

**SIERRA PACIFIC SYNOD  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
SYNOD COUNCIL MINUTES January 30-31, 2015  
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP, SACRAMENTO, CA.**

**Present:** Bp. Holmerud, Linda Lownes, Dennis Jones, Pr. Jeff Johnson, Gisela Daetz, Elaine Whitney, Jack Pease, Ed Nelson, Pr. Carl Wilfrid, Larell Fineren, Joseph Husary, Jordan Haley, Sheela Boddu, Pr. Patricia Vargas, Mark Nelson, and Nicki Shedler

**Absent:** Pr. Gabriele Schroeder, Pr. Adisa Armand-Miller, Pr. Kathryn Gulbranson, Pr. Tuhina Rasche, James Anderberg

**Staff:** Pr. Katy Grindberg, Pr. Jose Luis la Torre IV, Karen Idler, AIM, Pr. Carlton Monroe, DEM

**Visitors:** Irv Lownes

Vice President Whitney called the meeting to order at 2:05 PM on January 30, 2015.

**Opening Devotions**

Pr. Jeff Johnson provided devotions.

**Bp. Mark** introduced our new Director of Evangelical Mission (DEM), Pr. Carlton Monroe. Bp. Mark described the unusual and productive process that resulted in churchwide calling him as our new DEM.

Pr. Monroe indicated that he is happy to be back home in the Bay Area and he looks forward to working with all of us. Pr. Monroe will be working out of both synod offices in Northern California as he is living in Berkeley.

**Approval of minutes**

**SC15.1.1 MSC** (Fineren/Daetz) moved approval of the minutes of the December 6, 2014 meeting.

**Approval of agenda:**

**SC15.1.2 MSC** (Daetz/Haley) moved approval of the meeting agenda with the following changes:

**Add to Consent Agenda:**

- Approval of LSS Bylaw Amendments
- Approval of Chrislyn Carson, Faith Lutheran, Santa Rosa to LSS Board
- Approval of Joel Mjolsness, not a congregation member to LSS Board
- Appoint Intentional Interim Pastors
  - Pr. Chris Berry, Pr. Bill Wong, and Pr. Dave Ernat

- On Leave from Call Status
  - Pr. Adisa Armand Miller
- On Disability Status
  - Pr. Theodore Niemi
- Approve Bp. Mark's appointment of Neumiller and Beardslee, James Dyke Lead Attorney, as Synod Attorneys

Remove from Agenda:

- Greetings by Steve Solberg

## Staff Reports

**Bishop Mark** talked about the highlights of his recent overseas trips to Rwanda and Germany. He visited four YAGMs, two of which were from our synod, and spoke very highly of the program and what was being accomplished.

He talked about the possibility of reconfiguring our synod structure and will be continuing the discussion with the Conference deans. The new alternative arranges congregations in fewer geographical groups that are more similar in the number of congregants. Such a change would take two years and will likely be led by a couple of deans and a couple of council members who would be charged with drafting the new rules. Jack Pease volunteered to be one of the Synod Council representatives when the time comes.

Bp. Mark indicated that he needs to appoint some new members to the Synod Consultation Committee and the Synod Discipline Committees. While neither committee has met for more than 20 years, they need to have current membership in case the need arises. He asked members for suggestions.

Bp. Mark indicated that our synod has an abysmal record for congregations returning "annual reports" which are due each February 15. For the last 25 years we have had the worst record of any synod. As a result, he asked Synod Council members to organize themselves so that each church in every district is contacted and encouraged to send in both their annual report and their Rostered Leader Report.

**Pr. Jose Luis** is working on the Deans' Retreat which will occur February 3-4. The Conference of Deans is now complete as each conference has a dean. He worked on covering ecumenical events while Bp. Mark was gone and worked with leadership discipling teams.

**Pr. Katy** has been filling in for Bp. Mark while he was gone and for Pr. Nancy while she is recovering from surgery. She represented the bishop and the synod at ecumenical events and worked with three congregations who have instituted the catechumenate. She indicated she is very glad to have the Bp. Mark back.

**Karen, AIM** invited each of us to take a booklet and the CD that includes minutes from the 2014 Synod Assembly and yearly handbook material. She asked us to confirm with our home congregations that they received the CD which should go to every congregation and every rostered leader. If they haven't received it, they should contact Karen.

## Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Linda Lownes indicated that she wants to extend the temporary IT contract for another 3 months until we are ready to initiate a process to have a permanent IT contract.

