

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA
SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – JANUARY 19, 2019
LUTHER PLACE MEMORIAL CHURCH, WASHINGTON, D .C.

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

Devotion Sheena Foster provided a devotional message based on Isaiah 58.

Greetings Pastor Brau greeted the members of the Synod Council and provided a brief description of the ministries of Luther Place Memorial Church.

Vice President Crenshaw presented the proposed agenda for the meeting.

SC19.01.01: To approve the agenda for the January 19, 2019, Synod Council meeting.

The draft minutes of the November 17, 2018, Synod Council meeting were presented to the Council for approval. Vice President Crenshaw asked for corrections or amendments. There were none.

SC19.01.02: To approve the minutes of the November 17, 2018, Synod Council meeting.

1. Synod Council Primary Mission Table

a. New Connections Campaign Overview and Update

Bishop Graham stated that the work of the New Connections Campaign is continuing under the direction of Christy Hartigan. He also noted that an interim Director for Evangelical Mission is being sought to cover the position pending the arrival of the new Bishop. This interim Director will not be a candidate for the permanent position.

Treasurer Julie Hamre reviewed the New Connections financial report, which includes only those dollars for which the Synod is responsible. She reminded the Council that a number of congregations are managing their own campaigns and sending a portion of the funds collected to the Synod. Therefore, the totals shown on the Synod's report are less than those reported for the campaign as a whole.

b. Christ Lutheran Church, Bethesda, Maryland

Bishop Graham and Treasurer Julie Hamre provided an update on the status of Christ Lutheran Church, Bethesda. The congregation took a significant step in

December 2018 by voting to approve the sale of its entire property and they report having already identified at least five well-qualified buyers.

However, their cash problems continue. While they have moved out of the church building, they have committed to rent space at Imagination Stage for services and they continue to employ a number of musicians and other services. They have therefore asked for an additional \$40,000 loan.

Treasurer Julie Hamre summarized the conversations held by the Finance Committee regarding this request. Under the current budget presented by Christ Lutheran Church, the additional funding will run out in the next three or four months. Without a signed contract for the land sale, there is no plan as to how they will support operations at the current level. Some members of the Council expressed concern about continuing to fund this effort under these circumstances. Treasurer Hamre also noted that the unrestricted resources of the Synod available for projects like this are not unlimited.

The Finance Committee, having agreed with these concerns, recommended to the Council that this additional loan be made under the same restrictions as the first loan but that it be made clear to Christ Lutheran Church that no additional funding will be considered unless the sale of the property is consummated and a schedule for repayment is confirmed.

SC19.01.03: To authorize the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod to make a second loan in the amount of \$40,000 from the Bethany Fund the Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bethesda, Maryland, on and subject to the same terms and conditions as the original loan was made (SC18.10.29).

2. Bishop Transition Task Force/Election Committee Update

Jackson Droney reported that the Transition Task Force has developed a survey on transition issues to be distributed to rostered ministers, who will be asked to share the survey with congregational councils. Responses will be shared at synod conference meetings.

There was a general discussion of the ecclesiastical voting process.

3. Staff and Officer Reports

a. Bishop Graham:

- i. Roster Matters for Synod Council Action. Bishop Graham brought two roster matters to the Synod Council.

SC19.01.04: That:

1. The Rev. Susan Tyykila be placed on the retired roster, effective January 1, 2019; and
 2. The Rev. Charles Hodges be placed on the retired roster, effective April 1, 2019.
- ii. Roster Matters for Information. Although not requiring any action on the part of the Synod Council, Bishop Graham noted that the Rev. Philip Hirsch has been called to the ELCA as Executive Director of Domestic Mission effective February 1, 2019, but that he will remain on the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod roster.
- iii. Our Redeemer Update. Bishop Graham provided an update on the status of the Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Washington, D.C., which had been placed under voluntary synodical administration pursuant to S13.25 of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Synod. The congregation continues under this status; over the next few weeks they will be receiving reports about possible ways forward. In response to a question from the Council, Bishop Graham reported that the financial records of the congregation were in such a state that they were not able to be audited. He also commended Pastor Tom Knoll for providing his significant expertise in building management and accounting to Redeemer in this difficult time.
- b. Notice was taken of Pr. Hirsch's final report as the Synod's Director for Evangelical Mission, which is included with the written materials.
- c. Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Ortiz

Pastor Ortiz reported that there are fourteen congregations in transition and two calls issued since the last Council meeting. There have been five candidate entrants in the past few months with three approvals.

The Candidacy Committee has realized that there is confusion within the Synod as to how the candidacy process works. The committee is preparing a video on the process to be shared at the conference meetings.

A joint Web site (www.BuildingPuentes.com) has been established by the three cooperating synods (Carribbean, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., and Delaware/Maryland) to facilitate the work of this ministry. Registration for summer work trips to Puerto Rico is now available on the site. The Bishop's Convocation will also be held in Puerto Rico in April.

- d. Treasurer's Report:

Ms. Hamre presented a projection of how the Synod will end the fiscal year (January 31, 2019). Despite running a deficit throughout the year, she expects that the large deposits made by congregations “catching up” in December will total as much as \$300,000. If so, she projects that the Synod may recognize a surplus of as much as \$80,000 for the year. This is a significant turn-around from the budgeted deficit of \$(35,000).

Ms. Hamre identified two major explanations for this result:

At Ms. Hamre’s urging, the New and Renewing Table utilized monies from a number of existing funds that had not be touched in several years, rather than taking funds from the Synod’s annual budget. Other existing funds were also used for stewardship expenses, and most global mission budgeted funds were not utilized. Obviously the use of these existing funds is a one-time benefit to the regular budget and will not be repeated in 2019.

The 2018 budget for staff salaries was overstated by nearly \$50,000. All staff received the compensation and benefits they expected, but the actual costs were significantly below budget.

Bishop Graham commented that it will be very helpful for the new Bishop to have undesignated funds to support the transition and new programs. Ms. Hamre noted that this helps make up for the deficit of \$(52,000) from the prior fiscal year.

Ms. Hamre brought forward recommendations of the Synod Finance Committee for housing allowances for ordained staff for 2019.

SC19.01.05: That for the year 2019, \$50,000 of the compensation paid to Bishop Richard H. Graham and \$35,992 of the compensation paid to the Rev. Leila M. Ortiz be designated as a rental/housing allowance in accordance with the provisions of section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code.

4. Synodical Women’s Organization

Sheena Foster reported that she attended a meeting in St. Louis of women from across the country to explore the future of the Women of the ELCA.

The annual meeting of the Synodical Women’s Organization will be held on May 4, 2019.

5. Youth Organization Report

No report.

6. **New Business**

Rev. Jeanne Lowe announced that ground has been broken at the Villages at Rockville for a new facility.

The installation of the new bishop will take place on October 12, 2019. The time and place will be announced later.

The meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer at 10:30 a.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting: March 16, 2019; St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Springfield, Virginia.