

**Southern Ohio Synod – ELCA
Synod Council Electronic Meeting
December 5, 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 a quorum was present.

Roll Call:

Members present: Rev. Matthew Byrd, 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, Rev. Laura Leach-Shreffler, Mr. Imanuel Lyatuu, Ms. Abbie McCandlish, Mr. Kevin Pyle, Ms. Michelle Riesbeck, Ms. Laura Schmidt, Mr. Steven Schnittke, Ms. Cindy Schrader, Rev. Cheryl Siegenthaler, Ms. Morgan Walker, Mr. Doug Ware, Rev. Dr. Kenneth R. Witt, Rev. Ralph Wolfe.

Members excused: Mr. Steve Goff, Ms. Kathie Skamfer, Ms. Susan Wyckoff.

Members absent: None.

Also present for some or all of the electronic meeting were Finance Committee Chair Becky Witt; staff members, including Rev. Abrams, Rev. Kerrigan, Rev. Nakamura, Kim Uemura, and guests Christopher Clothier, Pastor Larry Donner, Susan Barton-Nonno, and David Lenz.

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

Review and Approval of Agenda of the 12/05/2020 Meeting:

The Agenda for the day was reviewed.

VOTED:

**SC.20.12.01 To approve the 12/05/2020 Agenda as amended. (Schnittke/Drumm)
APPROVED.**

Vice President Marjorie Ellis introduced guests.

Rev. Ralph Wolfe opened with devotions utilizing the new *2021 Church Council Devotions* for the month of December, contributed by Pastor Scott Nellis, All Saints Lutheran Church, Worthington (Scripture: Luke 21:25-36), and concluded with a prayer.

Review and Approval of Minutes of the September 12, 2020 Meeting:

The Minutes of the above Council meeting were reviewed.

**VOTED:
SC.20.12.02**

**To approve the Minutes of the 09/12/2020 meeting as submitted.
(Kimm/Schmidt) APPROVED .**

Reports of the Officers and Executive Committee:

Vice President

Vice President Ellis asked guest David Lenz, ELCA Church Council member, to provide information regarding the ELCA Redesign. Information concerning the Redesign was provided to Synod council members with the meeting materials.

Mr. Lenz provided a comprehensive overview of the ELCA Redesign, which was approved at the November 12-14, 2020 ELCA Church Council meeting, with an effective implementation date of February 1, 2021, to correspond with the beginning of the new fiscal year. Some staffing changes have already occurred. Mr. Lenz indicated that neither the Covid-19 pandemic, nor budgetary considerations, were the driving force behind the Redesign. Rather, the goal is to address the decades long pattern of church decline experienced in the ELCA (1988: 5.3 million members; 2020: 3.4 million members), as well as in other mainline protestant denominations. The new “Future Church” is to have a renewed purpose to “activate each of us so more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love.” Mr. Lenz emphasized that to accomplish this, the ELCA must reach younger, more diverse populations. Part of the reorganization is structural (impacting ELCA organization/staffing/job positions) and part is cultural (impacting all members of the church).

Regarding structural changes, Mr. Lenz shared that the ELCA will move from a more rigid, less flexible, hierarchical decision making body to a more flexible, responsive, dynamic body.

Ms. Schmidt asked for more information regarding staff reductions: whether positions will be reabsorbed and/or whether new staff with more specialized backgrounds will be hired. Mr. Lenz clarified that part of the staff position reductions were not the result of terminations, but rather were retirements and/or vacancies that the ELCA will not be filling. Approximately 12 new positions will be opened, some of which may be filled by staff who were terminated and some by candidates with more specialized experience.

Ms. Ellis asked what the ELCA’s mission support experience was in 2020? Mr. Lenz indicated the fiscal year is not closed yet, but currently, there is an approximate 2 million deficit out of a 65 million budget. A past year surplus can be applied to this if needed.

Mr. Lyatuu asked if Mr. Lentz had any other data indicating factors involved in the ELCA membership decline? Mr. Lentz indicated the November 2020 meeting did not analyze that data, but in general, the ELCA is composed of older members who are not being replaced by younger members. The hope with the Redesign is to promote a more outward congregational focus encouraging newer, younger and more diverse membership.

