

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA
SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – JANUARY 16, 2021
ELECTRONIC/ZOOM MEETING

Call to Order The meeting was held electronically, using the Zoom platform, in light of the public-health recommendations to avoid in-person meetings involving more than ten individuals. Interim Vice President Droney called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The roll was called to verify attendance.

Devotion During the portion of the meeting ordinarily set aside for an opening devotional message, Jennifer Slagle Peck led the Synod Council through a discussion of the introduction to, and the first and second chapters of, the book *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S.*, by the Rev. Lenny Duncan.

Interim Vice President Droney presented the proposed agenda for the meeting.

SC21.01.01: To approve the agenda for the January 16, 2021, Synod Council meeting.

The draft minutes of the November 21, 2020, Synod Council meeting were presented to the Council for approval. Interim Vice President Droney asked for corrections or amendments. There were none.

SC21.01.02: To approve the minutes of the November 21, 2020, Synod Council meeting.

1. Staff and Officer Reports

a. Bishop Ortiz:

- i. Youth Ministry Initiative. Bishop Gohl joined Bishop Ortiz for a discussion of a staff-sharing arrangement for youth ministry that would be implemented as a collaborative effort with the Delaware-Maryland Synod. The arrangement involves sharing of the services of Deacon Julie Stecker, currently the Assistant to the Bishop for Communications, Youth and Family Ministry on the staff of the Delaware-Maryland Synod. The initial efforts would be focused on replicating, within the Synod, some of the initiatives currently being employed in the Delaware-Maryland Synod. The longer-term goal is a unified youth organization across both synods.

The two synods have committed to this arrangement for one year and will thus evaluate the progress near the end of the first year with a view toward extending it. Pending adoption of a budget for the fiscal year beginning February 1, 2021, the Synod will use the amounts authorized for youth ministry to reimburse the Delaware-Maryland Synod for a portion of Deacon Stecker's compensation. No specific action was required to be taken by the Synod Council, inasmuch as the spending authorization for the initiative would be included in the budget when adopted. The members expressed their support for the initiative.

- ii. Roster Matters for Synod Council Action. Bishop Ortiz brought four roster matters to the Synod Council.

SC21.01.03:

That:

1. The Rev. Heidi Eickstadt be called to specialized ministry as Interim Youth Minister at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Falls Church, Virginia, effective January 1, 2021;
2. The Rev. Margrethe Kleiber be called to specialized ministry as Interim Pastor for First Trinity Lutheran Church and St. Matthews Lutheran Church, Washington, D.C.;
3. The Rev. Lisa Hufford be placed on the retired roster, effective February 1, 2021; and
4. The Rev. Eugene Kern be placed on the retired roster, effective February 1, 2021.

- ii. General Updates. Bishop Ortiz had distributed a written report to the Synod Council in advance of the meeting, including a summary of her official engagements since the last Synod Council meeting in November. She specifically referred to the security recommendations given to congregations in light of the insurrection at the Capitol on January 6 and the Inauguration Day events to be held on January 20, as well as all of the days between these two events.
- b. Assistant to the Bishop and DEM, Pr. Bailey:

Pastor Bailey provided an update on the work of two tables. The New and Renewing Missions Table continues to align its efforts with the Synod's ministry themes and has focused its efforts on mini-grants to rostered leaders, grants for transformational leadership and cultural competence, resources for new ministries, and building community and neighborhood engagement.

The Stewardship and Mission Support Table has focused, and will continue to focus, on its relationship to congregations, generosity, a training opportunity involving the power of storytelling, and thanking donors for their mission support.

He closed his report by summarizing other activities, including a video production of a prophetic reading of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Letter from a Birmingham Jail, congregational discernment and vitality grants, and his involvement with the Candidacy Committee and Racial Equity Team.

c. Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Swenson-Reinhold:

Pastor Swenson-Reinhold supplemented her written report by briefly discussing the completion of two calls by congregations, other work with congregations in any stage of leadership transition, postponement of the physical move of the Synod offices to the last week of January, the establishment of the sixth discernment group, the work of the Self-Care and Mental Health Team, and continued consideration of improved access to mental health care through discussions with representatives of Portico Benefit Services.

d. Interim Vice President's Report:

Interim Vice President Jackson Droney had distributed a written report in advance of the meeting. He also distributed the product of a strategic planning task force effort, a draft document entitled "Synod Council Member Commitments and Expectations." This document summarizes the role of a member of the Synod Council, the expectations relating to regular meetings, participation in the nominating process, and the relationship to tables, teams, and committees. Although several comments were made and questions raised, the draft document was presented to the Synod Council for adoption without modification.

