

**Southern Ohio Synod – ELCA
Synod Council Electronic Meeting
January 29, 2022**

Call to Order:

Vice President Ellis called the Synod Council meeting to order at 9:02 AM. Secretary Fischer took a roll call vote and confirmed a quorum was present.

Roll Call:

Members present: Rev. Matt Byrd, Rev. Mark Combs, Mr. Rick Davila, Bishop Suzanne D. Dillahun, Mr. David Drumm, Ms. Marjorie Ellis, Ms. Holly Fischer, Rev. Bonnie Gerber, Ms. Jeni Gray, Mr. Roy Hart, Mr. Matthew Hazzard, Rev. Stephen Kimm, Mr. Imanuel Lyatuu, Ms. Abbie McCandlish, Mr. David Miser, Mr. Kevin Pyle, Ms. Michelle Riesbeck, Mr. Ethan Roberts, Ms. Laura Schmidt, Ms. Cindy Schrader, Rev. Cheryl Siegenthaler, Ms. Kathie Skamfer, Mr. Doug Ware, Ms. Susan Wyckoff.

Members excused: Rev. Laura Leach-Shreffler, Ms. Marcia Ward, and Rev. Dr. Kenneth R. Witt.

Members absent: None.

Also present for some or all of the electronic meeting were staff members including Rev. Katie Kerrigan, Rev. Robert Abrams and Ms. Kim Uemura. Guests Chris Clothier, Finance Team and Rev. Barry Scott were also present.

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

Review and Approval of Agenda of the 1/29/2022 Meeting:

The Agenda for the day was reviewed. Rev. Stephen Kimm proposed an amendment.

VOTED:

**SC.22.01.01 To amend the 1/29/2022 Agenda to add Executive Session. (Kimm /Fischer)
APPROVED.**

VOTED:

**SC.22.01.02 To approve the 1/29/2022 Agenda as amended. (Gerber /Schmidt)
APPROVED.**

Ethan Roberts opened with devotions.

Review and Approval of Minutes of the December 4, 2021 Meeting:

The Minutes of the above Council meeting were reviewed.

VOTED:
SC.22.01.03

**To approve the Minutes of the 12/04/2021 meeting as submitted.
(Hazzard /Kimm) APPROVED .**

Reports of the Officers and Executive Committee:

Vice President

Vice President Ellis provided a verbal report on the monthly meetings of the Synod Vice-Presidents. She noted that information was provided by the ELCA regarding non-disclosure agreements. Bishop Dillahunst added that at a recent meeting of Bishops, the Bishops were not supportive of the use of non-disclosure agreements.

Secretary

Secretary Fischer provided a report on action taken by the Executive Committee at its January 24, 2022 meeting. The Committee voted to adopt three (3) Finance Team recommendations (a copy of the recommendations is included in Council meeting materials), which are now before the Council for approval.

Chris Clothier, Finance Team, provided background information on the three (3) Finance Team recommendations which were approved by the Executive Committee at its January 24, 2022 meeting.

Secretary Fischer read the language of the three (3) recommendations before Council. Ms. Fischer noted that since the recommendations have been approved by the Executive Committee, no second is required on motions made for Council vote.

Recommendation #1: Regarding the Lay School of Theology (now known as Living Our Faith Together, or “LOFT”), to discontinue the practice of recording registration fees paid as donor-restricted contributions, and secondly, to utilize the remaining balance in the Lay School of Theology donor-restricted fund for future expenditures of LOFT until exhausted.

VOTED:
SC.22.01.04

**To approve Recommendation #1 of the Executive Committee (Fischer)
APPROVED.**

Recommendation #2: Regarding the Leadership Academy, to establish a Council-designated fund for the Leadership Academy to retain receipts, including registration fees paid by participants, and pay expenditures, until such time as Council determines the fund is no longer needed.

Mr. Hazzard asked for additional information regarding the Leadership Academy fund. Mr. Clothier explained that the purpose of the fund would be to account for receipts and pay expenses for the Academy. Treasurer Pyle explained that a designated fund that separately accounts for Leadership Academy receipts/expenditures is needed from an accounting standpoint.

