

**Sierra Pacific Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Synod Council Minutes  
January 27 – 28, 2017  
Office of the Bishop, Burlingame**

**Present:** Bishop Mark Holmerud, Vice President Elaine Whitney, Treasurer Linda Lownes, Secretary Jeff Pennington, Pr. Patricia Vargas, Sue Michaelsen, Stephanie Leong, Theresa Landi, Jordan Haley, Andrew Stevens, Paula Barton, Larell Fineren, Pr. Susan Birkelo, Gail Kiyomura, Ed Nelson, Pr. Tita Valeriano, Randy Presuhn, Pr. Gregg Brown, Sherrill Heinz

**Absent:** Pr. Tuhina Rasche, Tony Burns

**Staff:** Pr. Katy Grindberg, Pr. Kathryn Gulbranson, Debbie Cook, Patty Monteiro

**Visitors:** Parliamentarian Cammie Chen, Lou Smith (Finance Committee), Irv Lownes, Dave Anderson (Our Redeemer/Nuestro Redentor, Livingston), Edwiges Chávez (Our Redeemer/Nuestro Redentor, Livingston), Elsi Villatoro (Our Redeemer/Nuestro Redentor, Livingston)

The meeting was called to order by Vice President Elaine Whitney at 2:25 PM. Randy Presuhn led an opening devotion drawn from the *Book of Concord*.

**Adoption of the Agenda**

**SC17.01.01 MSC** (Michaelsen/Leong) moved to adopt agenda as presented.

**Approval of Minutes of December 10, 2016 Synod Council Meeting**

**SC17.01.02 MSC** (Presuhn/Barton) moved approval of minutes.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

**SC17.01.03 MSC** (Haley/Lownes) moved approval of Consent Agenda.

- Renewal of call of Rev. Ruth Hanusa as Hospice Chaplain for Saint Mary's Regional Medical Center, Reno, NV
- Appointment of Mary Hanna-Weir, member of Grace Lutheran Church, Palo Alto, CA, to a 3-year term as an ELCA lay person on the Mt. Cross Board
- Approval of new constitution for the Sierra Pacific Synod Youth Committee
- Changes to the congregational constitution of the following congregations:
  - Peace Lutheran Church, Grass Valley, CA
  - St. Paul's Lutheran Family, Carson City, NV
  - Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Concord, CA

- Epiphany Lutheran Church, San Leandro, CA
- Community Lutheran Church, West Sacramento, CA
- Approval of housing allowance in order to benefit from provisions of Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code
  - Bishop Mark Holmerud
  - Rev. Katy Grindberg
  - Rev. Nancy Feniuk-Nelson
- On-leave-from-call status for Rev. Gabriele Schroeder
- Extension of on-leave-from-call status for one year, pending approval from the Conference of Bishops, and to forward this request to the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops for consideration at their March 2017 Meeting
  - Rev. John R. Ridenour
  - Rev. Gwendolyn Hermanson Schaefer

### **Bishop's Report**

Starting February 14, Chrism Masses to be held in each new conference, and in Conference 1 there will be two. In the morning, rostered ministers and lay leaders will be gathering in one congregation for the Mass, and then the Bishop will hold office hours for anyone interested in dropping in. That evening, there will be a dinner "Chili with the Bishop," where people—both rostered and lay, can just drop in for dinner and chatting with the Bishop.

Working to populate the Consultation and Discipline Committees with both rostered ministers and laity.

Synod assembly planning is going well. Will have the opportunity to celebrate Cinco de Mayo during assembly in Fresno.

Bishop sent a letter to President Trump, and also posted the letter on his Facebook page, and has been getting poignant responses to his post.

### **Vice-President's Report**

Reminded us that the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is still so great, and he never lived to see 40. Read excerpts from Dr. King's speech "The Other America." Freed and renewed, we can do great things.

### **Budget visioning exercise**

How to encourage the Synod Assembly to put the synod's money where its heart is?

We are centered in Jesus. **Good News, Great Need!**

- Becoming people of God in relationship with the people they serve
- Not forgetting the Triune God
- Staffing

We are part of the Body of Christ, God's word made flesh, **Incarnation.**

- Discipling Teams
- Periodic reports from council members on the work of the Discipling Team or ministry with which the member liaises
- Communication with Congregations on Discipling Team and other synodical ministry opportunities

We are **Called** to be church together.

