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

# SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – NOVEMBER 17, 2018

# HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH, CLINTON, MARYLAND

**Present:** Bishop Richard Graham

Vice President Evelyn Crenshaw

Secretary Kevin Anderson

Treasurer Julie Hamre

Barbara Bilodeau

Sheena Foster

Pr. Sandra Kessinger

Dcn. Rebecca Kolowé

Ashelyn Mosby

Pr. Elijah Mwitanti

Cynthia Reese

Michael Sonnenberg

Katherine Steene

Pr. David Trott (via Zoom meeting)

Cleophas Tsokodayi

**Absent:** Paul Culler

Jackson Droney

Pr. Michael Guy

Pr. Jeanne Lowe

Pr. Gary Rhinesmith

Pr. Albert Triolo

Virginia Trygstad

**Synod Staff:** Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Philip Hirsch

**Guests:** Victoria Flood, Director, ELCA Mission Support

Nick Kiger, Associate Director, ELCA Mission Support

Pastor Daniel Rinehart, Hope Lutheran Church[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Call to Order** Vice President Crenshaw called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**Devotion** Pastor Rinehart provided a devotional message based on Isaiah 55.

**Greetings** Pastor Rinehart greeted the members of the Synod Council and provided a brief history and profile of Hope Lutheran Church, described as a small congregation in south Prince George’s County established 50 years ago.

Vice President Crenshaw presented the proposed agenda for the meeting.

**Moved:**

**Seconded:** To approve the agenda for the November 17, 2018, Synod Council meeting.

**VOTED**

**SC18.11.39 To adopt the foregoing motion.**

Vice President Crenshaw declared the motion was adopted.

The draft minutes of the September 15, 2018, Synod Council meeting were presented to the Council for approval. Vice President Crenshaw asked for corrections or amendments. There were none.

**Moved:**

**Seconded:** To approve the minutes of the September 15, 2018, Synod Council meeting.

**VOTED**

**SC18.11.40 To adopt the foregoing motion.**

Vice President Crenshaw declared the motion was adopted.

The draft minutes of the October 2018 Synod Council electronic vote were presented to the Council for approval. Vice President Crenshaw asked for corrections or amendments. One small correction was noted.

**Moved:**

**Seconded:** To approve the minutes of the October 2018 Synod Council electronic vote.

**VOTED**

**SC18.11.41 To adopt the foregoing motion.**

Vice President Crenshaw declared the motion was adopted.

1. **Synodical Women’s Organization**

Sheena Foster provided comments to supplement the written report that had been provided to the members of the Council in advance of the meeting by President Donna Nelson.

1. **Youth Organization Report**

Katherine Steene identified the youth events planned for the next several months, including Chrysalis on December 1, at the 4-H Center, Front Royal, Virginia; Shema on April 28, 2019, at King of Kings Lutheran Church, Fairfax, Virginia; and two sharing events planned for the winter and spring of 2019.

1. **Mission Support Discussion**

Victoria Flood and Nick Kiger led the Synod Council through a two-hour interactive discussion under the heading “Mission Support Symposium: A Time of Listening, Learning and Imagining—TOGETHER.” After beginning with reflections on what it means to give generously, based on Matthew 5, substantial demographic and financial information was provided concerning the Synod, alone and when compared with other synods throughout the ELCA. The discussion explored the various partnerships involving the Synod, with the churchwide organization, with global companions, and with “above and beyond giving.” The discussion continued with a video message from Presiding Bishop Eaton based on II Kings 4:1-7, and concluded with reflections on the state of relationships and faith within congregations and the Synod, strategy and the future, and how individual leaders within the Synod can make a difference.

1. **Synod Council Primary Mission Table**
   1. New Connections Campaign Overview and Update

Pastor Hirsch provided an update on the New Connections Campaign. At present, congregations have made pledges of approximately 1,260 new connections throughout the Synod, compared with a goal of 3,000 new connections for the duration of the campaign. Pledges of financial support are approximately $1.375 million. Pastor Hirsch noted that the contract for the services of Christy Hartigan, Campaign Director, will be extended to November 30, 2019.

* 1. Christ Lutheran Church, Bethesda, Maryland

In light of the Synod Council’s prior approval of a short-term loan to the congregation for cash-flow needs, Bishop Graham and Treasurer Julie Hamre provided an update on discussions with representatives of Christ Lutheran Church, Bethesda. The congregation has scheduled a meeting at which it is expected that the congregation will approve the sale of its entire property. Following the completion of the sale, the congregation expects to use space at Imagination Stage, to call a pastor specializing in congregational redevelopment, to repay the loan extended by the Synod, and to decide how to reinvest and redeploy the remaining proceeds of sale. A draft of the congregation’s plan was distributed to the Synod Council.

