

**Synod Council
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

**4th Quarter Meeting
March 26, 2015**

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**Synod Council Meeting
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA
St. Mark Lutheran, Bethlehem, PA
March 26, 2015**

Attendance:Synod Council Attendees present:

Donna Austin-Ahner, Barbara Belón, Jim Carey, Pastor Cindy Camp, Pastor Lee Diefenderfer, Marlane Druckenmiller, Martin Everhart, Elizabeth Hand, David Hinrichs, Pastor Michele Kaufman, Pastor Martin Milne Pastor Jeff Odgren, James Parks, Pastor Barry Spatz, Victor Unks, Bishop Samuel Zeiser

Synod Council Members excused: Donald Smith, Pastor Gary Walbert

Synod Council Member absent: Steve Barnett, Stacie Bray, Mark Hammond,

Synod Staff Members present: Pastor Michael Bennethum

Guests: Marilyn Mazsa – WELCA,

Greetings from St. Mark's Lutheran, Pr. Bredlau: Pastor Peter Bredlau gave the council a background on St. Marks. He stated that they are defined as much by what they're not as what they are. The congregation is currently probing how they need to differentiate themselves from the other 80+ Lutheran churches in the area. St. Mark's is not very well known as a congregation and definitely "under the local radar", but they are willing to examine that issue.

Dwelling in the Word: Luke 1:26-38 The Annunciation. How was Mary unleashed? This passage from Luke was read, twice by Bishop Z., after which the Council members were each asked to reflect on which part of the reading spoke to them the most. In closing, council members were asked to offer a petition in a collective prayer, relating to the verse(s) that affected them the most.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 28TH MEETING MINUTES:

Motion to approve the January minutes was moved by Lee Diefenderfer, seconded by Marty Everhart. Approved unanimously.

BISHOP'S REPORT

- Bishop Zeiser thanked Mark Hammond, Lee Diefenderfer, and Barry Spatz for their multiple years of service on Synod Council, as they conclude their terms this June.
- Upcoming ELCA Youth Gathering (July) – As of February 27, 50 synod congregations are participating, with a total of 573 young people from this synod; The figure on participants from across the ELCA is 27,700+.
- Mission Support for 2014 was \$400,000 ahead of budget, but down slightly from 2013.
- Malaria Campaign will reach its goal a bit early!
- Staff matters: All positions are now occupied. An overnight staff retreat was held at St. Francis Retreat Center, Easton (2/19-20).
- Campaign for the ELCA update – 24.4% of goal has been reached. As a reminder, "Always Being Made New Sunday" is scheduled for May 3rd. Council is asked to check with their congregations to see what has been planned.
- Region 7 First Call Assignment Event was held on 3/14-15 at LTSP. Pastors Mary Gade, Mike Bennethum, and AiM Karen Matthias-Long attended with Bishop Zeiser. Twenty (20) First Call candidates were assigned to Region 7; NEPS was assigned 5 candidates.
- The group exploring the thematic component for the Synod Assembly, and led by Pr. Chris deForest, met on March 19th to continue developing the content. Webinars for rostered clergy are being used to explain what it means to be "unleashed". A new component this year will be "God's Playground" – bringing examples of something that excites congregations. This area is meant to be interactive and provide examples of how our congregations are serving. Registration materials have been mailed. The committee is looking at ways to make Ken Medema's large presentation

a free concert for the community and our Synod congregations. A draft of the Synod Assembly agenda was distributed to the Council.

- Vice President of the ELCA, Carlos Peña, will be the churchwide representative.
- **St. John, Shenandoah update** – The joint project of the Moravian, Episcopal and Lutheran synods in NEPA continue to move forward with a mission of hope. A Moravian seminary student, seeking an M.Div. and MSW, has been identified to carry out a summer internship. Our Synod will provide the funding for the intern's summer housing while the Moravian Church will provide the salary.
- **St. John, Auburn update** – St. John's is having some difficulties regarding endowment issues. At the request of the congregation council, the synod has placed the congregation under synodical administration, and a synodical administrator - Pastor Paul Schoffstall - has been assigned to the congregation.
- **St. Joseph's, Allentown:** voted to dissolve effective May 24, 2015 (see attached letter).
(2015.03.01) RESOLVED that Synod Council, in accordance with S13.21, supports and has approved the vote by members of St. Joseph's Lutheran Church, Allentown, to dissolve as of June 24th (Pentecost Sunday.) Moved by Barry Spatz, Seconded by Cindy Camp. Approved – unanimous.
- Bishop Zeiser noted that, to date, 52% of the Synod's congregations have submitted their Mission Support Forms for the upcoming year. Council members were asked to check with their congregations to make sure their form has been returned.
- Mayo Clinic Health Assessment – clergy should be encouraged to participate in this health assessment.
- "Unleashed for Reformation 2017" update – This campaign will start with Assembly 2015 and end with the 500th anniversary of the reformation in 2017.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Don Smith – Absent, but report was submitted and reviewed.