- Assembly workshop: congregations as leaders
- Organizational skills
- Listening sessions

We meet God in **Serving in Community.**

- Need how-to resources on addressing critical issues, e.g., the basic steps, even bullet-pointed list of things to do, on how to organize a feeding the homeless program (getting health department approvals, need for security, etc.)
- Congregation-to-congregation peer mentoring and modeling; congregations which have successfully done a program can model that program for others; sharing of best practices
- Incorporate "assessment," particularly spiritual assessment, into programming; not measuring outputs, e.g., the number of people served, but measuring the spiritual return that a congregation and parishioners receive from doing the programming

### **Treasurer's Report**

Following crash of the synod's remote server, are now backing up accounts in the cloud.

Audit, to be done again by Gilbert & Associates, is scheduled for late February.

Request for 2017 plans for Mission Support have been made to congregations, and those plans have been trickling in from congregations. More are expected following the annual meeting of many congregations which will be held on the last Sunday of January.

2016 fourth-quarter statements will be sent out to congregations shortly.

### **Discussion of proposed FY 2018-19 synod budget**

Tithe vs. offering—with online giving, many people are only “tithing” and not necessarily making additional “offerings”

Starting with FY 2018-19, it is believed there may be no New Start/Restart grants coming from Churchwide.

Council needs to make the decisions on where to make cuts to get to a revenue-neutral budget.

### **Resolutions regarding Lutheran Social Services of Northern California**

**SC17.01.04 MSC** (Stevens/Fineren) moved approval of the change in the by-laws of Lutheran Social Services of Northern California as requested by the Board of Directors of LSS NorCal.

#### Article III, Section 2. Number and Qualifications of Directors

(a) Number, Election and Term of Office. The authorized number of directors shall be at least twelve (12) but no more than twenty (20). At least a majority of the members of the board at any given time shall be members of Lutheran congregations. Each director shall serve for a term of ~~four (4)~~ two (2) years and/or until a successor has been selected and qualified. Directors may not serve more than ~~two (2)~~ four (4) consecutive terms. The directors shall be selected in the following manner:

- 1) At least five (5) but no more than eight (8) directors shall be appointed by the Sierra Pacific Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as designator;
- 2) At least four (4) but no more than six (6) directors shall be appointed by the California-Nevada-Hawaii District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) as designator;
- 3) No more than six (6) directors shall be elected by the Board of Directors.

**SC17.01.05 MSC** (Michaelsen/Lownes) moved approval of the appointment of Ms. Patricia Leslie (Lutheran Church of the Incarnation, Davis) as a new member to the Board of Directors of Lutheran Social Services of Northern California.

### **Resolutions regarding Elder Care Alliance**

**SC17.01.06 MSC** (Michaelsen/Kiyomura) moved approval of the First Amendment to the Fifth Amended and Restated Bylaws of ECA, which:

- 1) reaffirms keeping the size of the board at 14 directors;
- 2) replaces the two Dignity Health nominees with Joint appointments, raising that total from two to four; and

- 3) changes the board of director terms from one 1-year term followed by two 3-year terms to simply three 3-year terms with a maximum of nine years served.

**SC17.01.07 MSC** (Leong/Fineren) moved reappointment of board members:

- Rahul Joglekar, joint appointee, 2nd term (extended) expiring 2017
- Lynne Katzmann, joint appointee, 1st term (extended) expiring 2018
- Raja Sekaran, formerly Dignity Health moving to joint appointee, 1st term (extended) expiring 2018
- Michael Telleen, Lutheran appointee, 2nd term (extended) expiring 2018
- Tom Briody, Lutheran appointee, initial term expiring 2019

**Appointments to synod committees and discipling teams**

Council is keenly looking forward to receiving the nominations coming out of the Nominating Committee; may need to convene a telephone meeting in February or March in order to approve the nominations

**Request for synod financial sponsorship of Reformation 500 Anniversary worship service at Grace Cathedral**

**SC17.01.08 MS** (Stevens/Fineren) moved to fund event at \$2000 using money from Mission Investment fund.

**SC17.01.08a MSC** (Presuhn/Barton) moved to amend to add an additional \$2000 of synod funds to the financial sponsorship.

