

**Southern Ohio Synod – ELCA
Synod Council Electronic Meeting
April 24, 2021**

Call to Order:

Vice President Ellis called the Synod Council meeting to order a 10:03 AM. Secretary Fischer took a roll call vote and confirmed a quorum was present.

Roll Call:

Members present: Rev. Mark Combs, Bishop Suzanne D. Dillahun, Mr. David Drumm, Ms. Marjorie Ellis, Ms. Holly Fischer, Mr. Steve Goff, Ms. Jeni Gray, Mr. Roy Hart, Rev. Stephen Kimm, Rev. Laura Leach-Shreffler, Ms. Abbie McCandlish, Mr. Kevin Pyle, 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: Rev. Matthew Byrd.

Members absent: Immanuel Lyatyuu.

Also present for some or all of the electronic meeting were staff members including but not limited to Rev. Katie Kerrigan, Rev. Robert Abrams and Rev. Lynn Nakamura. Guests Becky Witt, Finance Team Chair, Chris Clothier and Susan Barton-Nonno, were also present.

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

Review and Approval of Agenda of the 04/24/2021 Meeting:

The Agenda for the day was reviewed.

VOTED:

**SC.21.04.01 To approve the 04/24/2021 Agenda as submitted. (Schmidt/Byrd)
APPROVED.**

Pastor Kimm opened with devotions from the Church Council Devotions 2021 (April) based on John 20:11-18. This devotion was prepared by Pastor Jacquie Buschor, The Church on Oakland Park, Columbus.

Review and Approval of Minutes of the January 23, 2021 Meeting:

The Minutes of the above Council meeting were reviewed.

VOTED:
SC.21.04.02

**To approve the Minutes of the 01/23/2021 meeting as submitted.
(Wolfe /Hart) APPROVED .**

Reports of the Officers and Executive Committee:

Vice President

Vice President Ellis discussed the upcoming Church Assembly and encouraged everyone to sign up for one of the pre-Assembly courses. Ms. Ellis provided an update on the recent ELCA Council Meeting which was conducted virtually. She noted that the guidelines for discipline were revised; and the Tuesday following Martin Luther King Day has been designated as a day of penance. She noted that Council reviewed preliminary data from a study involving five congregations who opted to utilize mission support funds to support local ministries and how this impacted overall mission funding. A final report will be forthcoming. The Bishop provided background information concerning this study. Other information discussed was that most synods are holding assemblies virtually this year. She shared that an article from the *Living Lutheran* indicates that the lives of one in 50 Americans are touched by a Lutheran affiliated organization.

Secretary

Secretary Fischer reported that the SOS Constitution Review Committee is now fully staffed, and thanked Council Member Roy Hart for agreeing to chair this Committee.

Treasurer

Treasurer Pyle submitted a Mission Support Contribution Summary in advance of the meeting. Mr. Pyle expressed appreciation for the work of Betty Witt in preparing the report. Mr. Pyle indicated that overall, the Synod is doing well despite the pandemic.

Becky Witt provided information concerning the Mission & Ministry Plan proposed revisions for 2021-22. We are receiving slightly more income than last year. On the expenditure side, the Bishop and staff have worked diligently to be conservative with spending, and in part due to reduced travel during the pandemic, expenses have been less than projected to date. Mr. Pyle noted that Portico is trying to keep any premium increases at a minimum. In addition, postage costs have been kept at a minimum due to electronic transmissions. Ms. Witt noted the pie chart included in the Mission & Ministry Plan 2022-2024 materials presents a graphic depiction of the allocation of expenditures. This information will be shared at the upcoming Assembly. Ms. Witt thanked the Bishop and staff for all of their hard work in controlling expenditures and for being good stewards of Synod resources.

Joy Hacker noted that it is anticipated the federal government will be forgiving the PPL loan (\$153,200) in the near future.

VOTED:
SC.21.04.03

To revise the Agenda by removing consideration of the proposed Mission & Ministry Plan and the Auditor's Report from the Summary of En Bloc vote as these matters will be voted upon as individual motions. (Pyle/Fischer) APPROVED.

