

Report of the Synod Council
Metropolitan Washington D.C. Synod Assembly
June 19, 2015

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.

We take the responsibility you have bestowed on us with great honor, gratitude, and more than a little trepidation. A fair amount of the work we do can at times look like “how the sausage is made,” which can be daunting to those of us who once believed that somehow the cruciform palm leaf, still in the glove compartment from last spring, is of one substance with the ashes imposed on our foreheads the following Lent. But I believe that the members of your Synod Council see the responsibility differently, that there is an awareness of God With Us through all of our deliberations and actions. We are, somehow, able to perceive the joy and pain of the people affected by our actions. We are able, with the guidance of our Bishop and staff, to see a longer trajectory of growth not only in four dimensions but in every heart seeking a more perfect relationship with Christ.

This year, the Council members are:

- Rev. Richard Graham, Bishop
- Dr. John White, Vice President
- Mr. Kevin Anderson, Secretary
- Rev. Tom Knoll, Treasurer
- Rev. Sarah Lewis (Montgomery Conference)
- Mr. Thomas Kern (Montgomery)
- Rev. Mark Edwards (Virginia Conference)
- Mr. Stanley Medikonda (Virginia)
- Rev. Renata Eustis (DC Conference)
- Mr. Larry Evans (DC)
- Rev. Elijah Mwitanti (Fairfax Conference)
- Mr. Nels Hendrickson (Fairfax)
- Rev. Robert Lewis (Potomac Conference)
- Ms. Desiree Jessimy (Potomac)
- Rev. Gary Rhinesmith (Maryland Conference)
- Ms. Gretta Williams (Maryland)
- Rev. Gissel Espinosa (at Large)
- Diac. Min Kathy Garrison (at large)
- Mr. Paul Kuller (at large)
- Ms. Karen Consiglio (at large)
- Ms. Kathleen Meir (Synodical Women’s Organization)
- Ms. Emily Moran (Youth Representative)
- Rev. Amy Thompson Sevimli, Assistant to the Bishop (staff)
- Rev. Phil Hirsch, Assistant to the Bishop for new and renewing missions (staff)

Thus we are empowered by you and by the Holy Spirit to listen with our ears, brains, and hearts to proposals for action, to the Primary Mission Table discussion, and to visions for the future of ministries of the synod. Along those lines, the Council took action to codify the process for applying for, and approving, grants for mission growth from a fund endowed to us for that purpose by the former congregation of Bethany Lutheran, Forestville. The Council made possible the funding of expansions for Shepherd of the Hills, Haymarket; worship and music tools for St. Michael's Truth / Our Savior and Luther Place; and collaboration between Hope-College Park and the Lutheran Campus Ministry at U. Maryland. All of these grants express the wisdom of investing our talents where our congregations can work the miracles of drawing and feeding that God leads them to do.

Toward the same goal, the Council approved the proposal for a Synod-wide Capital Campaign, intent on starting new congregations in ways that have proven effective in this region. The plan is ambitious. But we know that if it can be done anywhere, it can be done in the territory of our Synod – the means, the spirit, and our close relationships across our 75+ congregations.

Our Council considered the joy and sadness brought about by changes in our congregations. We accepted the request of one congregation to leave the Synod and one congregation to close, but also the continuation of two Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities, and the growing bonds between some of our congregations that could result in uniting in direct partnership.

This time last year we were both grieving and in disbelief about the shootings in a Charleston church, and we pledged to commit ourselves to reflection and action toward the elimination of racism both in our society and in our own hearts. The Council has empowered the launching of a racism action team, as well as an immigration team, to make strides in this direction. As forceful a voice as the worldwide Lutheran church has throughout the world, the voices in each of us need to raise the songs of tolerance and acceptance, welcome and celebration so as to join in that kindred chorus. The good work the Council has done this year is possible only because of the in-breathing of the song that you, this Assembly, have given us. God has richly blessed me to have been a part of this wise, caring, and proactive Council.

ἐάν τε γὰρ ζῶμεν, τῷ Κυρίῳ ζῶμεν, ἐάν τε ἀποθνήσκωμεν, τῷ Κυρίῳ ἀποθνήσκομεν. ἐάν τε οὖν ζῶμεν ἐάν τε ἀποθνήσκωμεν, τοῦ Κυρίου ἐσμέν. (Romans 14:8)

Respectfully Submitted,

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