

Synod Council Meeting – El Paso, TX

November 3, 2017

Present: Bishop Gonia, VP Earline Bohling, Jody Brammer-Hoelter, Dennis Reynolds, Joan Jacobson, Rev. Dana Peterson, Terry Cole, Ray Ferry, Todd Harried, Amelia Decker, Jay Voth, Rev. Julie Brooks, Susan Mitchell, Deb Elstad, Diana Biggs, Pr. Sara Wirth

Absent: Rev. Larry Davis, Maggie Nieberger, Betty Pepin, Hendrik Samosir

Guests: Rev. Judith VanOsdol, Rev. Sarah Moening, Rev. Leslie Welton , Ruth Hoffman, Peter Sorenson, Rev. Kim Gonia, Erin Power, Janice Ladd-Horkey, Rev. Kent Mueller, Rev. Janice Kibler

The meeting opened with prayer.

Consent Agenda

- Approval of Minutes
- Approve On Leave from Call – Rev. Phil Kettering

SC 17.11.01 Motion was made and seconded to add Rev. Karen Matuska and Rev. Kim Gonia to the On Leave from Call status. The motion passed.

SC 17.11.02 Motion was made and seconded to approve a change in call to specialized ministry as chaplain at Penrose/St. Francis Hospital in Colorado Springs to Rev. Julie Britsch. The motion passed.

SC 17.11.03 The consent agenda was passed by acclamation.

Leadership/Strategic Plan

Rev. Sarah Moening

Pr. Sarah presented information about the work of Ron Heifetz regarding Adaptive Leadership.

Adaptive Leadership: Mobilizing people to tackle touch challenges and thrive.

1. Preserves the DNA essential for species survival.
2. Discards (reregulates or rearranges) DNA that no longer serves the special ability to flourish.
3. Creates DNA arrangements that give the species the ability to flourish in new ways in more challenging environments.
4. Adaptive leadership is specifically about change that enables the capacity to thrive.
5. Successful adaptive changes build on the past rather than jettison it.
6. Organizational adaptation occurs through experimentation.
7. Adaptation relies on diversity.
8. New adaptations significantly displace, reregulate and rearrange some old DNA.
9. Adaptations take time.

Discussion about the difference between what is essential for the survival of the church vs. what each individual might consider essential for their own experience; and whether we have agreement on whether our focus is on survival of the institutional church, or the proclamation of the gospel.

The ideas expressed above are not sequential – they may occur simultaneously.

“Successful adaptations enable a living system to take the best from its history into the future.”

“Any social system is the way it is because the people in the system want it that way. . . at least those individuals and factions with the most leverage.”

Bishop’s Report

Bishop Gonia

Since Synod Assembly, we have had 12 installations (3 reflected calls involving our full communion partnerships), he has conducted 8 exit interviews and 1 ordination (outside the Synod).

We have held 7 prayer services with Roman Catholic partners this year.

LFS – RM has 2 refugee resettlement programs. The current administration has slashed the number of refugees allowed to enter the US. Unfortunately, this will result in a reduction in services we can provide, and loss of jobs.

Bishop Steve Talmadge of the Grand Canyon Synod resigned, and Rev. Lowell Allman is interim Bishop there.

Bishop Gonia participated in the Western States Youth Gathering; only 1 congregation from RMS attended.

Pres Bishop Eaton was here for 1 evening in July for a fund raiser for Fund for Leaders, and to celebrate the 125th anniversary of First Lutheran Church in Colo Springs.

ELCA Rostered Ministers Gathering in New Orleans in August. About 20 rostered ministers from the RMS attended.

Our 4 Madagascar Companion Synods were hosted here. There was an outbreak of the plague there, so they had to postpone their Reformation celebrations. Next year, we hope to have all 8 Bishops attend the conference of Bishops, and our 4 join us here after that event.

The Conference of Bishops meeting this year is engaged in a process of examining the future, similar to the Adaptive Leadership Pr. Sarah described. Leadership and Congregational Vitality have been identified as the two areas where we will focus our collective attention over the next 2 years.

