

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA**  
**SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – MARCH 21, 2020**  
**ELECTRONIC/ZOOM MEETING**

**Call to Order** The meeting was held electronically, using the Zoom platform, in light of the public-health recommendations to avoid in-person meetings involving more than ten individuals. Vice President Crenshaw called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The roll was called to verify attendance.

**Devotion** Secretary Kevin Anderson provided a devotional message reflecting on the current national emergency, based on Matthew 11:28-30, Matthew 7:12, and Leviticus 19:18. Treasurer Julie Hamre read a piece entitled “Lockdown” written by Friar Richard Hendrick, priest-friar of the Irish branch of the Capuchin Franciscan Order.

**Greetings** Secretary Anderson also provided opening comments on the use of an electronic meeting format in lieu of an in-person meeting. The Synod’s governing provisions, as well as applicable state law, permit the use of electronic means of conducting meetings, provided that each member is able to hear each other and to speak at any time.

Vice President Crenshaw presented the proposed agenda for the meeting.

**SC20.03.08:** To approve the agenda for the March 21, 2020, Synod Council meeting.

The draft minutes of the January 18, 2020, Synod Council meeting were presented to the Council for approval. Vice President Crenshaw asked for corrections or amendments. There were none.

**SC20.03.09:** To approve the minutes of the January 18, 2020, Synod Council meeting.

**1. Synod Council Primary Mission Table**

a. New Connections Campaign Overview and Update

Pastor Bailey described the Campaign as winding down, as planned. He provided examples of how the current public-health emergency will affect the ability of donors to maintain their commitments, the challenges of remaining connected, and the conversion of meetings to a virtual/electronic format. A Mosaix workshop was held on February 15.

b. New Connections Campaign Financial Reports

Financial reports for the Campaign had been distributed to the Council in advance of the meeting.

**2. Staff and Officer Reports**

a. Bishop Ortiz:

- i. Roster Matters for Synod Council Action. Bishop Ortiz brought four roster matters to the Synod Council, noting that some of them have significant retroactive effect because they arose out of a process of reconciling churchwide roster records with synod roster records.

**SC20.03.10:**

That:

1. The Rev. Tiffany Towberman be placed on leave from call for family leave effective May 23, 2018;
2. The Rev. Kendall Summers be placed on leave from call effective July 1, 2019;
3. The Rev. Charles Hodges be placed on the retired roster effective January 1, 2019; and
4. The Rev. Allison Michael be called to Specialized Ministry as Pastor for Adult Formation and Youth Ministry of St. Francis Episcopal Church in Potomac, Maryland, effective January 21, 2020.

- ii. Roster Matters for Information. Although not requiring any action on the part of the Synod Council, Bishop Ortiz's written report to the Council noted that the Rev. Andrea Walker transferred from the New Jersey Synod and is serving as the pastor at St. Paul's English Lutheran Church, Washington, D.C., effective January 15, 2020.
- iii. Leadership Academy Updates. Bishop Ortiz noted that all future events in the Leadership Academy Series have been postponed and will be reevaluated at a later time to determine whether they should be cancelled or rescheduled. There had been more than 100 registrants for the March 14 event for Congregation Council and leadership representatives at the time it was postponed.
- iv. Other Matters. Bishop Ortiz provided an update on the activities of the Synod office and staff in light of the current circumstances. Communications have been sent to congregations to provide resources for worship not involving in-person services. Concerns have been raised regarding the financial implications for congregations and the church as a whole.

b. Assistant to the Bishop and DEM, Pr. Bailey:

Pastor Bailey provided an update on the work of two tables. The New and Renewing Missions Table, led by Pr. Shannon Anderson, has established a dedicated Web page for its activities. Its electronic process for requesting grants is functional, with St. Michael's Truth being the first congregation to use the new proposal process. Grants will be classified with varying levels of required approvals. The Stewardship and Mission Support Table, led by Pr. Darcy Tillman, has discussed the current mission of the table. An upcoming meeting will be primarily devoted to the vision and strategy for this table. A new Latinx community is in the early stages. Finally, Pr. Bailey has been working with congregations in need of support at this time.

c. Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Swenson-Reinhold:

Pastor Swenson-Reinhold reported significant activity in the candidacy process since the January meeting. Discernment groups are in process, with a new April cohort formed. Meetings will continue to be held electronically, with the hope of a September in-person meeting. Additional efforts have been made to remain in contact with candidates and seminary partners.

With respect to mobility matters, nine congregations are in a study process. Four congregations are interviewing candidates. One congregation has postponed a previously-scheduled call meeting. Two congregations (King of Kings/Fairfax) and Resurrection/Arlington) have completed their respective call processes.

In addition, Pr. Swenson-Reinhold reported that the Synod is seeking to fill a part-time administrative position. However, these efforts may be deferred to later in the year as well.

