

**Southern Ohio Synod – ELCA
Synod Council Electronic Meeting
September 12, 2020**

Call to Order:

Vice President Ellis called the Synod Council meeting to order a 10:06 AM. Secretary Fischer took a roll call vote and confirmed upon initial roll call a quorum was present. A second roll call vote was taken by Ms. Fischer to identify members who joined after the meeting started.

Roll Call:

Members present: Rev. Matthew Byrd (joined after 11:00 am), Rev. Mark Combs, Bishop Suzanne D. Dillahunt, Mr. David Drumm, Ms. Marjorie Ellis, Ms. Holly Fischer, Ms. Jeni Gray, Mr. Roy Hart, Rev. Stephen Kimm, Ms. Michelle Riesbeck, Ms. Laura Schmidt, Mr. Steven Schnittke, Ms. Cindy Schrader, Rev. Cheryl Siegenthaler, Ms. Kathie Skamfer, Ms. Morgan Walker, Rev. Dr. Kenneth R. Witt, Rev. Ralph Wolfe.

Members excused: Mr. Steve Goff, Rev. Laura Leach-Shreffler, Ms. Sheryl Melvin, Ms. Susan Wyckoff.

Members absent: Mr. Kevin Pyle; Mr. Doug Ware.

Also present for some or all of the electronic meeting were Finance Committee Chair Becky Witt; and staff members, including Rev. Abrams, Rev. Kerrigan, Kim Uemura, and guests Mr. Imanuel Lyatuu and Ms. Abbie McCandlish.

Vice-President Ellis asked that participants identify themselves before speaking.

Review and Approval of Agenda of the 9/12/2020 Meeting:

The Agenda for the day was reviewed.

VOTED:

**SC.20.09.01 To approve the 9/12/2020 Agenda as submitted. (Schnittke/Schmidt)
APPROVED.**

Vice President Marjorie Ellis introduced guests Imanuel Lyatuu and Abbie McCandlish, who will be voted upon later in the meeting as council member candidates. Ms. McCandlish and Mr. Lyatuu shared their backgrounds with the Council.

Cindy Schrader opened with devotions utilizing the *2020 Church Council Devotions* for the month of September, contributed by Pastor Doug Warburton, Peace Lutheran Church (Scripture: Luke 13:21-32), and concluded with a prayer.

Review and Approval of Minutes of the July 11, 2020 Meeting:

The Minutes of the above Council meeting were reviewed.

VOTED:

SC.20.09.02

To approve the Minutes of the 07/11/2020 meeting as submitted. (Gray/Skamfer) APPROVED .

VOTED:

SC.20.09.03

To appoint Imanuel Lyatuu (At-Large Lay Man) and Abbie McCandlish (Scioto Lay Woman) to serve on Synod Council , both for terms beginning September 2020 through June 2021. (Wolfe/Kimm) APPROVED .

Vice President Ellis noted that for the remainder of the meeting, the new Council members will be eligible to vote on business.

Reports of the Officers and Executive Committee:

Vice President

Vice President Ellis noted that the ELCA Vice Presidents are meeting monthly on an electronic platform.

Secretary

Secretary Fischer provided a verbal report that the work group tasked with considering recommended changes to the Synod Constitution, following the August 2019 Assembly, is reviewing the proposals. Bishop Dillahunt noted an issue under review is how to potentially conduct electronic assemblies. P. Wolfe asked if congregations could conduct meetings electronically? P. Abrams shared that this would depend on state nonprofit corporation law. In Ohio, for example, the law requires that the congregation governing documents provide for electronic meetings, otherwise, this would not be permitted. An option may be for congregation councils to adopt a continuing resolution to provide for electronic meetings, as a continuing resolution is a governing document that can be more quickly adopted; although long-term it would be preferable to implement this permission in bylaws. Vice President Ellis asked if the Synod has resources online related to this? The Bishop noted that the Synod website has a dedicated Covid-19 section with information, and congregations are encouraged to contact the Synod for assistance.

