

**Synod Council
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

**3rd Quarter Meeting
October 22, 2014**

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**Synod Council Meeting
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA
Luther Crest, Allentown
October 22, 2014**

Attendance:Synod Council Attendees present:

Donna Austin-Ahner, Steve Barnett, Barbara Belón, Stacie Bray, Pastor Cindy Camp, Jim Carey, Pastor Lee Diefenderfer, Marlane Druckenmiller, Martin Everhart,, Mark Hammond, Elizabeth Hand, Pastor Jeff Odgren, James Parks, Donald Smith, Pastor Barry Spatz, Victor Unks, Pastor Gary Walbert

Synod Council Members excused: David Hinrichs, Pastor Martin Milne

Synod Council Member absent: Pastor Michele Kaufman

Synod Staff Members present: Bishop Samuel Zeiser, Pastor Michael Bennethum

Guests: Marilyn Mazsa – WELCA

Greetings from Pastor Mark Wimmer, VP for Ministry Partnerships, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries – Pr. Wimmer welcomed the Synod Council members to Luther Crest, and provided a Diakon brochure and pamphlet. The point was made that Diacon not only provides services to our members, but also underwrites many activities within our service area. Rev. Camp also a Diakon member and Rev. Dianne Kareha, chaplain at Luther Crest addressed the council. When asked what was his most pressing need, Pr. Wimmer responded that they continue to look for opportunities to be in conversation with congregations and synods so that everyone understands the strength of partnership with Diakon, and that Diakon should be viewed as a resource, and not a separate entity.

Dwelling in the Word: Bishop Zeiser focused our worship time on Psalm 46, with it being read responsively by the council. Council members were then divided into four teams and tasked with writing a new verse to “A Mighty Fortress”, with each group being given a multi-word phrase that needed to be included in the verse. These creative works were sung by each of the groups to conclude the exercise.

Ministry Updates:

- **Mr. Dan Scharnhorst, Bear Creek Camp** – Reported highlights from the 2014 summer camping season, with additional attendance data supplied from 1995 through 2014. This included numbers of campers from our NEPA churches for the past three years. The good news: there was a measurable increase in attendance. He also reported that a number of refurbishment projects have either been completed or are taking place, thanks to donations from congregations. Dan also explained the rationale behind selling a small portion of the Bear Creek Camp property, adjacent to the main highway, which continues to be an insurance problem and a “money pit”. Text of motion follows:
(2014.10.1) RESOLVED, that the request of the Board of Directors of the Eastern Pennsylvania Camp Corporation to sell the home and lot located at 3611 Bear Creek Blvd., Wilkes-Barre, PA be approved. (Moved by Marty Everhart, Seconded by Cindy Camp. Approval – unanimous.)
- **Pastor Paul Metzloff, Creation Care Task Force** – Holy Trinity, Kingston, Pastor Metzloff provided background on the relevancy of a task force focused on the environment, as it impacts faith life and related issues. Once approval for the task force is granted, the next step would be to build the core team, and plan a 1-day awareness event. He requested that Synod Council move on the formation of a Creation Care Task force within the synod.
(2014.10.2) RESOLVED, that the NEPA Synod approve the formation of a Creation Care Task Force. (Moved by Stacie Bray, seconded by Barry Spatz.) Approval – unanimous
- **Synod Bullying Task Force** – Marlane Druckenmiller reported that the task force, which was formed by a resolution at the 2011 Synod Assembly continues to meet, and is working on developing a formal resolution.

All information is accessible on a Google drive. Speak with Marlane for access rights. The task force is currently working on a half-day seminar, with a target deliver date of April, 2015. A keynote speaker is being sought. The full written report will be emailed to Council members.

APPROVAL OF JULY MEETING MINUTES:

Motion to approve the July minutes as amended to reflect the correct spelling of Stacie Bray's name was moved by Cindy Camp, seconded by Victor Unks. Approval – unanimous

BISHOP'S REPORT

Introduction of new members:

Bishop Zeiser introduced and welcomed the four new members of Synod Council: Elizabeth Hand, Pastor Jeff Odgren, Barbara Belón, Pastor Barry Spatz.

