

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA
SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – January 25, 2025**

LSSNCA is located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Piscataway and Doeg peoples. We give thanks for their presence here since time immemorial. We also wish to recognize and honor all our Indigenous siblings who have and continue to call this land their home.

Present:

Bishop Leila Ortiz, Bishop
Jennifer Slagle Peck, Vice President
Barbara Bilodeau, Secretary
Julie Hamre, Treasurer
Pr. Judith VanOsdol, DC – Rostered
Breeze Lawless, Fairfax - Lay
Pr. Elijah Mwitanti, Fairfax - Rostered
Rachad Ya Ntima Esengo, Maryland – Lay
Pr. Eric T. Randolph, Maryland - Rostered
Pr. Betty Landis, Montgomery – Rostered
Patrick Anderson, Potomac – Lay
Pr. Alexander P. Stall, Jr., Potomac – Rostered
Don Wallace, Virginia - Lay
Pr. Henry Langknecht, Virginia – Rostered
Nolan G, At-Large Youth – joined at 11am.

Absent:

Sheena Foster, DC – Lay
Anita Smallin, Montgomery - Lay

Synod Staff:

Pr. Sarah Garrett Krey
Pr. Jason Shank

Guests: The following guests joined us during specific agenda items:

Pr. Christine Dunn, Director for Development, LSSNCA
Pr. Kirstin Tannas, Good Samaritan Lutheran Church, Lexington Park, MD
Pr. Troy Jacobson, Good Samaritan Lutheran Church, Lexington Park, MD

Vacancies:

At-large young adult.

Pr. Christine Dunn provided a tour of the LSSNCA facility and an overview of their work. She then led our opening devotions.

Call to Order Vice President Slagle Peck called the meeting to order at 9:40am. The secretary verified the attendance.

Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.01.02 To approve the agenda for the January 25, 2025 Synod Council meeting; to approve the minutes October 26, 2024 Synod Council Meeting; to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2025 Council Vote; and to submit the 2024 Synod Assembly Minutes to the 2025 Synod Assembly for Approval.

Reports and Other Matters

1. Council

- a. Note one vacancy, at-large young adult

2. Staff and Officer Reports

- a. Bishop Ortiz

- i. Roster matters - **Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.01.03** the following change in status:
 - That the Rev. Kristen Glass Perez be called to serve in Specialized Ministry as Chaplain of George Washington University effective November 4, 2024.
 - That the Rev. Tiffany Towberman's On Leave from Call be extended for a third time effective September 1, 2025.
- ii. Events, activities, and other updates – seen in written report
- iii. Bishop Ortiz reported that we will pause any changes to our status as one of the “experimental” synods and our financial support to Churchwide will continue at 35%. The next administration can review.
- iv. Gifts of Hope: We have seen a pattern of decline and believe it is time to celebrate this ministry and leave space for other ways the synod can support our partner organizations and ministries. Synod staff working on a way to celebrate this ministry
- v. The Bishop has been and will be participating in many activities from World Federation of Church, the Prayer for the Nation, Prayer for Unity, and the Installation of the first woman Bishop in El Salvador. Bishop Ortiz and Pastor Mwitanti will attend the installation of the first woman Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) for the Western Diocese.

- b. Assistant to the Bishop and DEM, Pr. Jason Shank

- i. Holy Closures

Good Samaritan, Lexington Park, MD: Pr. Kirstin Tannas and Pr. Troy Jacobson joined us for this discussion. The congregation met on November 24, 2024 and was unable to field a new Council; and subsequently voted 42/2 for Synod Administration towards closure. **Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.01.04:** to accept Synod Administration of Good Samaritan Lutheran Church Lexington Park MD as requested by the congregation, with the intent to pursue holy closure; to assign trustees as follows: Julie Hamre, Barbara Bilodeau, John Scheffler, and Paige Marino; and to authorize the trustees to retain legal counsel and other contractors as necessary. (passed with one abstain)

