

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA**  
**SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – APRIL 18, 2015**  
**BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH, FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA**

**Call to Order** Dr. White called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**Devotion** Karen Consiglio provided a devotional message.

**Greetings** Pastor Johnson greeted the members of the Synod Council and provided a brief history of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, its challenges, and its mission partners.

**SC15.04.14:** To approve the agenda for the April 18, 2015, Synod Council meeting.

Before considering the minutes of the prior meeting, Secretary Anderson noted that, because the Synod Council held an executive session at the March 21 meeting in addition to its regular open session, the minutes of that meeting were prepared as two separate documents. The minutes of the open session, when approved, will be posted to the Synod's Web site in accordance with current practices.

**SC15.04.15:** To approve the minutes of the open session of the March 21, 2015, Synod Council meeting.

**SC15.04.16:** To approve the minutes of the executive session of the March 21, 2015, Synod Council meeting.

**1. Synod Council Primary Mission Table**

- a. Mission Spending Plan, FY 2016. Bishop Graham provided background information on the alternative plans for the development of a mission spending plan for the Synod for the fiscal year 2016, which will begin February 1, 2016. For the current year and for many prior years, the Synod has committed to remitting 50% of its undesignated receipts to the churchwide organization. At the same time, the churchwide organization has used a portion of its budget for the benefit of the Synod, primarily through paying the compensation of its Director for Evangelical Mission and making new and renewing ELCA grants for ministries. However, at its meeting held during the prior weekend, the ELCA Church Council approved a three-year experiment for five of its 65 synods, including the Metropolitan Washington, DC, Synod. Under this experiment, beginning with the fiscal year 2016, subject to the approval of the Synod Assembly, the Synod will assume direct financial responsibility for the compensation of the Director for Evangelical Mission as well as the new and renewing grants for ministries. In exchange, the Synod will reduce the

percentage of its undesignated receipts that it will commit to pay over to the churchwide organization. The plans under development by the Finance Committee project that this percentage could be reduced to 35%. A significant discussion of this experiment, as well as the implications for the Synod, ensued. The question presented for discussion is whether the Synod Council would recommend the development of a mission spending plan along the lines of the approved experiment or the use of a plan consistent with existing and prior practices.

**SC15.04.17:** To direct the Finance Committee to develop and propose a mission spending plan for the Synod for the fiscal year beginning February 1, 2016, consistent with the three-year experiment approved by the ELCA Church Council at its April 2015 meeting and based on a 35% level of churchwide mission support.

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

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

- i. Roster Matters for Synod Council Action. Bishop Graham brought several roster matters to the Synod Council as a single resolution.

**SC15.04.18:** That:

1. Alfreda Rulis, Associate in Ministry, be placed on the retired roster, effective July 1, 2010;
  2. The Rev. Ronald Qualley be placed on the retired roster, effective April 18, 2015; and
  3. The Rev. Shannon Anderson be called by the Synod to serve as the Program Manager for Supported Ministries for a one-year term, effective April 18, 2015.
- ii. Roster Matters for Information. Although not requiring any action on the part of the Synod Council, Bishop Graham noted the following additional matters affecting the Synod's rostered leaders:
    1. The Rev. Thomas Montgomery transferred from the North/West Lower Michigan Synod, effective March 24, 2015.
    2. The Rev. Alexis King was installed under unusual circumstances at Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Fairfax, Virginia, on March 29, 2015.
    3. The Rev. Terri Jo King transferred from the Upstate New York Synod, effective March 30, 2015.
    4. The Rev. Eleanor Abarno, retired, transferred from the Allegheny Synod, effective April 8, 2015.
    5. The Rev. Robert Abarno, retired, transferred from the Allegheny Synod, effective April 8, 2015.

iii. Synod Compensation Guidelines. Bishop Graham provided an update on the process of developing compensation guidelines for the Synod's rostered leaders, as directed by the 2014 Synod Assembly. The process is expected to result in a set of guidance and suggestions for developing compensation programs for rostered leaders rather than a completely new set of guidelines. The report is expected to be presented to the 2015 Synod Assembly.

b. Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Hirsch:

i. River of Grace Update. Pastor Hirsch provided an update on this congregation under development, which is expected to become a congregation in May 2015. Pr. Hirsch described the process being undertaken to refinance the existing mortgage indebtedness, which the Synod had co-signed when it was incurred in 2008. As a result of prior principal payments and an expected reduction of the interest rate by the Mission Investment Fund, the future monthly payments will be significantly reduced. Because of the Synod's continued liability on this indebtedness, the Synod's potential financial exposure will be protected by an agreement with River of Grace and by provisions in its constitution, to be approved by the Synod. No further action was taken by the Synod Council in connection with this matter.

ii. Shepherd of the Hills Debt Refinancing. Pastor Hirsch provided historical background on the financial assistance provided to this congregation for its development program. In addition to a grant, the Synod has co-signed a portion of its indebtedness and has placed \$300,000 of the Bethany Funds on deposit with the lender. This indebtedness is in the process of being refinanced with the Mission Investment Fund. Under the terms of the proposed refinancing, the Synod would co-sign, and thus become obligated under, a "second trust" and would also commit to maintain at least \$300,000 on deposit with MIF. The minimum required deposit amount with MIF will be reduced in stages as the congregation makes payments on its indebtedness to MIF. Treasurer Handley advised the Council that a substantial portion of these required amounts, consisting of the general undesignated funds of the Synod, are already on deposit with MIF. Subject to a brief overlap, where funds will be on deposit with both financial institutions, the Bethany Fund deposits will ultimately be returned and be available for other uses.

**SC15.04.19:** To (a) authorize the appropriate officers of the Synod to co-sign a second trust loan for the benefit of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Haymarket, Virginia, in an amount not to exceed \$1.2 million, and (b) approve the maintenance of a minimum deposit of \$300,000 of the undesignated funds of the Synod with the Mission Investment Fund of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ("MIF"), subject to a schedule of reductions to be agreed upon by the officers of the Synod and MIF.

- iii. Proposal for Leadership Training. As part of the advance materials for the meeting, Pr. Hirsch had distributed copies of a two-page proposal for Intentional Impact Reproducing Leadership Groups, dated March 19, 2015, and prepared by Intentional Impact, LLC, Naperville, Illinois. The training consists of six full-day sessions to be held within the boundaries of the Synod over a period of eight months. The training is intended for clergy. Congregations would be expected to share some of the cost of the training.

**SC15.04.20:** To authorize the expenditure of up to \$40,000 from the Bethany Funds for the purpose of obtaining reproducing leadership group training and planning services from Intentional Impact, LLC, Naperville, Illinois, consistent with the written proposal dated March 19, 2015, presented to the Synod Council for its consideration.

c. Treasurer's Report:

- i. Year-to-Date Financial Statements. Treasurer John Handley distributed and discussed the financial statements for the two-month period ended March 31, 2015. These statements reflect a small deficit of approximately \$16,000 for the first two months of the Synod's current fiscal year.

d. Vice President White:

- i. Synod Assembly Planning Update. Pastor Kleiber and others involved in the planning process provided an update on the plans for the 2015 Synod Assembly and responded to questions from the members of the Council.

3. **Synodical Women's Organization** (Please see attached report)

Ms. Meier provided a brief summary of the April 11, 2015, convention of the Synodical Women's Organization, as well as the organization of its Executive Board.

4. **Youth Organization Report** (Please see attached report)

Ms. Moran expanded upon her written report to the Synod Council, identifying the recent youth-related activities and ideas for future youth activities and involvement.

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