Bishop Zeiser gave a summary of some of the highlights of the recent Conference of Bishops, including the ELCA Renewal and Revival Prayer group; Young Adults – future leaders; Malaria campaign (a 5 yr. campaign, now in 2nd year, having already raised 12.8M towards their goal; Always Being Made New (goal of 198M, now at 26M.) The bishop also mentioned the confusion surrounding the "Study on the Use and Means of Grace". For clarification, there have been no changes to the theological underpinnings of the communion service.

Staff matters: Bishop reported that staff transitions have gone well; the new configuration of responsibilities is being monitored by the Bishop. Two upcoming staff retirements in 2015 were announced, with the process in place for a search for their replacements.

Observation was made that the new President of Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Rev. Dr. David Lose, brings a huge amount of energy and refreshing perspective to the position. He took office at the beginning of the 2014-15 academic year.

150th Anniversary of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. – Bishop as well as Synod Council VP Don Smith attended the celebratory dinner. Rostered leaders are being encouraged to make a donation to the seminary in this anniversary year.

Campaign for the ELCA – Mr. Guy Ehler, chair

Mr. Ehler presented a video on the campaign, "Always Being Made New". Plans are being made for how to get updates and event info onto the NEPA Synod website. Target for the campaign is \$200M. To date, 132 synod congregations have contributed to one of the eleven target programs. Approximately 45% of congregations have made donations. The suggestion was made to share the video with church councils, congregations, and mission districts. Donation envelopes for this campaign are available. Synod Council members were challenged to give at least one dollar to meet the 100% participation challenge for all Synod Councils in the ELCA.

Bishop Zeiser mentioned the newly formed committee that is tasked with exploring how to enliven, excite, and empower 2015 assembly attendees, and make this an unforgettable assembly. Committee is being headed by Rev. Chris DeForest, St. John's, Mahoning.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Don Smith reported that he had conducted one pastoral election since last meeting. He was encouraged by the process that was developed and utilized by the call committee and congregation.

Task force on the closing of congregations – Progress was made in identifying potential members to be on the committee; an attorney for the legal matters involving congregational closings has also been identified. Rev. Cindy

Camp commented on the property of St. Mark Lutheran Church, Lackawaxen and the problem of title not being clear on the ancillary building. Because of its location on the Delaware River, it was felt that there should not be a huge problem in selling the property.

(2014.10.3) RESOLVED, to approve the synod's receipt of the St. Mark, Lackawaxen church property and authorize sale of the property (Moved by Cindy C. seconded by Jim Parks) Approved – unanimous.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Correspondence

- **Hope Lutheran Church, Reading PA** – Thank you letter for the grant to Hope's Table
- **Adult Lutherans Organized for Action** – Thank you letter for staff and financial support given for the Sept. 6th event at Jordan Lutheran
- **Allegheny Evangelical Lutheran Church, Knauers PA** – Thank you for the grant which supported their outreach mailing campaign

TREASURER'S REPORT

(In absentia) Mr. Hinrichs reported that while giving totals are behind the annual targets, Synod expenses are under budget.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Recommendation regarding bids of \$5,000 or more

(2014.10.4) RESOLVED, that when considering financial proposals, two bids be sought for any project costing more than \$5,000. Approved – Unanimous

Grant request from Zion's, Weatherly

(2014.10.5) RESOLVED, that a grant of \$15,000 from the Prosser/Pahse Mission Fund be given to Zion's Lutheran Church, Weatherly for several projects that will enhance the congregations' ministries. Approved – Unanimous

2015 Spending Policy for Synod funds

(2014.10.6) RESOLVED, that spending policies for synod funds for 2015 be established as follows:

10% of the Prosser/Pahse Mission Fund - \$74,847

10% of the Student Education Fund - \$13,955

7% of the Leadership Fund - \$3,881

10% of the Social Ministry Fund - \$51,780

(Action already taken to distribute 10% of the Kelchner Fund - \$138,776) Approved – Unanimous

