

**Southern Ohio Synod – ELCA  
Synod Council Electronic Meeting  
January 23, 2021**

Call to Order:

Vice President Ellis called the Synod Council meeting to order a 10:04 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. Dillahun, 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 (joined after meeting started), Ms. Michelle Riesbeck, Ms. Laura Schmidt, Mr. Steven Schnittke, Ms. Cindy Schrader, Rev. Cheryl Siegenthaler, Ms. Kathie Skamfer, Ms. Morgan Walker, Mr. Doug Ware, Rev. Dr. Kenneth R. Witt, Rev. Ralph Wolfe, Ms. Susan Wyckoff.

Members excused: Mr. Steve Goff.

Members absent: None.

Also present for some or all of the electronic meeting were staff members including Rev. Katie Kerrigan and Gary Pecuch. Guest Becky Witt, Finance Team Chair was also present.

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

Review and Approval of Agenda of the 01/23/2021 Meeting:

The Agenda for the day was reviewed.

**VOTED:**

**SC.21.01.01                    To approve the 01/23/2021 Agenda as submitted. ( Wolfe/Ware)  
APPROVED.**

Mr. David Drumm opened with devotions with the theme Even in the Pandemic, Faith Thrives (reading Romans 8:38-39) and concluded with a prayer.

Review and Approval of Minutes of the December 5, 2020 Meeting:

The Minutes of the above Council meeting were reviewed.

**VOTED:**  
**SC.21.01.02**

**To approve the Minutes of the 12/05/2020 meeting as revised. (Schmidt /Schnittke) APPROVED .**

Reports of the Officers and Executive Committee:

Vice President

Vice President Ellis provided an update on the ELCA Vice Presidents, who continue to meet electronically. A survey has been completed, with a very good response rate, on the topic of what the role/functions of a synod Vice President should be. Some of the themes that emerged included that Vice Presidents fill an important role, and more flexibility should be afforded to that role. Vice Presidents should not preach, be involved in the call process, or be involved in ordinations/installations. A task force will distribute a report in late February to early March with recommendations to synods based on this study but none of the recommendations will be requirements.

Secretary

Secretary Fischer reported that the Executive Committee approved minor changes to the Synod Gift Policy, as recommended by the Finance Team. She reported that she will participate in the Region 6 Archives meeting next week. Discussion ensued regarding archiving. Ms. Fischer indicated that the archivist position has been vacant for about one year and the upcoming meeting will focus on how to fill the position. The Bishop noted that this is a part-time position and is fully funded by Region 6 congregational donations at a cost of approximately .23 cents per baptized member. Mr. Hart shared information about the archive process based on his historic experience as Council Secretary. The Council agreed by general consensus that it is a priority to get this position filled.

Treasurer

Treasurer Pyle submitted a written General Budget Comparison, February through December 2020 in advance of the meeting. Ms. Witt, Finance Team Chair, provided information regarding this report, noting it is preliminary as some December 2020 transactions have not been posted yet. Ms. Witt indicated that despite the pandemic, congregation support has remained strong. She anticipates that the 2020 fiscal year will finish with a positive balance, noting that while the current budget reflects a deficit of \$138,200, not all receipts have been posted and an approximate \$153,000 PPP loan balance will be forgiven according to the terms of the federal program. Pastor Siegenthaler asked about the status of agricultural real estate located in Oklahoma owned by the SOS. The Bishop indicated that the Synod may be able to sell this property in the upcoming year. Ms. Schrader asked for a snapshot/summary of how mission support dollars are utilized. The Bishop indicated that approximately 40% of receipts are allocated to the ELCA (unrestricted), and the ELCA distributes the funds towards ministries

and salaries that maintain the churchwide organization. Some portion may be returned to synods in the form of grants. Ms. Witt noted that the General Fund Budget Comparison, ELCA Mission Support line item provides the total dollar amount information.

Vice President Ellis called a recess at 11:00 am.

Vice President Ellis reconvened the meeting at 11:06 am.

### Bishop

Bishop Dillahunst 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 provided information, and invited staff members to provide verbal reports as discussed below.

