

SIERRA PACIFIC SYNOD

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Synod Council Minutes September 26-27, 2014 –Final

Bishop's Office, Sacramento

Present: Bp. Holmerud, Linda Lownes (electronically), Dennis Jones, Pr. Adisa Armand-Miller, Kristina Garabedian, Joseph Husary, Pr. Jeff Johnson, Gisela Daetz, Elaine Whitney, Jack Pease, Sue Hertless, Ed Nelson, Pr. Gabriele Schroeder, James Anderberg, Sheela Boddu, Pr. Patricia Vargas, Jordan Haley, Pr. Carl Wilfrid, Pr. Kathryn Gulbranson, Pr. Tuhina Rasche, Larell Fineren, Nicki Schedler

Staff: Pr. Katy Grindberg, Karen Idler, AIM, Lauri Gaumer, Pr. Jose Luis la Torre IV

Absent: Mark Nelson

Visitors: Pr. Dawn Roginski, Kathye Hamm

Vice President Whitney called the meeting to order at 2:04 PM on September 26, 2014. Elaine had each attendee introduce themselves.

Opening Devotions

Pr. Carl provided devotions including meeting together with our prayer partners.

AGENDA:

SC14.9.50 MSC (Hertless/Garabedian) moved the agenda with the following additions to the consent agenda:

- Authorize Bp. Mark to sign a 90 day contract for IT services with TM Pros.
- Increase the synod credit limit to \$15,000 to allow for two additional credit cards with \$2K limits for the Vice President and a DEM

August 9, 2014 Meeting Minutes

SC14.9.51 MSC (Daetz/Husary) moved approval of the August 9, 2014 minutes with the following amendments:

- Change the wording of SC14.8.46 to read: **...not allow the Finance Committee to reduce ELCA mission support to less than 45% of the mission support the Synod receives from congregations.**
- Replace “Jordan” with “Haley” in **SC14.8.48 and SC14.8.49.**
- Correct misspelling of Pr. Tuhina Rasche’s name in list of members present.

Review of the Covenant

Elaine distributed copies of the covenant and indicated that it was developed as a way of expressing how we would try and live together individually and as a body. She highlighted “promising to listen

accurately” in the covenant. There was concern expressed about the issue of confidentiality. A suggestion was made that we discuss whether “confidentiality” should remain in the covenant and, if so, in what context. Elaine indicated that we would talk about this tomorrow if time permits.

Staff Reports

Pr. Jose Luis talked about the Calvary congregation in Rio Linda that just called a new pastor after several years. They are reportedly very happy and thankful to the Synod for their support and patience. He has been working with the Leadership Discipling Team on the Professional Leaders’ Conference and they already have 109 registrations.

Pr. Katy reported she is working with nine congregations that are in the call process. She is handling some of Pr. Nancy’s congregations while she is on sabbatical. In June, she attended the Western State’s Youth Gathering at CLU and received a lot of positive feedback about attending

She is providing support on the call process for a new executive director for Mt. Cross. Applications were received up to the end of August and they will soon interview five strong candidates.

Karen talked about her happiness with Joyce Hopkins, a new volunteer, who has been coming into the office a couple days a week updating data, lists, and providing other assistance. With recent shifts in the process for educating potential pastors, the record process has become much more complicated.

Lauri

She has been focusing on the Professional Leadership Conference and planning teams as they approach the end of the preparation period for the conference.

Bishop Mark

Bp. Mark is looking forward to Professional Leaders Conference and the Dean’s retreat-which will include a disaster response segment this year. They will be discussing the drought and how we might help those in need.

He will be going to the Conference of Bishops in Chicago. As part of that trip, he and other bishops will go to the Fox Center in Chicago to witness against violence with other religious leaders.

Director of Mission Support Margaret Payne, who will be with us at our October 11 meeting, discussed a proposal under consideration that would reduce mission support to churchwide to 35% through transferring some things done by church-wide back to individual synods. We will be receiving a report about this from Pr. Payne at the October 11th meeting.

Bp. Mark recently attended a regional convocation that discussed the reimagining of Region 2-of which we are a part. Items discussed including regionalizing candidacy committees and other functions within the region to reduce resources expended by each synod.

He will be visiting the Lutheran Synod in Taiwan in November to help celebrate their 60th anniversary. They will cover all of the bishop’s expenses except transportation. He will also be visiting Lutheran synods in Germany and Rwanda in January 2015.

Bp. Mark needs to reconstitute his Mutual Ministry Committee and will look to have new members by the end of the year.