Bishop Dillahunt commented that it is unclear what the ELCA Redesign will look like because it is a work in progress, and because of this, it is uncertain what impact it will have on the Southern Ohio Synod. We will need to “live into it” as the reorganization is implemented.

Rev. Kimm asked what the impact of the Redesign will be on the Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM) position? The Bishop noted that currently Rev. Kerrigan fills this position, and a grant from the ELCA to the Synod will fund the position in the future, enabling Rev. Kerrigan’s work to continue.

Rev. Kimm asked whether as part of the Redesign, Synods will be consolidated? The Bishop indicated that the synods cannot be consolidated pursuant to ELCA directives; synods may arrive a voluntary, mutual agreement to do so.

Vice President Ellis thanked Mr. Lentz for providing this information.

Ms. Ellis provided an update on the ELCA Vice Presidents, who continue to meet electronically. A task force has been assigned to gather information through a survey tool on what the role/functions of a synod Vice President should be. Ms. Ellis will send the survey to Council members for input. The task force will make recommendations to synods based on this study but none of the recommendations will be requirements.

Secretary

Secretary Fischer provided information regarding two items approved by the Executive Committee for Council consideration (see written report, attached).

The first item Council discussed was whether to adopt a resolution for consideration by the Synod Assembly to allow recognized campus ministry sites in the Synod to send voting members to the Synod Assembly. The resolution, if adopted by Council, would go to the Synod Assembly for a vote in order to adopt a new Bylaw to the Synod Constitution. A two-thirds Assembly vote is required to adopt a Bylaw. Ms. Fischer read the proposed resolution language.

**VOTED:
SC.20.12.03**

To adopt the following Continuing Resolution approved by the Council Executive Committee:

“A RESOLUTION BY THE SYNOD COUNCIL

SOUTHERN OHIO SYNOD

TO ALLOW RECOGNIZED CAMPUS MINISTRY SITES IN THE SYNOD TO SEND VOTING MEMBERS TO THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY

Whereas, the campus ministries in this synod not only accompany students in their faith journeys, but also raise up leaders for this church; and

Whereas, these ministries are witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ to college students, faculties, staff, and others as they engage in Word and Sacrament ministry in their respective settings; and

Whereas, this synod has, in its Constitution and Bylaws, prioritized representation of youth and young adults among its voting membership in our synod assemblies; and

Whereas, this synod will be enriched, edified, and blessed by the intentional inclusion of participants of these campus ministries in our synod assemblies;

Therefore, be it Resolved: That the Southern Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall amend its bylaws to include the following provision:

†**S13.02.01** The recognized Campus Ministry Sites within this synod may each elect from among its baptized participants not more than two lay voting members to the Synod Assembly. The persons elected under this section shall, when possible, include persons of different genders, and shall not have attained the age of thirty (30) years at the time of the said Synod Assembly.

Adopted by the Southern Ohio Synod Council, according to the provisions for the amending of its By-laws, for consideration by the following Synod Assembly, on this 5th day of December 2020.”

The Bishop provided background information on the campus ministry proposal, some of which was provided to Council at its July and September 2020 meetings. The proposal was requested by SOS campus pastors to align with the ELCA emphasis on encouraging youth and diversity in our membership. The proposal would allow for two representatives, a male and female under the age of 30, to vote at the Assembly.

Ms. Walker expressed her support for this proposal as a member of a campus ministry.

(Kimm) APPROVED.

The second item discussed was whether Council should adopt a continuing resolution that would allow for the Synod Assembly to be conducted electronically. Ms. Fischer asked Susan Barton Nonno to provide background information on the rationale for the recommendation and how a virtual Assembly would be conducted. Ms. Barton Nonno explained that the Synod has a contract to utilize space at the Nationwide Convention Center, Lewis Center, Ohio for the Assembly, a decision needs to be made in December whether to inform Nationwide that the space will not be needed. She provided detailed information regarding the technology that would be involved in conducting a virtual meeting. Similar to in-person Assemblies in the past, a production team would be utilized, and Mr. Tim Skamfer, who has extensive meeting planning experience, has agreed to provide assistance. The meeting will feature a worship service streaming on YouTube that can be viewed by the entire Synod; the use of a Zoom “webinar” format allowing speakers to participate in the same manner as in-person meetings, and scheduled breaks. The cost is estimated at \$25-30 per person. Ms. Barton Nonno was able to observe the Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly which was conducted virtually this year and noted that we have excellent resources to do this from the ELCA and other Synods.

