

**Northwest Washington Synod
Synod Council Meeting Minutes 20 January 2024
NWWA Synod Offices, St. John United Lutheran Church, Seattle**

- Present:** Luke Allgeyer, Shelley Bryan Wee, Kay Edgerton, Curt Eidem, Netsie Griffith, Shane Lambing, Rebecca Langholz, Sherianne Molzahn Caldwell, Kelly Peterson, and Cindy Shultz
- Present by Zoom:** Hector Garfias-Toledo and Sam Sseba
- Staff:** Susan Berg, Judy Brennan, and Andy Yee
- Guests by Zoom:** Gary Rothenberger and Courtney Stepp
- Absent:** Bart Brosten, Salvador Cossio, Ivar Hillesland, and Elly Stitt

Call to Order, Land Acknowledgment and Opening Devotion

Vice President Kay called the meeting to order at 9:10 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.

Cindy was called upon to share our communication guidelines.

Bp. Shelley shared an opening prayer.

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

SC2024.01.20.01 to approve the agenda as presented acknowledging that the order might need to be adjusted to accommodate the schedule of our guests.

A request was made to pull the report of the Director of Evangelical Mission (DEM), Judy Brennan's report from the Consent Agenda, so we could discuss and consider requested actions.

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

SC2024.01.20.02 to approve the Consent Agenda consisting of:

- Approval of the minutes of the November 18, 2023 Synod Council Meeting
- Reception of the following written reports as presented:
 - Report of the Bishop – Shelley Bryan Wee
 - Report of the Assistant to the Bishop – Andy Yee
 - Report of the Treasurer – Bart Brosten
 - Report of the Director of Formation and Learning – David Hahn
- Approval of the following roster actions:
 - On Leave from Call – Gretchen Mertes (10/16/23)
 - Retired – Paul Stumme Diers (2/1/24)
- Approval of the following housing allowances for rostered leaders:
 - Shelley Bryan Wee: \$35,000
 - Andy Yee: \$45,000
 - David Hahn: \$10,000

Report of DEM, Judy Brennan

- A question was raised re: the funding of Synod Authorized Worshiping Communities (SAWCs).
 - Judy responded that the amounts were recommended by former DEM, Dianne (who retired the end of October), and were approved by the Evangelical Outreach Team.
 - In her next report to the council, Judy will include those amounts; she reminded us, as indicated in her written report, there will be a 10% reduction in funding from Churchwide for all the SAWCs.
- Another question was raised inquiring how SAWCs are governed at the community level.
 - They don't have a council but have a Leadership Team (sometimes formal & sometimes informal).
 - They do not have a constitution, because they are under the synod constitution, but they do have Covenants.

MC

SC2024.01.20.03 **to approve the following Synod Authorized Worshiping Communities (SAWCs) for continued funding for Fiscal Year 2024: Bethel Ethiopian Church, Seattle; Echoes, Bellingham; El Camino de Emaus, Burlington; Emmaus Table @ 7400 Woodlawn, Seattle; Grace Chinese Lutheran, Renton; Grace Chinese Lutheran, Sammamish; Roots of the Table, Renton; Seattle Covenant Community Fellowship, Seattle; Family and Friends Gathering, Everett; North Cascades Wild Church, Marblemount; University of Washington International Students Ministry, Seattle.**

Because of the presence of our guest presenters, the remainder of Judy's report was tabled to follow the Synod Assembly and Coaching presentations.

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

- Susan introduced Courtney Stepp who was with us via Zoom; Courtney is chairing the Synod Assembly Planning Team.
- Susan then introduced the theme, "We Lift our Eyes," based on Psalm 121:1-2.
- Approval was requested for the proposed designations for the Assembly Offering.

MC

SC2024.01.20.04 **to approve the offering to be received at the 2024 Synod Assembly to be designated as follows: 40% to the Bishop's Caring Fund; 30% to Lutheran Community Services Northwest; and 30% to Lutheran Disaster Response.**

- Synod Council needs to approve the **Parliamentarian**, but Susan is still waiting to hear back from the person contacted for this role. Thus, **the Executive Committee will approve at their February meeting.**
- Members of the Synod Council are expected to be at the evening meeting prior to the Assembly and in attendance at the Assembly; registration costs for members of the council are paid by the synod.
- The May 17th Synod Council meeting and dinner will be held at Dumas Bay Centre (pending confirmation from Dumas Bay); lodging will be arranged for those who need it.
- It was requested that information on our SAWCs (either on paper, via video or both) be provided during the Assembly.

Coaching NW – Gary Rothenberg

- Gary emphasized points about coaching that had been provided to the council in his written material.
 - Two corrections were made in the written material: 1) In the listing of coaches, the Samuelson who is a coach is Erik and not Mark; and 2) the spelling of Kasey Shultz's name was corrected.
- It was clarified that what Coaching NW was requesting from the Synod Council is to approve the inclusion of the synod's coaches under the synod's insurance policy.
 - A statement had been received from Church Mutual, the Synod's insurance agent, that this can be done at no additional cost to the synod; simply, a listing of names is to be provided.
- Questions and discussion re: liability and how that is already covered or not covered for rostered and lay members of the synod brought to light important considerations.

- Based on the discussion, it was decided that a Disciplinary Policy specifically pertaining to NWWA Synod Coaches needs to be drafted and approved.
- Thus, **the requested action is tabled until a disciplinary policy is formulated and brought to the Synod Council at the March meeting.**
- **Gary and Bp. Shelley will meet to draft a policy to submit to the Policy Review Committee at its February 22nd meeting.**
- It was also noted that this needs to be considered for Synod Authorized Lay Ministers as well.

