

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA

SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – JULY 10, 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.

Orientation In light of the significant number of new members of the Synod Council who had been first elected at the 2021 Synod Assembly, the meeting began with a series of introductions and orientation matters. Interim Vice President Droney used as the basis for the orientation a document entitled “Synod Council Member Commitments and Expectations,” which had been previously adopted by the Synod Council in January 2021 for the period ending with the 2021 Synod Assembly (SC21.01.04). After an extensive discussion, the Synod Council considered whether to adopt the document for the current Council year.

SC21.07.24: To adopt the document entitled “Synod Council Member Commitments and Expectations,” as presented to the meeting of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod Council, with such document to remain in effect until the 2022 Synod Assembly, subject to such non-substantive editorial changes and updates as may be made by the Interim Vice President.

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

SC21.07.25: To approve the agenda for the July 10, 2021, Synod Council meeting.

Following the 2021 Synod Assembly, two Synod Council vacancies remained. One such vacancy is for an at-large member reserved for a minister of Word and Service. Deacon Kati Miller-Holland had expressed her willingness to serve in this capacity, and provided biographical information to the Synod Council in advance of the meeting. The Synod Council is authorized to fill vacancies in its membership until the next regularly scheduled Synod Assembly.

SC21.07.26: That Deacon Katherine (Kati) Miller-Holland is elected to the Synod Council, as an at-large member, to serve until the conclusion of the 2022 Synod Assembly.

The draft minutes of the June 3, 2021, Synod Council meeting were presented to the Council for approval. Interim Vice President Droney asked for corrections or amendments. There were none.

SC21.07.27: To approve the minutes of the June 3, 2021, Synod Council meeting.

1. Staff and Officer Reports

a. Bishop Ortiz:

- i. Roster Matters for Synod Council Action. Bishop Ortiz brought four roster matters to the Synod Council.

SC21.07.28: That:

1. Deacon Katherine Miller-Holland be placed on the retired roster, effective April 1, 2021;
 2. The Rev. Mark Brown be placed on the retired roster, effective June 1, 2021;
 3. The Rev. Margrethe Kleiber be placed on leave from call, effective July 1, 2021; and
 4. The Rev. Kirsten Laderach be called to serve in Specialized Ministry as Interim Pastor of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Woodbridge, Virginia, effective August 9, 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. The Rev. Amy Fiera was called to serve as pastor at Grace Lutheran Church in Washington, D.C., effective July 19, 2021; and
 2. The Rev. Christopher Weidner transferred from Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, effective July 7, 2021.
 - iii. General Updates. Bishop Ortiz had distributed a written report to the Synod Council in advance of the meeting. Her remarks covered most aspects of the written report, including the 2021 Synod Assembly themes (transformational leadership, cultural competency, and Sabbath), the image of a tree (roots, trunk, branches, and fruit) to describe the efforts of the Synod in the coming year, continued work to implement the Synod's racial equity letter, a review of the 2021 Synod Assembly, and continued one-on-one conversations with rostered ministers. She also noted the closing of Messiah Lutheran Church, Alexandria, Virginia, which held its last worship service on Pentecost Sunday, May 23, 2021. The congregation transferred \$250,000 to the Synod for use in youth and young adult ministries, and staff members are exploring the possibility of calling a campus pastor to serve at Howard University, Washington, D.C.

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

Pastor Bailey provided an update on the work of two tables, one team, and Gifts of Hope, including an orientation to the work of these groups for the benefit of new members of the Synod Council. His written report included a description of certain changes for the role of Directors for Evangelical Mission (DEMs) currently being considered by the churchwide organization. In view of the relative autonomy that the Synod possesses regarding the role of the DEM under the mission support experiment, such changes will have minimal impact on the work of the Synod.

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

Pastor Swenson-Reinhold supplemented her written report. Among other updates and observations, the Candidacy Committee met with three candidates at its June meeting, approving one for Word and Sacrament ministry, approving a second to enter the process, and postponing a third candidate. Cohorts F and G are in process, and Cohort H will be launched in September 2021. The report included an update on the status of leadership transitions at several congregations.

