

**SIERRA PACIFIC SYNOD
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
SYNOD COUNCIL MINUTES June 26-27, 2015-Final
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP, SACRAMENTO**

Present: Bp. Mark Holmerud, V.P. Elaine Whitney, Treasurer Linda Lownes, Secretary Dennis Jones, Pr. Jeff Johnson, Jeff Pennington, Pr. Tuhina Rasche, Stephanie Leong, Jack Pease, Ed Nelson, Pr. Gabriele Schroeder, Sheela Boddu, Pr. Patricia Vargas, Jordan Haley, Mark Nelson, Sue Michaelson, Larell Fineren, Andrew Stevens, Pr. Kathryn Gulbranson, Pr. Don Haven

Staff: Pr. Nancy Feniuk Nelson, Pr. Carlton Monroe- DEM, Pr. Katy Grindberg, Laurie Gaumer, Debbie Cook,

Absent: Eileen Fite, Theresa Landi

Visitors: Cammie Chen, Irv Lownes, Pr. Jocelyn Hughes-Belfry Ministry in Davis

The meeting was called to order at 2:15 PM on June 26, 2015 by Vice President Elaine Whitney. She asked all members to introduce themselves to the group.

Pr. Tuhina gave an opening devotion.

Additions to the Agenda

Dennis presented two potential agenda additions:

Addition to consent agenda

- Call to Interim Ministry Pr. Pamela Griffith Pond

Addition to New Business

- Young Adult Strategy for Ministry Proposal- Pr. Jeff

SC15.6.39MSC (Johnson/Schroeder) moved adoption of the amended agenda including the two items above.

January 30-31, 2015 Synod Council Minutes

SC15.6.40MSC (Haley/Pease) moved approval of the minutes as amended with several spelling and wording changes.

May 28, 2015 Synod Council Minutes

SC15.6.41MSC (Johnson/Pease) moved to approve May 28, 2015 Council minutes after adding language regarding future discussions with the Finance Committee on how best to respond to the audit recommendations. This vote took place on Saturday.

Consent Agenda:

- On Leave from Call Status for Karen Idler, AIM
- On Leave from Call Status for Rev. Daniel Severson
- On Leave from Call Status for Rev. Robin Elizabeth Ressler
- Call to Interim Ministry Pr. Pamela Griffith Pond

SC15.6.41MSC (Johnson/Holmerud) moved approval of consent agenda including item that was added.

Synod Council Member Orientation

Elaine led an orientation for both new and existing council members that began with a review of sections of the constitution and bylaws pertaining to the council and its members. She also shared a document that summarized the high points of Roberts Rules of Order. There was discussion about the rules pertaining to e-voting and our practices. The orientation concluded with a discussion of commonly used motions.

Pr. Gulbranson provided devotions.

COVENANT

Pr. Jeff presented and described the new draft Covenant that he, Sheela and Jordan put together as requested by the Council. There was discussion of both the existing and newly drafted covenants and several amendments were discussed and agreed to by the group during an informal discussion. The changes included:

- Adding “prayerfully” between ‘and’ and ‘support’ in line one
- Trading “respecting” for “encouraging” and “encouraging” for “respecting” in the fifth bullet
- Adding “not speaking twice unless everyone has had the opportunity to speak once” at the end of the sixth bullet

SC15.6.42MSC (Johnson/Rasche) moved adoption of the amended newly drafted Covenant.

SC15.6.43MSC (M. Nelson/Rasche) moved that the covenant be translated into other languages.

SC15.6.44MSC (Johnson/Stevens) moved that we publish the covenant immediately in both English and Spanish and encourage its translation and sharing in the diverse languages spoken by people and in parishes throughout our synod.

SC15.6.45MSC (Johnson/Pease) moved the committee be discharged.

Bishop's Report/Staff Reports

Bp. Mark prayed for Pr. Jose Luis and Karen as they pursue new opportunities. He talked about the challenges for the remaining staff as they determine how to operate now.

Bp. Mark indicated that he is spending more time in the Sacramento office. He is relying on telephone and other means of communication rather than always visiting in person. Deans will continue to oversee pastoral care issues. He has been talking to a consultant about staffing configurations. He is still considering establishing a number of "synod ministers". He may begin by establishing three new positions, one urban, one suburban and one rural to test the concept. He initially thought Carlton would work out of Sacramento office-but determined that most of his work is in the Bay Area. He has asked Pr. Katy to move to the Sacramento area and work in the Sacramento office so that she can service the 100 or so congregations serviced by that office.

He will attend the national youth gathering in Detroit. He has already met with some of the youth. He is planning to go on sabbatical in August or September of next year.

Pr. Nancy

She will be taking responsibility for candidacy which Karen managed in about 30 hours a month. They have decided, in consultation with Exec Committee, to have all synod offices closed on Fridays and have synod staff work four ten hour days-Monday through Thursday.

Pr. Carlton

He is in the fifth month of his call and very much committed to visit all who invite him. He is spending a lot of time on orientation and training. He has responsibility for stewardship, mission development/redevelopment, and new start/re-start congregations.