Lou Smith and Linda are working to set up two new funds for property management and the endowment. Irv Lownes reviewed all of the existing accounts and how they were being used to establish proper procedures in how to use the new accounts. Finance Committee is working on changing accounts and leaving the American Christian credit Union. A recent merger involving our former credit union created this new credit union. Since then, we have been charged for deposits, withdrawals, transfers and other services which were either formally free or provided at a lower cost. Bp. Mark asked if members were aware of any social justice issues with other financial institutions that we might be looking at that would present a problem for us.

Linda gave updates on the following:

- We have requested appraisals for the Hilmar and Cupertino properties
- Cupertino appraisal will be completed in the next 2 week
- Hilmar appraisal will be completed before the audit in March
- All of 2014 W2s and 1099s are completed and mailed.
- New and Renewing Fund can spend \$116,000 for the coming year
- She has been working on putting together severance packages that might be necessary.
- Only one of the synod properties, Richmond, currently has property insurance. The Exec Committee asked Linda to get property insurance on all of the other properties immediately

Late last year one of the pastors in Rwanda and his wife died within a few weeks of each other. Bp. Mogabo and his wife have taken in their three grade school aged children. A congregation in our synod asked how much it would cost to support the children for the year and intend to provide that amount to Bp. Mogabo. Bp. Mogabo has asked that the funds be deposited directly into his personal account, rather than passing through the church account. Linda discussed this request with Churchwide. They were very concerned about the tax deductibility of money given in this manner. We will be talking to Bp. Mogabo to make these processes work.

There was discussion about the issues that still remain regarding the endowment and the new and renewing committee and funds since the passage of the most recent policies. It was mentioned that we had previously decided to ask our synod attorneys to advise us as to how the policies could/should work together. Linda indicated that she is looking to establish two new funds right now. One is holding all the money for the endowment-approximately \$225,000 currently in a money market account. The second one is approximately \$183,000 in the property management fund.

It was noted that when we voted for new endowment policy, we did not take the step of eliminating the New and Renewing fund. It was suggested that we do something to clarify these policies as the intentions of the Council have not been clarified so that we can move forward. It was noted that this is a “sticky wicket” as emotions are really high around the New and Renewing Fund as it contains policies about spend rates for new starts, restarts, and continuing congregations receiving funds.

Gisela indicated that the New and Renewing policy was passed in 2011 and the Endowment Policy was passed in 2013. She noted that they both contain the following language: *“All prior actions, resolutions, and policies of the Synod Council that are in conflict with this policy are rescinded by adoption of this policy”*.

Jeff suggested that we accept Gisela’s interpretation that the newest policy takes precedence over all previous policies in areas where there are disagreements. If the lawyers tell us otherwise, we can listen to

them. Bp. Mark agreed. He thinks the intent of the policies is clear. He indicated that we have asked Neumiller and Beardslee to check and see how we should go forward.

Bp. Mark suggested that the Finance Committee set up one fund using the rules that we have established. He asked Gisela and Jeff to work with Finance Committee as ex-officio members to make this happen. Finance Committee is currently comprised of Linda Lownes, John Kuehner, Lou Smith, Paul Kalorik and Aron Bohlig. James Anderberg is the synod liaison, although he has not been active

## **2016/2017 Budget**

*There were substantive discussions about the budget on January 30<sup>th</sup> and January 31<sup>st</sup>. Both discussions have been consolidated into this section for the sake of clarity.*

Linda indicated that the proposed FY16/17 budget is very similar to the FY 15/16 that was passed on October 11 as there is not additional meaningful information on which to base any changes. Linda distributed the Finance Committee's proposed draft budget for FY 16/17. It does reflect a rent increase of 5% for the Sacramento office and an increase of \$350 for landscaping. She also noted that the new projection for mission support is \$1,736,000, less than the \$1,800,000 in the budget.

Jack explained that the Exec Committee met last week and voted to recommend that we have a special budget meeting on March 14, 2015. This was based on a desire to have more information from congregations on their levels of support as well as yearend data from this fiscal year. The Executive Committee also recommended that we hold forums around the synod between Easter and the Assembly to provide the opportunity to share information on the recommended and have discussion.

**SC15.1.3 MSC** (Pease/Johnson) moved that we call a special meeting of the Synod Council on March 14, 9:00-1:00 to approve a FY 16/17 Synod Council budget.

There was a suggestion that in future years we might be better off as a Synod Council not meeting in January but meeting in March.

