

**Northwest Washington Synod
Synod Council Meeting Minutes 18 March 2023
St. John United Lutheran Church, Seattle**

- Present:** Luke Allgeyer, Shelley Bryan Wee, Salvador Cossio, Kay Edgerton, Curt Eidem, Hector Garfias-Toledo, Netsie Griffith, Ivar Hillesland, Sherianne Molzahn Caldwell, Kelly Peterson, and Cindy Shultz
- Staff:** Susan Berg
- Present by Zoom:** David Hahn (staff), Dianne Johnson (staff), Rebecca Langholz, Herb Shao (staff), Sam Sseba, Elly Stitt, and Andy Yee (staff)
- Guests:** Malcolm McCallum, Finance Committee Chair; Fred Row, Personnel Committee Chair
- Absent:** Amani Austin, Bart Brosten, and Shane Lambing

Call to Order and Opening Devotions

Vice President Kay shared the following land acknowledgment:

- We acknowledge the original inhabitants of this area, the Coast Salish people. Since time immemorial, they have hunted, fished, gathered, and taken care of these lands. We respect their sovereignty, their right to self-determination, and honor their sacred spiritual connection with the land and water. We will strive to be honest about our past mistakes and bring about a future that includes their people, stories, and voices to form a more just and equitable society.

The business meeting was called to order at 9:05 am.

Pr. Anna Rieke, pastor of St. John United Lutheran, shared on opening devotion from Acts 27 pondering parallels between crisis, the time before the crisis, and this biblical shipwreck story.

It was moved, seconded, and carried (hereafter abbreviated as **MSC**)

SC2023.03.18.01 to approve the agenda as presented noting that the order may need to vary based on the schedule of guests and presenters.

MSC

SC2023.03.18.02 to accept the minutes of the January 21, 2023 Synod Council meeting.

It was moved and carried (hereafter abbreviated as **MC**)

SC2023.03.18.03 to approve the Consent Agenda consisting of:

- **The following roster changes: 1) Extend “On Leave from Call” for Anya Helmon; 2) Transfer JT Burke from Southwest Washington Synod to Northwest Washington Synod; JT has been called to Prince of Peace; 3) Transfer Susan Kirlin-Hackett from Northwest Washington to Southwest Washington; Susan is retired; 4) Record the deaths of Deacon Paul Anderson and Deacon Erma Lee.**
- **The following appointments to the Personnel Committee: Pr. Mia Baumgartner (Word and Sacrament); Pr. Paul Benz (specialized**

ministry); Dcn. Le Brandes (Word and Service), and Pr. Ivar Hillesland (Synod Council Representative).

- The following appointment to the Candidacy Committee: Susan Harper (lay person, Church of the Apostles).
- The following disbursement from the Gloria Dei Endowment: \$5,000 grant to Pr. Kacey Hahn for a sabbatical.

Reports

Synod Gatherings Report

- Susan reported that registration opens April 10; Synod Council members will be sent a secret registration code for a reduced registration cost of \$20; there will be two registration links (one for May 13 and one for May 20)

MSC

SC2023.03.18.04 that the 2024 one-day, Synod Assembly be held on Saturday, May 18 and the 2025 Synod Assembly be held Friday-Sunday, May 16-18.

MSC

SC2023.03.18.05 that the Gatherings' offerings be split into one third each to equally support Lutheran World Relief (with an emphasis on Turkey/Syria earthquake relief); Lutheran Community Services NW (with an emphasis on refugee relief); and the Bishop's Caring Fund.

Treasurer's/Finance Committee Report

- Finance Committee Chair, Malcolm McCallum, was with us to present this report.
- It is good news that the Synod ended its fiscal year with a slight surplus, yet some concerns were noted about mission support going forward.
- Bart's Treasurer and Financial reports may be accessed in Microsoft Teams.

MC

SC2023.03.18.06 to approve the Synod Finance Committee's Financial Policy revisions as presented in their Executive Summary of Proposed Changes.

MC

SC2023.03.18.07 to approve the revisions made to the Northwest Washington Synod Policies and Procedures for Endowment Investments as presented.

Report from David Hahn, Director of Learning and Faith Formation

- Highlights were given from his written report lifting up past, current and future LIVE courses and projects.
- He is looking to bring on board a part-time, paid administrative assistant.

