

WHAT: Minutes of the Synod Council Meeting
Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod, ELCA
WHEN: January 29, 2011
WHERE: Christ Lutheran Church, Washington, D.C.

Present: Vice president Dr. John White, Treasurer John Handley, Secretary Dr. Marguerite Rourk, Wendell Anderson, Jim Brookshire, Rachel Carle, Pr. Teka Fogi, Pr. Joel Guttormson, Pr. Jane Halpern, Pr. Dax Jordan, Ruth Manchester, Deacon Kati Miller-Holland Pr. Thomas O'Brien, Bonnie Priebe, Robert Schilpp, Barbara Topel, Amanda Wahlig, Pr. Kendall Summers, Pr. Michael Wilker
Staff: Assistant to the Bishop Pr. Phil Hirsch, Synod Administrator Harold Sargeant
Absent: Bishop Richard Graham, Asst. to the Bishop Pr. Amy Sevimli (leave), Shirley Gibbs, Pr. Michael Wilker, Gretta Williams

Dr. White called the meeting to order, and Dr. Rourk offered devotions.

Minutes of the Synod Council 20 November 2010 meeting were adopted as amended.

Report of the Treasurer (attached):

+ Schedule 1 shows that at the end of November the synod deficit appeared considerable. We received a significant number of congregational gifts in January. The final results are still in question, but it appears that we will be nearly at break-even point.

+ Schedule 2 shows that at the end of December 2010 (11/12 of the way through the year) receipts were at 92% of the Level 1 spending Plan. If January is typical, the synod should end the fiscal year with approximately \$1.85 million. The budget for next year is \$2 million, and is dependent upon congregational giving. We are a bit under-pledged for 2011 as not all congregations have responded.

+ Schedule 3 shows a list of temporary restricted funds. With 2/3 of congregations reporting, Gifts of Hope are just short of \$50,000, down a bit from last year. The Christus Victor building fund, set up in 2007 to provide mortgage payment support, is nearing exhaustion, with a current balance of \$5,861, and we will use approximately \$33,000 of the Metro 200 funds for the year when the original funding expires in order to complete our obligation to Christus Victor..

+ Mr. Handley also submitted the end of year report of the Faith Fund (attached), showing that we have withdrawn funds for new missions and scholarships for seminarians. The fund is up over 2009. The Memorandum of Understanding stipulates that in order to care for the corpus of the fund, if it grows by 1% per year, funds will be withdrawn only when available monies are above the chart's blue line. The document states that we can take 3% of the fund values and put 2/3 of that amount into capital funds to support new missions and can use 1/3 for seminarian scholarships. Money that comes out of the fund goes into money market funds so that funds that are available to be spent are not subjected to market risk. Funding for outreach has had only two distributions (typically for larger projects and for funding that stretches more than a year, with a 3-year limit): for Belmont Ridge and rebuilding at Advent, Arlington.

+ Amanda Wahlig noted that youth events have been successful and well-attended, and have taken in \$9,000 more than they have expended. In July they created a scholarship fund that covers up to 1/3 of the cost of a youth event for those who need such financial support. Via **MOTION SC 11.01.01**, she moved placing \$7,500 of current youth events funding into the scholarship fund. The motion carried.

+ Mr. Handley reported that the Finance Committee discussed the coming 2012 fiscal year and will have a draft budget prepared for the Council in March so that we can have a vote at the May session of the Synod Assembly. Division/unit heads have been asked to submit their projected budgetary needs. It is too soon for an overall picture, but more will be known when the draft budget is formulated. The Finance Committee will meet March 7, two weeks prior to Council.

Presentation on the Lutheran Volunteer Corps (LVC) by Pr. Michael Wilker:

As he handed out some printed materials, Pr. Wilker gave a broad overview of social ministry within the ELCA. The LVC operates in 12 synods and 16 cities with 147 volunteers working with non-profit organizations. As they have for the 31 years of LVC's existence, volunteers (23 currently) work in DC with Bread for the City, including a medical volunteer and a case-management person who assists with food, rent, etc. Volunteers do their work but contribute to the whole of the organizations within which they are placed, and they emphasize and work on establishing and continuing sustainable living practices. The volunteer at Thurgood Marshall Charter High School works to prepare students for public service and public policy administration. Our volunteer is assistant to the principal for student projects. Law firms and attorneys participate at Marshall, offering numerous after-school programs.

Other volunteers work with advocacy centers, including those involved with local DC legislation pertaining to workers' rights. Other volunteers work on national advocacy issues. On Capital Hill 4 staff people are at the Lutheran Refugee Service emphasizing and supporting immigrant and refugee rights. 50% of the Capital Hill advocacy workers are alums of LVC or are current volunteers, many of whom go on to seminary and enter ordained or diaconal ministries, and their numbers have increased 50% in the last 5 years. LVC endeavors to grow volunteers in areas where they already exist and by expanding into new territories.