**SC15.1.4 MSC** (Johnson/Fineren) moved that we provisionally appoint a Synod Council member to the Finance Committee. Linda abstained

**SC15.1.5 MSC** (Johnson/Fineren) moved to provisionally appoint Pr. Carl Wilfrid to the Finance Committee.

There was discussion about having other members of the Synod Council participate in Finance Committee meetings as liaisons. It was suggested that Sheela Boddu and Pr. Katheryn Gulbranson both be invited to attend a couple of Finance Committee meetings and evaluate whether they would like to be more involved in the Finance Committee.

## **Warner Trust Committee**

*There were substantive discussions about the Warner Trust Committee recommendations on January 30<sup>th</sup> and January 31<sup>st</sup>. Both discussions have been consolidated into this section for the sake of clarity.*

The current members of the Warner Trust Committee are Kristina Garabedian , Nicki Shedler, and Pr. Carl Wilfrid. All three members will need to be replaced at end of the Synod Assembly this year.

Pastor Carl went over the recommended grant recipients and grant amounts:

- Faith, Pioneer \$1,250
- Christ, Visalia \$1,250
- St. Paul's, Lodi \$1,000
- Good Shepherd Asian Ministry, Fremont \$1,000
- University Chapel, Berkeley, \$750
- Hope, San Mateo \$750
- Good Shepherd, Gilroy \$500

If Sufficient funds to grant:

American, Woodland \$1,000

Requested:

Our Redeemer, Sacramento, \$2,000

St. John's, Antioch \$2,000

There was a good deal of discussion about the applications of Christ, Visalia and St. Paul's, Lodi as one of these congregations reduced their mission support from 10% to 1% and the other pledged no mission support for the coming year. The pastors of both of these congregations have shared their unhappiness with the synod/ELCA with Bp. Mark and indicated that their lack of financial support was based on this displeasure.

**SC15.1.6 MS** (Daetz/Lownes) moved we delete the requests from Christ Visalia and St. Paul's Lodi from the recommended list and fund all the rest. Did not pass (Pr. Jeff abstained).

On January 31, 2015, Pr. Carl submitted this amended recommendation from the Warner Trust Committee to the Council:

- Faith, Pioneer \$1,800
- Good Shepherd Asian Ministry, Fremont \$1,500
- University Chapel, Berkeley, \$750
- Hope, San Mateo \$750
- Good Shepherd, Gilroy \$500
- American, Woodland \$1,000
- Our Redeemer, Sacramento, \$1,000
- St. John's, Antioch \$1,000

**SC15.1.7 MSC** (Wilfrid/Daetz) moved that we approve the disbursements recommended by the Warner Trust Committee based on having \$8,300 available to distribute. (Pr. Jeff abstained)

**SC15.1.8 MSC** (Wilfrid/Johnson) moved that if we receive a \$3,000 reimbursement from United Lutheran in Oakland from an earlier unused grant, Faith, Pioneer, Our Redeemer, Sacramento, and St. John's, Antioch should each receive an additional \$1,000

Bp. Mark asked if the Synod Council can receive copies of the mid-year reports that are filed by each congregation receiving grants. Pr. Carl said that the committee would provide them.

**SC15.1.9 MSC** (Johnson/Daetz) moved that the following be added to the Warner Trust Policy, “In considering a grant request, the Warner Trust Committee shall take into account a congregation’s ongoing commitment to the mission and ministry of the Sierra Pacific Synod and its annual pledge in the form of Mission Support.”

**Request to Endorse Celebration of 70 anniversary of UN**

An interdenominational planning committee has requested that the Sierra Pacific Synod endorse a celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the of the charter signing of the United Nations which took place in San Francisco. The event will occur June 27, 2015 at Grace Cathedral in SF.

**SC15.1.10 MSC** (Johnson/Daetz) moved approval of the endorsement of this event.

**Recommendations of the Synod Assembly Planning Comm.**

Joseph Husary presented the recommendations of the Synod Assembly Planning Committee regarding changes in the some of the assembly costs and recommendations for the distribution of in-kind and financial gifts. Linda provided input from the Candidacy Committee that asked that a Candidacy Scholarship fund receive a portion of the financial gifts as well.