Consent Agenda

SC14.9.52 MSC (Wilfrid/Johnson) moved the modified consent agenda below:

- Appoint Chris Carlson as ELCA rep on LSS Board
- Appoint V-Anne Chernock as ELCA rep on LSS Board
- Appoint Larell Fineren liaison for Campus Ministry
- Appoint Rev. Dani Fey to Mt. Cross Bd of Directors
- Renew Rev. Chris Warner-Carey's call to the specialized ministry of Word and Sacrament at Vitas Innovative Hospice Care
- Approve constitutional changes, St. John, Sunnyvale
- Approve constitutional changes, University Lutheran, Palo Alto
- Authorize Bp. Mark to sign a 90 day contract for IT services with TM Pros for less than the cost of our previous contract
- Increase the synod credit limit to \$15,000 to allow for two additional credit cards with \$2K limits for the Vice President and the DEM

DISCUSSION OF BUDGET MEETINGS/BUDGET

Presenters and Facilitators reported their experiences at the fifteen budget meetings. The groups had from 3 or 4 to 30 folks at each meeting with an average of maybe 10 or 12. A common theme at several of the meetings was pleasure that synod council members cared enough to meet with folks and provide information on the budget. Concerns expressed ran the gamut from lack of trust and deficit spending to hoping to maintain existing staff and programs.

There was discussion of how to develop more trust between the synod and congregations and between church councils and their congregations. It was suggested that we need to work on engaging congregations, soliciting their input and talking with them. Bp. Mark met with clergy from four different conferences, several of whom expressed similar issues within their conferences.

Concern was expressed about lack of "year to date" budget data available at the budget meetings. There was discussion of council members making themselves available to visit church councils at their meetings and talk with them about the budget and the synod.

Council self-selected participating in one of three break out groups to develop pros and cons to each of the three budget alternatives presented at the budget meetings. The following were the results:

Proposal #1

- Bring God into the conversation
 - His church and his money
 - Matt 14: It will be man going on a journey

Pros:

- Ministry of synod is God's and we are his hands.
- Faith should be put over finances
- Need to support congregations
- It is God's mission
- We are stewards of the abundance of God

- Need to bring more into the budget discussion
- Need to move the mission of Synod forward and not fear for the future

Cons:

- Vocal folks will feel dismissed if this budget is adopted/maybe more backlash
- Congregations may withdraw more mission support
- Using property money might be a disincentive to congregations to give more money
- Lots of anxiety about finances/cultural clash of values that have been part of tradition for many years.
- Would require a lot of work/communications/ministry partners
- Have to work wisely in investment sector and property sector

Proposal #2

Pros

- Showing congregations we heard them and are reducing both expenses and spending out of reserves
- Encourage us to think creatively and imaginatively about the ministries and how we get the work done
- Professional leadership conference and synod assembly would be turned into revenue generating events
- Budget built around cash that we believe will be available
- Seriously looking at the reality that we are facing and addressing it
- Across the board cuts fairly share the pain.
- Trying to reduce the pain by not totally balancing the budget based on income
- We are not reducing our mission support by 36 percent
- Glass is half full not half empty
- Will not take any reimbursement from the property management fund
- Less slash and burn/more frugal/Not whiplash to the system
- Not making an "income meets expenses" budget in one year doing over more than one year

Cons

- \$1.8 million might be actually lower by \$100,000
- Opportunity cost if we are reducing staffing, needs might not be met all of the needs or things might take longer/lowers morale
- Professional leaders and synod assembly would be turned into budget generating events
- Mission Support for the ELCA will be reduced by 7% - what does that mean
- Personal upheaval for faithful staff who are affected

Proposal #3

Pros

The requirement is fulfilled, balanced, and sustainable.
 Almost everyone is effected under ministry partners (lines 10-18).
 Requires synod to urgently look at new creative staffing situations.
 The endowment and new and renewing funds will remain engines of growth.

Cons:

Line 10, ELCA Mission Support Share, is reduced by too much.
Line 12, PLTS, is perhaps not proportionally reduced.
DEM position is not shown.
No missional spending.
Lines 19-28, Staffing, can cause trust issues by leaving those lines blank.

There was wide ranging discussion of recent letters received expressing support for not spending more money each year than is contributed by congregations, expressing disappointment with actions taken by the Executive Committee after the August 9, 2014 meeting, and expressing concerns about using synod reserves to support yearly expenses. There was concern expressed about a member of the Finance Committee being a signer on one of the letters.

There were questions and answers with Linda by telephone about individual line items and confusion about different numbers in different documents. Linda will work with an ad hoc group made up of the Executive Committee, Pr. Gaby, Pr. Adisa and Gisela to draft budget material to be shared with the Council before it goes out.

While there was not resolution reached on some budget issues and process issues that have been in controversy on the Synod Council and in the Synod for the last several years, members present focused on the three budget proposals and worked diligently to develop a budget alternative that they could support as a group and recommend to the Synod Assembly on October 11.