Finally, Pr. Ray Ranker has agreed to serve as mentor to first-call candidates. A First Call Theological Retreat is being planned for the fall.

d. Vice President's Report:

Vice President Crenshaw announced that she had submitted her resignation as an officer of the Synod and member of the Synod Council, effective at the conclusion of this meeting. The Executive Committee will convene as soon as possible to discuss the means of filling the vacancy until the next Synod Assembly.

e. Treasurer's Report:

i. Year-End Financial Statements (Unaudited). Copies of the financial statements for the recently-completed fiscal year ended January 31, 2020, were distributed in advance of the meeting. These statements reflect a surplus of undesignated

receipts, compared with expenditures, of approximately \$108,800. However, virtually the entire surplus, slightly over \$100,000 of the total, consists of net investment gains for the year, and there can be no assurance that such amounts will be available for general synod operations in the future. Treasurer Julie Hamre noted that some of the favorable expense variances resulted from making expenditures out of restricted funds (consistent with applicable restrictions).

- ii. Interim Financial Statements. At the time of the meeting, only one month of the Synod's current fiscal year had been completed. Financial statements for that month were not distributed or discussed.
- iii. Proposed Clarification of Restricted Funds Provisions. Ms. Hamre provided the members with a summary of each of the Synod's restricted funds as well as the restrictions that were imposed on them when the funds were created. She brought forward a series of recommendations to clarify the restrictions on, and authority over, four such funds.

**SC20.03.11:** That the following policies be adopted for each of the four restricted funds of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod, effective immediately:

Campus Ministry Fund

The Campus Ministry Fund is to support campus ministry in the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod. Disbursements from the Fund must be authorized by the Director for Evangelical Mission. No more than 20% of the Fund may be disbursed in any one fiscal year unless the balance available is \$5,000 or less, in which case the full amount may be spent.

Building Puentes

Distributions from the Building Puentes Fund below \$20,000 may be made at the direction of the Bishop. Distributions of \$20,000 or more shall be made at the recommendation of the Bishop and with the approval of the Synod Council.

Synodical Latino Ministry

Distributions from the Synodical Latino Ministry are made at the direction of the Director for Evangelical Mission.

Young Adult Ministry

Distributions from the Young Adult Ministry Fund are made at the direction of the Director for Evangelical Mission.

- iv. Faith Fund. Information was provided regarding the administration of the Faith Fund, the sub-accounts within the Fund, and the distribution policies. Portions

of the Fund may be available for the unrestricted use of the Synod, particularly in times of great financial need.

- v. Budget Proposal. The Finance Committee will be meeting on March 23 to discuss the budget proposal for the next fiscal year of the Synod. There was some initial discussion of the process for authorizing expenditures if the 2020 Synod Assembly is not held as scheduled.
  - vi. Status of Independent Audit. Ms. Hamre also reported that much of the work to complete the external examination of the Synod's financial statements for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2020, is being done electronically. It had been scheduled to start the previous week.
- f. Secretary's Report:
- i. Elected Positions for 2020. Secretary Kevin Anderson provided a report on the Synod Council positions that will be filled at the 2020 Synod Assembly. Certain incumbents will not be eligible to serve another two-year term, having already served two consecutive terms. Four individuals will also be elected to serve six-year terms on the Consultation Committee. In view of the resignation of the Vice President, an election will be held for a full four-year term in order to fill the vacancy.
  - ii. Other Synod Assembly Planning Updates. Secretary Anderson also noted the recommendation from the churchwide offices regarding all 2020 synod assemblies. Depending on the circumstances of each synod and their respective governing provisions, the recommendation was made for each synod to consider postponing its synod assembly or cancelling it altogether. Some discussion ensued regarding the merits of either approach, including the consequences for Synod Council members whose terms would otherwise expire at the conclusion of the 2020 Synod Assembly.
  - iii. Report from Church Council Meeting, March 6-8. Finally, Mr. Anderson provided a brief report from the Church Council meeting, held in Itasca, Illinois, earlier in the month. The meeting was the first-ever joint meeting and retreat with the Conference of Bishops. At this meeting, after substantial discussion, the Church Council repealed *Vision and Expectations*, made non-substantive updates to *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*, and directed the Domestic Mission unit to make conforming changes to the Candidacy Manual, all effective immediately upon approval. The Church Council also directed Portico Benefit Services to develop two health plans that have an actuarial value of between 78% and 82%, representing the portion of healthcare costs of an average insured to be compensated for by insurance (rather than incurred directly by the insured).

### 3. **Synodical Women's Organization**

Sheena Foster supplemented the written report that had been provided in advance of the meeting, noting in particular that the one-day annual convention scheduled for May 2 will likely not be held this year.

### 4. **Youth Organization**

The Synod Council's youth representative reported on recent and planned activities. A group formed to assess the future of the youth organization met in December, and planned another meeting for the end of March. All other events are in an uncertain status. Although the National Youth Gathering has been scheduled for 2021, and will likely be unaffected by current circumstances, planning for the event may be delayed.

### 5. **New Business**

Although no specific action was requested or taken, an extensive discussion ensued concerning the response of the Synod and congregations to the current crisis. Topics included outreach to those who are vulnerable, particularly those without access to technology, member-to-member connections, congregational support for AA and Al-Anon meetings, and methods of continuing worship and making connections while avoiding physical contact.

**The meeting adjourned** with the Lord's Prayer at 11:42 a.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting: April 18, 2020; Zoom/Electronic.