

Synod Council Meeting

October 14, 2016

Present: VP Earline Bohling, Bishop Gonia, Jody Brammer-Hoelter, Jerry Ethridge, Todd Herreid, Dennis Reynolds, Deb Elstad, Diana Biggs, Hendrik Samosir, Jay Voth, Betty Pepin, Susan Mitchell, Rev. Dana Peterson, Joan Jacobson, Rev. Julie Brooks

Absent: Rev. Janice Kibler, Terry Cole, Maggie Nieberger, Rev. Larry Davis, Melanie Ferraro

Guests: Rev. Judith van Osdol; Janice Ladd-Horkey; Cheryl Almquist; Ruth Hoffman; Rev. Sarah Moening; Rev. Kent Mueller; Peter Severson; Rev. Ron Roschke; Andy Sprain; Erin Power

The meeting opened with worship led by Rev. Dana Peterson at 9:10.

Presentation by Interfaith Force for Good

Rev. Amanda Henderson

Website: Interfaithallianceco.org her email: Amanda@interfaithallianceco.org

Rev. Henderson spoke about their current initiative with individuals, organizations and congregations to become mobilized to work for equality, justice, religious freedom and empowerment of the vulnerable.

They are also encouraging congregations to engage in a study of racism, with support of their cohorts to lead dialog.

Economic justice work is focused on eliminating homelessness and predatory lending. She also shared information about upcoming programs called "Healing the Divide."

SC2016.10.1 Motion was made and seconded that the RMS Council sign the Commitment.

Following discussion, **the motion passed.**

Erin Power will be the contact person with Interfaith.

Approval of Affirmation of our Commitment to Serve

Earline Bohling

It was recommended and agreed to change the word "Him" to the word "God" in the preamble.

Consent Agenda

- Approval of Minutes from 9/14/16, as amended
- Approve Call to Specialized Ministry for Rick Green
- Approve a Call to interim ministry for Pr. Russ Sorensen at Bethlehem, Los Alamos NM

SC2016.10.2 Motion was made and seconded to approve the items on the consent agenda.

Report of the Bishop

Bishop Gonia

See Bishop Gonia's written report

Synod Assembly review

Erin Power

How do we create a space at Synod Assembly that brings us out of the distractions to what is important about being community in that time? She shared a summary of the timeline for planning for each

assembly. Erin and Earline reiterated that it is the shared responsibility of Synod Council and the Office of the Bishop to plan and conduct Synod Assembly, per S10.03.01. Erin is seeking more active involvement from council members. Joan encouraged us to bring voices that are outside of our tradition. Erin noted that our 2017 Assembly will have limited business sessions, as the focus will be on celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation..

Lilly Grant

Rev. Ron Roschke

Lilly Endowment invited the RMS in March 2016 to participate in an initiative addressing economic challenges facing pastors. The initial invitation was to do some preliminary research, and then create a plan for use of a possible grant. In August, he presented our grant proposal to Lilly Endowment. We should hear back by December 1, 2016.

The grant would provide \$500,000 that would allow a 3 year process to address some of the findings from the research:

- * at least 20% of our clergy do not feel financially secure;
- * another 47% feel some level of financial insecurity.
- * Financial insecurity impacts the ability to carry out ministry on an on-going basis.
- * The level of insecurity about retirement finances is somewhat larger.

The grant provides money for a Ministerial Excellence Fund. This allows direct grants to individuals for debt reduction.

The grant also provides money for Education and Capacity-building programs. The two parts will work together.

To receive a grant from the Ministerial Excellence Fund:

- Create a Fiscal Wellness Team, comprising rostered ministers and congregation leaders
 - Teams can be from one congregation, a cluster or a larger group
 - Teams will identify a specific economic challenge and develop a way to address the challenge
 - Teams will raise matching funds for a grant of \$1,000
- Seminary Debt Grants (different than above) must meet 2 of 4 criteria
 - Qualified recipients receive a match of funds raised:
 - 150% for 2 criteria; 200% for 3 criteria; 250% for four criteria – up to \$5,000

Education and capacity building grants:

- 10 Conference Fiscal Wellness Coaches will be trained
- New portal on RM website
- Scholarships for *Stewardship for All Seasons* (60 congregations)

The plan:

- Project Director – to be hired to work part time
- Steering Team – appointed by Synod Council
- Fiscal Wellness Grants Board – appointed by Synod Council
- Task Force on Systemic Economic Issues – appointed by Synod Council

Strategic Plan

Bishop Gonia

Bishop Gonia presented information about the process undertaken, and the resulting 4-part plan.

Reports of the Officers

Finance – Dennis Reynolds presented a Balance Sheet as of 9/30/16

Dennis suggested that we send some of our reserved disaster relief fund to North Carolina or Haiti. There will be more discussion of this tomorrow.

Secretary – Jody Brammer-Hoelter

We now have a Synod Attorney: Alan Friedberg, a partner at Berg Hill Greenleaf and Ruscitti in Boulder, CO, has agreed to be our attorney.

