

## SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2020

Members present: Bp. Jim Gonia, VP Earline Bohling, Treas. Julie Reusser, Secy. Susan Mitchell, Pr. Julie Brooks, Pr. Sara Wirth, Terry Cole, Jay Voth, Pr. Reba Kiger-Kolasch, Jeff Fairfax, Debra Frank Dew, Bunga Manarung, Wyatt Smith, and via Zoom: Todd Herreid, Pr. Terry Schjang

Staff present: Pr. Leslie O'Callaghan, Pr. Dana Peterson, Pr. Sarah Moening, Peter Severson, Kristen Lee, Tina Kvitek, Deniese Estrada, Deacon Erin Power, and via Zoom: Pr. Kent Mueller, Pr. Michael Tassler

Absent: Kurt Rager, Staff, and Ray Ferry, Diana Biggs, members

Guests present: Rev. Lou Blanchard, and Gary Philby—via Zoom

Due to snow conditions, the meeting started at 10 a.m. and several will be present via Zoom Conference Call. Earline opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Announcement: Pr. Dana Peter has accepted the position of DEM (Director for Evangelical Mission) for the Rocky Mountain Synod. He will be part time until May 4<sup>th</sup>.

Opening Devotions were given by Matthew, Leslie and Wyatt

### Consent Agenda:

Approval of Minutes – 12/17/19 and 1/21/20

Approval of Interim Call for Rev. Ken Thurow, St. Marks, Aurora, CO

Approval of On Leave from Call for Rev. Todd Payne

Approval of Interim Call for Rev. James West, First, Ault, CO

Kristen asked that an addition to the Consent Agent be made: Approval of Retirement Status for Rev. Renee Lier

**Jay moved, seconded by Matthew,** to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. **MOTION CARRIED.**

### Officer Reports:

Bishop Jim – Attended Advocacy Day and the Bishop's Luncheon in Santa Fe on 2/6/20; He reported that Kurt Rager, the new Director for Lutheran Advocacy New Mexico did a great job, mentored by Ruth Hoffman, the recently retired Director. Jim shared insights from his week's trip to the Holy Land. A highlight was worshipping in the only Christian Church that still worships in the Arabic language. He also said that the restrictions imposed on Palestinians were stunning to experience. Jim made a plea for anyone planning a trip to the Holy Land to be sure to connect with the Lutheran Church presence in Israel and Jordan. He told us that Carmen Miranda Rowland will go off the roster; her On Leave from Call has expired. Andrew Boesnecker's ONFC also has expired but we have not heard from him yet. The Conference of Bishops must vote on extensions.

VP Earline – She stated that while the Executive Committee does make many decisions, the Synod Council is also very important in making decisions for the RMS. She praised the Synod Staff (reviews were held in January) and thanked Council for their feedback. Excellence in Leadership was discussed.

Secretary Susan – Discussed her written report regarding reviews of congregational constitutions.

Treas. Julie – At this time, she introduced Gary Philby, Chair of the RMS Finance Committee, who joined meeting via Zoom. He reported on his work with the committee. Julie reviewed her written report, stating she is spending a lot of time completing the audit. She and Gary talked about the budget revisions that will

be needed due to lower mission support giving from congregations. **Jay moved, seconded by Terry Cole**, to accept the revised 2020 Budget as presented. Discussion followed, led by Julie R., pointing out transfers from different funds to cover expenditures—but this is not to be reported as income. Jeff asked that the January

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minutes of the Executive Committee be amended to clarify that the decision to increase staff compensation by 2.8% for cost-of-living is for 2020, not 2019. Jeff raised objection to synod council not spending more time working on the budget together. Jim addressed the deficit, discussing using reserves to cover it this year, yet be pro-active in 2020 so that 2021 will be more normal, not continuing to use reserves. Todd gave additional thoughts as to what Executive Committee dealt with in their January meeting. Cash flow is not a concern in the RMS, but transfers from other funds is not sustainable going forward. The synod has funds that were given for ministry, and we can choose to use them. Todd gave additional comments. Earline gave a clarifying summary.