Recommendation regarding signers for Synod accounts

(2014.10.7) RESOLVED, that the following persons be approved as signers for synod financial accounts: Bishop Samuel Zeiser, Pastor Mary Gade, Pastor D. Michael Bennethum, Mr David Hinrichs. Approved – unanimous

(2014.10.8) RESOLVED, (As presented by Carl Shankweiler, regarding St. Paul's, Gordon) to utilize \$5,000 from the sale of the church property to be directed to the Lutheran Archives Center in Philadelphia. (Moved by Pr. Lee Diefenderfer, seconded by Marlane Druckenmiller) Approved – unanimous

PROGRAM AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

Elections Process

Update by Mark Hammond. Committee will be reaching out to Synod Council members to verify when terms started and other pertinent information. Help will be requested to reach out to find candidates for various positions.

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

2015 Pastoral Staff Housing Allowance

(2014.10.9) RESOLVED, that the part of the 2015 Executive Staff salary to be designated as housing be as follows:

Zeiser - \$20,000	Handwork - \$6,500
Garbe - \$13,000	Gade - \$24,000

Approved – unanimous

Schoenersville Property

Update by Cindy Camp. Subcommittee is working on property needs and the project prioritization for Schoenersville property. Action today requested on HVAC contract. Two bids have been submitted to take over all HVAC contracts. Target cost for all services, including oil burner will not exceed \$4,600.

(2014.10.10) RESOLVED, to award a contract for up to \$4,600 for HVAC services for the Schoenersville property.

Approved - unanimous

2015 Synod Assembly

Bishop Zeiser mentioned the newly formed “Spiritual Renewal Committee” which is tasked with making the 2015 Synod Assembly an event to uplift, refresh, and re-energize. This committee is chaired by Rev. Christopher DeForest, St. John’s, Mahoning.

EN BLOC ITEMS

On Leave from Call Request

(2014.10.11) 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)	Richard Baumann
	Nancy Moore
	Paulette Obrecht
	Rashion Santiago
Clergy (6 th year, family leave)	Kim Truebenbach

Change of status for Pr. Oliver Brown

(2014.10.12) RESOLVED, that in accordance with sections 7.31.16 and 7.52.22 of the ELCA Constitution, that the status of Pastor Oliver Brown be changed from “retired” to “on leave from call, first year.”

Retirements

(2014.10.13) RESOLVED, that in accordance with ELCA bylaw 7.41.17, and upon endorsement by the bishop, the following rostered leaders be granted the roster status of “retired”:

The Rev. John Pearson, effective June 1, 2014

The Rev. Virginia Goodwin, effective October 1, 2014

Associate in Ministry Melanie Werley, effective November 1, 2014.

All above En Bloc items Approved - unanimous

NEW BUSINESS

Authorization of Hope’s Table

Rev. Bennethum provided background on the mission and financial support. Text of motion follows:

(2014.10.14) RESOLVED, that Hope’s Table, a new ministry housed at Hope Lutheran Church, 601 N. Front Street, Reading PA, 19601, be designated as a Synodically Authorized Worshiping Community of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod and that (until such time as a mission developer be identified) Pastor Mary Wolfe be designated as the ministry’s servant leader. (Moved by Jim Parks, Seconded by Cindy Camp.) Approved - unanimous

WELCA

Written report was submitted by Marilyn Mazsa. Highlights included a food packaging event held in June. Witness and Service grant supported the event, but funds raised enabled the return of all monies from W&S. Over 25,000 meals were packaged and distributed to area food pantries.

LAMPA

A written report was submitted by Pr. Bruce Osterhout. Highlighted was the upcoming “Lutheran Day at the Capital”, April 27, 2015.

Question from Staff Meeting notes

- Sam Thomas – was identified as an effective leader for call processes.
- Concern was raised in relation to the comment regarding congregations looking outside the Synod for pastoral candidates. Bishop Zeiser clarified.

AOB

- Registration issue for Boundary workshop. The discrepancy between the number of registrations and number who actually showed up was problematic. Within Synod, registration deadlines are not taken seriously, with the ramification being that “walk-ins” create a condition of not enough supplies or food. More discussion is needed to resolve this recurring issue.

Adjournment: 5:40 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara J. Belón, Synod Council Secretary