The Bishop noted that if the continuing resolution is adopted, the Synod will have the flexibility to conduct assemblies electronically should another emergency or other situation arise in the future.

As is explained in the Secretary’s report, Synod Council can adopt a continuing resolution to specifically authorize that the Synod Assembly be conducted virtually, as an amendment to the Synod’s governing documents Section 7.32, by a two-thirds vote of Council members. This action would be necessary in advance of the Assembly, as the other alternative is a bylaw amendment which can only occur by a two-thirds vote of the Assembly (*see*

Constitution Section 18.21, 18.31). The continuing resolution would be reported to the ELCA Secretary (*Constitution 18.31*).

VOTED:
SC.20.12.04

To adopt the following Continuing Resolution approved by the Council Executive Committee:

S7.32.A.20

“In accordance with R.C. Chapter 1702., the Synod Assembly meeting may be conducted using authorized communications equipment, as defined in R.C. 1702.01, as long as there is an opportunity for simultaneous aural communication, to the full extent permitted by Chapter 1702, ORC.”

(Byrd) APPROVED (by unanimous vote).

Vice President Ellis called for a recess at 11:30 am.
Vice President Ellis re-convened the meeting at 11:40 am.

Treasurer

Treasurer Pyle provided financial reports including a General Budget Comparison, February through October 2020; Net Assets Designated by Synod Council; and Net Assets with Donor Restrictions.

Ms. Witt, Finance Team Chair, discussed proposed revisions to the Mission & Ministry Plan 2021-2022 recommended by the Finance Team. The revisions include a \$100,000 reduction in mission support; this is in anticipation of the pandemic continuing to impact members financially in 2021. Consistent with the proposed reduction Ms. Witt explained reductions in expenditures, including, for example, a reduction in ELCA mission support and staff expenses (travel has been reduced related to the pandemic). She noted a proposed increase in technology expense. Ms. Witt noted that a projected \$73,700 deficit will be offset with funds from the sale of the Synod office building. Mr. Pyle also noted that historically there is an influx of giving at year end.

VOTED:
SC.20.12.05

To adopt the Finance Team recommended proposed revisions to the 2021-2022 Ministry and Mission Plan as submitted. (Schmidt) APPROVED.

Treasurer Pyle provided information concerning the financial reports including a General Budget Comparison, February through October 2020; Net Assets Designated by Synod Council; and Net Assets with Donor Restrictions. He reviewed the rationale for not recommending changes to the latter. He noted that the General Budget Comparison is used as a tool by the Finance Team in proposing future budgets.

Treasurer Pyle noted that, regarding the Synod Federal Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan, we had the option of recording the loan in the year received or the year it was converted to a grant, and decided to record it in the current year, noting that the Finance Team and our external auditors approved of this accounting.

Report of Auxiliaries

The Synod Council received a written report from the Lutheran Men in Mission.

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

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 invited the following guests and staff members to provide verbal reports:

1. The Bishop asked Pastor Larry Donner, Thrive! Campaign Manager, to provide an update on Thrive! Equipping a Vibrant Church Together. Pastor Donner provided highlights and detailed information regarding the status of the campaign. To date, over 14 congregations have participated in the Stewardship for All Seasons program. This is one of many initiatives funded by Thrive! that contribute to building a vibrant church community. To date, approximately \$694, 000 in gifts/pledges have been made, which is exceeds 50% of the goal. Pastor Donner noted that Thrive! was paused at the onset of Covid-19, in March 2020, and it has been an extremely challenging year for congregations and leaders. We have had a nine month experience in dealing with the pandemic, out of which new realities have prompted innovative worship methods.

Pastor Donner presented information on Thrive! Renewed, a simple, easy to implement campaign for congregations, complete with digital support resources. The campaign is designed to operate in

just three weeks. Zion Lutheran, Hamilton agreed to pilot the program in November 2020, and was very successful in raising \$12,530.00, exceeding its goal. We are seeking at least six congregations to operate Thrive! Renewed in the first quarter of 2021. This will assist us in improving and fine-tuning the operation of campaigns during the 2021 continuation of the pandemic.

Vice-President Ellis asked if there is a fact sheet available for Thrive! Renewed. Pastor Donner indicated he will send out a statement of intent and form for online pledges.