Theological Conference was in Colo Springs. Mike Ward presented about “Stewardship for All Seasons”, and Sarah Ciavarri presented about vulnerability.

Pr. Leslie Welton has joined the staff of the Office of the Bishop. Her responsibilities include Faith Formation and Candidacy.

The staff has completed 4 of the 6 planned development retreats.

Bishop Gonia attended the Faith and Science Conference hosted by Mt. Tabor in Salt Lake City. Much of the information presented was about genetic technology.

500th Anniversary of the Reformation celebrations have been held throughout the Synod.

Packard Brown, formerly of Iliff, is doing work with ministry leaders about transferring their skills in a meaningful way to other occupations. Part of this is looking at better models of part-time ministry.

Bishop is still working on tools for rostered ministers around discernment about their call, and for congregational discernment: What is Your Next Faithful Step?

The Strategic Plan has a framework for comprehensive leadership development. He and Pr. Sarah are working on a way to equip a group of leaders throughout the synod to help accompany congregations through transition and conflict. This would allow the members of the Bishop's staff to serve more as coaches.

Another part of this is helping our leaders distinguish between external events and their own challenges.

Vice President's Report

Earline Bohling

Please see written report.

Financial Report

Dennis Reynolds

As of Sept. 30, 2017, congregational mission support is ahead of budget. Our Mission Support to Churchwide, as of 9/30/17, is above our budgeted amount of 46 %.

Combined personnel costs are somewhat below budget as of 9/30/17, but due to filling staff positions, we will probably end the year close to budget.

There were 2 unexpected building expenses: a gas leak, and hail damage to the roof. A claim was filed with the insurance company for each: we paid a deductible of about \$10,000 for the roof replacement. Underground lines are not covered, so insurance will not help with the expenses for the gas leak.

We are pretty close to budget for total expenses for the 8 months ending 9/30/17.

Bishop Jim notes that our mission support to churchwide for this year compared to last is \$68,000 over last year, and \$41,000 over 2 years ago, even though we decreased our percentage of support. The increases come from many congregations. Pr. Sarah suggests we engage someone to analyze our data to see the correlations between our efforts to be church together.

Constitution

Earline and Jody

Some changes, such as replacing "benevolence" with "mission support" and "Global Church Network" being consistent can be made without waiting for next year. Earline thanked the committee for its work.

The naming of committees in oversight and catalyst was omitted. Self-organizing teams remain, but we added a requirement for approval for counsel, and a written report before Assembly.

Synod Council, with a 2/3 vote, can amend continuing resolutions.

SC 17.11.04 Motion was made and seconded to approve the changes to the continuing resolutions *en bloc*. The motion passed unanimously.

Village Exchange Center Board of Directors Position

Earline Bohling

SC 17.11.05 Motion was made and seconded to appoint a representative of the RMS to sit on the board of Directors of Village Exchange Center. The motion passed.

Please submit recommendations for representative to Earline.

Executive Committee Vacancy

Jerry Ethridge's resignation has created an opening on the Executive Committee.

SC 2017.11.06 Motion was made and seconded to appoint Susan Mitchell to the Executive Committee. The motion passed unanimously.

Messiah Mountain

Bishop Gonia, Jay Voth

Messiah congregation has a retreat property outside Denver that they will be giving to a new group, Messiah Mountain. They are requesting our support in forming a new entity to function as an outdoor ministry for adults of the RMS. There is a committee working with Rainbow Trail and Sky Ranch about this formation. They have not yet started the formal process of formation. Messiah is asking for consensus from the outdoor ministries and the Synod Council, and our future support. This would be a ministry of the synod, and there would be a council member on the board of the new entity.

SC 17.11.06 Motion was made and seconded to support Messiah Community Church's resolution to transfer the mountain property to a new entity to be formed, as a ministry of the Rocky Mountain Synod.

Jim thinks the property is about 30 acres. The building may need to be razed, and a new facility rebuilt. Our ecumenical partners might be interested in this property once it is refurbished.