Vice President's Point of Personal Privilege

- Kay made a brief report on the medical treatment and health status of Isabel, her daughter, Elizabeth's partner, and thanked the council for their past and ongoing prayers.

Personnel Committee Report

- Personnel Committee Chair, Fred Row, was with us to present this report.

MC

SC2023.03.18.08 to approve the revisions to the document, "Normal Duties and Timelines for the Personnel Committee ELCA NWWA Synod" as presented.

Report from Herb Shao, Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM)

- Herb shared his report in a Power Point format and began with a report on his experience of attending both the Asian Pacific Islander (API) Conference and the Asian Lutheran International (ALI) Conference held in Thailand earlier this year. Assistant to the Bishop, Andy Yee also attended these conferences.
- He spent the second part of his report clarifying the synodical and regional work of the two DEMS in our synod and discussed the importance of the Living Legacy initiative in assisting congregations considering closure.

Report from the Bishop, Shelley Bryan Wee

- She began by sharing a report of her recent trip to the Holy Land (not in her written report).
- Synod Council was asked to act on the “Synod Recommendations for Legacy Considerations.” She clarified that congregational property belongs to the congregation, thus the synod cannot force a congregational decision but only make recommendations. Other synods have presented a similar document to what is being proposed in our synod.

MSC

SC2023.03.18.09 to approve the “Synod Recommendations for Legacy Considerations” as a working document and to work on adding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) language as well as indigenous “land back” concerns

- Following through on a recommendation that was passed at Synod Assembly, the bishop is recommending we hire a company to do a DEI audit of practices within the NWWA Synod costing approximately \$50,000. This would be an intensive, year-long project involving not only synod staff but all leadership within the synod and would require extra time and energy.

MSC

SC2023.03.18.10 to move forward with a commitment to a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) audit and to utilize reserve funds to cover the cost.

Report from Assistant to the Bishop, Andy Yee

- Though Herb already reported on the API/ALI Conferences, he just wanted to add that, overall, it was a good way to gather people around worship and prayer and to strategize together.
- From his written report, he highlighted the Candidacy Committee’s work, and the ongoing work on the Synodically Authorized Lay Minister (SALM) Program.
- He asked that we keep congregations who are interviewing candidates in our prayers as well as wisdom for him, as he prepares slates of candidates for Call Committees awaiting names.

Report from DEM, Dianne Johnson may be found as a written document in Microsoft Teams

Updates from Task Forces

Open Door Ministries (ODM) Funds

- Sherianne reported on the work that she and Elly have done.
- There is approximately \$55,000 to distribute with the purpose of encouraging Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregations in their support of LGBTQ+ work with projects small or large; the plan is to announce the grant process in June, open it in July and close it the beginning of December.

Property

- The Task Force’s work to recruit Hannah Petros to assist with property concerns has been very helpful.
- There is still the need for a Property Management Team to manage and oversee properties; the Bishop is still contemplating the possibility of a paid position for this.

- It was recommended to make an appeal at the upcoming Synod Gatherings for people who might be interested in serving on a Property Management Team.

Discussion and Action Item

Coach NW Funding Proposal

- May need to submit this as a budget item to the budget committee in the future

MSC

SC2023.03.18.11 to approve the Coach NW Request for \$15,000 with the funding source to be determined but to place a priority on utilizing money from the Mission in WA fund

Other Business

Council Norms for Discussion/Communication

- Will talk about this at the beginning of the meeting in the future

Determining the funding source for the Camp Lutherwood contribution approved at the January meeting is still in process.

Looking Ahead

Synod Gatherings

- May 13, Salem Lutheran Church in Mt Vernon
- May 20, St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Bellevue

Future Meeting Dates and Announcements

Synod Council

- May meeting To Be Determined (TBD) and would be by Zoom should business arise
 - Kay proposes not meeting unless absolutely necessary.
- July – TBD (this is an as needed meeting and is usually a half-day)

Executive Committee is now meeting every other month (opposite full council meetings) via Zoom:

- April 12
- June 14
- August 9

We are still in need of people to serve on the Renewing Congregations Grants Committee to meet and review requests; Curt is willing if needed.

The meeting adjourned at 2:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Netsie Griffith,
Synod Council Secretary