Mr. Hart asked where/how to submit individual pledges? Pastor Donner indicated pledges can be made at the congregation level or by direct pledge or check sent to the SOS office. Bishop Dillahunt clarified that any checks should be written to the Southern Ohio Synod, with “Thrive!” in the memo line.

2. The Bishop asked Christopher Clothier, a member of the Finance Team who also coordinates the Outside the Box Team, to report on the Outside the Box Team. Mr. Clothier shared a slide presentation that addressed what the program is, who is part of the team, what the goals are, and how members can help. In the United States, churches have operated on a “build it and they will come” model. Today, this model is not working.

Churches compete for attention with an explosion of technological distractions that consume everyday life. This is a reality that necessitates change, unrelated to the current pandemic situation. The Outside the Box Team seeks to enable our congregations to extend themselves digitally, meeting people wherever they are and how they want to engage with the church. The goal of Outside the Box is: By the end of 2023, the SOS will be stronger and better together by digitally connecting with at least 150,000 people per month through our synod churches.

The Team has implemented four sub-teams. The Synod Infrastructure Team focuses on the SOS infrastructure (including replacement its current database, and redesign of the Synod website to include a user-friendly resource center - a one-stop shopping “Community Sandbox”). The remaining three teams are intended to equip and assist congregations at different levels of technological experience: Digital Foundation (to enable congregations with the basics necessary to implement an online presence); Digital Evolution (designed to assist congregations who have technological experience expand and enhance their technology, including, e.g., through equipment swaps); and Digital Multiplication (establishing

cohorts among congregations for best practice exchange and growing capacity).

Vice President Ellis complimented the Team on its work and noted how exciting this initiative is for congregations, including her own.

Mr. Lyatuu also complimented Mr. Clothier on an excellent presentation, and asked if the Outside the Box Team has start-up kit for smaller congregations, such as his own? Mr. Clothier indicated that a very simple, inexpensive digital option is available, and he would share information with Mr. Lyatuu.

Vice President Ellis adjourned the meeting for a break at 12:32pm.

Vice President Ellis re-convened the meeting at 1:02 pm.

3. The Bishop shared that for many years, it has been her vision to bolster smaller congregations, who may be unable to afford full or part-time pastoral staff -- but who wish to impact their local communities – with a leadership option. The Bishop envisioned a high-quality program to raise up lay leaders as well as Synod-authorized ministers to fulfill this critical need. The Bishop was pleased to ask Rev. Dr. Lynn Nakamura, Director for Candidacy and Leadership Development, and Dr. Cory Driver to report on the 2021 roll-out of a new Lay Worship Leader and Synod Authorized Minister (SAM) Education program.

Dr. Nakamura provided information on the three-tiered program, which includes an educational model that takes an individual through the process to become a lay leader, with more intensive education at a second level in order to prepare for potential work as a SAM, and eventual placement in a congregation. A comprehensive manual has been developed to accompany this model.

Dr. Driver explained that, similar to the candidacy process, this educational model includes robust requirements (including a psychological evaluation, a background check, and letters of recommendation). However, at the same time the model allows for great flexibility, for example, awarding credit for education obtained through a variety of options and an individual-paced progression.

Mr. Pyle asked about whether background checks conducted recently for other purposes would be accepted? Dr. Nakamura indicated this would be something to review. Discussion ensued regarding options for background

checks and liability considerations relative to doing checks at the congregation rather than Synod level.

Rev. Siegenthaler complimented the work and indicated the proposal is extremely exciting. Mr. Byrd commented that the model is innovative in addressing a critical need in a very approachable, doable manner. Mr. Pyle indicated that this program will be beneficial to those that may hear the call, but are unable to complete seminary or work as a rostered minister. Bishop Dillahunt noted that this program could be a gateway to candidacy for some individuals. Pastor Abrams shared that, as someone who works daily with congregational vacancies, this program should be a wonderful option to congregations.

Dr. Nakamura emphasized that a great need currently exists in the Eastern Ohio region.

4. The Bishop asked Rev. Kerrigan to report on the Vibrant Church.

Rev. Kerrigan indicated that the Vibrant Church has conducted monthly online workshops for churches, including three this Fall (Digital Ministry; Do-it-Yourself Christmas Pageants; The Art of Neighboring), with over 200 registrants. Upcoming workshops topics include how to do online VBS; building a budget faithfully, advocacy for the voiceless, “dinner church”, and evangelism. Rev. Kerrigan explained that these workshops are intended primarily for lay persons.