Vice President – Earline Bohling

See her written report. Earline also mentioned the need for Council members to participate in a Litany of Welcome for interim pastors, and attend congregation meetings voting on a call to a rostered minister.

Election of Executive Committee members

Earline Bohling

SC2016.10.3 Deb Elstad and Pr. Janice Kibler were elected by acclamation.

Re.Formation

Bishop Gonia

The theme for RMS for the next 18 months is “Re.Formation: Then, Now and Always”

Then: Engaging Our Story

Now: Deepening Our Unity

Always: Reclaiming Our Call

Web-Ex meeting with Evan Moilan – Strategic Plan

Question 1: What is the plan for communicating the Plan to congregations, and how do we anticipate congregations will use this?

The plan is developed for use by the Synod Council and Office of the Bishop. Although it will filter into the lives of congregations through our implementation of the MRAs, it was not developed to be used by congregations.

It will take time for the Plan to become embedded in our Synod’s language and actions.

Question 2: What have you seen that makes our Plan different from those developed by other Synods?

Unifying language – “church better together.” Our geography requires a way to unify.

We can make choices to work in areas addressed by the plan, or choose not to engage in some areas. Both are ok, as long as the decisions are intentional.

Question 3: How will metrics be reported?

Evaluation needs to be on-going. We now have a baseline, in the form of the survey responses. Results can be compared to that baseline by conducting a similar survey in a few years.

Comment from Council: We can utilize the web and other digital tools to determine how we are doing toward accomplishing each MRA or goal.

The energy generated by engaging in the activities toward implementing the MRAs is hard to measure – but we will be able to perceive it.

Staff Reports

- Peter Severson: see his written report

He also shared a Guide to Ballot Initiatives for Colorado voters, based on ELCA social statements.

Advocacy Day for Colorado is Sat. Feb. 11, 2017 at Bethany Lutheran. Rev. Amy Rumen, director of the Washington D.C. Advocacy office, will be the keynote speaker.

- Ruth Hoffman: see her written report

Advocacy Conference Nov. 5, 2016, at St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal church, focusing on border issues.

January 31, 2017 is Advocacy Day in New Mexico.

Compensation Guidelines

Deb Elstad

The committee reviews the guidelines annually, and did not see that any changes are needed at this time.

The cost of housing continues to be an issue, but the guidelines provide a mechanism to account for the increased cost of housing in calculating compensation. The committee will review that next year, to see if there is another way to address this factor.

Through the Lilly grant, she would like to collect feedback on the guidelines, as they have been in place for 3 years.

SC2016.10.4 Motion was made and seconded to maintain the compensation structure as it currently exists, and to change the language to match the new terminology for rostered ministers. The motion passed.

Earline distributed copies of the 2016 Synod Constitutions, with changes that need to be reviewed for recommendation to Synod Assembly highlighted in blue.

She also distributed the updated Staffing Handbook. Further changes will need to be made to update the language for rostered ministries.

The meeting adjourned for the day at 4:40 p.m. with song.

Synod Council Meeting

October 15, 2016

Present: VP Bohling, Bishop Gonia, Jody Brammer-Hoelter, Jerry Ethridge, Todd Herreid, Dennis Reynolds, Deb Elstad, Diana Biggs, Hendrik Samosir, Jay Voth, Betty Pepin, Susan Mitchell, Rev. Dana Peterson, Joan Jacobson, Rev. Julie Brooks

Absent: Rev. Janice Kibler, Terry Cole, Maggie Nieberger, Rev. Larry Davis, Melanie Ferraro

Guests: Rev. Judith van Osdol; Janice Ladd-Horkey; Ruth Hoffman; Rev. Sarah Moening; Rev. Kent Mueller; Peter Severson; Rev. Ron Roschke; Andy Sprain; Erin Power

The meeting opened with worship led by Rev. Dana Peterson at 9:00.

Disaster Relief

SC2016.10.5 Motion was made and seconded to make a gift of \$25,000 from our Synod to the North Carolina Synod for disaster relief from Hurricane Matthew.

An amendment was made and seconded to add a gift of \$10,000 to Lutheran Disaster Response for use in Haiti. The amendment is defeated.

An amendment was made and seconded to make a gift of \$35,000 to Lutheran Disaster Response for addressing damage caused by Hurricane Matthew. The amendment passed. The amended motion passed.

Lilly Grant Seed Money

The grant requires "new money" to be used as seed money from RMS. We have received a gift from an estate, and a gift from Bethlehem in Longmont.

SC2016.10.6 Motion was made and seconded to allocate gifts received in the amount of \$8,000 to the Lilly Grant Excellence in Ministry fund, pending approval of the grant from the Lilly Endowment. Motion passed.

New/Renewing Congregations

Pr. Judith VanOsdol

In addition to her written report, Pr. Judith distributed an explanation of New Start Categories.

There are 3 potential SAWC explorations (**Probe**). We have 5 groups that she recommends become Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities (**SAWCs**):

Latino Worshipping Community West Denver

New Beginnings (Prison Ministry)

Nueva Vida (Prison Ministry)

Well of Hope

Spirit of the Mountain in Golden; unlike most SAWCs, Spirit of the Mountain does not want to become a constituted congregation.

