

Synod Council Meeting

February 3, 2017

Present: VP Earline Bohling, Bishop Gonia, Jody Brammer-Hoelter, Jerry Etheridge, Todd Herreid, Dennis Reynolds, Diana Biggs, Hendrik Samosir, Jay Voth, Betty Pepin, Susan Mitchell, Rev. Dana Peterson, Joan Jacobson, Melanie Ferraro, Rev. Janice Kibler, Rev. Larry Davis; Hendrik Samosir; Terry Cole

Absent: Maggie Nieberger, Rev. Julie Brooks, Deb Elstad

Guests: Rev. Judith van Osdol; Janice Ladd-Horkey; Cheryl Almquist; Ruth Hoffman; Rev. Sarah Moening; Rev. Kent Mueller; Peter Severson; Andy Sprain; Deacon Erin Power; Rev. Sara Wirth; Rev. Brigitte Weir; Victoria Flood, Director, Mission Support, ELCA; Tori Plucheck, Minister of Faith Formation, Bethany Lutheran, Cherry Hills Village, CO;

The meeting opened with worship led by Susan Mitchell and Diana Biggs at 8:55 a.m.

Introduction of Visitors

Earline Bohling

Consent Agenda

S02.17.01 Motion was made, seconded and approved to change the consent agenda as published. The amendment removed the names of Pr. Rod Hansen and Pr. Steve Berke from the OLFC list, and Pr. Armando Rangel.

- Approval of Minutes
- Approve retirement status for
 - Pr. Art Meyer
 - Pr. Peter Morin
- Vote to approve request to move from
 - Risen Lord, Conifer, CO
- Vote to accept resignation of Rev. Janice Kibler as a member of Synod Council
- Approve staff housing allowances
- Vote to approve Rev. Sara Wirth to Synod Council to fill the term as Boulder/Broomfield Conference representative
- Vote to approve Rev. Julie Brooks as member of the Executive Committee

Approval of conditional OLFC status for:

- Pr. Rod Hansen – has not been in touch with Bishop, but needs to extend prior OLFC status;
- Pr. Steve Berke – has been under call to serve at Cross of Christ in Broomfield; he is now serving as interim in Nebraska (which does not have interim status), and is consulting at Cross of Christ; we need to determine the appropriate status
- Pr. Armando Rangel – provisionally approval, as he has not yet met with the Bishop regarding this change in status

SC02.17.02 Motion was made and seconded to approve a change of status to OLFC for these three pastors conditionally. Discuss regarding the conditions. Bishop Gonia will have conversation with all of them, and if all is in good order, the condition will have been met. A further vote to approve OLFC status will be held.

The motion passed.

Request from Mount Tabor, Salt Lake City

Earline Bohling

Executive Committee recommends supporting the conference, but does not have a recommendation as to amount. There is not a budget line item for this, but Dennis believes we could use some of the mission reserve fund (endowment account).

SC02.17.03 Motion was made and seconded that the Council contribute \$1000 to the Mount Tabor Lutheran Church to support the Faith and Science conference. The motion passed.

Vote to remove Grace, Bountiful, UT from ELCA

SC02.17.04 Motion was made and seconded to adopt the following: Upon prayerful and amicable resolution of issues surrounding the property of Grace Lutheran Church, Bountiful, UT, and having entered into a Settlement Agreement and Promissory Note and having received the initial payment in the agreement, and having agreed to a schedule of payments over 114 months from the congregation, we hereby release Grace Lutheran Church, Bountiful, UT, and, with regret remove them from the roster of the Rocky Mountain Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Grace has signed a promissory note with the ELCA to repay \$37,993 without interest over 114 months.

The motion passed.

Information about Metro South Conference Project

Pr. Brigette Weir and Tory Plucheck

Rejoicing Spirits is an accessible worship format, especially designed to welcome, engage and include those with cognitive, intellectual or development disabilities. Rejoicing Spirits comes out of the Mosaic ministry. There are no congregations in RMS who are currently offering this worship. Pr. Weir and Tori have brought the idea to Metro South Conference and Metro West.

Pr. Weir presented a timeline, including an orientation on March 19, 2017, for congregations that want to collaborate in providing this worship each quarter. Worship will be hosted at Bethany at 4 p.m. on June 4, August 20, and Nov. 12. Pr. Weir brings this to us with the hope that we will share this exciting worship opportunity with others in the RMS.

Bishop Jim notes that this ministry aligns with 4 areas of our Strategic Plan. It is similar to a "probe" and a "SAWC", but does not fit neatly into either of these categories. We seek to embrace this ministry without letting existing structural terms stand in the way. Pr. Brigette points out that this is a collaboration with the community and other agencies, as well as among congregations. Bishop Jim would like the RMS to be a partner in this ministry.

In May, Council will address a resolution of support at the May meeting.

Leadership Development

Rev. Sarah Moening

The question we should be asking isn't "How do we keep this congregation going?", it is "How do we proclaim and embody God's unconditional love for the sake of the world?" We need to ask big questions, search for deep answers and surround ourselves with people of like mind.

