

Synod Council Meeting
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA
St. John, Shenandoah
October 17, 2013

Synod Council Members present: Donna Ahner, Pastor Paul Braden, Steve Barnett, Pastor Cindy Camp, Jim Carey, Pastor Lee Diefenderfer, Marty Everhart, Mark Hammond, Dave Hinrichs, Pastor Michele Kaufman, Pastor Jerry Kulp, Pastor Tricia McMackin, Jim Parks, Terry Shilling, Don Smith, Leslie Wagner and Pastor Gary Walbert.

Synod Council Members excused: Pastor Jeff Butz, David Derr and Cathy Mordosky.

Synod Council Member not excused: Sister Ramona Daily.

Synod Staff Members present: Bishop Samuel Zeiser, Pastor Carl Shankweiler, Pastor Glenn Simmons and Pastor Catherine Ziel.

Guests Present: Marilyn Mazsa, President of Women of the ELCA, NEPS; Dan Scharnhorst, Executive Director, Bear Creek Camp

Vice President Don Smith called the meeting to order at 3:02 PM. Bishop Zeiser and Pastors Shankweiler and Simmons shared information about the ministries of the people of St. John's in the absence of Pastor Mindy Heppe, who had a family emergency.

Bishop Zeiser led "Dwelling in the Word".

The minutes from the July 13th meeting were approved as presented.

Bishop's Report

- Bishop Zeiser shared that 5 newly ordained pastors are bringing energy to their ministries in the synod.
- The first Conversations that Matter workshop was held and well received and 2 more are scheduled for the end of October. The Bishop's Conference in November will be based on Do What Matters.
- Mary Perun has announced her retirement effective December 31, 2013.
- The 2013 Churchwide Assembly was attended by 30 voting members from our synod 9 of whom were young adults.
- The Fund for Leaders highlighted at our synod assembly has received donations of \$9,608 to date that will be matched by Holy Spirit, Reading.

- Mission Support Commitment forms have been mailed to all congregations. Mission District Deans have been asked to help encourage the return of the forms. For 2013 there was an 88% return level.

Bishop Zeiser turned to Pastor Shankweiler to address concerns about congregational records. Pastor Shankweiler serves as our synod's Archivist. As congregations close, there have been questions raised about when the synod council can take charge of a congregation's assets, both financial and record-wise, as outlined in the synod's constitution. Pastor Shankweiler asked if a Task Force could be formed and that the Task Force seek legal counsel so that there will be answers when issues arise concerning congregational assets.

(2013.10.1) Resolved, that a Task Force be appointed and they seek legal counsel to examine issues arising from the closing of a congregation and when it is appropriate for synod council to take possession of the congregation's assets.

The resolution was adopted.

Dan Scharnhorst, Executive Director, Bear Creek Camp gave an enthusiastic report about this year's camping season. There were challenges but lots of good things as well. There was a 12% increase in campers.

Request for Call to Non-Stipendiary Ministry – The ELCA created this category of ministry where a pastor has secular employment and so can serve a congregation without receiving substantial income from the congregation. The congregation must submit a plan to be approved by the Conference of Bishops.

(2013.10.2) Resolved, that a non-stipendiary call be extended Pastor Mary Owens to serve the congregations of Saint Jacobi Lutheran Church, Shohola, PA and Saint Mark Lutheran Church, Lackawaxen, pending approval by the Conference of Bishops.

The resolution was adopted.

Vice President's Report

Don attend the cabinet meeting with the synod staff and conveners of the ministry teams. Youth and Family had positive feedback on Bear Creek Camp and the new chaplain at Muhlenberg College. Leadership Development needs more members. Faith Formation has a bulletin board on Pinterest. Witness and Service has grant money available. The Call Process Task Force continues their work.

Marilyn Mazsa, President of the Women of the ELCA, NEPS presented a written report.

Pastor Paul Braden, a member of the Connection Building Team, reported progress on creating a new synod website.

Secretary's Report

No report.

Treasurer's Report

Dave reported that contributions are 2% below last year at this time but we should finish the year relatively close to the budget. He is working on converting the accounting system at the synod office to new software.

Finance Committee

The following resolution was received from the Finance Committee and adopted:

(2013.10.3) Resolved, that spending policies for synod funds for 2014 be established as distributed.

