

**Synod Council  
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

**3rd Quarter Meeting  
January 28, 2015**

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**Synod Council Meeting  
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA  
St. Joseph Hill Church, Boyertown, PA  
January 28, 2015**

**Attendance:**Synod Council Attendees present:

Steve Barnett, Barbara Belón, Pastor Lee Diefenderfer, Marlane Druckenmiller, Martin Everhart,, Mark Hammond, , Pastor Michele Kaufman, James Parks, Donald Smith, Pastor Barry Spatz, Victor Unks, Pastor Gary Walbert

Synod Council Members excused: Stacie Bray, Jim Carey, Pastor Cindy Camp, Pastor Jeff Odgren, David Hinrichs.

Synod Council Member absent: Donna Austin-Ahner, Elizabeth Hand, Pastor Martin Milne

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

**Guests:** Marilyn Mazsa – WELCA, Yvonne Lembo - ELCA Foundation

**Greetings from St. Joseph Hill Church, Pr. Jeff Odgren:** Unfortunately, Pr. Odgren was a casualty of the winter storm system, and was stuck in Boston. Bishop Zeiser gave the Council's thanks to St. Joseph's for their hospitality.

**Dwelling in the Word:** Beginning with a participatory reading from Isaiah 61, the council explored the meaning of being unleashed, personally and within our congregations.

**Ministry Update:** Ms. Yvonne Lembo, Regional Gift Planner, ELCA Foundation. Ms. Lembo gave an overview of the purpose of gift planners and how their guidance can assist with identifying how financial bequests can be structured and protected for family members, their church, and other NGOs. Gift planners present the array of vehicles that can be used to protect and grow these financial gifts, associated with one's estate.

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**APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 22<sup>ND</sup> MEETING MINUTES:**

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**Motion** to approve the October minutes as *amended* was moved by Marty Everhart, seconded by Pr. Michele Kaufman. The minutes now read as follows:

- **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. Approved

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**BISHOP'S REPORT**

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**Campaign for the ELCA Update:** Bishop Zeiser shared with the council the new poster, mailed to each congregation, and asked that everyone make sure that it is placed in their congregations for maximum visibility. He noted that Guy Ehler continues to work with the Bishop on the campaign. The Bishop reported that 62% of congregations in the NE Synod have participated in giving to at least one of the identified ministries of the ELCA, and each of the 10 ministries have received some amount. Each congregation is asked to make a special emphasis on the campaign so that their delegates can come to the Synod assembly knowing the total of their contributions to ELCA campaign up through May.

**(2015.01.01) RESOLVED** that May 3<sup>rd</sup> be designated as "Always Being Made New Sunday" within the congregations in the NE PA Synod. Moved by Bishop Zeiser, Seconded by Barry Spatz. Approved.

Assembly 2015 – Three meetings of the thematic team have already taken place; with an outlook that their efforts would not be just for the current Assembly, but as a cumulative 3-year event, targeting 2017, the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of

the Reformation. Bishop Zeiser is bringing this up to mission districts as he meets with them. A webinar will be scheduled for rostered leaders in the Synod prior to the Assembly. A portion of the conference floor will be set aside as "God's Playground" – specifically for the display of any and all outreach activities.

Update on St. John's, Shenandoah – Pr. Paul Schoffstall is coordinating repairs and work assignments to church and parsonage. The Bishop of Episcopal Diocese and the Bishop's counterpart in the Moravian Church met with Bishop Zeiser in Shenandoah. One noted observation: "This is one example of ministry where the poor are aiding the poor."

Staff matters: Bishop Zeiser updated the council on the staff changes. On Feb 1<sup>st</sup>, the new configuration will be complete. Phone conferences, face-to-face meetings, and retreats are being employed to facilitate communication and information flow amongst the staff.

Mission Support Forms: In 2014, without emphasis, a drop was seen in respondents from 86% to 67%. This year, emphasis will return to urge the congregations in turning in their MSFs.

2015 Congregation Report – 68% is the historic average on congregations turning in these reports. Council is requested to urge our congregations to turn in their 2015 report which now can be done online.

Please encourage rostered leaders who receive their health benefits through Portico Benefit Services to complete the annual Health Risk Assessment before April 30.

Assignment process for 2015 seminary graduates begins shortly. Bishop Zeiser will announce the number of seminary graduates that will be available for NEPA when they are assigned.

Conference of Bishops is scheduled for March 5-10<sup>th</sup>.

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## VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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Mr. Don Smith – The Closing Congregation Task Force will meet again on Saturday, Feb 7<sup>th</sup>. Their mission is to prepare a manual detailing the processes for the closing of congregations.