SC14.9.53 MSC (Pease/Fineren) moved adoption of a modified proposal #2 as the Synod Council recommendation to the Synod Assembly as gathered on October 11, 2014. Adjust the Cash Flow line 59 upward by \$1,615. to \$151,615. Adjust “Total Net” line down to zero dollars. Change the title of this column to “Synod Council Recommendation”. Remove “Proposed #1” column. Include a column listing expected current year-end actuals, alongside the current year budget column as determined by the Finance Committee. Communicate this decision to October 11 voting members by October 4, 2014. Bp. Mark and Pr. Adisa abstained

Pr. Johnson Called the Question- Passed

Synod Resource Center

SC14.9.54 MS (Garabedian/Ed Nelson) moved that the Resource Center receive \$917/month from the Synod for the rest of the year.

SC14.9.55 MSC (Wilfrid/Johnson) moved to table.

Pr. Carl led the group in the Lord’s Prayer and we recessed until Saturday morning

SATURDAY

EXECUTIVE SESSION-SYNOD COUNCIL MEMBERS ONLY closed at 9:28 AM no action items.

Morning Devotions

Pr. Carl led morning devotions.

Discipling Team Chair Reports

○ **Kathye Hamm, Congregational Life**

Congregational life team is excited about training that will be provided by Reconciling Works for churches who want to become reconciled congregations or existing reconciled congregations who would like to have the training.

The Team is working diligently on the Discipling Team Event which will be held January 24-25, 2015 at St. John's in Sacramento. This event will gather people of all ages for fellowship, games, scavenger hunts, and other activities. Each discipling team is being asked to prepare a 4 minute video highlighting the activities of their team to be shown at the event. People can participate Friday, Saturday or both days. Watch for more information.

○ **Pr. Dawn Roginski, Witness**

The Witness team has missed having a DEM to work with especially with regards to the allocation of funds. Previously they have invited four of their ministries to come, meet with the bishop and the team and give updates as to what they are doing. She would like to do this more often as it allows them to better keep up with the progress of their ministries. They will participate in the Discipling Team Event and intend to have several choirs including the Tanzanian choir come to the event, perform and tell their stories.

Continued Budget Discussion from Yesterday

- Bp. Mark suggested that the Exec Committee and several other Council members take the lead on developing material for the October 11 meeting-with all other Council members able to review, comment on, and sign off on all material before it is distributed on or before October 4.
 - Volunteers for the October 11 Planning Group
 - Executive Committee, Pr. Gaby, Gisela, Pr. Adisa

There were a number of suggestions regarding what should be included in the material:

- Start with a brief description of the process that we went through
- Include the pros and cons for the two proposals provided
- Proposal #1 should not be in front of the assembly (this seemed to have majority support)
- However, we need to be able to say with some clarity why we have not gone forward with option #1 rather than to pretend that it never existed.
- Not use the terms Mission or Reduction Budgets but and use terms #1 and #2.
- Commit to being more language neutral
- Clearly state what has happened.
- We want to be transparent.
- We want to answer all of the questions
- We want to support the recommendation that we are bringing to them.
 - We need to prepare our case
 - Why are we picking this alternative

- What spirit led discernment to this conclusion
- Why are we changing from one direction to another/how did we arrive at this result
- Communicate that there are consequences to each of the budgets which we have considered.
- 9:30AM to 10:00AM is a real good time to build trust at the October 11 meeting
- We really get at the trust issues by taking on all questions

Treasurer's Report

Linda (By Phone)

Bishop Eaton might come to one of our council meetings if we asked her. She made this offer at the meeting Linda is attending of all synod treasurers.

Linda discussed the one page treasurer's report that she sent to us. Highlights included:

- We recently received the Hilmar Property which is valued at \$375,601 by Assessor.
- Church-wide has agreed to send us the \$43,709.08 to reimburse us for half of Pr. Nancy's salary. Linda is following up on other possible reimbursements.

Jeff will discuss with Linda questions about the Campus Ministry Grant material.

There was discussion about what material we would like to send out to the voting members by October 4th.

Synod Resource Center

Linda described changes in the procedures regarding the funding of the Synod Resource Center in Fresno. The Resource Center Board has used different methods to provide salary funding for the director over the last several years as a result of funding challenges and changes in personnel.

The following motion was made on Friday by Kristina Garabedian and is repeated here:

SC14.9.54 MS (Garabedian/Ed Nelson) moved that the Resource Center receive \$917/month from the Synod for the rest of the year

After significant discussion, the council concluded that they did not have enough information to make a decision on the motion.

SC14.9.56 MSC (Wilfrid/Fineren) moved that the issue be removed from the table.

SC14.9.57 MSC (Jordan/Boddu) moved that the issue of increased support for the Synod Resource Center be referred to the Exec Committee for fact finding (and action-see amendment below).

SC14.9.58 MSC (Pease/Johnson) moved to amend the motion to give the Exec Committee authority to act after they conduct fact finding.

SC14.9.59 MSC (Johnson/Jordan) moved that we remove as soon as possible but no later than Tuesday the now outdated information and links on the synod website relative to previous options

October 11, 2014	5 locations
December 6, 2014	<u>Maybe?</u> Sacramento
Jan 30-31, 2015	Sacramento
May 28, 2015	St. John's, Sacto
June 26-27, 2015	TBD