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

Deacon Stecker was unable to attend the meeting, but had provided a written report in advance of the meeting. The focus of recent activities has been on preparations for the coming program year. More than 30 members of the Lutheran Youth Organization will be returning, and eight new members will join the program for the year. Monthly Growing Young discussion groups continue to meet.

e. Interim Vice President's Report:

- i. Racial Equity Plan. Interim Vice President Droney referred to a document entitled "A Plan for Racial Justice in the Metro DC Synod of the ELCA," which had been approved by the Synod Council in May 2021 and subsequently released publicly. The plan calls for a three-part process 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. In furtherance of the second of the three processes, a request for proposal has been prepared and will soon be distributed to solicit applications for a contractor. The Racial Equity Team will be using the Sacred Ground curriculum in furtherance of the first process, and Synod leadership and staff members are developing means to convene the panel on reparations in furtherance of the third process.

- ii. **Executive Committee Membership.** Interim Vice President Droney noted that there are four open positions for the Executive Committee in addition to the four officers. Normally only two at-large members would be elected to two-year terms following the most recent Synod Assembly. Because of the cycle disruptions caused by the cancellation of the 2020 Synod Assembly, all four at-large members will be elected at the same time, two for one-year terms and two for two-year terms. No two at-large members may be from the same conference. Members were asked to discern their willingness to serve in this capacity, with the expectation that the vacancies will be filled at the September Synod Council meeting.
- iii. **Committee Vacancies.** The Synod Assembly also elects members to the Committee on Discipline and the Consultation Committee. Each committee consists of 12 members, equally divided between ministers of Word and Sacrament and lay persons. At each Synod Assembly, four members are elected to one of the two committees, each to serve a six-year term. Although the 2021 Synod Assembly elected four members to each of the two committees, vacancies remained from prior synod assemblies. Biographical information regarding two candidates to fill vacant positions on these committees had been provided in advance of the meeting.

SC21.07.29: That the Rev. Betty E. Landis, Saint Stephen Lutheran Church, Silver Spring, Maryland, is elected to serve on the Committee on Discipline for a term that will expire on the date on which the 2025 Synod Assembly has concluded.

SC21.07.30: That John E. Handley, Resurrection Lutheran Church, Arlington, Virginia, is elected to serve on the Consultation Committee for a term that will expire on the date on which the 2022 Synod Assembly has concluded.

f. **Secretary's Report:**

Secretary Kevin Anderson provided brief comments regarding the patterns for distributing the materials in advance of each meeting, the means of communicating with the Synod Council generally, and contact information for each member. A directory of Synod Council members will be prepared and distributed after each member has provided complete contact information.

g. **Treasurer's Report:**

- i. **Overview of Financial Information.** Treasurer Julie Hamre provided an overview of the financial information that will be presented at each Synod Council meeting, noting the difference between the annual budgeted amounts and the restricted funds available to the Synod for its use.

- ii. Year-to-Date Financial Statements. Copies of the financial statements for the first five months of the current fiscal year, *i.e.*, the period ended June 30, 2021, were distributed in advance of the meeting. These statements reflect a deficit in undesignated receipts, compared with expenditures, of approximately \$28,000 before consideration of the relatively large surplus from the prior fiscal year and the transfer of a smaller amount from the Congregational Mission designated funds.
- iii. Status of Financial Statement Audit. The examination of the synod's financial statements for the fiscal year ended January 31, 2021, by independent auditors has been completed, and a draft report of the auditors has been provided to the Finance Committee for its review.

2. Synodical Women's Organization

[No report]

3. Youth Organization

[No report]

4. New Business

Vice President-Elect Jennifer Slagle Peck referred to a Synod Council questionnaire that was in the final stages of being developed. The questionnaire will assist in planning for Synod Council meetings and efforts for the next year. One member inquired about the process for placing items on the agenda for meetings.

The meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer at 12:00 noon.

Next Scheduled Meeting: September 11, 2021; Zoom/Electronic.