Call Process Committee – Feb 14<sup>th</sup> is the next scheduled meeting where they will be reviewing the status.

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## SECRETARY'S REPORT

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### Correspondence

- None received.
- Synod Assembly "Report from the Secretary" continues to be updated, including obituaries, as appropriate.

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## TREASURER'S REPORT

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With Mr. Hinrichs' absence, Pr. Diefenderfer included the treasurer's information in his Finance Committee report.

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## FINANCE COMMITTEE

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**(2015.01.02) RESOLVED**, that \$12,000 be granted from the Prosser/Pahse Mission Fund to the Common Ground Recovery Ministry, Wyomissing and that \$12,000 be granted from the Prosser/Pahse Mission Fund to Hope's Table, Reading. Approved

Pr. Diefenderfer reported that finances look to be in the black for 2014, and that the budget for 2015 can remain as drafted.

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## PROGRAM AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

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Nominations: (Mark Hammond) Committee did not meet. Their task is to provide the information on which Synod Council positions are open, along with their designation (e.g., male/female, lay/clergy). Our representatives to the Churchwide Assembly will also be elected this June.

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## ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

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**(2015.01.03) RESOLVED**, that 2015 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 were acted upon at the October 22, 2014 meeting and shall apply to calendar year 2015 and all future years unless otherwise provided by this Synod Council. (Numbers are rounded to the nearest dollar.) This represents a 3% increase over 2014 with the following exception: Pastor Garbe who is receiving a \$5,000 increase to bring his salary more in line with synod guidelines. **Note:** Pastors Crawford, and Kuritz are just beginning their service in 2015.

NAME***	BASE SALARY	HOUSING	SS	TOTAL
Zeiser	\$63,626	\$20,000	\$6,927	\$90,553
Garbe	\$51,161	\$16,000	\$5,563	\$72,724
Gade	\$49,151	\$24,000	\$6,060	\$79,211
Matthias-Long	\$55,914		\$4,632*	\$60,545
Bennethum	\$20,600**			\$20,600
Huber	\$15,450			\$15,450
Richter	\$17,510			\$17,510
Crawford	\$15,000			\$15,000
Kuritz	\$15,000			\$15,000

\* 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 synod's Executive Associate of the Bishop.

\*\*\* Compensation for the associates serving the Northern Lehigh Valley, Pocono, and Schuylkill Mission Districts is paid to their congregations under a purchase of services arrangement

### And

that Pastor Garbe's housing allowance be increased from \$13,000 to \$16,000. Approved

**(2015.01.04) RESOLVED**, that all executive staff be required to complete the Child Abuse History check and the PA State Police Criminal Record Check every 36 months, as required by law and that Criminal Record Checks be required of support staff as well, with the Synod paying the cost. Approved

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## EN BLOC ITEMS

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### On Leave from Call Request

**(2015.01.05) 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)	Paulette Obrecht	effective August 15, 2014
Clergy (3rd year)	Jennifer Oaks	effective September 30, 2014

### Retirements

**(2015.01.07) 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 Reverend Glenn Simmons, effective December 31, 2014  
 The Reverend Gene Handwerk, effective January 31, 2015  
 The Reverend George Mathews, effective February 1, 2015

### Future Meeting Dates

**(2015.01.08) RESOLVED**, that future meeting dates for the council be established as follows:

March 26, 2015, 3:00 pm (Location: St. Mark, Bethlehem)  
 July 11, 2015, 9:00 am  
 October 21, 2015, 3:00 pm  
 January 20, 2016, 3:00 pm  
 March 17, 2016, 3:00 pm

All above En Bloc items Approved - unanimous

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## NEW BUSINESS

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### WELCA

- In addition to her written report, Marilyn reported that she will be attending the churchwide WELCA meeting in September.

### Questions from the floor:

- Questions were raised on the research being done in Susquehanna area. The Bishop clarified that there are no plans to establish a new church, but to potentially work with the area’s established congregations to identify opportunities for joint mission that may be being missed. When there is something of substance, then a plan will be brought to the Synod Council.
- Berks County mission districts want to know how their help will be needed for the upcoming Synod Assembly. Bishop Zeiser reported that Pr. Garbe just received that new assignment in January, and will be calling to start the arrangements.
- Pastor Barry Spatz reported that the Disaster Chaplaincy Response team which services both the NE and SE PA Synods continues to assist where needed. Any interest in serving should be directed to Pr. Spatz.

**Adjournment:** Marlene Druckenmiller, seconded by Victor Unks.. Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Barbara J. Belón, Synod Council Secretary

**Next Meeting:** March 26, 2015  
 St. Mark Lutheran Church, Bethlehem