LVC has recently consolidated with Lutheran Service Corps in Nebraska, opened 2 houses in Michigan and in Georgia, and is hoping to expand to 20 to 22 volunteers in those areas. Begun in 1979 as a ministry of Luther Place, DC, LVC has also grown into Maryland and Delaware and many other places. There are two other Lutheran-affiliated programs (siblings, but not part of LVC): the Urban Servant corps in Denver and the Border Servant Corps in El Paso, TX and Las Cruces, NM. The Young Adults in Global Ministry project of the ELCA has grown, and it was not cut in the ELCA restructuring. There are now 50 volunteers working on behalf of the ELCA overseas.

In 2004 Luther Place spun off LVC and N Street Village as separate entities. Both have boards and 5 ½ years ago Pr. Wilker was called by the LCV Board, through the Synod Council. Representatives for the board come from all over the country, with 2 members always nominated by Luther Place but elected by the LVC Board. In comparison with other faith-based volunteer programs, Presbyterian and United Methodist volunteer programs are part of their denominational structure, and they have experienced budget cuts and reduction in numbers of volunteers as well. LVC, however, is funded primarily by individuals and congregations, and this support enables them not to be bound to denominational structures or subject to their budgetary uncertainties.

LVC is the largest Protestant-affiliated volunteer organization in the U.S. There are now 19 staff positions, with 7 here at Luther Place, as well as in Michigan, Georgia, Wisconsin and Illinois. Volunteers are provided with a stipend for living expenses and travel, and they qualify for Americorps education Award which is a voucher for paying off student loans, etc. Americorps is on the congressional chopping block, but it is supported by the President who has increased this more than any other volunteer agency of government.

60% of LVC volunteers are Lutherans, with other denominations represented, and some are not Christian. They are a religiously diverse faith-based organization and open and affirming to LGBT volunteers as well. Volunteers often live together with four to seven in a house and each has a sponsoring parish. In DC, Reformation, Augustana, Luther Place and First Trinity support these volunteers. Some staff are part-time recruiters who visit college campuses and other places., and they now have more than 215 applications.

The word about LVC is getting out more and more. Pr. Wilker emphasized that he and various volunteers are available for presentations to congregations, and would welcome the opportunity to speak and make presentations.

Report of the Bishop - in absentia:

+ The Rev. John Hundt has been called to special ministry to serve as interim at Christ, Bethesda.

+ The Rev. Kathy Hlatshwayo has been called as interim at Grace, DC

MOTION SC 11.01.02 to approve these calls was carried.

Report of the Vice-president:

+ Dr. White reported having met with Jennifer Barger of ELCA World Hunger as part of the HIV-AIDS initiative. A demographic distribution of HIV-AIDS resulted in DC being selected as a focus study area, not only for survivors of the 80's and 80's AIDS spread, but also for people without resources to get better and the elderly who could be currently at risk. They are asking for growth in awareness and that congregations be awakened to the reality of HIV-AIDS and that the key to action is in enabling people to get help. It was suggested that perhaps we could have an testing day at the Synod Assembly in May. We are working to get advance information to Synod Assembly voting members and visitors.

Report of Assistant to the Bishop Pr. Phil Hirsch:

+ Pr. Hirsch defined a mission probe as testing of a mission field to ascertain if it is a good place to start a congregation. 501 Church is our mission probe, as Pr. Wendy Moen meets with young adults in DC. They are affiliated with First Trinity for now. La Plata was going to be a new mission start, but that is now off the table as such, and now we are looking into that part of St. Mary's County as a likely place perhaps to begin a Bible study group which could develop into a synodically authorized worshiping community (SAWC).

+ Currently La Sagrada Familia has SAWC standing and gets a 501.C3 status, operating as its own organized body which can employ a pastor through Synod Council which calls a pastor to specialized ministry there, currently Pr. Hernandez-Cruz. Each year a SAWC must be reappointed as such by the Synod Council. Each year it is determined if that body is operating under the ways that the Synod Council envisioned? Any SAWC can apply to the ELCA once for \$10,000 to become established.

+ The next steps are to become a congregation under development (Belmont Ridge and the Oromo Christian Fellowship currently) and then to progress to an established congregation. La Sagrada Familia will become a congregation under development at the end of the month.