Treasurer

Finance Team Chair Becky Witt provided a report on behalf of Treasurer Pyle. Ms. Witt noted that mission support remains fairly strong, despite the difficult economic circumstances related to the pandemic. The overall financial picture is encouraging. Ms. Witt indicated that upon recommendation of the Finance Team, the Executive Committee voted to

authorize Bishop Suzanne Dillahunt to enter into an Insured Cash Sweep Deposit Placement Agreement and related custodial agreements with First Commonwealth Bank; and to establish a 3-year Fixed Annuity Investment with First Commonwealth Bank totaling \$150,000, at a 2.5% interest rate. Ms. Witt also noted that, regarding the Synod Federal Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan, the loan still appears on the books as such but once an application for loan forgiveness is completed and processed this debt will be removed. This will place the Synod in a better position for next year's audit. The Bishop noted that the Synod is waiting on the necessary paperwork to be able to complete and submit this application.

Report of Auxiliaries

The Synod Council received written reports from the Women of the ELCA and Lutheran Men in Mission.

The Reports of the Officers, Executive Committee, Women of the ELCA, and Lutheran Men in Mission, were then received by the Synod Council.

Vice-President Ellis declared a recess at 10:55 am. At 11:05 am, Vice-President Ellis reconvened the meeting.

Bishop

Bishop Dillahunt noted that her written report was distributed to the members of the Synod Council. The Bishop's Report is attached to these minutes for review. In addition to her written report, the Bishop noted the following:

1. The Bishop welcomed and offered thanks to Ms. McCandlish and Mr. Lyatuu for responding to the call to serve as Council members. During today's meeting, Council members will break into small groups (via Zoom Rooms) to consider Isaiah 43:19 ("I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. . ."), and report back on their discussions.
2. The groups reported back and shared that the pandemic challenged congregations and the Synod to re-think the use of technology and has spurred innovations allowing more individuals to be reached through a "church without walls." (See information below regarding the Outside the Box team's work on how we can best assist congregations in thinking about now and the future with technology).
3. The Bishop asked Pr. Abrams to report on the SOS call situation. Pr. Abrams indicated the SOS has a very low vacancy rate. Josh Brodbeck assisted in compiling vacancy data, sorted as follows: 22 congregations have no ability to call (11.8%); 9 congregations have part-time call

vacancies (4.8%); 7 congregations have full-time call vacancies (3.7%). Although a low vacancy rate can be viewed as positive, it also means that the Synod has little to offer in terms of placing new candidates or pastors who would like to move from out of state into positions in Ohio or move from current Ohio positions. Pr. Abrams noted it is also quite difficult to find part-time pastors with few retired pastors in the area willing and able to serve. The Bishop noted two SOS programs that may help to address this issue: The Lay Worship Leader program, and the Synod Authorized Minister program.

Pr. Abrams also shared that despite the challenges of Covid-19, since the pandemic began, we have filled 8 full-time pastors in positions. Dr. Rev. Witt noted that in a few years it is anticipated we will have many more retirements leading to vacancies. Pr. Abrams agreed, and indicated that lower numbers of seminary students will present challenges. Ms. Schrader commented that the low number of SOS vacancies is a reflection of the work of Synod staff, and that work is to be commended.

4. The Bishop provided an update that the move to the new office space at 9200 Worthington Road has been completed. The space is excellent and meets staff needs, and we are within, and will probably be below, the budget allocated for moving expenses. The SOS has a new telephone number (614-714-3157), and the new contact information is published on the Synod website.

5. The Bishop provided an update on the Outside the Box Team, which is composed of 9 lay and clergy members, and is working on how to best assist congregations with current and future technology as our vision changes with Covid-19. The Team was established in April 2020. The Bishop shared information on an upcoming Digital Resource Center for congregations on the SOS website, which will be redesigned, with a goal of helping congregations to be connected. See also Pr. Kerrigan's report, below.

6. Thrive! is conducting is conducting a virtual workshop on September 15 for congregations. Synod ministry has not stopped during the pandemic but has become more flexible.

7. The Bishop thanked Rev. Kimm for his leadership and work on the Candidacy Committee and for shepherding candidates for the past 25 years. Council members joined to applaud Rev. Kimm (and congratulate him on becoming a grandfather).