**VOTED:**

**SC17.01.08 MSC** To sponsor the Reformation 500 Anniversary worship service at Grace Cathedral with \$4000: \$2000 from Mission Investment fund, and \$2000 from synod funds.

**Non-required amendments to the Constitution for Synods as approved by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly**

**SC17.01.09 MSC** (Holmerud/Haley) moved approval of the following amendments from the Constitution for Synods as approved by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly, to be presented to the 2017 Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly for approval:

- S7.22.
- S7.24.
- S7.27.
- S10.03.
- S13.11.
- S13.12.
- S14.13.
- S14.14.

- S14.15.
- S14.17.
- S14.25.
- S14.33.
- S14.34.
- S14.42.
- S14.47.

**SC17.01.10 MSC** (Stevens/Haley) moved approval of amendment S8.55. from the Constitution for Synods as approved by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly, with the number “four” in the blanks, to read: **If the treasurer is appointed by the Synod Council, the Synod Council shall appoint a new treasurer to a four-year term.**

This amendment to the Synod Constitution will be presented to the 2017 Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly for approval, together with those approved by SC17.01.09.

### **Warner Trust**

2017 recipients include:

- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Gilroy, California; \$815.00 to support the purchase of *Spark Children’s Story Bibles* for the children of Good Shepherd’s Vineyard Christian Preschool
- Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Auburn, California; \$2000.00 to support the nutrition education program for children, youth and families of Bethlehem Lutheran Church
- Faith Lutheran Church, Pioneer, California; \$2000.00 to support the Faith Lutheran Church Summer Church Day Camp project
- American Lutheran Church, Woodland, California; \$1360.00 to support the nursery project at American Lutheran Church

For future, find ways to more widely publicize, offer assistance to congregations interested in applying on ways to successfully apply; ask applicants to indicate how much of the entire budget is the request that they are making, i.e., is the congregation able to provide matching funds, etc.

### **Special Synod Call**

**SC17.01.11 MSC** (Michaelsen/Presuhn) moved to extend special synod council call to Pastor Scott Sorenson to serve at St. John’s Program for Real Change in Sacramento.

**Budget discussion cont.**

Need to stress the idea that we are Church together, to find ways for the Council to be in support of the budget and to be able to articulate this support to Congregations and the Synod Assembly

**Presentation by Dave Anderson, Edwiges Chávez, Elsi Villatoro, and Pastor Patricia Vargas from Our Redeemer Lutheran Church/La Iglesia Luterana Nuestro Redentor, Livingston, California**

Council welcomed a presentation by representatives from Nuestro Redentor/Our Redeemer. They spoke about their bilingual/bicultural congregation and its ministry and presented a short video about the congregation. They also presented to Council a proposal that the Synod deed the Synod's property in Hilmar, California (eight miles from Livingston) to Our Redeemer/Nuestro Redentor, which in turn would then oversee and rent out the Hilmar property to the current congregation using that property, Nova Esperança Portuguese church, as a way of securing additional financial support for Our Redeemer/Nuestro Redentor.

If the idea of deeding the property over is not a possibility, they inquired about the possibility of becoming the property managers of the Hilmar property.

**Property Committee Report**

Oromo Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, San Lorenzo, California

- Property has been deeded from the Synod over to the Oromo Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church congregation and the deed has been recorded

Hilmar, California

- Receive \$400/month in rent for the house
- Receive \$1400/month in rent for sanctuary and Sunday school
- Repairs have been done, e.g., new front door, repair of a ramp
- Building maintenance has been deferred, and buildings are in need of further repairs and upgrades
- Synod attorney has received notice that the Nova Esperança Portuguese congregation, which currently rents the church, would like to purchase the entire property (church and house)

Because the property is considered more of a liability than an asset, the Property Committee recommends that the property be sold and that we pursue further conversation with Nova Esperança on their desire to purchase the property. Pursuant to Synod policy regarding the disposition of Synod property, the Executive Committee will pursue the sale of the Hilmar property.

### **Synod Planning Committee report and recommendations**

- Synod Assembly Registration Fees for 2017
- Allocation of Synod Assembly Offerings
- Bylaws and Policy Changes related to retired rostered ministers

**SC17.01.12. MSC** (Stevens/Haley) moved approval of the following recommendation from the Synod Planning Committee regarding Synod Assembly Registration Fees for 2017.