- Pr. Shank will arrange for the first meeting of the trustees and pastors. The Trustees are expected to provide updates to the Council at each meeting.
- Holy Comforter, DC: Pr. Shank and Bishop Ortiz reviewed the history of trying to work with the remaining people at Holy Comforter, noting that requested deadlines for responses have long expired. Since there is no congregation council, no pastoral leadership, no worship activity, nor anyone managing the property, it was agreed that the Council must assume synod administration. **Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.01.05:** to enter into involuntary synod administration of Holy Comforter, Washington DC, with the intent to pursue holy closure; to assign trustees as follows: Patrick Anderson, Pastor Eric Randolph, Pastor Elijah Mwitanti, and Rachad Ya Ntima Esengo; and to authorize the trustees to retain legal counsel and other contractors as necessary.
- ii. The appeal Bold and Boundless Love: A Lasting Inheritance has been launched. Share the one-pagers. Would like to be able to say that 100% of the Council has participated.
 - iii. Support of migrants and refugees: looking to see what we can do to support. A form will go to rostered ministers to see how we are currently supporting, what needs and concerns they have. A town hall will follow for the full synod. We will be looking for partners.
 - iv. Bishop Ortiz reported that the funds request to Christ, Bethesda was turned down. Synod staff are presenting a modified proposal to Christ, Bethesda to seek support for synod office space.
- c. Treasurer's Report, Ms. Julie Hamre
 - i. Financial reports: expect to end the fiscal year with about a \$50,000 deficit; slightly more than originally budgeted.
 - ii. **Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.01.06** That for the calendar year 2025 the following housing allowances for ordained Synod staff be approved
 - 45 percent of the compensation paid in the form of salary to Bishop Leila M. Ortiz
 - 29 percent of the compensation paid in the form of salary to Rev. Sarah Garrett-Krey
 - 75 percent of the compensation paid in the form of salary to Rev. Julie Jackson
 - d. Assistant to the Bishop for Candidacy & Mobility, Pr. Sarah Garret Krey – see written report. Noted that there is confusion and inaccurate communication on when our rostered ministers should take certain required trainings – specifically the “Boundary and Ethics Training” but also the Racial Justice and Human Sexuality training. Pr. Stall volunteered to work with Pr. Sarah on what training is required and when, to present to Council for approval.
 - e. Youth Organization Report, Ms. Katharyn Wheeler, Metro D.C. Synod Youth+Family – Katharyn Wheeler. Written report from Ms Wheeler, indicated requested a commitment to continuing the partnership with the DE-MD Synod so that they could confidently plan events and execute contracts with event facilities.

Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.01.07: to continue the Youth and Family partnership with the DE-MD Synod through 2025-2026.

- f. Secretary's Report, Barbara Bilodeau
- i. Reviews/approvals of congregation constitutions updates
 - Reviewed and provided recommendations and list of changes to comply with the model passed at the 2022 Church-wide Assembly: Lord of Life, Fairfax
 - Concurred – please send final for official approval after voted on by Congregation: Abiding Presence, Burke, VA and Epiphany, Alexandria
 - Reviewed and verified changes were only to bylaws: Reformation DC
 - Approved : n/a
 - ii. **Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.01.08:** to invite rostered ministers of this Synod who are On Leave From Call (OLFC) to have voice and vote at the 2025 Synod Assembly.
 - iii. The Secretary recommended we add text to our Constitution as a Continuing Resolution to establish the processes that permit OLFC ministers to serve as voting members of Synod Assembly. A Continuing Resolution may be added by the Synod Council with a two-thirds vote. **Moved/Seconded/Adopted (passed unanimously): SC25.01.09:** To approve the following Continuing Resolution to the CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD:

S7.22.01.A25 The Synod Council will annually review the allocation of lay members of the Synod Assembly to determine if granting voting membership to rostered ministers of this synod who are on leave from call would result in fewer than 60% of the voting members of the Synod Assembly being laypersons in contravention of †S7.21. If the allocation would not result in contravention of †S7.21 then the Synod Council may allow rostered ministers of the synod who are on leave from call to serve as voting members.

- iv. Rick Ahlberg, our Parliamentarian, has recommended that the following Bylaw be presented at the next Synod Assembly to address electronic or hybrid Assemblies. **Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.01.10:** to present the following ByLaw of the CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD to the 2025 Synod Assembly for approval:

S7.01.01. To the extent permitted by state law, meetings of the Synod Assembly may be held electronically, and notice of all meetings may be provided electronically. The Synod Council shall decide whether a meeting of the Synod Assembly shall be held in person, electronically, or in a hybrid format where some voting members are physically present while other voting members use an online meeting platform (such as Zoom webinar). The platform must allow that all participants who are entitled to voice and vote (whether physically present or using the online platform) can communicate with others in the meeting, in accordance with the Synod's governing documents and applicable Pennsylvania statutes.

- g. Vice President's Report, VP Slagle Peck
 - i. Please share Synod information and happenings with your congregations.
 - ii. Prayerfully consider those you know for nominations to synod council, especially for Vice President and Treasurer.
 - iii. Reach out and support the federal employees in your congregations during this time of transition, as some have been fired, some reassigned, and many have fear.

3. Committees, Tables, and Teams - Reports as needed

- a. n/a

4. New Business

- a. LSSNCA Bylaw Changes. **Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.01.11:** to approve the updates to the LSSNCA Bylaws as provided.
- b. Good news and announcements were shared.

The meeting adjourned at 12:21 with prayer.

Next Scheduled Meeting: March 22, 2025 via Zoom

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara A. Bilodeau
Secretary