- Call Process Task Force update – Committee met in February to tweak the materials, and resolve some existing contradictions in the time line. Two "intentional interims" were included in that meeting. The committee will be meeting with Bishop Z. to discuss some ideas that are out of the scope of the task force.
- Closing of Congregations Task Force update – The task force met for the first time in early February, and again in March. Materials from other Synods are being reviewed, and permission has been received from those Synods to reprint portions from those documents for inclusion with material developed here. The goal is to have a draft manual prepared in time for the June Synod Assembly.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Correspondence

- All confirmation letters of change of status and retirements, approved at the January meeting were sent out.
- Documents for inclusion in Synod Assembly will be finalized and submitted after this meeting.
- No additional correspondence received.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Hinrichs reported that the auditors arrived at the Synod Office last week. Final numbers should be available prior to Synod Assembly.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The following resolution is recommended to the 2015 Synod Assembly; budget based on receipts of \$2.4 million; This will be a balanced budget:

(2015.03.02) RESOLVED, that the 2016 program proposal (February 1, 2016, to January 31, 2017) be adopted. The Synod Council is hereby authorized to establish the 2016 spending program no later than its January, 2016, meeting, making any necessary adjustment to the budget proposal in light of both realistic anticipation of receipts and synod priorities (in consultation with the ELCA Treasurer with respect to the ELCA portion thereof.)

Motion Approved

Prosser/Pahse/Mission Fund, Grant from: The following resolution is recommended for Council approval:

(2015.03.03) RESOLVED, that a grant of \$12,000 from the Prosser/Pahse Mission Fund be given to the Susquehanna County Church Without Walls Initiative.

Motion Approved

Finance committee would encourage the Bishop and Pastor Niels Nielsen to hold conversation regarding the disposition of the building of the former St. Mark's/Lackawaxen congregation.

Designated Income Funds homework will be producing suggestions for Synod Council. A "house cleaning" is needed for funds that have existed and have gone dormant. Will come back to the Council with recommendations.

The Finance Committee also recommends that a letter, encouraging regular giving should be composed and sent to congregations.

PROGRAM AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mark Hammond – absent. Committee members reported that the committee has not met. Pr. Bennethum reported that as of today, he has received over a dozen nominations for Churchwide assembly, but only two for synod council.

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Sabbatical Policy – This committee is still searching for documents from the July 2014 meeting regarding the addition of HR updates which were proposed.

EN BLOC ITEMS

Synod Assembly Agenda, Referral of - The following resolution is recommended to the 2015 Synod Assembly:

(2015.03.04) RESOLVED that the 2015 Assembly program (as printed in the Bulletin of Reports) be adopted.

Hazleton-Lehigh Mission District budget, Approval of:

(2015.03.05) RESOLVED, that the 2015 budget of the Hazleton-Lehigh Mission District be approved.

On Leave from Call Requests:

(2015.03.06) 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)

Frank Stinner (effective 11/28/2014)

James Hammond (effective 2/1/2015)

Call to Special Service

(2015.03.07) RESOLVED, that a two-year term call be issued to the Rev. Larry Lane to serve as pastor of Trinity, Bangor, effective March 1, 2015.

Retirements

(2015.03.08) 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 Fritch, effective April 30, 2015

The Rev. Bruce Potteiger, effective April 30, 2015

All above En Bloc items were moved by Cindy, Seconded by Jim Parks. Approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Susquehanna County SAWC Exploration, Authorization of

(2015.03.09) RESOLVED, that the Susquehanna County Church Without Walls Initiative be designated as a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community Exploration of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod and that Pastor Jira Albers (who will supervise the seminary intern screened for mission development) be designated as the ministry’s servant leader. Moved by Jim Parks, Seconded by Barry Spatz Approved.

Merger of Epiphany, Temple into Calvary, Laureldale, Approval of

(2015.03.10) RESOLVED, that the congregation of Epiphany Lutheran Church in Temple be merged into the congregation of Calvary Lutheran Church in Laureldale, effective April 13, 2015. Moved by Michelle Kaufman, Seconded by Marlene Druckenmiller. Approved.

Debriefing / Questions from the floor:

- Report from Marilyn Mazsa – WELCA (report distributed). Of interest is the Spring NEPA Retreat, April 11th, and the Region 7 Spiritual Retreat, Hartford, CT. WELCA NEPA Synod Annual Convention is scheduled for June 13th in Oley, PA. Of special interest is the churchwide WELCA drive to raise \$200,000 by year’s end for a solar power system for a hospital in Liberia. The hospital currently has an outlay of \$40,000/month in diesel fuel to run the power generators - -if the fuel can be found. This major humanitarian project would benefit the entire country.
- **(2015.03.11) RESOLVED**, that Synod apply to Thrivent for the addition of NEPA Synod to their list of approved organizations who can receive member-directed funds. Moved by Marty E., seconded by Cindy C. Approved.
- Pr Lee Diefenderfer – gave his thanks for his six years on Synod Council. This is now off his bucket list.
- Barry Spatz – gave thanks for the opportunity to serve on Synod Council, and his promise to be of assistance in the future.
- Camp Noah will be held in Chrisfield, MD the last week in July. Information to follow.
- Michele Kaufman reported on the upcoming inter-generational exchange trip to our companion synod in Saxony, 2016.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 5:04 Moved by Marty Everhart, seconded by Elizabeth Hand. Approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara J. Belón, Synod Council Secretary

Next Meeting: July 11, 2015, 9:00 am

Location to be announced