

SIERRA PACIFIC SYNOD

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Synod Council Minutes , May 1, 2013

Our Savior Lutheran Church

2101 N. Fruit Ave, Fresno

Present: Bp. Mark Holmerud, Doug Miller, Linda Lownes, Dennis Jones, James Anderberg, Pr. Adisa Armand-Miller, Gisela Daetz, Elaine H. Whitney, Pr. Sarah Meckler-Tate, Steve Herzfeldt, Pr. Jeff Johnson, Perry Gray-Reneberg, Pr. Newt Kerney, Rosie Ellis-Falik, Pr. Susan Birkelo, Mark Nelson, Larry Struve, Pr. Carl Wilfrid, Kristina Garabedian, Sue Hertless, Sheela Boddu

Absent: Joseph A. Husary, Kay Valler

Staff: Bishop's Associate Pr. Nancy Feniuk-Nelson, Assistant to the Bishop Pr. Jose Luis la Torre Cuadros, Karen Idler, AIM, Executive Assistant, Director for Evangelical Mission Terrance Jacob

Guests: Joyce Objorden, Beth Auburn

The meeting was called to order at 2:10 PM by Vice President Doug Miller.

Pr. Sarah Meckler-Tate offered devotions. She shared thoughts from "Some Assembly Required" by Anne Lamott

Adoption of Amended Agenda

SC13.05.35MSC (Daetz/Garabedian) approved the removal of the Finance Committee appointment from the Consent Agenda.

SC13.05.36MSC (Gray-Reneberg/Daetz) approved the amended agenda with these additional items:

- Motion to Change the Standing Rules for Assembly voting procedures to allow for electronic voting beginning in 2014 Assembly
- Distribution of \$75,000 gift from St. Andrew's for Mission Outreach
- Recommending that Pr. Bill Wong be allowed Voice at the Synod Assembly
- Move Pastor Bill Knezovich's greeting to end of meeting
- Request permission of council to support the book *A Humble Walk for Justice* (Larry Struve)

SC13.05.37MSC (Daetz/Garabedian) Approval of minutes from January 25-26, 2013 Synod Council Meeting

SC13.05.38MSC (Daetz/Garabedian) Approval of minutes from February 23, 2013 Synod Council Meeting

Consent Agenda

SC13.05.39MSC (Daetz/Garabedian) approve the consent agenda as modified:

- Approve Constitutional Changes by St Mark's, Fairfield
- Approve Constitutional Changes, Faith Lutheran, Pioneer
- Approve Constitutional Changes, Paradise Lutheran, Paradise
- Appoint to the Candidacy Committee
 - Rev. Thomas Gable, Marin Lutheran, Corte Madera
 - Rev. Derek Harman, Messiah Lutheran, Redwood City
 - Rev. Dorothy Lindstrom, Shepard of the Valley, Merced

SC13.05.40MSC (Lownes/Armand-Miller) Appoint Cheryl Foster to Finance Committee

Report from Bishop Holmerud

The Nominating Committee will take the "Toolkit for Synod Bishop Election" provided by churchwide and work with Synod Council to develop a process for the selection of a SPS bishop next year. Bishop Mark will not participate in this process in any way as he plans to allow his name to go forward as a candidate for Bishop.

Bp. Mark is looking forward to hearing keynote addresses from Dr. David Lose and participating in bible studies led by Pr. Susan Briehl.

He reminded those present that at the last Synod Council meeting we struggled, again, with discussion of the proposed budget. He reported that he has followed the example of US Senate leadership who have appointed a group of eight senators known as the "Gang of 8" to develop a proposal on the very controversial subject of immigration reform.

He has created our own Synod Council "Gang of 8" to tackle the very controversial subject of the synod budget. This group of 8 is comprised of Pr. Matt Smutz, Larry Struve, Pr. Carl Wilfrid, Elaine Whitney, Pr. Newt Kerney (moderator), Pr. Barbara Foltin, Gisela Daetz and one more pastor. Pr. Nancy Fenuik-Nelson and Treasurer Linda Lownes will provide staff resources to the group. While there is very limited time available, Bishop Mark has charged this group with the development of a consensus budget that could replace the recommended "Continuation Budget" being proposed.

The Resolutions Committee has received four additional resolutions that they are vetting. After vetting, these resolutions will be brought to the Assembly to determine if 2/3 of the voting members will support their being heard and considered at the Assembly.

Pr. Nancy Fenuik-Nelson thanked synod staff for all the additional work that they perform to make each Assembly possible.

Pr. Katy Grindberg distributed copies of the updated SPS vision statement. She indicated that it will play a very large part in the upcoming Assembly.

Treasurer's Report

Linda Lownes reported that she and Debbie Cook are still doing catch up work ie: wire transfers to Rawanda, processing Designated Giving forms efficiently, etc. They are making progress.

Linda indicated that she received the yearly Audit Report. She wanted to share a couple of recommendations made by the auditor. One recommendation was that the Synod develop policies prescribing the roles and responsibilities of those involved with budget and finance including how they interact with one another. A second recommendation was that the Synod contract with a Certified Public Accountant for one to one and a half days a month to provide us better fiscal controls.

Linda reported that congregational mission support documents have been included with Synod Assembly documents. Receipts from congregation to the Synod as of the end of March reflect giving at 106% of what was expected by this time. Linda also distributed a report on the status of all three of our accounts, where they are investment and the investment return rates for each account-which she described as quite favorable given the economy.

Linda reported that as part of her budget presentation at the Synod Assembly she will compare our synod staffing levels with staffing levels at other synods. While we have the third largest geographical area in the country for a synod, we also have the lowest number of Synod staff members per congregation.