She challenged us to be intentional about our leadership, and adopt a practice of prayer, meditation and/or journaling as part of our spiritual practice.

Larry recommended a TedTalk by Renee Brown on vulnerability.

What is Advocacy? Why do we do it? How do we do it?

Our activity in the public sphere; God frees us from seeking our own salvation so that we may love and serve our neighbors (both materially and spiritually); We show love to our neighbors by being the church in public. God's redemption implicates all human sin, including social, structural and institutional sin.

The big question "How will we be a public church in the world?"

Resources to discern normative ways of being a public church: Scripture, Lutheran Confessions, Tradition, Collective discernment, moral consciousness, Lutheran teaching and theology

What does "neighbor love" mean? Luther said it is: Love manifest in service to the neighbor, even if it may bring danger to the self and family; Love manifest in exposing and theologically denouncing oppression or exploitation of the vulnerable; Love manifest in ways of living that counter prevailing cultural norms when those norms exploit the vulnerable or defy God some other way; neighbor love includes loving those we perceive as the oppressor

Justice is normative for neighbor love – we challenge injustice by seeking the good/well-being of those suffering systemic injustice; We see and name systemic evil for what it is and we actively resist evil through pursuing alternatives. Jesus calls us to identify with the marginalized and oppressed.

Ways to do this: Worship, social ministry, advocacy

Advocacy is one way in which we live out our calling to be a public church grounded in neighbor-love

It is necessary when the powers of this world threaten the ability of God's people to live in right relationship with one another.

Advocacy means listening; seeing and critiquing the injustices that harm vulnerable people using the power of our political structures to pursue alternatives that are founded on justice; pursuing social healing through public lament and celebration.

Advocacy needs:

- Us to address our own power and privilege; meet others in compassion, not pity
- Learn what accompaniment means
- Us to take action without the agreement with all, and learn to deal with diverse opinions (we prize harmony over action)
- We need to claim this part of our identity as grounding us, while maintaining our unity in Christ
- Be able to hold the tension – we don't have to have 1 "right" action
- Morally responsible sight – we cannot advocate if we fail to see or refuse to see what threatens neighbor-love
- A church that is willing to teach narratives of resistance where we can identify with forebears in the faith whose faith in God enabled them to resist social-structural evil, despite the risks
- A Desire to resist letting the U.S. cultural norms co-opt our vision
- A body of believers that are formed and equipped for moral discernment
- Not to get lost in despair or hopelessness

There are several aspects of Lutheran Advocacy: our national Advocacy Office in Washington, D.C.; the Lutheran Office for World Community at the United Nations; and the Corporate Social Responsibility program of the ELCA.

Peter and Ruth distributed lists of pending bills in both states that our Advocacy offices are watching, and a statement of whether the ELCA officially supports or opposes those measures.

Colorado Faith Advocacy Day is Sat. 2/11

Hunger Free Colorado Day 2/7

Faith Rally against Death Penalty – 2/15 at 12:30 p.m. on West Steps

CO Consumer Health Initiative Day: 2/23

New Mexico is focusing on addressing systemic issues that prevent people living in poverty from earning a family-sustaining income; and making various types of assistance available to people living in poverty to help meet basic living expenses.

Mission Support Partnership Consultation/Symposium:

Victoria Flood, Dir. Mission Support

A Time of Listening, Learning and Imagining Together

There are 2 people on the Mission Support Team at the churchwide office. They act as bridge builders, relationship nurturers and network-weavers; they are focused equally on the financial health of the synods AND the churchwide expression; they work as resources to synods.

Mission Support is both relational and financial:

- Unrestricted giving
- Shared from congregations with synods
- Shared from synods with the churchwide expression
- Expended by all expressions of the ELCA for ministries within the ELCA and partners
- One aspect of our giving

Rocky Mountain Synod's mission support to churchwide is about 5.8% on average of overall congregational income. (The national average is 5.6%)

67.3% of our congregations lost more than 3% of its membership; 16.7% gained at least 3% in membership.

Challenges this trend creates:

- Operating costs of congregations are being borne by fewer people
- Decreased involvement of youth and young adults
- Increased number of ways for people to find community
- Re-examining our model of 'congregation' and church building

Bishop's Report

Bishop Gonia

Please see written report

We must claim the gifts we have been given so that we can embody and proclaim God's unconditional love for the sake of the world. Bishop Gonia distributed a sheet that sets out 4 important gifts:

- ELCA theology
 - Grace
 - Paradox
 - Cross
- ELCA practices:
 - Word and Sacrament
 - Service to the neighbor

- Ministry of the Baptized
- Lifelong Faith Formation
- ELCA ecclesiology
 - Global + local
 - Ecumenical
 - Interdependent
- ELCA legacy
 - Heirs of the Lutheran reformation
 - Church shaped by immigrant history
 - A church formed by what we share

Financial Report

Dennis Reynolds

Mission Support from Congregations for FY 2016 was about \$80,000 less than anticipated. The proposed 2017 budget assumes \$2.2mm in support, which is somewhat more than actual support received in 2016.