8. The Bishop requested prayers for the health of Council Member Steve Goff.

9. The Bishop highlighted matters to be discussed at the December 2020 meeting, including (a) a resolution to consider campus ministries sending voting members to Synod Assembly, and her discussions with the Office Secretary regarding the importance of young peoples' voices being heard; and (b) whether to become a "Sanctuary Synod" without causing divisiveness.

10. The Bishop provided information on a proposed ELCA re-organization targeted for February 2021. The proposal has been on hold pending ELCA Church Council review and study. Ms. Schmidt asked what concerns the Bishop has regarding the proposal. The Bishop indicated a primary concern is the impact on the Director for Evangelical Mission position (currently held by Pr. Kerrigan) funded by an ELCA grant. Rev. Kimm asked whether ELCA synods will be affected by the re-organization. The Bishop indicated this is unclear.

Vice-President Ellis declared a recess at 12:24 pm. At 12:27 pm, Vice-President Ellis reconvened the meeting

11. Rev. Kerrigan provided a slide presentation: "The Collaborative: Stronger * Better * Together." She indicated that 8 congregations are currently participating in the Collaborative, which is seeking new vitality in the Covid-19 landscape. Topics include developing lay leadership, stewardship during the pandemic, and thinking evangelically in all we do. Highlights of the presentation included information on Stewardship for All Seasons (offered in synods nationally, this program encourages congregations to consider year-round stewardship), the Vibrant Church Conference (a priority is equipping lay leaders) and the Mission Support Fall Campaign (the theme this year is from 1 Corinthians 12:7, "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good").

Vice President Ellis thanked the Bishop and her team for their hard work in completing an office move and continuing operations during the past few months.

The Bishop reviewed En Bloc recommendations. She noted one revision from the written agenda: the starting date for Rev. Anne Marie Winters to serve at Trinity Episcopal Church, in Troy OH, is October 1, 2020.

EN BLOC

VOTED:

SC.20.09.04 To approve the En Bloc Recommendations as presented. (Schmidt/Kimm)

APPROVED.

Rostered Ministers Status

On Leave from Call

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Retired Status

RECOMMENDATION:

- The Rev. Ronald R. Calvert (8/1/2020)
- The Rev. William A. McKee (10/1/2020)
- The Rev. John T. Mittermaier (12/1/2020)

Disability Status

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Extension of Call

RECOMMENDATION:

- To extend a Synod Council Call to Rev. Dr. G. Renee Ahern to serve as a clinical therapist at Holistic Consultations, LLC, in Columbus OH, beginning September 12, 2020.
- To extend an invitation to Extended Service Call to Rev. Anne Marie Winters to serve at Trinity Episcopal Church, in Troy OH, beginning October 1, 2020.

Affirmation and Renewal of Appointment of Synod Authorized Ministers

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Information: Resignation of Ms. Gabrielle Hudecek from St. John Lutheran Church, in Logan. No action needed.

Affirmation and Renewal of Synod Council Calls

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Removal from the ELCA Roster

RECOMMENDATION:

- To accept the resignation of The Rev. Timothy Muller from the roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as of August 9, 2020. (Moving to

Australia and was accepted onto the roster of the Lutheran Church of Australia).

Legal and Governance

RECOMMENDATION:

- To appoint Rev. Aaron Layne as the Southern Ohio Synod representative, to Lutheran Outdoor Ministries in Ohio, for a 3-year term, beginning January 2021 thru December 2023.
- To appoint Mrs. Josselyn Bennett and Rev. Chad Huebner to the Southern Ohio Synod Candidacy Committee to a 5-year term beginning January 2021 thru December 2025.
- To approve congregation constitutions for:
 - Augsburg Lutheran Church, Cincinnati OH
 - Christ Lutheran Church, Columbus OH

Other Business: Ms. Schrader shared that her congregation, First Lutheran Church, Cincinnati, has been approved as a “RIC” congregation following adoption of an official statement that the congregation welcomes everyone and anyone. Bishop Dillahunt noted that this stands for “Reconciled in Christ.”

Bishop Dillahunt offered closing prayers.

SC.20.09.05 To adjourn the meeting (Kimm /Byrd) APPROVED.

The meeting was then adjourned at 1:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Holly R. Fischer
Synod Council Secretary