

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA

SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – NOVEMBER 15, 2014

ST. MICHAEL'S TRUTH LUTHERAN CHURCH, TEMPLE HILLS, MD

Call to Order Dr. White called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m.

Devotions Pastor Grantson offered devotions based on Zephaniah 1, and closed with the singing of Psalm 46.

Greetings Pastor Grantson, pastor of St. Michael's Truth Lutheran Church, welcomed the Synod Council and provided a brief history of the Temple Hills congregation which, until the end of 2013, had operated as Our Savior's Lutheran Church.

SC14.11.38: To approve the agenda for the November 15, 2014, Synod Council meeting.

SC14.11.39: To approve the minutes of the September 27, 2014, Synod Council meeting.

1. Synod Council Primary Mission Table

a. La Sagrada Familia. Pastor Hirsch led a discussion of the current status of La Sagrada Familia (The Holy Family), which has been ministering among the diverse, poor, and marginalized immigrant community in Langley Park, Maryland, since 1997. He reported that the organization is exploring an affiliation with St. Luke Lutheran Church, Silver Spring, Maryland, while maintaining the status as a synodically authorized worshiping community supported by the larger church.

SC14.11.40: To designate La Sagrada Familia, Langley Park, Maryland, as a synodically authorized worshiping community for a period of one year beginning February 1, 2015, subject to the provisions of S13.41 of the Synod's Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions.

b. River of Grace Lutheran Church. Pastor Hirsch led a discussion of the current status of this congregation, currently under synodical administration. The ELCA has approved \$35,000 of funding for the ensuing year, but requires that a formal review of the congregation also be undertaken. Pastor Hirsch described the review process that would commence soon and would be completed in advance of the January 2015 meeting of the Synod Council. The ELCA's funding also requires an identical level of support from the Synod.

SC14.11.42: To approve the three-year funding proposal of River of Grace Lutheran Church, Dumfries, Virginia, consisting of financial support in the amounts of \$35,000,

\$25,000, and \$15,000, payable during the years beginning February 1, 2015, 2016, and 2017, respectively, contingent on the receipt of a recommendation of continued funding on or before January 17, 2015, following the completion of a formal review of its financial condition and prospects, with such funding to be made from the Bethany Endowment.¹

2. Staff and Officer Reports

a. Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Hirsch:

- i. Together in Mission Proposal. Pastor Hirsch reported that the organizers of the 2015 Together in Mission event, scheduled for January 31, 2015, had requested \$4,400 in funding to defray costs not expected to be covered by projected registration fees. Pastor Hirsch provided a budget for the event and responded to questions and comments from the members of the Synod Council. Mr. Handley made a recommendation as to certain temporary restricted funds that could be used for this purpose.

SC14.11.43: To approve a grant of up to \$4,400 for the January 2015 Together in Mission event, to be payable (a) from the Transforming Ministry Event Grant and the Small Congregation Event Fund, to the extent that the organizers of such event do not secure grants from sources other than the Synod, and then (b) from the Baker Trust, to the extent that the event results in a deficit of expenditures not covered by receipts.

- ii. Macedonia Grant. Pastor Hirsch reported that the “Macedonia” Grant, the purpose of which is to help congregations increase their stewardship and mission support, was approved in the amount of \$10,000. No action on the part of the Synod Council was requested.
- iii. New Church Start Strategy/Bethany Funds. Pastor Hirsch distributed a written summary of a new church start strategy, consisting of (a) churches starting churches, (b) restart and parallel church developments, (c) starts from scratch, and (d) missional communities that will start new and build into existing congregations, requesting prayers for this effort. He also noted that the Synod Council will, in a later meeting, be asked to consider what portion of the Bethany Endowment should be designated for short-term use and what portion should be invested for the long term.

b. Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Sevimli:

¹ The reported motion was the result of an original motion and an amendment. In the official minutes, the original motion was SC14.11.41 and the amendment was SC14.11.42.

- i. Administrative Update. Pastor Sevimli provided an updated on the organization and staffing of the Synod office, including expected changes in personnel and responsibilities.
- c. Vice President White:
 - i. Synod Council Vacancy. Dr. White reminded the Synod Council that a vacancy on the Synod Council occurred when Kurtis Lowe, an at-large member, had tendered his resignation effective on or about September 12, 2014. He also reported that a former member of the Council had expressed his willingness to serve again. After nominating the former member to serve the remainder of Mr. Lowe's unexpired term, and hearing no other nominations, the Council proceeded to the election. Dr. White asked Mr. Handley to assume the Chair for this portion of the meeting. Discussion ensued, and members of the Council made inquiries as to the requirements for service on the Synod Council under the Synod's Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions.

Moved:

SC14.11.44: To postpone the election to the Synod Council until the January 2015 meeting of the Synod Council.

Dr. White reassumed his position as the Chair of the meeting.

- ii. Executive Committee Membership. Dr. White provided an update on the membership of the Executive Committee. The four officers of the Synod are *ex officio* members of the Executive Committee, and four other members are elected to serve two-year terms, with two such persons elected every year at the first meeting of the Synod Council following the Synod Assembly. Pastors Edwards and Stephan have begun the second year of their two-year terms, and Ms. Garrison was elected at the September 2014 meeting of the Synod Council to begin a two-year term. One vacancy remained on the Executive Committee, and the Council discussed the mandatory and desirable qualifications for service.
- SC14.11.45:** To elect Larry Evans to a two-year term as a member of the Executive Committee of the Synod Council of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, effective immediately, to serve until his successor's term begins following the 2016 Synod Assembly.

d. Treasurer's Report:

- i. Year-to-Date Financial Statements. Treasurer John Handley discussed the financial statements for the current fiscal year of the Synod through October 31, 2014. Mr. Handley noted that, while expenditures to date exceeded receipts by approximately \$50,000, this deficit is the lowest cumulative deficit for any of the

five years presented for comparison. From a financial perspective, the month of October was the best month in some time. He also reiterated previous statements that he will bring a motion before the Synod Council in January 2015 to add the excess funds left over after subtracting the cost of the 2014 Synod Assembly from the registration fees for the event to the Synod Assembly Reserve Fund. These funds will be used to offset any deficit for the 2015 Synod Assembly.

- ii. Implications for Budgeted Expenditures. Although the agenda included a discussion of the implications of the financial reports on budgeted expenditures for the balance of the Synod's fiscal year, no specific action was recommended at this time.

3. **Synodical Women's Organization**

Ms. Meier was not present at the meeting, but had submitted a written report for the Synodical Women's Organization in advance.

4. **New Business**—Mr. Anderson provided a summary of late-breaking news involving federal tax litigation over the constitutionality of the clergy housing allowance. The Freedom From Religion Foundation and two individuals had challenged this provision in the United States District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin. The court ruled that the plaintiffs had standing to bring the action and that the provision was unconstitutional. The United States appealed to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, and on November 13, 2014, the court ruled that the plaintiffs did not have standing. Accordingly, the court remanded the case back to the district court with instructions to dismiss the case. The case is *Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc. v. Lew*, No. 14-1152 (7th Cir., Nov. 13, 2014).

The meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer at 12:02 p.m.