**VOTE TO APPROVE THE REVISED 2020 BUDGET: MOTION CARRIED.**

Re: Approve signatories on financial accounts: add Julie Reusser, Treasurer— **Reba moved, seconded by Debra. MOTION CARRIED.**

**Sara W. moved, seconded by Terry C.** to remove Dennis Reynolds, former RMS Treasurer, as a bank signer. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Treas. Julie asked for a motion to liquidate \$50,000 in individual energy common stocks, which have been held by the Synod for quite some time. This is a recommendation of the finance committee. They are a part of the Scholarship Fund. **Susan moved, seconded by Matthew**, to sell these stocks. **MOTION CARRIED.** The finance committee is currently working on a gift policy, which would resolve this going forward.

Re: Financial Policy – Earline suggested we table the discussion and the vote on the financial policy handbook for approval at the May meeting. **Jay moved, seconded by Reba**, to table. **MOTION CARRIED.**

### Staff Reports:

Michael Tassler, Program Director for the 3E Lilly Grant, reported to Synod Council via Zoom Conference.

He said Abundant Mindset helps us reframe the financial picture. He needs council assistance with Item 10 in his report: there are significant changes to core programs—Stewardship for All Seasons and MEF (Ministerial Excellence Fund). He told us about results from a survey done at last Synod Assembly, about the Lilly Grants. Education debt changes: increase to up to 10% of the loan, capped at \$10,000. Medical Debt Changes: up to \$2,000, maximum of \$4,000 if the 3E contribution is raised by another source. Emergency Debt grant requires review by the 3E Board and Bishop Gonia. Not hearing there is a crisis in the category of Retirement Savings from the survey. Continue to hear about medical emergencies. Tina said nationally she believes there is a retirement savings crisis but people today are more concerned with education and medical debts. Michael agreed, but for the purpose of our grants, we will put emphasis on education and medical. Stewardship for All Seasons – continuing in the formal program is not the most feasible thing. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> grant, we want to offer an alternative for Year 2 of SAS. Developing a team called “Abundance Advocates” – laypeople in various locations. He is looking for council’s affirmation of these changes. **Debra moved, seconded by Reba**, to affirm the changes, including in the Vital Right Size Ministry part of the grant. Discussion: Michael hopes that the matching money comes from the Next Steps Campaign that the RMS is launching. There are coaching leaders to help congregations and rostered ministers for things like retirement savings. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**Lunch Break 12:05 – 12:45 p.m.**

### **Afternoon Session with Rev. Lou Blanchard**

She led the Council and Staff in a presentation using Theory U to think deeply about our life together in the Rocky Mountain Synod, our Strategic Plan and the revised budget for 2020. We broke into small groups and reported back to the full council and staff.

Earline adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m. Due to snow conditions, the evening fellowship and meal was cancelled.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan H. Mitchell  
Rocky Mountain Synod Secretary

Members present: Bp. Jim Gonia, VP Earline Bohling, Treas. Julie Reusser, Secy. Susan Mitchell, Pr. Julie Brooks, Pr. Sara Wirth, Terry Cole, Jay Voth, Pr. Reba Kiger-Kolasch, Debra Frank Dew, Bunga Manarung, Wyatt Smith, Pr. Terry Schjang, and via Zoom: Todd Herreid and Ray Ferry.

Staff present: Pr. Leslie O'Callaghan, Pr. Dana Peterson, Pr. Sarah Moening, Peter Severson, Kristen Lee, Tina Kvitek, Deniese Estrada, Deacon Erin Power, Pr. Kent Mueller.

Absent: Kurt Rager, Staff, Diana Biggs and Jeff Fairfax, members

Guest present: Rev. Lou Blanchard

Earline opened the meeting at 8:40 a.m.