VOTED:
SC.21.04.04

To approve the revisions to the Mission & Ministry Plan for 2021-22 as submitted. (Pyle /Schmidt) APPROVED

VOTED:
SC.21.04.05

To approve the Mission & Ministry Plan for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 as submitted and recommend to the Synod Assembly that the Plan be approved. (Pyle/Kimm) APPROVED

Editorial note: The Meeting Agenda contained a typographical error as the Mission & Ministry Plan reviewed, discussed, and voting upon by Council (in above Motion 21.04.05), was for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, rather than 2021-2022.

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

Vice President Ellis reconvened the meeting at 11:15 am.

Kevin Pyle reviewed the Independent Auditor's Report February 2020-January 2021 (Report). He read the opinion letter, indicating the financial position of the Synod was determined to be fairly presented and in good order. Mr. Pyle complimented the Bishop and staff for a job well done. Chris Clothier joined the meeting. He noted that the Auditors also reviewed internal controls (segregation of duties for purposes of checks and balances) and the Auditors found staff to be doing an excellent job of maintain segregation. The Finance Committee and Audit Team are jointly recommending that the Synod continue to retain Apple Growth Partners as its independent auditor and accept the Report as submitted. Becky Witt commented that although it is advisable to utilize different outside auditors if independence is a concern, if an outside firm can be retained it is less disruptive and costly, and is good practice if as here, the auditor maintains independence (and as Mr. Pyle noted uses different personnel members on audit teams from year to year).

Vice-President Ellis requested that the minutes reflect the members of the Audit Team (Chris Clothier, Pastor Bonnie Gerber, Pastor Alyssa Mazzei-Baker, Pastor Gil Santiago, Bishop Dillahunt, and Joy Hacker) and Finance

Team (Joy Hacker, Becky Witt, Pastor Jonathan Bull, Chris Clothier, Rev. Kerrigan, Bishop Dillahunt, Kevin Pyle, Susan Barton-Nonno) and recognize them for their excellent work.

VOTED:
SC.21.04.06

To accept the Auditor's Report (January 31, 2021 and 2020) and recommend the Report be accepted by the Synod Assembly, as submitted. (Witt /Pyle) APPROVED .

VOTED:
SC.21.04.07

To continue the use of Apple Growth Partners as the Synod's independent auditor as recommended by the Finance Committee and Audit Team. (Schnittke/Witt) APPROVED .

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 asked Susan Barton-Nonno to provide information regarding the upcoming June 4-5, 2021 Synod Assembly. Ms. Barton-Nonno provided an overview of the meeting; information concerning registration; reviewed the proposed meeting agenda; and discussed the nomination process. The Assembly will begin with a Synod-wide worship service on Friday evening live-streamed via YouTube. Ms. Barton-Nonno thanked Cindy Schrader for her work in assembling video footage that will be played during Assembly break periods. The Assembly registration deadline is May 11. We are seeking host site congregations to provide a place to participate in the Assembly virtually. Congregations may establish their own ground rules for meeting related to pandemic precautions. Ms. Barton-Nonno thanked Tim Skamfer for his work in preparing for the online Assembly and for agreeing to serve as parliamentarian (along with Pastor Craig Richter).
2. The Bishop asked Rev. Nakamura, Director of Candidacy and Leadership Development, to report on proposals to revise the 2022 and 2023 Compensation Guidelines and Pulpit Supply Rates (materials provided in advance of the meeting). Rev. Nakamura indicated the proposal reflects a cost of living increase of 1.4%. Regarding the Compensation Guideline – Minister of Word and Sacrament, No Parsonage Provided, she discussed that the guideline format has been simplified by reducing the number of tables to two

(Year of Service and Cash Compensation). Many congregations have expressed confusion with whether a minimum housing allowance exists; Rev. Abrams clarified that there is no minimum housing allowance if the minimum compensation is provided. In other words, the housing allowance is negotiable and is primarily separately identified for federal income tax purposes. Rev. Abrams also noted that the Compensation Guidelines are minimums, and congregations in more affluent areas may opt to provide a higher amount due to the cost of living in the area. Rev. Nakamura noted regarding the Pulpit Supply Rate that if services are cancelled less than 72 hours in advance, a fee of 50% of the compensation rate shall be provided (without mileage), as in these situations the pastor has most likely completed work for the Sunday service. Because there is no Assembly in 2022, the Guidelines are proposed for 2022 and 2023, knowing that adjustments may be necessary for cost of living. Thus, the Bishop noted that Council most likely need to review the 2023 Guidelines at some point next year.