VOTED:
SC.22.01.05

To approve Recommendation #2 of the Executive Committee (Fischer)
APPROVED.

Recommendation #3: To establish two new endowment funds to support the next steps in the Thrive! program as follows:

- (a) **The Holy Innovations Endowment fund**, which shall be used to make possible the exploration and development of innovative approaches to the Southern Ohio Synod's work of supporting congregations and their leaders. Such innovations may include, but are not limited to, new and promising approaches to equipping and supporting both rostered and lay leaders, expansion of the ministry of the laity, new forms of communicating the Gospel, encouraging new approaches to discipleship in congregations, and the support of inclusive diversity and justice in our church.
- (b) **Emerging Lutheran Communities Endowment fund**, which shall be used to promote the planting of new Lutheran worshipping communities on the mission territory of the Southern Ohio Synod. Such plantings may be congregations, Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities, or experiments in outreach to new communities.

Bishop Dillahunt noted that the Finance Team would develop guidelines/policy for fund administration. She also shared that St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Lancaster, has made a generous bequest, out of which \$5,000 would be allocated to each of the two new endowment funds as "seed" money.

VOTED:
SC.22.01.06

To approve Recommendation #3 of the Executive Committee (Fischer)
APPROVED.

Treasurer

Treasurer Pyle submitted written reports for the General Fund Budget Comparison February to December 2021, Summary of Mission Report, and a copy of the Notes to the Financial Statements (January 31, 2021 and 2020, page 21). These Notes provide information regarding Long-Term Obligations, Donated Services, Farmland – Oklahoma, and the Paycheck Protection Program Grant. Treasurer Pyle explained, to follow up on a question at the December Council meeting, regarding the PPL that the

\$153,000 loan was converted to a grant and is now recorded on Synod financial statements as income rather than debt. Regarding the General Fund Budget Comparison, he noted that the Synod ended December \$3,380.92 above budget.

Ms. Schmidt asked how mission support has compared post-Covid vs. pre-Covid? Pastor Kerrigan remarked that overall, support has been remarkably consistent during the pandemic. Although some smaller congregations have shown indications that they are struggling, other congregations have been able to buttress support. The Bishop noted that the Synod gives 40% of unrestricted fund receipts to the ELCA.

Vice President Ellis called a recess at 9:52 am.

Vice President Ellis reconvened the meeting at 10:00 am.

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

1. The Bishop introduced Rev. Barry Scott, and asked Rev. Scott and Rev. Mark Combs to speak about the proposed policy, "Southern Ohio Synod of the ELCA Policies and Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Sexual Misconduct Against Rostered Ministers." This policy will be voted upon at the Council's April 2022 meeting. Rev. Scott provided detailed information regarding the work of a task force established by the Bishop to update the current policy and address deficiencies, as the current policy has not been modified since 1996. The new proposed policy incorporates footnotes for reference. It was developed following a review of resources including but not limited to six other ELCA Synod policies. The new policy includes an orderly process for reporting and investigating allegations of misconduct and providing for care of all involved parties (the victim, the congregation, the accused). The proposed policy has been reviewed by ELCA legal counsel and aligns with ELCA definitions. The Bishop thanked the task force for its work.

Discussion ensued. Mr. Davilla asked about whether the task force reviewed policies for therapists or other licensed professionals. Pastor Scott clarified that the policy does not provide a therapeutic process but rather a disciplinary process that is intended to be fair and equitable. Mr. Davilla clarified that he meant to ask whether the task force reviewed similar policies for abuse allegations involving

licensed professional. Although the task force did not look at those types of policies, Pastor Abrams noted that the intention is to develop a policy that allows a mechanism for victims and others to report abuse in a safe and confidential manner. Ms. Schmidt asked what would happen if someone made a report on the Synod hotline with respect to law enforcement involvement. The Bishop clarified that it is critical that reporters not only report to the Synod, but also independently report to law enforcement. Pastor Abrams noted that the criminal law enforcement process is subject to different legal standards.