5. The Bishop asked Pr. Abrams to report on the Call Process.

Pr. Abrams shared the new “A Guide to the Call Process” publication. The Guide has been significantly enhanced to assist the candidate through the complexities of the call process. The format is easier to understand, featuring a table of contents, a definitional section, visuals including color-coded charts, and is rich in content so candidates have resource to find answers to needed information.

Pastor Abrams thanked Josh Brodbeck for his significant work in contributing to the new Guide, and thanked the Bishop for her accessible management style which has facilitated the development of the new Guide as well as other Synod projects.

Ms. Schmidt complimented staff on the comprehensive, much needed product. Dr. Rev. Witt commented on how difficult the call process can be,

including unpredictable outcomes, and how having the new Guide will greatly help candidates.

6. The Bishop provided information in addition to her written report. She noted that conduct policies will be updated next year, including specifically, the policy on sexual misconduct.

The Bishop commented that the move to the new office space has been fully completed, and she would like to offer a virtual tour of the space next year. The space is clean, well-organized and meets all staff needs, including a new podcast room that has all of the necessary technology (and was appointed at a cost of less than \$3,000, thanks to the work of Josh Brodbeck).

The Bishop shared the good news that she has participated in multiple ordinations this year that have carried on despite the pandemic. Most have been virtual ordination ceremonies, but she noted that on December 19 she will participate in an in-person (less than 10 participants) ordination in Vandalia, Ohio.

The Bishop referred to written materials from the ELCA concerning voting member allocations for the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. The SOS remains at 16 voting members.

The Bishop shared that the NE Ohio Synod has elected a new Bishop (Bishop Barbins), who will be installed at future date due to the pandemic.

The Bishop is planning a Christmas Facebook Message, probably to air on Christmas Eve.

The Bishop reviewed En Bloc recommendations.

The Bishop reviewed and provided background information concerning the en bloc recommendations. She noted that the SOS was approached with a request to become a Sanctuary Synod, but rather than proceeding with this, she felt it advisable to create a task force on this issue. The Immigrant and Refugee Task Force will not be limited to the ELCA but will be ecumenical (with representative from the Catholic, Methodist, and Episcopal denominations).

EN BLOC

VOTED:

**SC.20.12.05 To approve the En Bloc Recommendations as presented. (Pyle / Wolfe)
APPROVED.**

Rostered Ministers Status

On Leave from Call

- The Rev. Kevin Scheuller, 1st yr. (12/1/2020)

Retired Status

RECOMMENDATION:

- The Rev. Cheryl Siegenthaler (1/1/2021)

Disability Status

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Extension of Call

RECOMMENDATION:

- To extend an invitation to Extended Service Call to Rev. Callon W. Holloway, Jr. to serve as the Northland Initiative Pastor at Worthington United Methodist Church, in Worthington OH, beginning January 1, 2021.

Affirmation and Renewal of Appointment of Synod Authorized Ministers

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Affirmation and Renewal of Synod Council Calls

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Removal from the ELCA Roster

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Legal and Governance

RECOMMENDATION:

- To approve and appoint an Immigration and Refugee Task Force; John Neugebauer, Patricia Tietz, Don Plummer, Carme Colon Brown, Susan Fox, Susan Righi and Doug Debrick.
- To approve the closing of First Lutheran Church, Portsmouth OH (ALC).
- To approve the closing of St. Mark Lutheran Church, Fairborn OH (LCA).

Other Business:

Treasurer Pyle provided good news that Joy Hacker just provided November 2020 revenues, which appear to be slightly ahead of 2019. Ms. Gray shared that her home church, New Hope, is hosting a Zoom get-together this evening so members can touch base – a good example of technology use in keeping with much of the content of today’s meeting.

Bishop Dillahunt thanked Council members for their work and wished all a blessed advent season.

Rev. Siegenthaler offered closing prayers.

Members congratulated Rev. Siegenthaler on her retirement.

SC.20.12.06 To adjourn the meeting (Hart /Schnittke) APPROVED.

The meeting was then adjourned at 2:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Holly R. Fischer
Synod Council Secretary