

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA
SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – MARCH 20, 2021
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. Interim Vice President Droney called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The roll was called to verify attendance.

Devotion During the portion of the meeting ordinarily set aside for an opening devotional message, Interim Vice President Droney led the Synod Council through a discussion of the third, fourth, and fifth chapters of the book *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S.*, by the Rev. Lenny Duncan.

At the conclusion of the discussion of these three chapters, members reflected on the killing of eight individuals in the Atlanta, Georgia, area on March 16, six of whom were of Asian descent. Bishop Ortiz shared a video in which members of the Association of Asians and Pacific Islanders-ELCA share the “Embodied Blessing and Healing” prayer, part of the litany for the church’s day of lament for anti-Asian racism.

Interim Vice President Droney presented the proposed agenda for the meeting.

SC21.03.09: To approve the agenda for the March 20, 2021, Synod Council meeting.

The draft minutes of the January 16, 2021, Synod Council meeting were presented to the Council for approval. Interim Vice President Droney asked for corrections or amendments. There were none.

SC21.03.10: To approve the minutes of the January 16, 2021, Synod Council meeting.

1. Staff and Officer Reports

a. Bishop Ortiz:

- i. Roster Matters for Synod Council Action. Bishop Ortiz brought one roster matter to the Synod Council, noting that the matter had been approved by the Conference of Bishops pending approval by the Synod Council.

SC21.03.11: That the Rev. Tiffany Towberman’s status of on leave from call for family matters be renewed for one year, effective August 31, 2021.

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 several matters affecting the Synod’s rostered ministers, as follows:

1. Deacon Troy Jacobson was ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament and installed at Good Samaritan Lutheran Church, Lexington Park, Maryland, effective February 27, 2021;
2. The Rev. Kirstin Tannas transferred from the Florida-Bahamas Synod to serve as co-pastor at Good Samaritan Lutheran Church, Lexington Park, Maryland, effective December 1, 2020;
3. Deacon Troy Jacobson transferred from the Southeastern Michigan Synod to serve as co-pastor at Good Samaritan Lutheran Church, Lexington Park, Maryland, effective December 1, 2020;
4. The Rev. Lauren Muratore transferred from the Delaware-Maryland Synod to serve as pastor at Augustana Lutheran Church, Washington, DC, effective, November 29, 2020;
5. The Rev. Lydia Posselt transferred from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod to serve as Pastor for Evangelism and Mission at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Vienna, Virginia, effective November 29, 2020;
6. The Rev. Jeanette Surita-Vasquetelles transferred from the Delaware-Maryland Synod to serve as pastor at Hope Lutheran Church in Annandale, Virginia, effective March 1, 2021;
7. The Rev. Jeanette Leisk transferred to the New England Synod, effective September 1, 2020; and
8. The Rev. Daniel Rinehart transferred to the Southeastern Iowa Synod, effective November 1, 2020.

iii. General Updates. Bishop Ortiz had distributed a written report to the Synod Council in advance of the meeting, including a summary of her official engagements since the last Synod Council meeting in January. She noted that she had been invited by Presiding Bishop Eaton to be one of two synod bishops to focus on strategic planning and living into the Future Church structure adopted by the Church Council in November 2020. At the approximate one-year anniversary of the significant dislocations resulting from the pandemic, she expressed her appreciation for the efforts of the leaders in the synod, including synod staff, over the last year.

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

Pastor Bailey provided an update on the work of two tables and one team. The New and Renewing Missions Table has approved a total of 17 Sabbath grants and expects

to provide additional mini-grants. The table will also be participating in meeting and training with Pr. Kelly Chatman, Executive Director of the Center for Leadership and Neighborhood Engagement, on transformational leadership, community engagement, and congregational revitalization.

The Stewardship and Mission Support Table is in the process of contacting the pastors of each congregation in the synod, and hopes to complete this process by Easter. The table is also planning a storytelling event via Zoom on April 22.

The Racial Equity Team has completed a review of Sacred Ground, a film- and readings-based dialogue on race, grounded in faith, and has presented Bishop Ortiz with a recommendation to offer the training to all congregations. The team is also ascertaining means of engaging youth in coordination with Deacon Julie Stecker.