SC21.01.04: To adopt the document entitled "Synod Council Member Commitments and Expectations," as presented to the meeting of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Council, with such document to remain in effect until the 2021 Synod Assembly.

In connection with the adoption of this document, several lay members expressed their willingness to serve as members of the Nominating Committee for the 2021 Synod Assembly. Formal appointments to this committee will be made at a subsequent meeting.

Interim Vice President Droney also provided an update on the racial equity letter approved by the Synod Council last year, noting that two congregations had specifically written to the Synod Council to express their support for the letter. He invited any member of the Synod Council who did not sign the letter when it was issued to add his or her signature at any time.

e. Treasurer's Report:

- i. Year-to-Date Financial Statements. Copies of the financial statements for the first 11 months of the current fiscal year, through December 31, 2020, were distributed in advance of the meeting. These statements reflect a surplus in undesignated receipts, compared with expenditures, of approximately \$10,000. This number excludes the effect of the expected forgiveness of the Paycheck Protection Program loan. Bishop Ortiz specifically noted the generosity of the Synod's congregations in support of its mission during the year.
- ii. Budget Approval for FY 2021. In light of the cancellation of the 2020 Synod Assembly, the Synod Council was presented with a proposed budget for the fiscal year beginning February 1, 2021, for adoption. The proposed budget provides for \$992,116 in total expenditures and, while revenues are projected to be \$884,500, the deficit should be substantially offset by the expected forgiveness of the Paycheck Protection Program loan of approximately \$104,000.

SC21.01.05: That the budget of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod for the fiscal year beginning February 1, 2021, providing for \$992,116 in total expenditures, be adopted in the form presented to the meeting.

- iii. Synod Assembly Registration Fees. The specific approval of the registration fees for the 2021 Synod Assembly had been postponed from the November 2020 meeting, pending further analysis by the Treasurer in coordination with the Synod Assembly Planning Committee. The Treasurer brought forward a recommendation for adoption by the Synod Council.

SC21.01.06: That the registration fees for the 2021 Synod Assembly be established at \$75 for regular registration and \$100 for late registration, with the effective date for the late registration fee to be established by the Synod Assembly planners.

- iv. Clergy Housing Allowances for 2021. Treasurer Julie Hamre brought forward recommendations for housing allowances for ordained staff for the calendar year 2021, noting that Pr. Swenson-Reinhold had not requested an allowance.

SC21.01.07: That for the calendar year 2021, 35 percent of the compensation paid in the form of salary to Bishop Leila M. Ortiz and 100 percent of the compensation paid in the form of salary to the Rev. Lamar Bailey be designated as a rental/housing allowance in accordance with the provisions of section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code.

- v. Other Items of Information. In connection with an existing guarantee by the Synod of a loan made to Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Haymarket,

Virginia, the Synod had been required to place funds on deposit with the lender. The guarantee has ended in accordance with its terms, and any remaining funds on deposit will be released back to the Synod.

- vi. Paycheck Protection Program, Round 2. Legislation enacted by Congress in late December 2020 has made another round of forgivable Paycheck Protection Program loans available to eligible borrowers, including those entities that borrowed funds under the first round. Eligibility for the second round of loans is based on certain quantitative measures and is subject to regulatory guidance issued by the Small Business Administration within the last week. Treasurer Hamre has not yet determined whether the Synod will qualify under these new standards. The Synod Council considered whether to authorize a new loan pending a final determination of eligibility.

SC21.01.08: That the Treasurer be directed to submit, on behalf of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod, an application for a second loan under the Paycheck Protection Program under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, in the maximum amount available, conditioned on the Treasurer's determination of the Synod's eligibility for such a loan.

2. Synodical Women's Organization

Sheena Foster summarized recent activities of the organization, including plans for a virtual annual convention for 2021.

3. Youth Organization

The Synod Council's youth representative did not have updates to report but expressed his excitement for the collaboration with the Delaware-Maryland Synod.

4. New Business

None.

The meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer at 12:00 p.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting: March 20, 2021; Zoom/Electronic.