

SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
The Lutheran Home at Topton, Topton, Pennsylvania
January 23, 2019

ATTENDANCE. Synod Council Members Present: Pr. June Bair, Dr. Donald Boyer, Donald Dillman, Marlane Druckenmiller, Kristen Edelman-Weiner, Thomas Engle, Linda Eroh, Martin Everhart, Pr. Charles Grube, Ruth Major, Louise McCloughan, Pr. Deborah Scheffey, Pr. Carl Shankweiler, Victor Unks, Pr. Gary Walbert, Bishop Samuel Zeiser.

Synod Council Members Who Resigned: Pr. Jessica Kingsboro, Jeannette Richardson.

Synod Council Members Excused: Pr. Lauren Blatt, Pr. Oliver Brown, Karrison Dubbs, Elizabeth Leibenguth, Pr. Nelson Quiñones. Larry Rissmiller.

Synod Council Member Absent: Ethan Melber.

Other Persons Present: Pr. D. Michael Bennethum, Executive Associate of the Bishop and Director of Evangelical Mission; Pr. Lauren Applegate and child; Pr. Rebecca Middeke-Conlin.

CALL TO ORDER. Vice President Kristen Edelman-Weiner called the January 23, 2019 regular meeting of the Synod Council of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to order at 3:00 p.m.

GREETINGS FROM THE HOST INSTITUTION. Ms. Debra Gogno, Executive Director of Diakon's Topton facility and Nursing Home Administrator, welcomed the council to the Lutheran Home at Topton and thanked the council for coming. Ms. Gogno explained her personal history and expressed her gratitude to be working at Topton, which she described as a "five-star facility" and "respectful." The room in which the council was meeting, the Henry Auditorium, is the meeting room of Grace Lutheran Church with its 25 active and 15 associate members. The total campus consists of 443 acres with a variety of housing arrangements: 194 people in the health center, 84 in personal care, and 100 in the apartments and cottages. These residents range in age from 32 to 106. In all, Diakon has nine facilities. A short time later a Diakon chaplain, the Rev. Dr. Colleen G. Kristula, also visited the council to extend her welcome.

DWELLING IN THE WORD. Bishop Samuel Zeiser led the council in prayer.

AGENDA ADJUSTMENT. Because some council members were needing to leave early, it was agreed to modify the proposed agenda: (a) "Council Development" would be deleted from the agenda and (b) matters requiring votes would be dealt with before informational matters.

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 17. The synod council minutes of October 17, 2018 were approved as distributed on a motion made by Dr. Donald Boyer and seconded by Martin Everhart.

BISHOP’S REPORT, PART 1. Bishop Zeiser announced that two council members resigned for personal reasons: Jeanette Richardson and the Rev. Jessica Kingsboro. Dr. Boyer, seconded by Mr. Everhart moved that their resignations be accepted; the motion carried.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. The executive committee presented the following resolution for consideration; it was adopted. Before the vote occurred, Dr. Boyer explained that in 2018 the executive staff members did not receive any pay increases. The recommendation now was for an increase of 2%, with the cost in 2019 being lower than in 2018 because of staff reductions, resulting in “fewer people who must do more work.”

(2019.01.01) Resolved, that 2019 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 17, 2018 meeting and shall apply to calendar year 2019 and all future years unless otherwise provided by this Synod Council. (Numbers are rounded to the nearest dollar.) This represents a 2% increase over 2018.

NAME**	BASE SALARY	HOUSING	SS	TOTAL
Zeiser, Samuel	\$68,744	\$20,000	\$7,351	\$96,096
Gade, Mary	\$52,629	\$25,000	\$6,431	\$84,059
Garbe, Kurt	\$18,636	\$17,000	\$2,952	\$38,588
Wuertele, Peggy		\$15,918		\$15,918
Shankweiler, Carl	\$ 5,542		\$459	\$ 6,001
Bennethum, Michael*				\$21,861
Huber, Jean				\$16,396
Richter, John				\$18,582
Crawford, Fred				\$15,918
Kuritz, Peter				\$15,918

* Pastor Bennethum’s salary as DEM and his benefits are paid by the ELCA. This amount represents additional compensation for working as the synod’s Executive Associate of the Bishop.

** Compensation for the associate serving the Pocono Mission District is paid to his congregation under a purchase of services arrangement

[Note: the 2% increase in staff compensation means that the 2019 cost for support staff will be \$169,148; the 2019 cost for contract staff will be \$33,838.]

FINANCE COMMITTEE. The Finance Committee presented the following resolution, which was adopted:

(2019.01.02) Resolved, that grants be made from the Prosser, Pahse, Mission Fund to the following ministries under development for the 2019 fiscal year:

- Common Ground Recovery Community, Wyomissing—\$12,000
- Hope’s Table, Reading—\$12,000,

- Common Ground Recovery Community, Reading—\$5,000,
- St. Paul, Tannersville—\$22,500.

Dr. Boyer explained that the committee did not recommend making any changes to the proposed spending plan for the synod for 2019. The committee will meet with the chairpersons of the synod’s various teams and committees to learn how they function and what they need as financial resources.