Old Business/New Business

Appointment of temporary assistant to the Bishop

Bishop Mark reported that when the Assistant to the Bishop position in Fresno became vacant, he had informal discussions with a number of pastors and others in the Fresno area. They uniformly told him that they still had a strong desire to have both an office and an Assistant to the Bishop in their geographic area. Bishop Mark, after receiving permission from the Executive Committee, asked Pastor Don Romsa to fill the non-financial duties of the Assistant to the Bishop position at Fresno for a period of four months as a half time position. Pr. Romsa has accepted the call.

Bishop Mark and synod staff are assessing the long term need for the position.

SC13.05.41MSC (Holmerud/Daetz) Approval of housing allowance for Pastor Romsa of \$833 monthly for calendar year 2013 .

Discussion of last Council meeting/results of Survey

Doug Miller discussed the results of the surveys by Synod Council members regarding the January and February Synod Council Meetings. The February 23rd meeting was very difficult.

He highlighted the measurable deterioration of scores from January to February in the following questions:

- We were business-like, result oriented, and functioned like a team
- Discussion was cordial and respectful of members
- We followed parliamentary rules
- The chairperson controlled and guided the meeting

Doug read each of the comments submitted and then shared the following thoughts:

- We are going to have some tough times as we are still evolving as a group.
- We should hang in there-as it will get better and the good times will outweigh the tough times.
- Disagreement is healthy and can lead us to better decisions.
- May need to develop some principles on how we treat each other.
- Using a facilitator could be helpful in dealing with some issues.
- Nobody said it would be easy.

Property Report:

Bishop Mark reported that First English has not yet completed the process to transfer their property to the Synod.

Mt. Cross Governance Issue

Pastor Katy Grindberg brought a recommendation to the SC from the Board.

SC13.05.42MSC (Johnson/Daetz) to approve the following recommendation of the Mt. Cross Board:

Mt. Cross would be a Lutheran camping, retreat and conference ministry affiliated with the Sierra Pacific Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This ministry would be reflective of the culture and values of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Membership in the corporation of Mt. Cross Lutheran Camp would be open to the following entities:

1. *Lutheran congregations, regardless of synodical affiliation.*
2. *Congregations of those church bodies with whom the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is in full communion, including the United Methodist, The Presbyterian Church USA, and the Episcopal Church USA.*
3. *The Sierra Pacific Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

The members of the corporation would be given access to representation on the Board of Directors.

Immanuel, San Jose

Bishop Mark reported that in late January Immanuel congregation in San Jose voted to ask the synod for voluntary synodical administration. Bahama Synod provided us a draft "synodical administration"

agreement that we tailored to use with Immanuel. In March the Immanuel Council signed the agreement after a vote at a congregational meeting. The congregation had become unable to pay their monthly mortgage payment on church property of \$4,000. The current interim pastor's contract was expiring.

Bishop Holmerud recommended that the interim pastor's contract not be renewed. He offered them some potential candidates to serve as interim pastor. Bishop Mark asked Jim White to act as the interim administrator. Linda Lownes was intended to be made a signator on all existing congregational accounts.

Subsequently, the congregation met without including Jim White. They voted to withdraw from synodical administration that had been granted at their request. Bishop Mark intends to develop a "listening team" to visit the congregation and gather information that will be shared with the Synod Council and used in determining how to proceed.

Synod Non-financial Audit

Bishop Mark reported forty eight people responded to an on line survey sent out by Churchwide. The survey is designed to generate information on the health and vitality of a Synod. Results will be shared and discussed at the June Synod Council meeting.

California Lutheran University

Howie Wennes, President Emeritus of California Lutheran University (CLU), updated the Council on CLU. He indicated that the student body of 4200 makes CLU the largest Lutheran college in the country. He spoke of progress on the pending merger between CLU and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS). He indicated that he would love to meet with congregations who might want to participate in the establishment of additional endowed chairs in youth and family ministry or in the alternative to give scholarships of \$2500 or more on a one time or yearly basis.

Report on upgrade of Computer Equipment/Plan B

Pastor Nelson reported that the synod is in the process of moving their computer operations off of aging hard drives and to the cloud through the use of Microsoft 365 technology. This will cost the Synod a good deal less money than replacing aging hard drives.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS:

SC13.05.43MSC (Wilfrid/Struve) change VI.6.E of the Standing Rules of Order for Assemblies to add "or electronic" in line one after "written". The new sentence will read "*The elections for all positions in the Synod shall be by written or electronic ballot.*"

Distribution of \$75,000 gift from St. Andrew's for Mission Outreach

SC13.05.44MSC (Lownes/Daetz) the Synod tithes 10% of the gift (\$7,500) to the ELCA

SC13.05.45MSC (Lownes/Boddu) the Synod use \$67,500 of the gift toward miscellaneous income in the 2014/15 budget.

Pastor Bill Wong

SC13.05.46 (Holmerud/Daetz) to allow Pr. Bill Wong be allowed Voice and Vote at the Synod Assembly.

He is interim pastor in Rohnert Park and still on roster of a Synod in Ohio.

Larry Struve

SC13.05.47 (Struve/Kerney) to give Larry Struve permission to market his book *A Humble Walk for Justice* at Synod events to raise funds to support the LAMN.

Pr. Bill Knezovich of Our Savior welcomed the Synod Council. His congregation provided a nice meeting site, a delicious dinner, and gracious hospitality to the Council. Pastor Bill and about a dozen members of his congregation shared Our Savior's story. A story of the growth, outreach and compassion by a congregation that is doing amazing things despite huge challenges. It was very inspiring for the Council as it prepared for the Synod Assembly.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dennis Jones

Synod Secretary