. Treasurer's Report:

- i. Year-to-Date Financial Statements. Copies of the financial statements for the first five months of the current fiscal year, through June 30, 2020, were distributed in advance of the meeting. These statements reflect a deficit in undesignated receipts, compared with expenditures, of approximately \$18,500. Nevertheless, the Synod continues to be able to meet all of its obligations and has sufficient resources to fulfill its continuing needs.
- ii. Paycheck Protection Program Loan Update. Pursuant to prior authorization by the Synod Council, an application for a loan under the federal Paycheck Protection Program had been submitted to Capital One, but rejected on technical (non-substantive) grounds. The loan application was resubmitted through the ELCA Federal Credit Union and was approved. Due to favorable

changes in this program enacted by Congress, each borrower has additional time in which to devote the proceeds of the loan to approved purposes. Accordingly, the Synod has not yet begun the process of applying for forgiveness of the loan pursuant to established rules.

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

No report.

### **4. Youth Organization**

The Synod Council's youth representative reported that youth activities are being conducted principally at the congregational level.

### **5. New Business**

Bishop Ortiz also reported that the process of assignment of candidates to synods has changed, giving synods more power and authority to decide whether to release candidates assigned to their synod.

Separately, Bishop Ortiz also described a communication prepared and sent by the bishops of Region 8 to all of the synod councils in the region. The communication describes the beginning of a process to examine the current configuration of the eight synods comprising the region, and whether such configuration continues to be appropriate in light of changes in the church over the last 30-plus years. The following specific questions were posed:

- 1) Is your synod open to forming and participating in new configurations of synods within our region?
- 2) If so, would you be willing to bring to the conversation your current understanding of your Synod's mission?
- 3) Is there a better way, given current conditions, than the three decades old three-expression polity or, at least, in the defined work those expressions, to serve the people of God and advance the Gospel ministry?

By consensus, the members concluded that the Synod Council would be willing to engage in this discussion.

**The meeting adjourned** with the Lord's Prayer at 11:53 a.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting: September 19, 2020; Zoom/Electronic.