

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA
SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – March 22, 2025, 9am via Zoom**

The Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod, is located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Piscataway, Nacotchtank (Anacostan), Patuxent, Susqueahnnoch, Doeg, and Manahoac 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
Julie Hamre, Treasurer
Sheena Foster, DC – Lay
Breeze Lawless, Fairfax - Lay
Pr. Elijah Mwitanti, Fairfax - Rostered
Pr. Eric T. Randolph, Maryland - Rostered
Anita Smallin, Montgomery - Lay
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
VACANT, At-Large Young Adult

Absent:

Barbara Bilodeau, Secretary
Pr. Judith VanOsdol, DC – Rostered
Rachad Ya Ntima Esengo, Maryland – Lay
Nolan G, At-Large Youth

Synod Staff:

Pr. Sarah Garrett Krey
Pr. Jason Shank
Katharyn Wheeler

Guests:

Melody Stachour – Churchwide Commission for the Renewed Lutheran Church

Vacancies:

At-large young adult.

Devotions led by Katharyn Wheeler

Call to Order Vice President Slagle Peck called the meeting to order at 0900. Attendance was verified.

Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.03.12 To approve the agenda for the March 22, 2025, Synod Council meeting; and to approve the minutes of the January 25, 2025.

Reports and Other Matters

1. Council

- a. Business?

2. Staff and Officer Reports

- a. Bishop Ortiz
 - i. Roster matters – Report provided.
 - ii. Bishop discussed the tough times we are currently living through and how much our outreach and help are.
 - iii. Pastor Elijah described his trip to Namibia with Bishop Ortiz and how much interest was shown. He stressed the importance of the relationships between Namibia and the US.
- b. Treasurer's Report, Ms. Julie Hamre
 - i. Financial reports:
 - The FY2024 actuals show that we fell short by about \$110K. Overall budget has been redesigned to show the income only at the top. We ended 2024 with a surplus of \$16K. We can't rely on the stock market in the future. FY2025 current estimate for 2025 is a deficit of \$80K.
 - ii. 2026 Budget (draft)
 - 2026 estimates were based on the same staff that we have now. That may change.
 - There is no provision for office space in these budgets. Bishop Ortiz said that we have many dreams and hopes for a space.
 - La Sagrada Familia needs direction from the council. Currently \$40K support.
- c. Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Sarah Garret Krey – see written report
 - i. **Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.03.13** To extend a call to specialized ministry to Emily DeMarco to serve as a Minister of Word and Service shared between Luther Place and First Trinity.
 - ii. **Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.03.14** To adopt required training for all rostered ministers including boundaries and ethics, racial equity and cultural competency, human sexuality and gender justice.
- d. Update from Commission on Renewed Lutheran Church, Melody Stachour - gave report on the Commission and the shared efforts to dismantle racism. The final report is currently at the ELCA Executive Committee and should be published soon.
- e. Assistant to the Bishop and DEM, Pr. Jason Shank. See written report.
 - i. We gave out the third new grant.
 - ii. Bishop's Appeal has raised \$49,148.33. Phase II approach between now and Synod Assembly will consist of targeted stories approach on how these funds can be used.
 - iii. Holy Closure Updates:

- Good Samaritan, Lexington Park, MD. Ms. Hamre reported that the trustees were doing a good job thus far. She said that the range of estimates for sale of the property is 2.7M-2.9M and there was a 650K mortgage remaining. She also discussed the disposition of sacred items. Pastor Jason said that under synodical administration 10% of anything sold would go to Good Samaritan and 90% goes to the Synod. The Holy Closure is really the Synod completing the final distribution of the congregation rather than the congregation carrying out that disposition.
 - Holy Comforter, DC. Patrick Anderson presented a report on what is happening on the involuntary Holy Closure of the Holy Comforter congregation.
- f. Youth Organization Report, Ms. Katharyn Wheeler, Metro D.C. Synod Youth+Family Coordinator
- i. There were 37 Synod youths (3rd-5th grade) at the Seekers Event last week.
 - ii. Promoting future events with the Racial Equity Team.
- g. Secretary's Report, Barbara Bilodeau
- i. Reviews/approvals of congregation constitution updates
 - Reviewed and provided recommendations and list of changes to comply with the model passed at the 2022 Church-wide Assembly: none.
 - Concurred – please send final for official approval after voted on by Congregation: none.
 - Approved:
 - Epiphany, Alexandria (January 2025)
 - Abiding Presence, Burke (February 2025)
 - ii. Motions on Gifts of Hope. Motion background: Due to a continuing pattern of decline in the “Gifts of Hope” fund, and following consultation with staff and others involved, the Synod Council agrees to discontinue the Gifts of Hope program at the close of the 2024 campaign. In retiring this model, the Council will seek other ways to provide support to the beneficiaries of the fund. The Council extends its sincere thanks to all who have participated in the administration of the program since its inception and gives thanks to God for the remarkable generosity of all the donors over that period. The Council requests that the Synod Assembly celebrate the accomplishments of this program at its 2025 Assembly.
 - iii. **Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.03.15:** to discontinue the Gifts of Hope program at the close of the 2024 campaign and fiscal year, and to disburse the balance remaining in the Gifts of Hope reserve account to the beneficiaries participating in the 2024 campaign in the same proportion as calculated for the 2024 offerings.
 - iv. There are two changes to be made to the Constitution to remove the Gifts of Hope. The first change, as a Continuing Resolution, can be executed by the Council (“may be adopted or amended by a majority vote of the Synod Assembly or by a two-thirds vote of the Synod Council.”

Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.03.16: to amend the CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD to delete the Continuing Resolution S15.21.A17 which states

This synod authorizes the establishment of Gifts of Hope to increase understanding and strengthen relationships between the beneficiary organizations and the congregations of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod and to raise funds for the beneficiary organizations. The Synod Council shall appoint an ex-officio member to the Gifts of Hope coordinating committee. The Synod Council shall approve any changes to this statement of purpose.

- v. The second is a change to a Bylaw, which must be presented at the Synod Assembly. ("This synod may amend its bylaws at any meeting of the Synod Assembly by a two-thirds vote of voting members of the assembly present and voting.") **Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.03.17:** to present to the Synod Assembly a motion to amend the CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD, S11.01.15 to change the Bylaw removing oversight of the Gifts of Hope, as follows: *S11.01.15. There shall be a Stewardship and Mission Support Table, which shall assist congregations in their ongoing stewardship ministries that make and grow disciples of Jesus Christ, and shall provide leadership in developing a unified mission funding strategy for all synodical, churchwide, and cooperative ministries. This table shall communicate and interpret the mission work of this synod, ~~and shall oversee Gifts of Hope.~~ This table shall be accountable to the bishop and to the Synod Council.*

h. Vice President's Report, VP Slagle Peck

- i. **Moved/Seconded/Adopted: SC25.03.18** To approve the draft 2026 Budget for submission to the Synod Assembly.
- ii. Update on the Bishop Transition was presented by Katharyn Wheeler. Discernment Day is today 22 March.
- iii. Group zoom picture was taken as several people are leaving council after the Synod Assembly.

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

- a. Update from ELCA Church Council, Sheena Foster – see written report
- b. Open floor for updates from liaisons – none.

4. New Business – none.

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 with prayer.

Next Scheduled Meeting: May 10, 2025 at The Lamb Center, Fairfax, VA

Respectfully submitted,
Don Wallace