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

Pastor Swenson-Reinhold supplemented her written report by noting the completion of the physical office move, the launch of a seventh discernment group (Cohort G), the results of discussions with representatives of Portico Benefit Services regarding improved access to mental health care, and the significant number of discernment discussions with candidates and rostered ministers.

d. Assistant to the Bishop, Youth and Family Ministry, Deacon Julie Stecker:

Deacon Stecker provided her first written report after approximately six weeks as the Assistant to the Bishop, Youth and Family Ministry, in partnership with the Delaware-Maryland Synod. She called attention to the weekly small group meetings for all students in grades six through 12, the Growing Young discussion groups to commence after Easter, and planning for the ELCA Youth Gathering to be held in Minneapolis in July 2022.

e. Interim Vice President's Report:

- i. Draft Plan for Racial Justice. An ad hoc Racial Justice Planning group had been formed following the adoption and distribution by the Synod Council of the racial equity letter last year. That letter committed the Synod Council to the development of a draft plan by April 1, 2021, and the approval of a final plan at the May Synod Council meeting. In advance of the meeting, Interim Vice President Droney distributed a copy of the draft plan, which calls for a three-part plan consisting of (a) regular opportunities for rostered ministers and lay members to learn about racial justice and equity; (b) engaging a contractor to review specified systems of the synod; and (c) consideration of how the synod, as an entity, as well as its congregations, may issue reparations to people of color and work toward meaningful reconciliation. Although several questions

were raised and discussed in connection with the draft, a consensus developed that the draft plan, as presented to the Synod Council, should be published for further comment before final consideration by the Synod Council.

- ii. Nominating Committee Update. Barbara Bilodeau provided an update on the work of the Nominating Committee, which consists of four members of the Synod Council and the six conference deans. There are 36 positions that must be elected by the 2021 Synod Assembly. At present, eight of these positions have at least one nominee. The Committee has contacted most of the Synod Council members who are eligible for re-election to assess their willingness to be a candidate to serve another term.

f. Treasurer's Report:

- i. Year-End Financial Statements. Copies of the unaudited financial statements for the recently-completed fiscal year ended January 31, 2021, were distributed in advance of the meeting. These statements reflect a surplus in undesignated receipts, compared with expenditures, of approximately \$72,600. The financial statements also reflect the formal approval of the forgiveness application for the Synod's Paycheck Protection Program loan. The forgiveness results in additional income of approximately \$104,000 for the fiscal year. Treasurer Julie Hamre noted that, because we did not expect that the formal approval of forgiveness would occur before the end of the prior fiscal year, the Synod planned to use the income from forgiveness to offset expected deficits in the current year.
- ii. Year-to-Date Financial Statements. Copies of the financial statements for the first month of the current fiscal year, *i.e.*, the month of February 2021, were also distributed in advance of the meeting. These statements reflect a deficit in undesignated receipts, compared with expenditures, of approximately \$92,200.
- iii. Discussion of FY 2020 Operating Surplus. Several ideas were discussed concerning the potential use of the unexpected operating surplus for the prior fiscal year. First, a proposal to share some portion of the surplus with the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod in response to its Emergency Winter Freeze Appeal was considered and rejected. Inasmuch as congregational mission support is intended for use within the Synod or for churchwide operations, members felt it was inappropriate to make a direct gift of Synod funds to another synod. Nevertheless, a special appeal, or notification of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod's appeal, was preferred by the members. Second, the United Lutheran Seminary received a significantly smaller sum than the amount provided for in the approved budget for the fiscal year. At the recommendation of the Finance Committee, an additional \$20,000 will be provided to the Seminary. No formal action on the part of the Synod Council is required because the amounts had previously been approved by the 2019 Synod Assembly as part of the approval of

the FY 2020 budget. Finally, consistent with the approaches taken by other synods, the income from forgiveness of the Paycheck Protection Program loan will not be considered as unrestricted revenue of the Synod for purposes of calculating its mission support to the churchwide organization.

2. Synodical Women's Organization

Sheena Foster summarized recent activities of the organization, including the continuation of the terms of all officers for another year and plans for a virtual fall convention.

3. Youth Organization

The Synod Council's youth representative reported on initial discussions with Deacon Julie Stecker and the search for a successor youth representative on the Synod Council.

4. New Business

None.

The meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer at 11:30 a.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting: April 17, 2021; Zoom/Electronic.