There are 3 Congregations Under Development (**CUD**):

Camino de Vida, Albuquerque, NM

Mustard Seed Houses, Fort Collins, CO

Well of Hope, Castle Rock, CO (they will be returning to SAWC status for 2017)

There is 1 potential Alternate Worshiping Site (**AWS**): Mount Calvary, Boulder is looking at buying another property in Lafayette, CO for a potential second site

About 80% of our congregations are “in decline”, meaning renewal is a high priority.

There are 4 **Redevelopment** Congregations:

Mount Hope, El Paso, TX
St. Matthews, Taylorsville, UT
Our Savior’s, Denver, CO
Christ the King, Denver, CO

There are several congregations undergoing informal redevelopment/renewal. Tools include Comprehensive Ministry Reviews and Congregational Vitality Assessment surveys.

MIF-related congregations: She is working with 3 congregations that are struggling with debt.

Ethnic Specific Congregations: She is working with 2 congregations: HKBP, Aurora; and Cristo Rey, El Paso.

Area Ministry Strategy: We have one AMS served by Pr. Cindy Robles. Pr. Judith is looking at other potential AMS sites – Albuquerque, NM, and Colorado Springs, CO.

The Ministry and Mission Report was provided to congregations at Synod Assembly. A few congregations did not receive the Report. Pr. Judith asked Council members to take packets to congregations near them who had not yet received the report.

SC2016.10.6 A motion was made and seconded to approve the 5 SAWCS:

Latino Worshipping Community West Denver
New Beginnings (Prison Ministry)
Nueva Vida (Prison Ministry – Spanish speaking)
Well of Hope
Spirit of the Mountain in Golden;

The motion passed.

Staff Reports

Please see written reports.

Pr. Sarah Moening brought forward several congregations in transition.

SC2016.10.7 A motion was made and seconded to extend interim calls to the following:

Frank Phillip as bridge pastor at First, Longmont;
Teri Hermsmeyer as interim at Risen Lord, Conifer;
Travis Johnson-Ezparza as interim at Highlands, Denver;
Marty Lettow as bridge pastor at Our Savior’s, Denver.

The motion passed.

Erin Power lifted up Refugee Sunday, and asks congregations to recognize this one Sunday in Advent. Resources are available on the website.

She also lifted up “Better Together” Sunday, which will occur in February. Bishop Gonia will make a video sermon available to congregations.

She asked for input about implementing the Welcome Statement adopted at Synod Assembly on our documents and website. Deb suggested a committee be formed to look at options, and volunteered to be on that committee. Pr. Dana also volunteered for the committee.

Staffing Handbook

SC2016.10.8 A motion was made and seconded to approve the Staffing Handbook Rev. 2

An amendment was made and seconded to create a Task Force to re-examine the *Drug Screen* and *Substance Abuse* provisions. The amendment passed.

An amendment was made and seconded to revise the language regarding rostered ministers to be consistent with the changes approved at the Churchwide Assembly in August 2016. The Amendment passed.

The motion, as amended, passed.

Todd and Jay will constitute the Task Force created by amendment.

Strategic Plan

SC 2016.10.9 A motion was made and seconded to approve the Strategic Plan of the Rocky Mountain Synod. The motion passed.

Model Constitution for Synods

SC 2016.10.10 A motion was made and seconded to bring the changes made to the Synod Constitution which reflect the change in language regarding rostered ministers to the Synod Assembly for approval.

Corrections were made as follows: insert the number 12 between the words “announced” and “months” in S7.11.01, and to change the phrase “shall be ____ years” to be “shall serve the remainder of the term.”

The motion passed.

SC2016.10.11 A motion was made and seconded to approve the change to Continuing Resolution S11.16.C87. The motion passed.

Janice, Kent, Earline and Jody will review the Synod constitution and address the renumbering for Article 11.

A committee to help review congregation constitutions submitted for approval was formed: Jerry Ethridge; Joan Jacobson; Dana will ask a member of his congregation; Jerry will ask a retired attorney from his office.

Bishop Gonia would like us to spend one day in a mini-immersion, and about ½ day addressing business.

Team: Earline, Susan, Diana, Erin, Betty

Report on Churchwide Assembly

Earline Bohling

Earline shared slides of the event. 22 voting members attended from RMS. (The number of voting members per Synod is passed on annual reports submitted by congregations).

Some of the actions taken by the Churchwide Assembly:

- approved the AMMPARO strategy, meaning “refuge” in Spanish; it is also an acronym for Accompany Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities, to assist migrant children and families fleeing humanitarian crises in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala.
- Voted to unify the three lay rosters into one roster of Word and Service.
- Adopted the Statement on The Way in collaboration with the Roman Catholic Church.
- Adopted a Statement repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery.
- Approved “Called Forward in Christ” – a plan for the future of the ELCA.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jody Brammer-Hoelter
Synod Secretary