- Voting Member Registration: \$200 each
- Non-Voting Registration: \$120 each
- Kids meals: \$ 30 per child (covers two meals)
- Display Tables: \$ 75 each

**SC17.01.13. MSC** (Lownes/Leong) moved approval of the following recommendation from the Synod Planning Committee regarding Synod Assembly 2017 Offering Recipients.

- Financial:
  - Local: Fresno Area Lutheran Hunger Network
  - Synod: Synod Candidacy Committee for Scholarships
  - Churchwide: World Hunger
- In-Kind Contributions:
  - Marjoree Mason Center in Fresno, a shelter for women and children who are victims of domestic violence
    - Diapers and personal items for women will be donated.

**SC17.01.14. MSC** (Leong/Stevens) moved approval of the change in bylaw S7.22.01. reducing to 5% the total number on the combined retired rosters who shall be selected as voting members to the Synod Assembly.

**S7.22.01.** Not less than 90 days prior to the convening of the Assembly, the Secretary of the Synod shall mail a letter to all retired ordained ministers, retired associates in ministry, retired deaconesses, and retired diaconal ministers on the combined rosters of the Synod, asking if they are willing to serve as a voting member of that year's Assembly. From the list of those who reply affirmatively, the secretary shall designate a number equal to ~~10~~5% of the total number on the combined rosters who shall be selected as voting members. The names of those replying affirmatively shall be placed in alphabetical order, and the persons selected shall be chosen alphabetically, moving down the list from the alphabetical point where the previous year's list of voting members left off. Alternates shall be designated by continuing down the list in alphabetical order, but alternates who are not seated as voting members will continue to be eligible the next year. The secretary shall notify all retired rostered persons of the results of this process.

Pursuant to †S18.21. of the Constitution of the Sierra Pacific Synod, this recommended change to bylaw S7.22.01. will be put forward for approval at the 2017 Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly.

**SC17.01.16. MSC** (Fineren/Leong) moved that Council consider proposing a revision to the Synod Constitution bylaws whereby those non-voting retired rostered ministers, if they register as a visitor, would be granted voice, though not vote, beginning with the 2018 Synod Assembly.

It subsequently came to light that a provision already exists in the Synod Constitution S7.23. to allow for the privilege of voice but not vote for all retired rostered ministers at all meetings of the Synod Assembly.

**SC17.01.16. MSC** (Fineren/Valeriano) moved that Synod Council adopt a policy that only registration costs would be paid by the Synod for retired rostered ministers serving as voting members. The retired ministers would be responsible for paying for their housing and their transportation costs. Council would encourage the congregation where the retired minister holds their membership to help them cover these costs. This policy would take effect beginning with the 2018 Synod Assembly.

#### **Discussion of Synod Assembly Resolution 2016-06**

Will meet telephonically in March to vote on approval of members nominated to serve on the REMS Discipling Team.

An ad-hoc group will also be convening to start a grassroots, bottom-up campaign to populate this discipling team and to energize its work and ministry.

#### **Budget discussion cont.**

**SC17.01.17. MS** (Stevens/Fineren) moved that Council present for consideration to the Synod Assembly the two columns representing the Draft Budget and Draft Income-Based Budget, and that Council recommend approval of the Draft Budget.

**SC17.01.17a. MSC** (Nelson/Presuhn) moved changing line 1 in both columns to \$1,890,000.

**SC17.01.17b. MSC** (Holmerud/Haley) moved increasing line 11 by \$30,000 to a total of \$662,400 in the Draft Income-Based Budget.

**VOTED:**

**SC17.01.17. To present for consideration to the Synod Assembly the two columns representing the Draft Budget and Draft Income-Based Budget, and that Council recommend approval of the Draft Budget, with line 1 in both columns to be \$1,890,000 and with line 11 in the Draft Income-Based Budget to be \$662,400.**

Meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

**Scheduled Council Meetings**

**May 3, 2017**            **Fresno-Pre Synod Assembly Meeting, Location to be determined**  
**Devotions: Sherrill**            **Treats: Larell, Andrew**

**June 23-24, 2017**    **Bishop's Office, Sacramento**  
**Devotions: TBD**            **Treats: Gail, Jeff**