Return to DEM, Judy's, Report

- The next area of requested funding in Judy's report dealt with the council's previous decision to provide two years of funding for the Collaborative Coaching Project of which churchwide is providing a two-year grant from which the bulk of the funding is coming.
 - A question was raised re: the distinction between coaches and deans related to the value of their work to the synod and why deans are not remunerated for their service in this role; it was decided this should be an intentional conversation at a future time.

MC

SC2024.01.20.05 to approve \$5800 for fiscal year 2024 for the second year of the two-year commitment to Collaborative Coaching to come from the Renewing Congregations Fund.

- The final area of funding in Judy's report pertained to the synod's four congregational based Strategic Ministries.
 - In three out of the synod's four Strategic Ministries, the churchwide contribution is double to what the synod provides.
 - Important questions were raised and discussion ensued addressing how a Strategic Ministry is defined, the history of these ministries in the synod, and how other congregations might access such funding if their ministry meets the churchwide criteria for a Strategic Ministry.
 - It was also noted that the Renewing Congregations Fund from which the synod's portion is coming to fund these ministries will eventually be depleted, as there is no means for adding revenue to it.

MC

SC2024.01.20.06 to approve the synod portion of funding for fiscal year 2024 for the synod's Strategic Ministries to come from the Renewing Congregations Fund as designated by previous action of the Synod Council:
\$10,000 for Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, SeaTac
\$10,000 for Grace Chinese Lutheran Church, Seattle
\$20,000 for Columbia City Church of Hope, Seattle
\$15,000 for St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Renton

MSC

SC2024.01.20.07 to receive Judy's Director for Evangelical Mission report.

New Business Items Brought Forward

- It was reported that action was no longer needed for an **Invitation to Extended Service for Drew Frisbie**, so it could be struck from the agenda.
- Written information had been received to support extending a **Non-Stipendiary Call to Eric Wangen-Hoch**. If approval is given, it will be forwarded to the Conference of Bishops for final approval.

MC

SC2024.01.20.08 to approve a non-stipendiary call for Eric Wangen-Hoch to serve as pastor at Celebration Lutheran Church in Anacortes.

Old Business

- The **Policy Review Committee** gave a report of their work since the November meeting and requested the council's approval for their revision of the former Staff Travel Policy more accurately renamed, the **Bishop's Spouse Travel Policy**.

MC

SC2024.01.20.09 to adopt the **Bishop's Spouse Travel Policy** as presented by the Policy Review Committee.

- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Assessment (Bp. Shelley/VP Kay)**
 - The names of people who had applied for serving on the Assessment Team and the reasons they gave for their interest in this work were presented; their presence will make the team more ethnically and geographically diverse.

MC

SC2024.01.20.10 to appoint the following people to serve on the Assessment Team along with Synod Council members and Synod Staff: Susan Baird-Joshi (Holy Spirit, Kirkland), Eileen Burdick (Josephine Caring Community, Stanwood), Kacey Hahn (St. Matthew's, Renton), James McEachran (St. Luke's, Bellevue/St. Thomas Episcopal, Medina), Cheri Neill (St. Luke's, Bellevue), Miri Park (Seattle Covenant Community Fellowship, Seattle), Ed Reyes (Hope, Lynden), and Kasey Shultz (Columbia City Church of Hope, Seattle)

New Business

- **Updating of the Synod's Reconciling in Christ Welcome Statement and Other Documents**
 - Based on information received from Susan Berg who had recently attended a *Reconciling in Christ* Update Webinar, it was discovered that some updates need to be made to the Synod's welcome statement and commitments.
 - **Luke volunteered to look at what needs to be amended and provided for appropriate updates and will bring it to our March meeting.**

Candidacy Committee Additions

MC

SC2024.01.20.11 to receive the following people as members of the Synod Candidacy Committee: Dn. Marie Preftes Arenz, Kirsten Joy Lysen, and Sr. Jessica Zimmerle (conditional upon her positive discernment).

Looking Ahead

- **Council Participation at upcoming synod events:**
 - **Cindy Shultz** volunteered to represent the synod at the call meeting scheduled at First Lutheran Church, West Seattle, on February 11th following the 10:30 a.m. worship service.
 - If their schedule allows either **Curt Eidem** or **Luke Allgeyer** will represent the synod at the installation of Pr. Joseph Li for service to the University of Washington Lutheran Campus Ministry; it will be held outdoors on the campus on May 5th.
 - **Cindy Shultz** will represent the synod at the installation of Esau Cuevas as pastor of Immanuel Lutheran, Everson on February 4th at 2:00 p.m.
 - If her schedule allows **Kay Edgerton** will represent the synod at the installation of Olaf & Kristen Luana Baumann as pastors of Our Saviour's Lutheran in Issaquah on February 24th at 11 a.m.
 - **Sherianne Molzahn Caldwell** will represent the synod at the installation of Rachel San Diego as pastor at St. Matthew's, Renton on March 17th.
- **Future Meeting Dates:**
 - Synod Council –
 - March 16: Council Meeting (Special guest via Zoom – ELCA VP Imran Siddiqui)

- At the Synod Office
 - 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:
 - February 7, 2024 – (will appoint Synod Assembly Parliamentarian)
 - April 10, 2024
 - June 12, 2024

MSC

SC2024.01.20.12 to adjourn the meeting at 1:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Netsie Griffith,
Synod Council Secretary