Vice-President Ellis raised a concern that the policy contains specific contact information and questioned whether the policy would be required to be formerly amended by Council to modify contact information if it were updated. The Bishop indicated that non-substantive information of this nature can be updated without the entire policy being subject to Council vote. Ms. Schrader asked whether the policy will be required to be adopted by congregations? The Bishop indicated that this will be a Synod policy but will be posted on the website and available for congregations. Congregations should adopt their own “safe haven” policies to address this issue.

Treasurer Pyle cautioned Council members that, were a matter to be reported to the Synod, that members should not engage in media interviews. Pastor Gerber suggested that “talking points” templates could be developed for congregation use. The Bishop agreed this was a good idea. Mr. Hazzard asked for additional clarification regarding the handling of reports involving retired (or no longer rostered) pastors and Vicars. Bishop Dillahunt explained the proposed process and agreed that clarification may be added to the draft policy to be reviewed again at the April Council meeting. She clarified that because Vicars are not rostered ministers, reports would go to the pastor where the Vicar was serving and to the seminary. It was further clarified that if a report involved a Bishop, the report should go to the Council Vice-President.

2. Bishop Dillahunt shared that the Synod has experienced an unprecedented degree of loss and sadness with the passing of Bishop Emeritus Kenneth Sauer, WELCA leaders Ginny Paper and Kathy Schnierle, and others. She noted that she will be presiding at a memorial service for Pastor Wally Arnold on February 26, 2022 in Michigan.
3. Bishop Dillahunt indicated that registration for the National Youth Gathering was placed on hold, and that registrations are

approximately 50% less nationally, and 20% less in the Southern Ohio Synod, than in historic periods. It is possible this event will be cancelled or postponed, and the Bishop will update Council as information becomes available.

4. The Bishop discussed the Churchwide Assembly, which will be hosted in Columbus at the Columbus Convention Center August 8-12, 2022. The Synod Assembly team is working with Mr. Tim Skamfer to assist the ELCA team and is very much on schedule – if not ahead. An online volunteer registration form will be posted (most likely in early February), and the Bishop encouraged anyone who wishes to volunteer register as soon as possible.
5. The Bishop noted that her trip to Israel has been postponed to February 2023, and a planned Black History Month event will be rescheduled, both due to Covid.
6. Regarding the Leadership Academy, the Bishop updated Council on the departure of Pastor Cory Driver, who was ordained two weeks ago and is headed for Egypt. With his departure, the Bishop thanked Pastor Kimm and others who are part of the Leadership Academy and are working to keep this new program moving forward.
7. Regarding the farmland owned by the Synod in Oklahoma, the Bishop indicated that this is a complex situation; we have learned that the land has been owned by multiple Native American tribes, and Synod staff is working with the Bureau of Land Management to develop a plan for the land.
8. The Bishop encouraged Mr. Drumm to submit information that can be added the SOS website regarding Ohio Lutheran Men in Mission.
9. Orientation is scheduled for February 28, 2022 for new congregation presidents.
10. Rostered Ministers are invited to register for the Bishop's Convocation, to be held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Upper Arlington on March 14, 2022.
11. The Bishop referred to Pastor Donner's *Thrive!* written report and highlighted training and mentoring provided for participating congregations. Three new *Thrive!* funded programs are coming in 2022 to help congregations grow their ministries: Storytelling Workshops for all synod congregations (change the culture of how your congregation tells its story and improve the impact of your annual fund development, volunteer recruitment, and evangelism); Planned Giving Workshops

for *Thrive!* congregations; Board Development Workshops for large congregations. A large congregation initiative is tentatively planned for late April/early May.

