

**Northwest Washington Synod
Synod Council Meeting Minutes 16 March 2024
NWWA Synod Offices, St. John United Lutheran Church, Seattle**

Present: Luke Allgeyer, Bart Brosten, Shelley Bryan Wee, Salvador Cossio, Kay Edgerton, Curt Eidem, Netsie Griffith, Ivar Hillesland, Rebecca Langholz, Sherianne Molzahn Caldwell, and Cindy Shultz

Present by Zoom: Hector Garfias-Toledo, Kelly Peterson, Elly Stitt, and Andy Yee

Staff: Susan Berg and Judy Brennan

Guests by Zoom: Imran Siddiqui and Courtney Stepp

Guests: Cara Tanis

Absent: Shane Lambing and Sam Sseba

Call to Order, Land Acknowledgment and Opening Devotion

Vice President Kay called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and shared the following land acknowledgment:

- We acknowledge the original inhabitants of this area, the Coast Salish people (specifically in this area, the Duwamish). 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.

Bp. Shelley read Psalm 121 which is the basis of this year's Synod Assembly theme and offered an opening prayer.

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

SC2024.03.16.01 to approve the agenda as presented acknowledging that the order might need to be adjusted to accommodate the schedule of our guests.

Kay noted that there was no report from the Director of Formation and Learning (David Hahn) so asked that this report be removed from the Consent Agenda.

MSC

SC2024.03.16.02 to approve the Consent Agenda consisting of:

- Approval of the minutes of the January 20, 2024 Synod Council Meeting
- Reception of the following written staff reports as presented, including any addendums:
 - Report of the Bishop – Shelley Bryan Wee
 - Report of the Assistant to the Bishop – Andy Yee
 - Report of the Treasurer – Bart Broston
 - Report of the DEMs – Judy Brennan/Herb Shao
 - Report of the Director of Properties – Jay Edgerton
- Reception of the following written committee report as presented:
 - Policy Review
- Approval of the following roster actions:
 - On Leave From Call (OLFC):
 - Elizabeth Colver 2/27/2024
 - Retired:
 - Jane Prestbye 2/1/2023

- Reception of the following roster notifications:
 - Called:
 - Bryon Hansen 2/11/24
 - Ordinations:
 - William Cheung 1/13/2024
 - Transfer out:
 - Scott Postlewait 2/20/2024 to SWWA
 - Jocelyn Carson 2/20/2024 to Montana
 - Conference of Bishops approved On Leave from Call (COB OLFC)
 - Marc Hander
 - Deb Mach

Greetings from Imran Siddiqui, ELCA Vice President

- Imran brought us greetings via Zoom and shared information from his perspective as ELCA Vice President (a volunteer position).
- Among other things, he shared that 1) a DEI audit of ELCA documents had been completed [recommendations from the audit for churchwide documents is on the ELCA website]; 2) The Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church will be bringing recommendations to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly; 3) Bishop Eaton will return this month from her Sabbatical; 4) the ELCA Church Council meets twice a year in April and November; 5) he was grateful to us as Synod Council members and gave a special thanks to Kay who had a role in the planning of the recent gathering in Chicago of Synod Council Vice Presidents; and 6) he was grateful for our Bishop and the important role that the Conference of Bishops plays in the life of our whole church; they do important work when they gather.
- He then took time to answer questions from synod council members.

Synod Assembly Report and Actions for the May 18, 2024 Assembly - (Susan Berg and Courtney Stepp)

- Susan and Courtney presented and answered questions about the Standing Rules for our upcoming Assembly.

MC

SC2024.03.16.03 to approve the Standing Rules to be presented to the 2024 Synod Assembly for adoption.

- Agenda
 - It was noted that a couple of changes had been made to the proposed agenda for the Synod Assembly that were not reflected in the version of the agenda previously provided for Synod Council members. These changes were clarified so approval of the agenda could proceed.

MC

SC2024.03.16.04 to approve the Agenda, as corrected, for the 2024 Synod Assembly.

- Because of challenges encountered in the past, Susan asked if Synod Council might create a policy which would state that Synod Council members attending Synod Assembly who are not also representatives of their congregation would have their registration fee covered by the synod, and, if needed, housing as well. It is expected that congregations would cover the cost of Synod Council members who are also attending assemblies as voting members for their congregations.
 - After some discussion, **it was decided to refer a request to the Policy Review Committee for writing a policy pertaining to the cost of Synod Council Members' attendance at future assemblies.**

MSC

SC2024.03.16.05 to cover the cost of Synod Assembly registration and housing for Synod Council members who are not also voting members for their congregations.

MSC

SC2024.03.16.06 to reimburse Synod Council members for mileage to Synod Assembly at the volunteer rate for mileage reimbursement if it is requested.

MC

SC2024.03.16.07 to approve the recommendation of the Synod Assembly Planning Team to hold the 2025 Synod Assembly at the Edward D. Hansen Conference Center at the Angel of the Winds Arena in Everett.

- The 2025 Synod Assembly will be a two-day assembly held all day both Friday and Saturday, May 16-17.

Coach NW Report - (Cara Tanis)

- Coach Coordinator Job Description
 - Cara is stepping down as the NWWA Synod Coach Coordinator; this is the reason for the job description being created; it is hoped that the position might be filled by June 1.