Rita will write regular checks. Unique expenses need to be Okayed by Catherine.

The Finance Committee will return to court next year to try to be able to have more of the Kelchner Fund available for ministries.

The committee hopes to make the audit available online.

Program and Review

Mark reported that the team has been formed into 4 sub teams to cover Nominations and Elections, Consultation and Discipline, Model Constitution Changes and Inner-Relationships. Concerning the election of Bishop in 2014, the team will get a report out to Mission Districts prior to their Spring Assemblies.

Refreshments were enjoyed and powerful testimonies were shared by Tom, Tina, Wayne and Leah Mae, friends of St. John's.

Administration

The committee is reviewing the synod Personnel Policy.

The following resolutions were received from the Administration Committee and adopted:

(2013.10.4) Resolved, that the 2014 Synod Assembly be held at Split Rock Lodge on May 30-31, 2014.

(2013.10.5) Resolved, that 2014 Executive Staff compensation be set in accordance with the following schedule, reflecting 1) total compensation, and 2) for ordained staff members the amount of base salary, social security allowance, and housing allowance. The amounts designated as housing allowance shall apply to calendar year 2013 and all future years unless otherwise provided by this Synod Council. (Numbers are rounded to the nearest dollar.) This represents a 2% increase over 2013.

NAME	BASE SALARY	HOUSING	SS	TOTAL
Zeiser	\$60,394	\$20,000	\$6,660	\$87,054
Ziel	\$44,975	\$18,000	\$5,217	\$68,191
Garbe	\$49,930	\$12,000	\$5,130	\$67,060
Gade	\$37,180	\$24,000	\$5,068	\$66,248
Handwerk	\$3,414	\$6,000	\$780	\$10,194
Simmons	\$14,876	\$20,000	\$2,889	\$37,765
Matthias-Long	\$49,180		\$4,074*	\$49,180
Bennethum	\$10,732**			\$10,723
Weiser	\$17,708		\$1,355*	\$17,708

* Employer's required portion of Social Security

** Pastor Bennethum's salary as DEM is paid by the ELCA. This amount represents additional compensation for working as the Associate of the Bishop for the Wes Berks Mission District.

En Bloc Items

The following resolutions were adopted:

(2013.10.6) Resolved, that in accordance with sections 7.31.16 and 7.52.22 of the ELCA Constitution, "on leave from call" status be approved as follows:

Clergy (first year):	Timothy Garman
	Vicki Reeser
Clergy (second year):	Jennifer Oaks
Clergy (fifth year, family leave)	Kim Truebenbach
Associate in Ministry (second year):	Melanie Werley

(2013.10.7) Resolved, that a call to special service be issued to Nancy Schawbe-Fry to serve as transitional pastor of St. Daniel, Robesonia.

(2013.10.8) Resolved, that Gary R. Schmidt be elected to fill a vacancy on the Board of Trustees of Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network, such term to run until 2015.

(2013.10.9) Resolved, that a one-year term call be issued to Dody Siegfried to serve as interim pastor of St. John, Stroudsburg, effective November 10, 2013.

New Business

Bishop Zeiser handed out materials on the 25th Anniversary Campaign of the ELCA. It is a voluntary 5 year campaign to raise additional funding for existing ministries of the ELCA. The council is asked to shape our synod's response. We will discuss at our January meeting.

Don shared two questions he had from reading the staff minutes. The first dealt with "listening posts" and Bishop Zeiser shared that the Conversations That Matter events are the start of offering opportunities for conversation, especially for congregations facing closing. The second question concerned what defines a partnership in the case of a gay pastor. Bishop Zeiser shared that the Conference of Bishop's is wrestling with this question.

The question was raised concerning decisions made prior to council meetings and whether members could be informed of these decisions.

Debriefing

The consensus of all present was that it was a gift to have met at St. John, Shenandoah, and be reminded what it is we called to do and be.

Don shared that before the meeting, he and Carl looked at the parsonage which is badly in need of new windows.

(2013.10.11) Resolved, that funds from the Prosser/Pahse Fund be used to replace the windows in the parsonage of St. John, Shenandoah.

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Tricia A. McMackin
Synod Secretary