1. The Bishop reported that the Region 6 Bishops are promoting a "Congregation Report Superbowl" competition to encourage congregations to submit their annual reports by the February 15, 2021 due date. This information is vital and the Bishop asked everyone to convey this information to their congregations. She noted that Synod staff cannot complete these reports for congregations. Ms. Schmidt asked if the report goes to the ELCA or the Synod? The Bishop indicated the report is filed with the ELCA, and the ELCA provides a report to the Synod showing the congregations who submitted reports. Rev. Kerrigan noted the report is an online form and that is the preferred method of submission.
2. The Bishop discussed the events on January 6, 2021 in Washington D.C. She noted that the three Ohio Bishops signed an Ohio Council of Churches Pastoral Letter in response to these events, which addresses racial tension and demands that those responsible for the insurgence/violence be held legally accountable. The Bishop encouraged members to review the ELCA Social Message on Government and Civic Engagement in the United States: Discipleship in a Democracy.
3. The Bishop provided an update on the upcoming June 4-5, 2021 Synod Assembly, thanking Ms. Riesbeck for her work as the Nominations Chair, and Ms. Schrader for her work on the Planning Team. The Assembly theme will be "Abundance", drawn from the feeding of the 5,000 in the Gospel of John. The Assembly will be virtual, as discussed, with two parliamentarians (Pastor Craig Richter and Mr. Tim Skamfer), noting that Mr. Skamfer has expertise in conducting online meetings and is serving as a consultant for the event. Council will review and approve the Assembly Agenda at its April 2021 meeting.

4. Discussed the four thematic goals and objectives for 2020 developed by the Outside the Box Team (handout provided).
5. The Bishop asked Rev. Kerrigan to provide an update on the Stewardship Team's goals for 2021. The fall stewardship appeal is an opportunity to build bridges between congregations and connectiveness with the Synod. Rev. Kerrigan noted that over the past few years there has been an increase in submission of statements of intent, although in 2020 the response rate was under the historical average related to the pandemic. Yet, despite all of the circumstances, 20 new congregations have submitted statements of intent with at least 40% indicating a proposed increase in giving.
6. The Bishop asked Gary Pecuch to provide an update on the Youth and Family Ministry program. Mr. Pecuch has served as the Youth and Family Ministry Coach since 2008 when the position was created. His role is to assist congregations, of all sizes, as a resource in developing youth and family ministry. He has developed a comprehensive website with over 200 education and training videos, forms and templates. Mr. Pecuch also serves as the Synod liaison to the Camp Lomo Board. Mr. Pecuch provided information on Grace Ministry day camps for youth who may not otherwise have opportunities to attend day camp.

Vice President Ellis called a recess at 12:04 pm.

Vice President Ellis reconvened the meeting at 12:35 pm.

7. The Bishop asked members to consider what gifts should we be looking for in future Council members? Ms. Schmidt asked what positions will be open in 2021. Ms. Riesbeck reviewed the list of openings. Ms. Ellis indicated that it's helpful to have attorneys on Council as well as those with financial backgrounds. Ms. Riesbeck indicated we need visionaries and members with a youthful perspective. Ms. Schrader noted the need for diversity. Pastor Byrd and Mr. Hart agreed that we need individuals who, despite varying opinions, bring a cooperative attitude and convey civility in discourse. Mr. Drumm indicated that the current Council membership has done well with a conservative fiscal approach and unity in action. Pastor Siegenthaler and Pastor Kimm indicated a need for representation in terms of size of congregation (small congregations need representation). Ms. Gray would like to see members who are open-minded and don't adopt opinions until discussion has occurred; as well as a youthful perspective. Mr. Pyle

cited the need for geographic diversity, particularly from southern Ohio. Ms. Walker shared that in order to build a youthful perspective, building communication with seminary students and campus ministries is essential. Mr. Lyatuu shared his perspective from the church of his youth (in Tanzania) that it's critical that the Bible be a manual for life; and that the church work to provide real solutions for today's life (Jesus is for yesterday, today, and tomorrow).

Ms. Riesbeck indicated that nominations can be submitted directly to the Nominating Committee. Pastor Kimm asked if a nomination form is available on the ELCA website. The Bishop indicated it is not currently. Discussion ensued and the Bishop indicated an updated version of the form will be posted online, as well as contact information for members of the Nominations Committee. Ms. Schrader suggested that the online information include a brief position description.

8. The Bishop encouraged Council members to review the Synod Prayer List, and expressed the need for prayers this week for two families who experienced the passing of their loved ones.

### Report of Auxiliaries

The Synod Council received a written report from the Lutheran Men in Mission. Mr. Drumm noted that as is reflected on a societal level, meetings are being held virtually or in some situations not at all during the pandemic.

The Council received a written report from the Women of the ELCA. Ms. Wyckoff reported that the national convention will occur in August 2021, but the biennial meeting for the SOS has not been scheduled yet.