NEW BUSINESS, PART I. The following resolution was adopted as it was moved by Marlane Druckenmiller and seconded by Victor Unks.

(2019.01.03) Resolved, in accordance with S13.21. of the Constitution of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, that the dissolution of Grace Lutheran Church, Allentown be approved.

EN BLOC ITEMS. The Rev. Carl Shankweiler, seconded by Donald Dillman, moved that the en bloc items be approved; they were all adopted as presented.

(2019.01.04) 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): Christina Johnsten
Carolyn Hetrick
- Clergy (second year): Lee Diefenderfer
Carl Wenzel

(2019.01.05) Resolved, that in accordance with ELCA bylaw 7.41.17. and upon endorsement by the bishop, the following rostered leader be granted the roster status of “retired”:

- The Rev. Allen Forsman (effective June 1, 2018)
- The Rev. John Kuschel (effective January 1, 2019)
- Deacon Beverly Eiche Kriner (effective January 1, 2019)

(2019.01.06) Resolved, that the Common Ground Recovery Community, housed at Atonement Lutheran Church, 5 Wyomissing Blvd, Wyomissing, PA 19610 be reauthorized as a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

(2019.01.07) Resolved, that the 2019 spending plan of the West Berks Mission District be approved.

NEW BUSINESS, PART II. Pastor Shankweiler raised the issue of council meeting times given the large number of absences of younger members. He moved, seconded by Dr. Boyer, the following resolution: “Resolved, that the meetings of the synod council be held from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. instead of 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.” Before that motion was voted upon and defeated, Ms. Druckenmiller gave notice that she would present a substitute motion, which was adopted:

(2019.01.08) Resolved, that following the 2019 synod assembly, the synod council will meet on Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY DISCUSSION. The Rev. Lauren Applegate and the Rev. Rebecca Middeke-Conlin from the Youth, Young Adult, and Family Ministry Team (YoYoFa) spoke about the changes taking place in the synod's ministries with youth and families now that there is no longer an executive staff person to support those ministries. The ministry team is now considering how it should function and asked the council members to answer two questions: What are the joys that we have in regard to the young people in our lives? What are the concerns? The discussion resulted in these points being made.

JOYS: seeing Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts working on the Duty to God award with a pastor; knowing a son who was glad he could go to church because his soccer event that day was cancelled; the enthusiasm exuded by Dan Scharnhorst of Bear Creek Camp concerning what church camping does in lives (with Dan exhibiting faith in how he lives and talks the faith), the number of youth from this synod who attend the ELCA youth gatherings, seeing youth in their involvement with sports and the arts, witnessing teachers who do wonderful things with the kids who come to church, acknowledging a specific person who works in congregations and is a mental health worker as a blessing in church and community.

CONCERNS: the number of youth with no church or faith connections, mental health issues among youth (such as eating disorders), how to compete with soccer in those places where everything takes place on a Sunday, the need to meet families where they are, the need to help people recognize that they will have faith for the rest of their lives but not their involvement in sports like soccer, not having a neighborhood as an impediment to working together with others, and getting parents involved so that their youth will be involved ("If I can't get parents, I can't get youth.").

Pastor Middeke-Conlin said that people involved in the recent ELCA youth gathering spoke about joys, such as mentoring youth and singing; one problem was that some topics were seen as political.

Pastor Applegate expressed her hope that the council will continue to discuss these topics related to youth and families and reported about a number of upcoming events related to the youth ministry network: (a) Youth Ministry Network Gatherings (brown bag lunches at the Lutheran Center) on February 5 and March 9; (b) May Play Day, May 5 at Bear Creek Camp. Pastor Middeke-Conlin mentioned that the YoYoFa group is also working with the LGBTQ+ Task Force to hold a safe event on October 5. She reported about recently going to Nebraska for a youth ministry summit and asked that the council promote an event for eighth grade students planned for October 31 to November 3.

BISHOP'S REPORT, PART II. Bishop Zeiser raised the issue of the synod's sexual misconduct policy. From recent workshops the recommendation was made to amend the synod's policy by dropping an option from the section Education Awareness Program, D.2. As a result, Mr. Dillman, seconded by Thomas Engle, moved the following resolution, which was adopted:

(2019.01.09) Resolved, that the words "or until some equivalent education, as determined by the bishop, is completed" be removed from the synod's Policy on Sexual Misconduct of Rostered Ministers, Education Awareness Program, D.2.

Bishop Zeiser reported about the decisions made by the assembly planning task force the morning of January 23 concerning the 2019 synod assembly. There will be a dinner to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, the cost of which will be included in the registration fee. Because this will be a one-day assembly, the spring mission district assemblies will be used for the distribution of materials, making it important for congregations to identify their voting members prior to those district assemblies. There will not be packets of materials for distribution at the synod assembly; instead, a table will be available for materials to be picked up by interested persons. Voting members will be invited to support a local ministry in the Hazleton area. More use will be made of the large screen for sharing information for the plenary sessions, such as the posting of amendments. Wi-Fi will be available if possible. The planning task force's next meeting will be February 25.