Planning Committee Recommendations:

1. Increase registration fees for voting members by \$20.
2. Charge \$40 for a half a display table and \$75 for a full display table.
3. Charge the following fees for late registrations and changes:

Late registration	\$75
On-site registration	\$100
Substitution of voting member	\$25
Registration of visitors	\$120
4. In kind food-Central Downtown Food Basket  
Financial gifts split between: Lutheran Social Services-Northern California and Lutheran Disaster Response

**SC15.1.11 MS** (Johnson/Fineren) moved we approve all 4 recommendations made by the committee. Did not pass.

**SC15.1.12 MSC** (Bp. mark/Nelson) moved that the issue be divided looking at 1, 2, and 3 and then 4.

Discussion commenced on recommendation 4.

**SC15.1.13 MSC** (Lownes/Bp. Mark) Motion to split the financial gifts equally in recommendation four between candidacy committee/Lutheran Social Services in Northern California for homeless hotel and Lutheran Disaster Response.

**SC15.1.14 MSC** (Johnson/Jordan) moved recommendations 1, 2, and 3.

**Approve 2015 Housing Allowances**

**SC15.1.15 MSC** (Jones/Fineren) moved approval of the following housing allowances for 2015: Bp. Mark Holmerud \$48,000, Rev. Nancy \$65,000, Rev Jose Luis La Torre-Quadros \$30,000, Rev. Cynthia Beck \$30,000, Rev. Katy Grindberg \$30,000

**Meeting in Executive Session with no actions 5:30 PM to 6:00 PM.**

**Synod Resource Center Report**

Ed Nelson distributed his comprehensive written analysis of the Synod Resource Center and went over his recommendations. There was spirited discussion.

**SC15.1.16 MSC** (Nelson/Wilfrid) moved that Synod Council affirm that the Synod Resource Center is a resource of the Sierra Pacific Synod and we authorize the Synod Resource Center Board to conduct a recruitment, interview candidates and bring a recommendation to the Synod Council for a director for the Synod Resource Center. Sheela abstained

**Covenant**

**SC15.1.17 MSC** (XXXXXXXXXX) moved that we appoint a committee to review/update the Covenant and bring the recommended update to the June meeting.

A request was made for three volunteers to work on the committee to update the Covenant and Sheela, Pr. Jeff, and Jordan volunteered.

**Replacement for Kristina Garabedian on Synod Council**

A second letter went out to the deans in District E asking for potential candidates to replace Kristina. The name of one candidate was received and a request has been made for more information on that candidate.

Sue Hertless will be writing a letter to Bishop Mark about her ability to continue to serve on the Council.

**Amended Consent Agenda**

- Approval of LSS Bylaw Amendments
- Approval of Chrislyn Carson, Faith Lutheran, Santa Rosa to LSS Board
- Approval of Joel Mjolsness, not a congregation member To LSS Board
- Appoint Intentional Interim Pastors
  - Pr. Chris Berry, Pr. Bill Wong, and Pr. Dave Ernat
- On Leave from Call Status
  - Pr. Adisa Armand Miller
- On Disability Status
  - Pr. Theodore Niemi
- Approve Bp. Mark's appointment of Neumiller and Beardslee, James Dyke Lead Attorney as Synod Attorneys
- Rev. Sandra Dager-extension of On leave from Call Status
- Approve Constitutional Changes
  - American Lutheran, Woodland
  - Faith Lutheran, Los Gatos
  - Hope Lutheran, Fresno
  - St. Paul's Lutheran, Vallejo
  - Elim Lutheran, Petaluma

- Appoint Pr. Jason Bense to the LOPP Policy Council

**SC15.1.18 MSC** (Daetz/M. Nelson) moved to sever Joel Mjolsness from the consent agenda and approve the rest of the list.

**SC15.1.19 MSC** (M. Nelson/Johnson) moved to approve Joel Mjolsness. Jack abstained

### **Property and Investment Discussion on four properties**

Jack indicated that we have four properties being managed by the Property Committee. Individual committee members are taking the lead with individual properties.

**Cupertino property**-The Lutheran Church in Taiwan is interested in purchasing the property on behalf of the congregation currently using the property. We need to do due diligence on the verbal offer that they have made

**Richmond Property** Elaine is in discussion with the congregation about the property. There are issues.

**San Lorenzo property.** Oromo Lutheran Church wants to take ownership of the property. We have asked our new DEM, Carlton Monroe, to do an analysis to see if the congregation is strong enough financially and operationally to be a responsible owner of the property if it were given to them.

**Hilmar** property contains a church and a parsonage next to one another and a small parking lot. A former congregational member family has leased the house, the church itself has been leased to a Portuguese language based congregation who moved out of a nearby storefront. The congregation is very challenging and the property takes a great deal of time to oversee. Managing the property is proving to be very difficult from afar.