We received \$279,000 from the sale of the former parsonage for the former Cristo Rey congregation in Denver. In the past, when we received income from the sale of real property, some was given to the churchwide expression, and some remained in our mission investment fund.

Dennis suggests that we give at least 10% of this money to the churchwide expression. He also suggests that we use about \$42,000 to supplement our operating budget for 2017. We can perhaps cover the remaining shortfall with Better Together gifts. We also gave \$100,000 to Cristo Rey previously, and have not been given records reflecting how that was spent. We could recoup that amount for our mission investment fund.

Judith noted that the Synodical administration team for Cristo Rey requested that 20% of the proceeds be set aside for property repairs at the site of the former Cristo Rey, and the rest for mission support of the Rocky Mountain Synod. Dennis mentioned that we will need to have specific bids for work on the building, and that we need to look at the viability of that congregation. Dennis thinks the repairs will cost much more than \$56,000.

Secretary's Report

Jody Brammer-Hoelter

See written report

Vice President's Report

Earline Bohling

VP Bohling has been working primarily on the Strategic Plan, and will talk more about her work as part of that discussion.

Educate, Enact and Equip Grant

Janice Kibler

She provided a written report.

We are about 3 months from launch. 26 congregations will be participating in Stewardship for All Seasons.

A Steering Team of 6 has been formed, and will meet the first time on Feb. 15, 2017.

SC2.17.05 A motion was made and seconded to approve the Steering Team. The motion passed.

Strategic Plan

VP Bohling distributed a grid outlining the MRAs for which the Synod Council has responsibility.

One of the Objectives, under 2.1C, has been accomplished. There is a sheet for tracking Synod Council visits to congregations on the website. Council members are asked to add their visits to that sheet as they occur.

The Council *worked in small groups to review the objectives and strategies.*

MRA 1: Claiming our Gifts Obj 3B use social media more; encourage greater use of E-Connection; clarify the questions that are asked; how to solicit the stories – incl. rostered ministers, congr. Leaders, bulletins

Note: Synod Council has its own FB page for sharing with each other

Obj. 3D: Include widespread sharing of the work of the larger church. Make connections b/t what local churches and churchwide are doing – instead of an annual report, provide info by topics. Stories, not graphs. We each need to have 2-3 stories about churchwide ministry to share with congregations.

MRA2: Connecting in Ministry and Witness Obj. 1C: Stronger effort to acclimate new Council members to their responsibilities and opportunities with congregations in their conferences. Kent will work on making a Smart Sheet so that each council member can enter their visits. Link will be on the Synod Council member page of the website.

Obj. 3: What areas of the role of Dean are not being addressed due to time constraints? Where else can we engage conference deans, coordinators and grant team members?

MRA 3: Equipping All Leaders Obj. 2A: When Council members visit congregations, thank them for their mission support. Create some visual recognition at Assembly for congregational support. Thank you letters or cards for congregations that exceed their mission support commitments. At Assembly, acknowledge congregations that give more than 10%. Recognize people's gifts of time and talent to the larger church.

MRA 4: Accompaniment Goal 3A: assisting congregations in assessing the correlation between our constitution and our actual practice

Obj. 6C: Invite speakers to present at Assembly about new stewardship models.

Obj. 7A: Conversation with Regional Gift Planner, donors to Campaign for the ELCA; collaboration with estate planners; Synod Council members to communicate with congregations about providing on-going life through their gifts.

Obj. 8A: Create an "intern lab" at The Lutheran Center (Erin?) Training for rostered ministers and Synod Council about how to have conversations with people who are leaning toward rostered ministry. Identify potential mentors for those in discernment.

Thank you videos RMS & Betela Seminary

Communication, Assembly, Report

Deacon Erin Power

Erin introduced the RMS brand, and Style Guide and Graphic Standards. These are on the Synod website.

SC2.17.106 Motion was made and seconded to approve the OfB Publicity and Event Support Policy. The motion passed.

Erin presented the proposed agenda for Synod Assembly. The focus will be on our partnership with full communion partners.

Erin passed around a signup for tasks at the assembly. Betty Pepin offered to be the coordinator.

Landscape of Generosity / Review Congregation
Mission Support

Bishop Gonia

The Office of the Bishop will provide information about giving for congregations within each conference to the Council member for that conference. Updated information will be provided at each Synod Council meeting.

Developing a Spirituality of generosity and abundance (MRA 3.2) – create a Mission Support Table. A survey was conducted that asked congregations if their mission support had increased, decreased or stayed the same last year, and why. No one has been charged with analyzing this information.

The Mission Support Table convened in June 2016 initially. Since then, there has been a realignment of staff responsibilities, and we have been awarded the Lilly Grant. The Team reconvened in January 2017. In order to provide cross-over between this team and the grant team, Pr. Sonja Pancoast will be part of both teams. Pr. Judith would like to have a few Council members on the Mission Support Table.

The Lilly Grant will address two parts of this MRA – stewardship education and leadership development for stewardship.

Rocky Mountain Synod will be hiring a Regional Gift Planner through the churchwide expression. We are looking for ways to engage with this position.

The Council adjourned to share a meal with the members of the Four Winds American Indian Council in Denver.