Opening Devotions were given by Matthew, Leslie and Wyatt  
Worship followed with Holy Communion

Rev. Blanchard led the group in the second day's presentation using Theory U. We again broke into small groups and returned to the large group to discuss. Lou then talked about Next Steps discussions and a Timetable. Bp. Jim is intrigued by doing a survey with the stakeholders. Sarah added other ways to obtain the data—small group conversations primarily. Erin mentioned Town Hall meetings to give members throughout the RMS access to the Bishop for questions and answers.

Campus Ministry: Leslie asked council members to go and meet with the campus ministry students (and the campus ministry pastor) in their Conferences and report back to Leslie by April. **AGENDA ITEM.**

Bp. Jim mentioned chaplaincy ministry on military bases in the RMS. This is another important area of young adult ministry in which we have not been involved.

Jim summarized things he hopes we can complete before the October 23-24 Synod Council meetings: Survey piece, Town Hall meetings, Campus Ministry meetings and Vital Right Size Ministry plans. Jim asked Reba and Dana to help with the survey. Deacon Linda Bobbitt will be invited also. A more detailed timeline: By March 17<sup>th</sup> Zoom Synod Council Meeting : 1) have a template Survey ready, 2) have Town Hall meeting dates and topics, 3) Kent have dates for Conference Gatherings, and by April 21<sup>st</sup> Zoom Synod Council Meeting: 1) schedule the Town Hall meetings, 2) have reports of visits to Campus Ministry sites. **AGENDA ITEM.**

Jim led the council and staff in a big thank you to Lou for leading us in the 2-day presentation.

Terry S. invited Council and Staff to attend a dinner and worship at New Beginnings Prison Ministry on Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, the evening after our Council meeting on that Friday. She said the women are so thankful for the support given by the Synod that they want to express their appreciation in this way. Terry will provide us with the requirements for entering the prison for this event. And for those who live in the Denver area and who cannot attend in October, a special worship service will take place on March 6<sup>th</sup> – worship only, no dinner.

Deacon Erin has a Synod Assembly Team: Ray, Reba, Earline, and Wyatt. She will be scheduling a meeting to have conversation soon.

**12:20 – Working Lunch**Staff Reports (continued):

Leslie requests names for reps to be on Candidacy Committee (to replace Diana Biggs whose term expires in May)

Peter requests additional names for the Policy Committee (Bunga is currently on it).

Issues he is following/working on: Trying to abolish the death penalty in Colorado; Feb. 27, Day of the Colorado Legislature; Discerning a Hunger Advocacy Fellow (a one-year support person in the Advocacy office)

Kent – he stated we have already answered his request.

Dana has received the Churchwide letter offering him the DEM position.

He reported on an interesting ministry on the Western Slope. Deacon Gail Britt for a part time Call to Hope and Healing, a cooperative ministry in Grand Junction, CO. A grant is being applied for - Visitation and Grief Support. Bp. Jim said if it is a paid position, a Call can be issued to Deacon Gail. **Terry C. moved, seconded by Susan**, to issue a Call to Deacon Gail Britt. Discussed followed.

**MOTION CARRIED.**Erin – Synod Assembly Update

She reminded council to go to the link to sign up for which regional location they will attend and to also sign up for the various duties listed at each site. She will send out her email with the link again. There are options for excursions in the afternoon – for visitors as well as voting members.

Tina – discussed her written report. She booked \$25 million-plus in gifts. Total of current as well as future gifts. She is meeting with many individuals in congregations. Regarding the Next Steps Synod Campaign, she requests we do “name-storming” – put names of potential givers to the Campaign on her wall charts, by Conferences. We can send her the names after the council meeting by email. She requests that all Conference Leader positions be filled.

Earline asked for volunteers to give Devotions at the May Synod Council meeting. Julie Brooks and Jay Voth will prepare Devotions. She and Erin discussed the May Synod Council meeting time. It will be by Zoom Conference Call the Thursday afternoon, April 30, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., before the 1 PM start of Synod Assembly on Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Earline adjourned the meeting at 12:00. A lunch for all was provided.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Mitchell  
Rocky Mountain Synod Secretary