There are things happening every day with these four properties and they all need active management. The Property Committee has work to do in developing recommendations on how they recommend going forward with each of these properties.

### **Thrivent Dollar Policies**

There was an update on previous discussions and actions on this issue.

**SC15.1.20 MSC.**(Johnson/Fineren) moved the Synod Council refrain from entering into new relations with Thrivent or its affiliates until such time as their neutrality policy is rescinded.

### **Proposed Amendment to Standing Rules**

Bp. Mark indicated that In anticipation of October meeting, former ELCA Secretary David Swartling asked for a copy of our standing rules. He suggested the following changes to our standing rules:

#### **Amendment to Standing Rules of Order for Assemblies**

#### **VI Nominations and Elections**

H. The Election for Bishop shall be governed by the provisions of the Constitution and Bylaws. The Assembly agenda shall include time for the seven persons (plus ties) who received the greatest number of

legal votes on the second ballot to address the Assembly prior to the third ballot. The agenda may also include other opportunities for voting members to meet or hear from candidates. The specific plans for such interaction (including time allowed, format, etc.) shall be approved by the Synod Council and adopted by the Assembly as part of the agenda.

**SC15.1.21 MSC** (Pease/Daetz) moved forwarding recommend changes to the Standing Rules above to the Assembly.

Bishop Mark also presented the following proposed language to amend the Sierra Pacific Synod Constitution:

ELCA Constitution language (as amended):

S9.04 The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly by ecclesiastical ballot. Three-fourths of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election on the first ballot. If no one is elected, the first ballot shall be considered the nominating ballot. The second ballot shall list all persons who received legal votes on the first ballot, except those who have asked that their names not be included for further consideration in the election process by notifying the Chair of the Elections Committee within two hours of the announcement of the results of the first ballot. Three-fourths of the legal votes cast on the second ballot shall be necessary for election. The third ballot shall be limited to the seven persons (plus ties) who received the greatest number of legal votes on the second ballot, and two-thirds of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. The fourth ballot shall be limited to the three persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the third ballot, and 60 percent of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. On subsequent ballots a majority of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. These ballots shall be limited to the two persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the previous ballot.

**SC15.1.22 MSC** (Pease/Daetz) moved the constitutional language change above be recommended by the Synod Council to the Synod Assembly.

### **Discuss implementing an action plan to track issues**

Larell suggested that it is easy for issues to fall through the cracks between meetings as we only have the minutes to track issues. She described an “Action Plan” used by her congregation that has been very helpful for them in managing issues and activities. The “Action Plan” is an ongoing item on their agenda and rarely contains more than eight or nine items.

**SC15.1.23 MSC** (Fineren/Vargas) moved the council adopt an action plan structure that is maintained by the Secretary and is reviewed at each Council meeting.

### **Notice of the Campaign for the ELCA**

Pr. Jeff expressed the desire that we encourage our congregations to participate in the Campaign for the ELCA, an effort to raise \$200 Million in the ELCA. He suggested that we need a resolution to go to the synod assembly. He will work with others to draft a resolution that can be discussed at the next Council meeting and get to the Resolution Committee by their deadline.

**SC15.1.24 MSC** (Johnson/Wilfrid) moved we add an additional item to March meeting-to review/approve a Resolution drafted for presentation at the Synod Assembly.

## **Committee Vacancies**

There was discussion of current vacancies on a number of committees, Council, Endowment Committee, committee that recommends disbursements. There was a lack of clarity on the role of the Nominating Committee in filing these vacancies. A desire was expressed to put this on the agenda for the March meeting.

**SC15.1.25 MSC** (Johnson/Daetz) moved that we amend **Policy 13-002 Mission and Ministry Endowment Fund** by deleting item 7 except for the last sentence beginning with “This committee shall” which shall be added to the end of item 6, and renumbering existing items 8 and 9 to item 7 and item 8.

**Meeting was adjourned at 11:35 AM**

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Jones, Synod Secretary

### **Synod Council Meeting Schedule for 2015**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Jan 30-31, 2015</b>	<b>Sacramento</b>
<b>March 14, 2015</b>	<b>Sacramento, 9:00 AM-1:00 PM</b>
<b>May 28, 2015</b>	<b>St. John’s, Sacramento</b>
<b>June 26-27, 2015</b>	<b>TBD</b>