The Bishop's Election Task Force has five members so far, though four more are being sought. The task force will meet two or three times in 2019 and an equal number of times in 2020. The task force will include members of the synod council's program committee.

Bishop Zeiser said that he was starting to plan his sabbatical and spoke of his interest in becoming part of Life Church, Allentown (purchasers of St. Paul Lutheran, which they fill with people) and Bethany Church (United Methodist), Wescosville. He wants to learn why these congregations are flourishing. The Rev. Gary Walbert cautioned, "Go for it, but don't wear yourself out."

Bishop Zeiser spoke about the first call consultation that he will be attending in Chicago on February 27. Because six graduates are already restricted in this region, Region 7 will not get to share in the pool of candidates until all of the regions have that same number of graduates; therefore, we can anticipate a diminished number of graduates.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT. Ms. Edelman-Weiner said that she picked up her predecessor's practice of visiting congregations to see how they are doing on a regular Sunday. She said, too, that she finds these visits "enjoyable and informative." She also spoke about her maintaining contact with other synodical vice presidents, observing that there are many issues coming up that pin Lutheran against Lutheran, such as the reactions to the ELCA youth gatherings. She also noted that the synod's Facebook page has only 400 friends, which means only about 1.7 friends per congregation, a number that could easily be improved.

SECRETARY'S REPORT. Pastor Shankweiler gave an update on the pending sale of St. Mark, Lackawaxen. A proposed settlement date of January 11 could not be achieved because of the need to de-winterize the property and make the heating system functional again. There were no major problems, only difficulty making contact with essential people over the holidays and gaining entrance to the building because of a broken key box. He also asked if anyone on the council was interested in serving as synod archivist.

TREASURER'S REPORT. Mr. Dillman distributed a written report covering all of the synod's funds for the period that will end on January 31, 2019: General Fund, Pass-through Funds, and Special Funds (Student Education Fund; Church Loan/Development Fund; Disaster

Response Fund; Social Ministry Fund; Global Mission Fund; Prosser, Pahse, Mission Fund; Leadership Development Fund; Bishop Discretion Fund; Clyde Kelchner Funds; Kerschmar Memorial Fund). He said that as of December 31 the synod had received 88% of its budget for fiscal year 2018. The auditing of the books for 2018 will begin in April.

DIRECTOR FOR EVANGELICAL MISSION REPORT. The Rev. D. Michael Bennethum spoke about David Kline, a person seeking churches that are for sale. He reported that Lenna Harris, who would have reported about the Women of the ELCA, made contact with the synod to say that she was stranded in the airport in Chicago.

He talked about Mission Support as the synod's "primary" funding source. For 2019 the synod has received 125 statements of intention with 60% staying the same and roughly the same number projecting increases as decreases, though with the combined decreases being about \$29,000 greater than the combined increases.

He added that one congregation sent an intention of zero dollars because they learned about the size of the synod's special funds and intend to give directly to agencies. Pastor Bennethum said that he will be visiting this congregation to explain that most of these special funds are restricted.

He further explained that some congregations pledge to give a certain percentage of their income, whereas others give a fixed amount.

Concerning new ministry updates, he explained that the ELCA also has growing, thriving ministries, which are usually new, unencumbered ministries. For example, Common Ground is now up to four expressions. He encouraged council members to invite mission interpreters to their congregations. In telling stories about mission, Ruth Major reported about a church in Texas that worships outdoors in a tent; she has spoken in three congregations (one on a Sunday in worship and two with their councils).

PROGRAM COMMITTEE. Linda Eroh explained that she had nothing to add to the bishop's report about the 2019 assembly.

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE. Pastor Walbert said that the committee had nothing to report.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE. Ms. Druckenmiller reported about the positions needing to be filled at the 2019 synod assembly:

Vice President (four-year term), may be a lay male or a lay female
Secretary (four-year year term), may be lay or clergy, male or female

Synod Council

Clergy (three-year term)
Lay male (three-year term)
Lay female (three-year term)
Lay female of color or language other than English (one-year term)
Youth, male (confirmed under 18 years old; two-year term)

Mission District Representatives (to be elected by Mission Districts)
Pocono Mission District (clergy, three-year term)
Hazleton-Lehigh Mission District (lay male, three-year term)
Northern Lehigh Valley Mission District (lay female, three-year term)

Discipline Committee (three lay female nominees are needed)

DEBRIEFING. Bishop Zeiser asked if putting decision-making first on the agenda was helpful. The consensus was that doing so was good and should be continued. Ms. Druckenmiller added that it was good to hear from a ministry team as part of the agenda.

ADJOURNMENT. Ms. Eroh moved, seconded by Mr. Dillman, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was adopted and the meeting adjourned at 5:14 p.m. It was announced that the next meeting will be March 14, 2019, 3:00 p.m., at Trinity Lutheran Church, Hecktown.

Carl D. Shankweiler, Secretary