MSC

SC2024.03.16.08 to approve the NWWA Synod Coach Coordinator position description.

MSC

SC2024.03.16.09 to empower the Coach NW Steering Team to hire the new Coach Coordinator.

MSC

SC2024.03.16.10 to amend the previous motion to include Judy Brennan (DEM) in the hiring process.

- Progressive Discipline Policy for our Synod's Active Status Coaches
 - A question was raised about what "serious misconduct" entails; it is undefined in the document, and the council feels it needs to be defined.
 - It was also thought there needs to be further clarity for the pathway of how a grievance is brought forward; who brings a complaint to whom?; how is it processed?
 - Finally, is it necessary for coaches to be a member of an ELCA congregation?

MSC

SC2024.03.16.11 to refer approval of the Disciplinary Policy for Coaches as well as covering coaches under the synod's liability insurance to Executive Committee for action at their April 10 meeting.

OLD BUSINESS**DEIB Updates and Dates**

- The first meeting with Crossroads is next **Saturday, March 23**.
- Tentative dates for the next two meetings are **June 22** and **July 27 (both 9-5)**.

Policy Review Committee**MC**

SC2024.03.16.12 to approve the revision of the NWWA Synod Capital Equipment Policy and its renaming to the NWWA Synod Equipment Policy.

MC

SC2024.03.16.13 to approve the recommendation to rescind the following out of date synod policies: *NWWA Synod Call Process for Associates in Ministry in a Congregational Setting, Policy for Calling Pastors to Congregations in NWWA Synod, and the NWWA Continuing Education Policy.*

Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Statement Review/Recommendations (Luke Allgeyer)

MSC

SC2024.03.16.14 to approve the revised Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Welcome Statement.

MSC

SC2024.03.16.15 to approve the four partner commitments as stated by Reconciling Works and do our best to live into them.

- Ivar volunteered to look at the RIC Profile Survey to which we are being asked to respond to see what it entails.

NEW BUSINESS

Welcome of Hope, Lake Stevens as a new Synod Authorized Worshiping Community (SAWC)

MSC

SC2024.03.16.16 to authorize Hope Church, Lake Stevens, as a Synod Authorized Worshiping Community (SAWC).

United in Grace, Monroe

- This is a Methodist/ELCA congregation coming together; the ELCA congregation was formerly Morning Star Lutheran Church; the Bp. proposes that we affirm them

MSC

SC2024.03.16.17 to affirm the Methodist and ELCA congregations in Monroe coming together as United in Grace, a new congregation, and to celebrate their expression of being the church in their community.

Follow up from Judy on Grant Info

- Judy entertained and responded to questions about the grant report she specifically prepared for us.
- It was decided that a conversation topic at a future meeting needs to be: What happens to our Evangelical Mission when our "Renewing Congregations" money is depleted

Upcoming council representation related to events around pastoral calls requested by Andy

- The installation of Sr. Jessica Zimmerlee at St. John's United, Seattle on Saturday, April 13 at 3 pm
 - Curt Eidem volunteered to serve as the council representative.
- In the future, once dates are determined representation will be needed at the installation of Pr. Bryon Hansen at First Lutheran, West Seattle, and the installation of Pr. Thomas Voelp at Our Redeemer's Lutheran in Ballard.

Budget Proposal - (Bart Brosten)

- Bart reported that he had loaded the preliminary, recommended 2025 budget in Teams for us to review; it is forwarded to us from the Finance Committee. He shared that:
 - the budget reflects Mission Support of \$1.36 million; the budget is able to be increased because of investments; and it includes staff pay increases of 4.5%
- It was clarified that operating revenue is not used for the new Director of Properties position; because of this, while it needs to be included in the budget, it needs to be reported differently.
- A concern was expressed regarding salary guidelines for staff and if the proposed increase is in line with our own guidelines.

- A question was raised, if we were to have excess revenue at the end of the year, if extra contributions might be made to the agencies and social ministry in our budget, since those line items were not increased.
- It was decided that we need to: 1) look at all designated funds, what they are funding, and how they either need to be increased or replaced, and 2) spend more time discussing budgetary concerns at the end of this next fiscal year in anticipation of the 2026 budget.

MSC

SC2024.03.16.18 because of revisions and further work on the budget required, to request the final, proposed 2025 budget be approved by the Executive Committee at their April 10 meeting.

Discussion re: the meeting of salary guidelines for rostered ministers in the synod

- This discussion began with a reporting of partial information gleaned from annual reports to the Bishop.
- It soon became clear that this is a very complicated topic based on many variables (i.e., congregational capacity; personal choices; and a lack of ability/structure to enforce mandated guidelines.
- Andy suggested giving thought to how this information is gleaned in future reports to the Bishop based not only on numbers but something that leaves room for mutual agreements about “between spaces.”

Looking Ahead

- **Future Meeting Dates:**
 - Synod Council –
 - May 17: Council Meeting (this is a Friday evening, prior to the Synod Assembly)
 - Executive Committee meets every other month (opposite full council meetings) via Zoom:
 - April 10, 2024
 - June 12, 2024

MSC

SC2024.03.16.19 to adjourn the meeting at 1:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Netsie Griffith,
Synod Council Secretary