+ Resurrection, Kensington, has been trying to decide what to do about its declining membership, as it may well no longer be a viable congregation. They vote next week on whether to ask to become a SAWC and then give away or otherwise transfer ownership of their buildings and facilities to the Oromo Christian Fellowship or whether to implement another plan. The Synod would help them be a SAWC for a year, and then they might be able to re-establish as a congregation or perhaps affiliate with another congregation. Were they to stay as they are now, they would have to decide how to continue to operate as a congregation, and to seek Synod leadership to monitor and review their situation. **MOTION SC11.01.03** that the Synod approve Resurrection Lutheran Church, Kensington, becoming a Synodically Authorized Worshiping Community, upon such vote by the congregation, with financing issues being reserved for future action was carried. As a SAWC they would work out their property issues with the Synod, and contract with a pastor under call to special ministry.

+ Pr. Hirsch wants to introduce a policy for closing a congregation. St. John, Riverdale, is voting on whether to close or continue, and there are three other congregations considering the same situation. We want to understand the closing of a congregation as an act of mission. The Synod also wants to have more mission probes as congregations choose to close. Recommendations for the use of the assets of closing congregations include a) the congregation deciding upon its closing to designate 10% of its profits after all is sold or otherwise disposed of as a gift to a mission; b) to designate 90% of such profits to the synod which would further the work of the gospel by giving 10% of that sum to the ELCA and using the remaining 90% to start new congregations and/or to re-develop congregations on the territory of the Metro DC Synod. Therefore, all funds accruing to the Synod would be used to start or restart congregations, thus closely aligning with the intentions of original donors who gave their money for the purpose of establishing a congregation within this Synod. Such a policy would also guide the Synod in any situation of closing or re-developing a congregation.

+ The New and Renewing Mission Table requests Synod Council to ask the Finance Committee to help the Council and the Mission Table to understand the financing of the church's three mission funds: the Faith Fund, the Mission Endowment Fund, and the Mission Development Fund. We know little about them except their names, and we are asking for clarification for the purposes for which these funds could

be used and information about the corpus of each fund, i.e. how much is reserved for what purposes. We need to spend money on Belmont Ridge this year. The ELCA is responsible for 1/3 and the Synod for 2/3 of that funding, and we need help with our 2/3 portion. What were the original intentions of these funds? **MOTION SC 11.01.04** requested that the Finance Committee report on the current investment and disbursement of funds and their policies, and recommend revisions of those policies to the Synod Council, all so that the Synod Council might be able to vote its intentions by July 2011. The motion carried.

+ The Mission Table for New and Renewing Congregations asked Synod Council to designate Christus Victor as a mission redevelopment in order that they may apply for funds from the ELCA, as Christus Victor is in an area of high growth, is in pastoral transition, and the leadership of the congregation is willing to take a significantly new direction. Their status as a congregation would not change, and they would be the first congregation in our Synod to be targeted for redevelopment. **MOTION SC 11.01.05** to implement the foregoing was carried.

+ Pr. Hirsch noted that the theme of our Synod for this year is To See Ourselves As Others See Us. This is a risky thing to ask: how do others perceive our welcome as a congregation? Any congregation can ask for young adults to come and talk, to have a team from our congregation both to be visited as a congregation and a team to visit other congregations; and 3) to ask people in the congregation to ask folk in the community to visit two or three times to assess our welcome and hospitality. Dr. Amy Oden spoke at *Together in Mission* emphasizing the biblical injunction to "remember that you were once strangers in the land of Egypt," for each of us to recall a time in our lives when we were strangers, and to use such memories and events to motivate us toward better welcome and hospitality.

Report of the Women of the ELCA:

+ Bonnie Priebe reported that WELCA raises funds for camp/conference/outdoor ministries for Caroline Furnace and Mar-Lu Ridge.

+ The 2011 Metro DC Synod WELCA unit will hold its annual convention on Saturday, May 7 at Abiding Presence in Burke.

+ She reminded all that the WELCA Triennial Gathering will be July 14-17 this summer in Spokane, Washington. Registrations continue and all members are being encouraged to go. Scholarship aid from the Synodical unit was available to assist younger women with the expenses of going was to have been claimed by 1 October 2010, but no one has asked for this. Synod Administrator Harold Sargeant reported that the Synod continues to look for a place to move the offices. There have been offers from three DC congregations: Grace and Reformation had the problem of distant Metro connection and little parking, and the third, Community Family Life Services has enough space but there arose some negotiating issues. The Synod is awaiting a possible counter-offer, as conversation continues. If this space proves unsuitable for whatever reason, the next step would most likely be to investigate business sites. Our lease ends on 30 November 2011, and the time draws close.

Vice President White noted a few changes in the liaison appointments. (List attached)

Ruth Manchester emphasized the Compassion Walks at Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area as a terrific way to acquaint people with the scope of their work. The Walks consist of a one-hour strolling tour of the Falls Church office and hearing the story of what LSSNCA does. The next Walks are scheduled for Tuesday evening, 1 February, from 6-7 pm, and on 15 February from 11 a.m.-noon.

The meeting adjourned with prayer at 12:20 pm

Respectfully submitted,

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