1. **Staff and Officer Reports**
2. Bishop Graham:
3. Roster Matters for Synod Council Action. Bishop Graham brought several roster matters to the Synod Council.

**Moved:**

**Seconded:** That:

1. The Rev. Gary Rhinesmith be placed on the retired roster, effective November 1, 2018;
2. The Rev. Roger Berner be placed on the retired roster, effective December 1, 2018;
3. The Rev. Thomas Omholt be placed on the retired roster, effective December 1, 2018;
4. The Rev. Rosario Hernandez be placed on the retired roster, effective January 1, 2019;
5. The Rev. Gregory Durig be placed on the retired roster, effective February 1, 2019;
6. The Rev Tarja Stevenson be placed on leave from call, effective July 1, 2018;
7. The Rev. Elijah Mwitanti be placed on leave from call, effective July 1, 2018;
8. Deacon Rebecca Kolowé be placed on leave from call, effective November 17, 2018;
9. The Rev. Alexis King be called to specialized ministry as an Air Force Reserve Chaplain, effective August 15, 2015; and
10. The Rev. John R. Spangler, Jr. be called to specialized ministry as Interim Pastor of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church Washington, DC, effective December 1, 2018.

**VOTED**

**SC18.11.42** **To adopt the foregoing motion.**

Pastor Mwitanti and Deacon Kolowé abstained from voting on this motion. Vice President Crenshaw declared the motion was adopted.

1. Roster Matters for Information. Although not requiring any action on the part of the Synod Council, Bishop Graham’s written report to the Council noted the following additional matters affecting the Synod’s rostered ministers:
2. The Rev. Mark Olsen transferred to the New England Synod, effective October 18, 2018; and
3. The Rev. Anteneh Gebreselassie transferred to the Central States Synod effective October 5, 2018.
4. Our Redeemer Update. Bishop Graham provided an update on the status of the Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Washington, D.C., which had recently been placed under voluntary synodical administration pursuant to S13.25 of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Synod. Bishop Graham noted that Sheena Foster is serving as the liaison from the Synod Council to the steering committee, and that Pastors Tom Knoll and Tony Carpenter are also serving on the committee. Bishop Graham discussed the listening sessions planned with individual members of the congregation, potential needs for short-term financial support, and the current status of pastoral leadership.
5. Assistant to the Bishop and DEM, Pr. Hirsch:
6. Anchor Church Summit. Pastor Hirsch provided a brief report on a conference he had recently attended in North Carolina, together with Pr. David Sonnenberg, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Gaithersburg, Maryland. The conference focused on stronger congregations being paired with smaller congregations to provide support for the latter. Pastor Hirsch held up the Good Shepherd/Epiphany (Burtonsville) collaboration as an example.
7. Mosaix Conference. He continued with a report from the conference “Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church,” held on October 20 at Peace Lutheran Church, Waldorf, Maryland. Out of that conference, seven congregations came forward and offered to become part of the first cohort. Representatives of these congregations will be meeting monthly over seven or eight months as part of their development efforts.
8. Congregational Consolidation. Pastor Hirsch noted that two congregations, Messiah Lutheran Church and Nativity Lutheran Church, both in Alexandria, Virginia, are in the process of voting to consolidate.
9. Resignation/Next Call. The Synod had previously announced that Pr. Hirsch had been called by the ELCA Church Council to serve a four-year term as the Executive for Domestic Mission, effective February 1, 2019. Accordingly, he has resigned his position as Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission, effective immediately prior to the beginning of his next call. Bishop Graham described his plans for filling the vacancy on an interim basis for the remainder of his term as bishop. Prayers were offered by the members present for his transition and new calling.
10. Treasurer’s Report:

Review of Year-to-Date Financial Statements. Ms. Hamre had distributed copies of the financial statements for the first nine months of the Synod’s current fiscal year, *i.e.*, the period ended October 31, 2018, in advance of the meeting. These statements reflect a deficit in undesignated receipts, compared with expenditures, of just under $29,000. She noted that none of the $75,000 budgeted as financial support for United Lutheran Seminary has been disbursed thus far, and that the Racial Equity Team has spent only a small fraction of its budgeted amount. She called attention to the fact that the loan made to Christ Lutheran Church, Bethesda, Maryland, has been recorded as a receivable rather than as an expense. Finally, Ms. Hamre noted that receipts for congregational benevolence tend to be the greatest for the month of December, corresponding to the year-end increases in contributions received by congregations.

1. **New Business**

None.

**The meeting adjourned** with the Lord’s Prayer at 12:20 p.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting: January 19, 2019; Luther Place Memorial Church, Washington, D.C.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin D. Anderson

Secretary

1. Pastor Rinehart was present only for the portion of the meeting in which his participation is specifically noted. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)