3. The Bishop discussed her letter of April 20 asking that congregations, campus ministries and worshipping communities throughout our mission territory prepare for worship this weekend pray together a prayer for Peace from the *All Creation Sings Evangelical Lutheran Worship Supplement*. Mr. Hart expressed that this prayer was well-received by his congregation, was appreciated by him and his wife, and it spoke a loud and clear message.
4. The Bishop asked Pastor Kimm to update Council on Camp Noah, a camp program for traumatized children. Pastor Kimm indicated that a virtual camp was held and was well-received, and a live camp is planned in the Dayton area. A third camp is in the planning stage.
5. Bishop Dillahunt shared that Pastor Dan Jacob (Wittenburg University and Peace Lutheran, Beavercreek) is preparing a new virtual VBS for 2021 for congregation use. The theme will be “Hospital of Hope”, and Cindy Schrader will share a video clip during one of the Assembly breaks.
6. The Bishop shared that staff has received training from Mitzie Schafer, a professional storyteller, that will enhance the ability to develop material for the new Synod website. The new website will feature a “community sandbox” with digital resources for congregations, rostered ministers and lay leaders. The Outside the Box Team has worked hard to develop this with the assistance of Josh Brodbeck and Gary Pecuch.
7. The Bishop indicated that staff are beginning to participate in live worship events with congregations. Rev. Abrams indicated all staff

have been fully vaccinated. The Bishop is recommending continuation of virtual meetings with congregations, as this has proved efficient and has reduced travel cost and wear and tear on vehicles.

8. The Bishop noted that the following Council members' terms are ending with this meeting: Pastor Ralph Wolfe; Mr. Steven Schnittke. The Bishop thanked these members for their contribution and service. She noted that the following individuals have agreed to stand for nomination to fill new Council terms of office: Mr. Steve Goff; Rev. Laura Leach-Shreffler; Mr. Immanuel Lyatyuu; and Ms. Abbie McCandlish.

Vice President Ellis called a lunch recess at 12:20 pm. Pastor Wolfe provided a lunchtime prayer.

Vice President Ellis reconvened the meeting at 1:00 pm.

9. The Bishop asked Rev. Abrams to provide an update on a joint ministry program (Task Force for Immigration). The Task Force is composed of representatives from the Episcopal Diocese – Southern Ohio, the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, and the Diocese of Columbus. Currently the Task Force has around 20-25 members. Rev. Abrams noted that the immigration crisis is not limited to the U.S. but is endemic in the Western Hemisphere. The Task Force seeks to develop educational resources for congregations and a unified Christian voice in addressing this crisis. Ms. Schmidt asked when educational materials will be available. Rev. Abrams indicated he was not sure, but a previous task force that convened to address the opioid crisis took about 14 months to prepare materials.
10. The Bishop asked Michelle Riesbeck to provide a report from the Nomination Committee, and thanked Michelle and the Committee members for their hard work. Michelle indicated that the Committee is composed of six members; candidates have been identified for all open positions except for one lay male from the Cincinnati area. A written list of candidates for Council will be provided to Council members shortly.
11. The Bishop asked Rev. Kerrigan, Director for Evangelical Mission, to provide information regarding on two ventures in the Greater Cincinnati area. The first is an intentional outreach to young adults in the area to provide a time/space to gather and talk about faith. This initiative is led by Elizabeth Gilbert. The first planned gathering, in a local park, had a good response including ten young adult

participants and teens. Ms. Walker commented that Ms. Gilbert is an excellent choice to lead this ministry and the program is exciting. Rev. Kerrigan noted that First Lutheran, Cincinnati, has agreed to provide support to the outreach project, including providing website space and serving as a fiscal agent for transmission of funds. Ms. Schrader noted that intern Tyler Lee is assisting Ms. Gilbert and we are fortunate to have him. Rev. Kerrigan provided information on the Tikkun Farm ministry. Council will vote today on whether to make Tikkun Farm a Synod Authorized Worshipping Community. Rev. Kerrigan provided written materials in advance of the meeting regarding Tikkun Farm, which has been evolving for several years as a para-Lutheran ministry in Mt. Healthy, Ohio established by Rev. Mary Laymon, an ELCA pastor, and supported by many Cincinnati-area ELCA congregations. The community is a working farm and provides an outreach option for demographics including millennials seeking to experience worship in a new way and non-churched individuals. Rev. Kerrigan shared a video clip. Rev. Witt commented that he is pleased that the Synod is expanding in a new direction away from strictly traditional “mission starts”.