Liaison Responsibilities

There was discussion of the various ministry partners and committees to whom we provide synod council liaisons. The Synod Resource Center was added to the list. It became clear during the discussion that some liaison assignments are very busy as there are many meetings to attend-while others require very little. There was a brief discussion of each ministry partner group and each committee to try and help council members volunteer for the assignment(s) that best meet their needs and skills. Each council member submitted a list of their top three choices for Liaison assignments.

Later in the meeting, Elaine shared which council member was assigned to each position. Dennis will provide the final list to all members

Bp. Mark asked that Dennis get in touch with each agency and tell them who the newly appointed Synod Liaison person for their organization is.

Treasurer's Report

Linda distributed "Treasurer's Report" dated 6/26/15 and discussed that document as well as the two fiscal documents she had sent out previously. She indicated that they have been looking for a new financial institution as a result of dissatisfaction with our current financial institution.

A recommendation that came out of the audit was that we have a CPA do the reconciliation and closing each month. Lou Smith, who is a CPA, volunteered to do that. With his busy schedule, this will mean that monthly closings will not be concluded as timely as they should be.

Linda distributed information on mission support by congregation. She asked members to look at the congregations within their districts and encourage them to make mission support a priority.

Sister Synod Funds

We receive funds from 2nd mile giving for our sister synods (we have three-Rwanda, Taiwan and El Salvador). The Executive Committee suggested that Linda ask the global mission group to suggest how to distribute the \$9,000 set aside for "sister synods" between the three synods. She is awaiting a response.

Larell talked about concerns expressed by the auditor over the Pay-pal account. The concerns seemed to focus on the time it took to process funds received from Pay-pal. Lou Smith will put something in the file on the Pay-pal issue that responds to the concerns raised in the audit.

Thrivent Investments

Pr. Jeff expressed unhappiness that we still have funds invested in Thrivent-given their recent policy changes.

SC15.6.46MS (Johnson/Fineren) moved that we transfer into the ELCA's Endowment Fund the monies currently invested with Thrivent and the Mission Investment Fund (Warner Trust Fund).

SC15.6.47MS (Fineren/Schroeder) made a substitute motion that we keep existing MIF investments and move existing Thrivent investments into the ELCA Endowment Portfolio.

SC15.6.48MSC (Ed Nelson/Johnson) moved the previous two motions be referred to the investment committee and that they be asked to report back in September to the Synod Council with a recommendation.

SC15.6.49MSC (Johnson/Fineren) moved to rescind the decision above (**SC15.6.48**) to refer to the Investment Team the issues described in **SC15.6.46** and **SC15.6.47**). Passed with more than 2/3 vote as required.

SC15.6.50 MSC (Gulbranson/Johnson) moved that Greg Jahnke (or another Thrivent representative if he is unavailable) be invited to the September meeting where Thrivent will be discussed.

Property Updates

Bp. Mark and Jack reported on our four properties. They indicated that at the September meeting there will be a report on all four properties regarding whether we should be contemplating putting them on the market or keeping them and, if so, under what conditions.

Morning Devotions

Bp. Mark and Pr. Katheryn conducted a Service of Repentance and Mourning provided by Bp. Eaton in remembrance of those who lost their lives in Charleston, South Carolina.

Committee Appointments

SC15.6.51MSC (Johnson/Boddu) moved the nominees for the Synod Consultation Committee and the Discipline Committee presented by the Bishop:

Synod Consultation Committee

Ms. Barbara Malispina, Christ the Good Shepherd, San Jose, term expires 2021

Ms. Etenesh Benti, Christ Oromo, San Lorenzo, term expires 2021

Discipline Committee

Rev. Annemarie Burke, All Saints, Novato, term expires 2021

Mr. Randy Preshun, Christ the Good Shepherd, San Jose, term expires 2021

Mr. Perry Gray-Reneberg, Calvary, Eureka, term expires 2021

Rev. Adisa Armand-Miller, Hope, Santa Clara, term expires 2021

SC15.6.52MSC (Michaelson/Leong) moved that Pr. Frank Espegren chair the Synod Consultation Committee for the next 2 years

Selection of the Executive Committee

SC15.6.53MSC (Michaelson/Fineren) moved nominations for the executive committee be opened

Discussion was held about the committee, its responsibilities, meeting frequency, and expectations. The following nominations were made:

Nominated	Accepted /Declined.
Pr. Jeff	Declined
Larell	Declined
Jack	Accepted
Jordan	Declined
Pr. Gabi	Accepted
Pr. Tuhina	Declined
Jeff Pennington	Accepted

SC15.6.54MSC (Fineren/Johnson) moved that nominations be closed and the three individuals who accepted nominations be appointed.

Synod Resource Center

Ed Nelson presented the request of the Synod Resource Center Board to have permission to do fund raising. He indicated that Janet Lane started as the Director of the center this week after the three requirements that the Council had established before she was hired were met. She works 11 hours a week at the Center and receives an annual salary of \$7,500.