The motion passed.

Unallocated disaster funds

Dennis & Earline

We have about \$8,074 in funds from churchwide disaster relief that were initially committed to Rejoice. We requested that they get 3 bids, but they have not done so.

SC 17.11.07 Motion was made and seconded to give the remaining disaster relief funds to the Caribbean Synod. The motion passed. The Council asks Erin Power to publicize the total giving to Lutheran Disaster Relief in 2017, as well as our recent gift.

Budget Change

SC 17.11.08 Motion was made and seconded to increase our mission support to churchwide from 46% to 47% for fiscal 2018. The motion passed.

Staff Report

Pr. Judith: The RMS hosted the Developer and Redeveloper Conference of over 350 people at Bethany in Cherry Creek.

There was a training for people who conduct behavioral interviews of those considering developer or redeveloper training.

She continues to facilitate a relationship between council members and developing or redeveloping congregations. If anyone would like to participate, please let her know.

She has tentative mission support figures from churchwide for our redevelopment and ethnic specific sites, but is not able to bring a budget recommendation at this time. She asks that we allow the Executive Committee to address this when the numbers are received. No objection being made, the executive committee will work with her on mission support allocations.

Several developers need to have their calls renewed:

SC 17.11.08 Motion was made and seconded to extend the term call to Deacon Cindy Robles, for one year to the Aurora area ministry strategy (“ACTS” or Aurora Church Together Strategy) . Pr. Judith would like to rework the project description, as it has been evolving. The motion passed.

SC 17.11.09 Motion was made and seconded to extend the term call to Pr. Terry Schjang for one year at New Beginnings Prison Ministry in Denver. The motion passed.

SC 17.11.10 Motion was made and seconded to reauthorize the following SAWCs

New Beginnings

Latino Ministries West Denver

Nueva Vida Ministries

Rejoicing Spirits (a SAWC exploration)

Spirit of the Mountain (Golden, CO)

The motion passed.

Congregations under development:

Pr. Andy Boesenecker at Mustard Seed House ministries resigned his call recently, and most of the lay leadership team also resigned, and the congregation has chosen to disband. Pr. Judith is working with the conference to review and evaluate the ministry.

SC 17.11.11. Motion was made and seconded to close Mustard Seed House ministries in Northern Colorado. Following discussion, the motion passed.

Pr. Leslie Welton:

There is a vacancy at the campus ministry an UNM in Albuquerque. She will be working with the other Albuquerque congregations in re-visioning campus ministry in this setting.

Peter Severson:

Lobby day is Feb. 15, 2018. Presiding Bishop Eaton has invited him to represent the ELCA on the National Council of Churches Justice and Advocacy Table.

Pr. Sarah Moening:

We have 40 congregations in the transition process. One congregation is entering the call process for two co-pastors. Two congregations in Colorado are now “yoked” and the arrangement is working well.

Deacon Erin Power:

She just launched the new communications group. Council members need to check with their congregations and conferences to make sure they are aware of and participating in this group.

She has been working with the assembly planning/visioning team to define our values for assembly and begin developing consistent goals.

Earline commended Erin for her work in facilitating the Global Church Network.

Erin will send council members the grid that shows whether each position is open to a male/female lay, or clergy.

Better Together Team – Council Engagement

Bishop Gonia

Theme for next Assembly: For the Life of the World

The team is focusing on the foundational relationships that allow us to be church together.

They are working on developing a narrative budget for 2018.

Other foci: disaster response; how we say thank you for mission support (including handwritten thank you notes from council members)

Asking Assembly members to take on a role for the coming year as ambassadors for our life as Church Together.

Deniese has been assembling information about each conference’s mission support. Each council member who represents a conference will receive a regular mission support report. They can note changes and engage with the congregation(s). Orientation will take place at the February council meeting.

They are planning a Better Together Sunday the week before Assembly, with a common litany and prayers.

They are developing a litany to be offered to acknowledge mission support when a congregation is developing its budget.

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jody Brammer-Hoelter