12. The Bishop asked Rev. Kerrigan to share a video prepared by Pastor Larry Donner (Thrive!). Pastor Donner emphasized the campaign process is quite simple, and Pastor Donner will provide the training and all materials necessary to congregations to conduct campaigns. Vice-President Ellis commented that her congregation, All Saints Lutheran, Worthington conducted a campaign and noted that a Thrive! campaign can easily be done simultaneously with or as a part of a congregation’s capital campaign
13. Rev. Kerrigan provided an update on the Vibrant Church including information on upcoming events (e.g., Creation Care Ministries (July), Community Gardens (August), Workshop on Dinner Church (September)).

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 reported that she is eager to hear from conference leadership whether in person gatherings will resume. The Bishop asked if the national gathering has been postponed to 2023 and Susan confirmed that it has been postponed.

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

Ms. Ellis thanked Michelle Riesbeck for her work with the Nominations Committee and thanked the Committee members.

The Bishop reviewed and provided background information concerning En Bloc recommendations. She noted that Rev. Pollock retired from ministry but passed away shortly after retirement. The Council must still vote to officially place Rev. Pollock on the retired status roster. The Bishop noted that Deacon Buss graduates May 22, so for timing purposes her call date will be effective June 1, pending graduation.

EN BLOC

VOTED:

SC.21.04.08 To approve the En Bloc Recommendations. (Kimm/Wolfe) APPROVED

Rostered Ministers Status

On Leave from Call

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Retired Status

RECOMMENDATION:

- Deacon Debbie Jones (9/1/2021)
- The Rev. John H. Pollock* (3/1/2021)
- The Rev. Barry D. Scott (5/1/2021)

Disability Status

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Extension of Call

RECOMMENDATION:

- To extend a Synod Council Call to Deacon Kristen Buss to serve as the Chaplain at the Ohio Reformatory for Women, Marysville OH, beginning June 1, 2021, pending graduation.
- To extend a Synod Council Call to Rev. Alyssa K. Mazzei-Baker to serve at Lutheran Outdoor Ministries in Ohio, beginning April 15, 2021.
- To extend a Synod Council Call to Rev. Gilbert Santiago to serve as the intentional interim at St. John Lutheran Church, in Springfield OH, beginning April 15, 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 authorize Tikkun Farm, in Cincinnati, OH as a Synod Authorized Worshipping Community, effective April 24, 2021. (A13)
- To approve and recommend to the 2021 Synod Assembly, the 2022 and 2023 Compensation Guidelines and Pulpit Supply Rates. (A14a-d)
- To approve and recommend to the 2021 Synod Assembly, the 2021 Synod Assembly Agenda.
- To approve the closure and distribution of assets for Shiloh Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lewisburg OH (ALC) on March 1, 2021.
- To approve the final vote for Trinity Lutheran Church, Lewisburg OH (LCA) to disaffiliate from the ELCA, March 7, 2021.
- To approve congregation constitutions for:
 - St. Paul Lutheran Church, Dayton OH

The Bishop provided information regarding the first vote to close St. Paul Lutheran Church, St. Louisville. The Bishop noted the congregation was down to around seven members most of whom are elderly. Pastor Abrams reported that the congregation has indicated it wishes to sell their building, pay expenses, and revert the remainder of assets to the Synod. The Bishop shared that it is sad that many of our older congregations are closing out of necessity, but it is encouraging that new ministry avenues are opening.

Other Business: None.

Bishop Dillahunt offered as a closing prayer the following Prayer for Peace: *Holy God, out of your great love for the world, your Word became flesh to live among us and to reconcile us to you and to one another. Rekindle among us the gift of your Spirit so that we seek to live in unity with all people, breaking down the walls that divide, ending the hostility among us and proclaiming peace to those who are near and to those who are far away; through Christ Jesus, in whom we all have access in the one Spirit to you, both now and forever. Amen*

SC.21.04.09 To adjourn the meeting (Fischer /Wolfe) APPROVED.

The meeting was then adjourned a 2:18 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Holly R. Fischer
Synod Council Secretary