SC15.6.55MSC (Johnson/Ed Nelson) moved the council grant permission to the Synod Resource Center Board to raise funds among the congregations and members of our synod. **PASSED** as amended-see below

SC15.6.56MSC (Holmerud/Fineren) moved to amend the motion to limited fund raising to the 6 items in the request which are:

Soliciting support:

1. We would like to submit grant requests to any congregational endowment funds that we are aware of.
2. We would like to submit grant requests to the Synodical Women of the ELCA, and to active congregational W-ELCA units that we are aware of.
3. We would like to invite the South Valley Conference W-ELCA board to consider designating a portion of the annual conference offering to the Resource Center

- periodically. (This Conference is the only Conference which continues to have an annual W-ELCA event, and at which offerings are received for various ministries.)
4. We would like to invite the Synod Council to consider designating a portion of the offerings received at Synod Assembly to the Resource Center periodically.
 5. Subscriptions/membership fees/user fees: We have discussed this in depth with some difficulty in coming to an agreement. We feel strongly that the interaction between the Resource Center and its users is a “ministry” which is very much appreciated so asking for a fee needs more discussion. We know there are congregations who could easily pay an annual “fee,” but there are others for whom this would be difficult. One idea is “congregations could be invited to support the RC with an annual gift of \$50 to \$100.” This would not be mandatory, and it is unknown how many congregations would want or be able to do this. If the synod council has a recommendation, we would be glad to hear it. *(Note: 94 congregations used the RC during 2014-2015. To meet the proposed budget prepared a couple months ago of \$14,952 with **only** users contributing, it would require each of the 94 users to provide \$159. This is information-only; we are not recommending this.)*
 6. Thrivent Choice and Thrivent Action – we will work with these. We would like to send detailed instructions to users inviting them to offer their Thrivent dollars for the RC. We will include this invitation in our RC newsletter, and as an enclosure when mailing resources.

Pr. Johnson Abstained

Proposal for selection of Voting Members to 2016 Churchwide

SC15.6.57MSC (Haven /Leong) moved that Executive Committee be given authority to select the nine voting members for churchwide from the fifteen candidates identified at the Synod Assembly

Reflections on the Synod Assembly

Several members and staff reported mostly very positive responses and reports. We received 90 evaluations from voting members who attended. There was discussion of the district caucuses that occurred at the Synod Assembly, how they were received/whether they should be continued.

Some reported very positively of the great conversations that took place while votes were being counted in their district caucuses. They commented that the district caucus at Assembly always has the best attendance. Other experiences were not as positive. When votes were being counted in other caucuses, some of the pastors in attendance shared jokes which were not particularly productive and which seemed to leave lay attendees out of the conversation.

Bp. Mark talked about the potential of a different process to choose council nominees and Churchwide assembly voters. This process would occur outside of the Synod Assembly and allow the elimination of the need for district caucuses. No conclusions were reached during the discussion.

There was a discussion about how the decision this year to increase Synod Assembly fees in order to generate a \$10,000 profit. It was reported that we received a lot of negative feedback from congregations that are financially struggling-some of which decided not to attend the Assembly. No one, however, has made a suggestion about how to raise the \$10,000 which was projected to be generated by the Assembly in another way.

It appears that the \$10,000 income goal will not be reached.

Mission Support Experiment

Bp. Mark has not heard anything positive back from Churchwide about our synod being included with the five synods selected by ELCA church council to participate in the Mission Support Experiment. This experiment allows the five synods to reduce their financial commitment to churchwide to 35% while picking up the funding of a lot of the costs and activities historically funded by churchwide.

Young Adult proposal

Pr. Jeff and Pr. Jocelyn Hughes, an Episcopal pastor from the Belfry Ministry in Davis, discussed the creation of a new proposal to emphasize young adult participation patterned after the focus on high school youth that has been so successful.

SC15.6.58MSC (Johnson/Michaelsen) moved that the synod council create a synod-wide framework /strategic intention for mission and ministry with and among young adults.

Pastor Jeff explained that he hoped this framework would lead to the possible creation of a new discipling team for young adult ministry, a remedy for the ongoing disenfranchisement of young adults active in center based campus ministries, improve coordination among ministries like campus ministries, Lutheran Volunteer Corps, LEVN, etc. at work within our synod; and create a working group composed of representatives of ministries with and among young adults. It was his hope that there would either be a proposal or progress report at the September meeting.

Gender Inclusivity

SC15.6.59MSC (Stevens/Holmerud) moved that in order to fulfill our obligations as outlined in Synod Assembly resolution 2015-2, we constitute an *ad hoc* committee on gender identity inclusivity and refer the actions included in the resolution to the committee.

Andrew indicated a willingness to serve on this committee as did Jordan and Larell. Bishop Mark suggested that the Synod Secretary serve on the committee as there might be constitutional issues to consider.

SC15.6.60MSC (Michaelsen/Leong) moved adjournment at 12:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dennis Jones, Synod Secretary

SYNOD COUNCIL MEETINGS FOR 2015/16

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>
Sept 25-26, 2015	Sacramento Office
Jan 29-30, 2016	Bay Area Congregation
March 12, 2016	Sacramento Office-Budget Meeting
June 2, 2016	Reno (pre Synod Assembly)
June 24-25, 2016	Sacramento