12. The Bishop asked Chris Clothier to provide an update on the Outside the Box (OTB) team. Mr. Clothier shared a PowerPoint presentation including a retrospective on what the OTB team has accomplished, and OTB plans for the future. He discussed the new, more user-friendly SOS website design, the Community Sandbox feature (with great resources for congregations), and the updated SOS database which streamlines communication. He noted what we are learning from observing growing church communities outside the mainline protestant denominations, notably, how the communities welcome guests both virtually and in person. Mr. Clothier invited Council members to think about two things that their own congregations could do to be more welcoming. Pastor Abrams noted that while we cannot be all things to all people, we need to do our very best at what we do. The goal is not “entertainment”, but connectivity. Robust discussion ensued. Mr. Hazzard questioned how to invite discussion on certain live-stream platforms (e.g., no “chat feature” in Facebook); Ms. Schrader questioned how to connect with members who are not online/do not have access to technology.

Vice President Ellis called a recess at 11:32 am.

Vice President Ellis reconvened the meeting at 11:38 am.

Report of Auxiliaries

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

The Council received a written report from the Women of the ELCA. Ms. Wyckoff noted that many members of WELCA are aging, and the recent passing of members has been difficult. She noted that WELCA is hopeful to resume in-person gatherings along with a continuation of online meetings. The biennial meeting is tentatively scheduled for September 16-17, 2022.

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

The Bishop reviewed and provided background information concerning En Bloc recommendations. In response to Mr. Hazzard's request, she provided specific information regarding each position delineated in the Synod Council Calls. Vice-President Ellis requested that the Synod Authorized Ministers En Bloc item be removed from En Bloc and voted upon separately in order that Mr. Ware be able to abstain.

VOTED:

SC.22.01.07 To remove the Synod Authorized Ministers vote from En Bloc (Ellis/Roberts) APPROVED.

EN BLOC

VOTED:

SC.22.01.08 To approve the En Bloc Recommendations. (Schmidt/ Pyle) APPROVED

Rostered Ministers Status

On Leave from Call

RECOMMENDATION:

- The Rev. Christena J. Lutz, 1st yr. (1/1/2022)
- The Rev. Marjorie McDaniel, 3rd yr. (4/22/19)

Retired Status

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Disability Status

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Extension of Call

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Affirmation and Renewal of Synod Council Calls

RECOMMENDATION:

- To affirm synod council calls: Rev. Dr. G. Renee Ahern, Rev. Karen Asmus-Alsnauer, Deacon Nicholas Bates, Rev. Lisa Bernheisel, Deacon Kristen Buss, Rev. Sally Cook, Deacon Tammy Eady, Rev. Leslie Fox Lott, Deacon Jennifer Frantz, Rev. Callon Holloway, Deacon Daniel Jacob, Deacon Rachel Lammi, Rev. Mary Laymon, Rev. Dale Linder, Deacon Elaine Malzahn, Rev. Alvin McCay, Deacon Diane Montgomery, Dr. Lynn Nakamura, 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, and Rev. Larry Welin.

Removal/ Resignation from the ELCA Roster

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Legal and Governance

RECOMMENDATION:

- To approve Mr. Chris Clothier, Rev. Bonnie Gerber, Rev. Aly Mazzei-Baker, Ms. Susan Fox and Rev. Benjamin Prill to serve on the 2022 Audit Team.

Information: The Bishop indicated that neither St. Paul, St. Louisville nor Grace, Centerburg have taken their 2nd vote to close.

VOTED:

SC.22.01.09

To affirm the renewal and appointment of Mr. John Meister, Ms. Patti Morrow, Mr. John Rushmeyer, Mr. Norm Staker, and Mr. Doug Ware as Synod Authorized Ministers. (Hart/Skamfer) APPROVED with Mr. Ware abstaining.

Other Business:

None.

VOTED:

SC.22.01.10 To report into Executive Session (Kimm/ Fischer) APPROVED

Guests left the meeting and Executive Session began at 12:03 pm.

Council reported out of Executive Session at 12:35 pm.

Pastor Dillahunt offered a closing prayer.

SC.22.01.10 To adjourn the meeting (Fischer /Skamfer) APPROVED.

The meeting was then adjourned at 12:42 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Holly R. Fischer
Synod Council Secretary