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

The Bishop provided information regarding the closing of First Lutheran Church, Portsmouth, Ohio. She provided information on the distribution of assets. All of the assets, with the exception of \$2,000 contributed to Synod archiving, have been or will be distributed by First Lutheran Church to various organizations, with the church real estate being conveyed to a non-denominational church.

**VOTED:**

**SC.21.01.03**

**To approve the closing of First Lutheran Church, Portsmouth, Ohio.  
(Schmidt /Pyle) APPROVED**

**VOTED:**

**SC.21.01.04**

**To amend the meeting agenda to include, in the Summary of En Bloc  
actions, under Extension of Call Rev. Karen Asmus-Alsnauer. (Fischer  
/Kimm) APPROVED**

The Bishop reviewed and provided background information concerning En Bloc  
recommendations.

**EN BLOC**

**VOTED:**

**SC.21.01.05 To approve the En Bloc Recommendations as amended. (Hart / Skamfer)  
APPROVED**

**Rostered Ministers Status**

On Leave from Call

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- The Rev. Martin Gehring, 1<sup>st</sup> yr. (2/4/2020)
- Deacon Mary Lasits, 3<sup>rd</sup> yr. (11/12/2018)
- The Rev. Marjorie McDaniel, 2<sup>nd</sup> yr. (4/22/2019)
- The Rev. Brian Whitton, 2<sup>nd</sup> yr. (1/1/2020)

Retired Status

**RECOMMENDATION:** N/A

Disability Status

**RECOMMENDATION:** N/A

Extension of Call

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- To extend a Synod Council Call to Rev. Karen Asmus-Alsnauer to  
serve as the intentional interim at Ascension Lutheran Church,  
Columbus OH, beginning September 23, 2020.
- To extend a Synod Council Call to Rev Leslie Fox to serve as the  
intentional interim at Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Columbus OH,  
beginning March 1, 2021.

- To extend a Synod Council Call to Rev. Alvin McCay to serve as Pastor Developer at Intercessor Lutheran Mission, Columbus, OH, beginning January 23, 2021.

#### Affirmation and Renewal of Appointment of Synod Authorized Ministers

##### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- To affirm the appointment of Synod Authorized Ministers; Mr. John Meister, Ms. Patti Morrow, Mr. Jonathan Moyers and Mr. John Rushmeyer.

#### Affirmation and Renewal of Synod Council Calls

##### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- To affirm synod council calls: Rev. Dr. G. Renee Ahern, Deacon Nicholas Bates, Rev. Lisa Bernheisel, Deacon Tammy Eady, Deacon Jennifer Frantz, Rev. Callon Holloway, Deacon Daniel Jacob, Deacon Rachel Lammi, Rev. Mary Laymon, Rev. Dale Linder, Deacon Elaine Malzahn, Deacon Diane Montgomery, Rev. Sally Padgett, Rev. Anne Pairan, Rev. Tracy Paschke-Johannes, Rev. Gilbert Santiago, Deacon Linda Sprick-Kruse, Rev. Alexander Sumo, Rev. Robert Swanson, Rev. Andrew Tucker, Rev. Patricia Vargas, Rev. Julija Volfa and Rev. Larry Welin.

#### Removal from the ELCA Roster

##### **RECOMMENDATION:** N/A

#### **Legal and Governance**

##### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- To approve Mr. Chris Clothier, Rev. Bonnie Gerber, Rev. Aly Mazzei and Rev. Gil Santiago to serve on the 2020 Audit Team.
- To approve the final vote taken for First Lutheran Church, Portsmouth OH (ALC) closure and distribution of assets.

The Bishop provided information on the first vote of Trinity Lutheran Church, Lewisburg, Ohio to disaffiliate. The Bishop was informed of this vote in December 2020, and met with church representatives last week. The church supports ELCA theology and is satisfied with membership in the church, except that it believes that pastors could be obtained at lower cost as a non-ELCA church, and this was the rationale for the vote to disaffiliate.

**Other Business:** None.

Bishop Dillahunt noted it has been almost one year since Council has met virtually. Members expressed that a hybrid model for the future (in person, virtual meetings) would be beneficial.

Pastor Byrd offered closing prayers.

**SC.21.01.06                      To adjourn the meeting ( Fischer / Wolfe )   APPROVED.**

The meeting was then adjourned at 1:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Holly R. Fischer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'H'.

Holly R. Fischer  
Synod Council Secretary