

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA
SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – MARCH 16, 2019
ST. MARK’S LUTHERAN CHURCH, SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA

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

Devotion Cynthia Reese provided a devotional message based on Matthew 23: 37-39, the lament over Jerusalem. Prayers were offered for the people of New Zealand, one day after a terrorist attack that took 50 lives at two mosques.

Greetings Pastor Triolo greeted the members of the Synod Council and provided a brief description of the ministries of St. Mark’s Lutheran Church. He noted that the congregation had celebrated its 65th anniversary in 2018, and provided a summary of recent and planned renovations to the physical facilities.

Vice President Crenshaw presented the proposed agenda for the meeting.

SC19.03.06: To approve the agenda for the March 16, 2019, Synod Council meeting.

The draft minutes of the January 19, 2019, Synod Council meeting were presented to the Council for approval. Vice President Crenshaw asked for corrections or amendments. There were none.

SC19.03.07: To approve the minutes of the January 19, 2019, Synod Council meeting.

1. Synod Council Primary Mission Table

a. New Connections Campaign Overview and Update

Bishop Graham used the update on the New Connections Campaign to introduce Pr. Gary Rhinesmith as the recently-appointed Director for Evangelical Mission in Transition. He will be working with the campaign as a member of the Synod staff until the middle of August. However, the principal contact for the campaign is Christy Hartigan, who will continue to serve as its director. Pastor Mike Ward’s commitment to the campaign concluded at the end of 2018.

Of the \$2.25 million financial goal for the campaign, pledges and contributions have been received for slightly more than \$1.5 million. Congregations have committed to approximately one-half of the goal of 3,000 new connections. Fewer than half of the congregations have made either a financial or connections commitment. Tracking of congregations’ participation in the campaign (or lack thereof) will continue.

b. Christ Lutheran Church, Bethesda, Maryland

Bishop Graham provided an update on the status of Christ Lutheran Church, Bethesda. The congregation has moved out of the property it owns and is preparing to sell it. Proceeds will be used, in part, to satisfy debts. Congregational activities are conducted at space rented from Imagination Stage, and supply preachers will lead worship through the summer. The congregation will partner with other ELCA congregations in Bethesda in a manner comparable to the recent collaboration between First Trinity Lutheran Church and St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Washington.

2. Bishop Transition Task Force/Election Committee Update

Jackson Droney reported that the seven-week online survey for rostered ministers had closed on March 15. A summary of compiled survey results was distributed to the Council. The Council also viewed a video entitled "Transition Year" that had been completed and posted to YouTube and Facebook on March 1. The video described the position and duties of the bishop and featured remarks from Bishop Graham, Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Ortiz, former Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission, Pr. Hirsch, and others.

The Synod Council was also provided with a copy of a document describing the ecclesiastical voting process for the election of a bishop. A discussion of the process ensued. The Council was also advised that Dr. Tommie Robinson, former Synod Vice President, had agreed to serve as the chair of the Elections Committee insofar as it relates to the election of the bishop.

3. Staff and Officer Reports

a. Bishop Graham:

- i. Roster Matters for Synod Council Action. Bishop Graham brought one roster matter to the Synod Council.

SC19.03.08: That the Rev. Alexis King be placed on leave from call, effective May 30, 2016.

Bishop Graham advised the Synod Council that this retroactive action was being recommended after consultation with the Office of the ELCA Secretary. Pastor King had been a reserve chaplain in the United States Air Force, but this status did not qualify her to be considered as under call. Only active duty chaplains may remain under call by the ELCA Church Council.

- ii. Roster Matters for Information. Although not requiring any action on the part of the Synod Council, Bishop Graham informed the Council of the following additional matters affecting the Synod's rostered ministers:
 - 1. Deacon Erin Swenson-Reinhold was ordained on March 11, 2019, to serve as Associate Pastor at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, McLean, Virginia;
 - 2. The Rev. Angela Shannon transferred from the Minneapolis Area Synod effective February 1, 2019; and
 - 3. The Rev. Elijah Mwitanti transferred to the New Jersey Synod effective January 26, 2019.
- 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 but has asked Synod leadership to consider converting to the congregation to a mission development congregation. Bishop Graham is hopeful that a final report on this matter can be delivered to the Council at its April meeting.

b. Director for Evangelical Mission in Transition, Pr. Rhinesmith:

Pastor Rhinesmith summarized the work of the two tables associated with his role, *i.e.*, New and Renewing Missions and Stewardship and Mission Support. With guidance from the New and Renewing Missions Table, three congregations are exploring the methods and means of establishing mission communities. Under the leadership of the Stewardship and Mission Support Table, all congregations will be given an opportunity during the 2019 Synod Assembly to provide their statement of financial intent for 2019, similar to the Consecration Sundays that occur within congregations for their own members' financial support. This table is also working on legacy and major gifts as well as leadership support and development through Metro DC Coaches.

c. Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Ortiz

Pastor Ortiz reported that there are fourteen congregations in transition. Four congregations have extended calls. Three other congregations are interviewing candidates. Eight congregations have interim pastors and are engaged in a study process. There are no congregations currently awaiting names of potential candidates.

The Candidacy Committee will meet during the week immediately following the Synod Council meeting. Four entrance interviews are scheduled and one candidate is awaiting approval for ordination.

Two Building Puentes mission trips have been scheduled for the summer. Pastor Ortiz clarified that funds previously raised for this effort will be used for leadership development and not for mission support.

d. Vice President's Report:

Vice President Crenshaw reported on other recent activities outside of Synod Council meeting, including presiding over a call meeting at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, McLean, Virginia, and an ordination.

e. Treasurer's Report:

Ms. Hamre was unable to attend the meeting but had distributed unaudited financial statements for the most recently completed fiscal year ended January 31, 2019. Bishop Graham noted that, based on these statements, the Synod has completed the year with a slight surplus of undesignated income over expenses of approximately \$32,000. The external audit of these financial statements is in process.

4. Synodical Women's Organization

In the absence of Sheena Foster, Joan Enerson highlighted parts of the written report provided in advance to the Synod Council, including the annual Convention of the Synodical Women's Organization to be held on May 4, 2019, and the 2020 Triennial Gathering to be held in Arizona, along with the associated fundraising challenge made to each of the 65 synods in the church.

5. Youth Organization Report

No report.

6. New Business

Several items were noted by those present, but none required any specific action:

- a. Secretary Anderson noted an important development that occurred in the legal challenge to the constitutionality of the clergy housing allowance provisions of the federal income tax laws. On the day before the meeting, Friday, March 15, the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit issued its opinion reversing a prior decision made by the District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin. The court of appeals held that the clergy housing allowance is constitutional, putting to rest any immediate concerns about its continuing validity. The case is *Gaylor v. Mnuchin*.

- b. Bishop Graham provided comments and responded to questions concerning the recent decision by The United Methodist Church, a full communion partner with the ELCA, at its 2019 General Conference, to affirm the church's current prohibitions against "ordaining LGBTQ clergy and officiating at or hosting same-sex marriage."
- c. Members were reminded to register for the 2019 Synod Assembly. Questions were raised about hotel room accommodations for Thursday and Friday nights for Synod Council members, especially in light of the Synod Council meeting scheduled for Friday morning prior to the beginning of the Assembly.
- d. Pastor Lowe provided an update on building renovations at The Village at Rockville.

The meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer at 11:08 a.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting: April 13, 2019; King of Kings Lutheran Church, Fairfax, Virginia.