

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA**  
**SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING – JANUARY 8, 2022**  
**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. Vice President Slagle Peck called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The roll was called to verify attendance.

**Devotions** Vice President Slagle Peck provided a devotional message based on Psalm 121.

**Introductions** In light of the significant number of Synod Council members newly elected by the 2021 Synod Assembly, Vice President Slagle Peck invited four members to provide more extensive biographical introductions. Remarks were made by Heather Light, Melody Mobley, Donald Wallace, and Ashelyn Mosby.

Vice President Slagle Peck presented the proposed agenda for the meeting.

**SC22.01.01:** To approve the agenda for the January 8, 2022, Synod Council meeting.

The draft minutes of the November 13, 2021, Synod Council meeting and the November 17-20, 2021, electronic meeting were presented to the Council for approval. Vice President Slagle Peck asked for corrections or amendments. One minor correction was noted regarding the first set of minutes.

**SC22.01.02:** To approve the minutes of the September 11, 2021, Synod Council meeting and the November 17-20, 2021, electronic meeting.

**1. Staff and Officer Reports**

a. Bishop Ortiz:

- i. Roster Matters for Synod Council Action. Bishop Ortiz brought one roster matter to the Synod Council, noting that any further extension of Pr. Amy Thompson Sevimli's on-leave-from-call status must be approved by the Conference of Bishops, including the duration of that extension.

**SC22.01.03:** That:

1. The portion of the Synod Council resolution SC21.11.41 relating to the status of the Rev. Amy Thompson Sevimli as on leave from call be rescinded; and
  2. The Synod Council recommends that the Conference of Bishops grant the Rev. Amy Thompson Sevimli an extension of her family leave.
- ii. Roster Matters for Information. Although not requiring any action on the part of the Synod Council, Bishop Ortiz's written report to the Council noted several matters affecting the Synod's rostered ministers, as follows:
1. The Rev. Sigurd Arneson, retired, transferred from the Lower Susquehanna Synod, effective December 12, 2021;
  2. The Rev. Russell Gordon, retired and rostered in the Southwest California Synod, will be serving as interim pastor at Lutheran Church of the Reformation, Washington, D.C., effective January 15, 2022;
  3. The Rev. Wendy Moen transferred to the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, effective August 23, 2021;
  4. The Rev. Scott Zimmerer, retired, transferred to the Lower Susquehanna Synod, effective December 14, 2021; and
  5. The Rev. Michael Wilker transferred to the Northeastern Iowa Synod effective January 18, 2022.
- iii. Web Site Development Proposal. Bishop Ortiz described the current state of the Synod's Web site, including the ability to access its archived documents, and the need to provide a significant update and redesign to improve the user experience. Staff has received a proposal from Johnny Flash Productions LLC for one-time development services and recurring monthly support. The goal of this effort is to be able to launch a new/redesigned Web site at the time of the 2022 Synod Assembly.

**SC22.01.04:** To authorize the engagement by the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod of Johnny Flash Productions LLC for the redesign of its Web site, in accordance with the proposal reviewed by the Synod Council, at a one-time cost not exceeding \$15,300.

- iv. Proposed Development Officer Engagement. The written report of Bishop Ortiz described a proposal to add a development officer to the staff. Staff has interviewed the individual currently serving as the Assistant to the Bishop for Donor Relations and Development of the Delaware-Maryland Synod, with a view toward a potential collaboration modelled on the current arrangement to share the services of the Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Family Ministry. Members raised several questions about how the compensation will be

structured, the potential duration of the arrangement, how the arrangement will be evaluated, and what steps are necessary to conclude any final arrangements. Although no formal action on this proposal was taken by the Synod Council, a consensus developed among the members that discussions should proceed. An opportunity to meet the individual and to formally act on a proposal would be provided at one or more subsequent meetings of the Synod Council.

- v. Bishop Sabbatical Leave and Staff Sabbatical Proposal. The written report also referred to two aspects of sabbatical leave. Given her nearly six-year tenure on the synod staff (first as an Assistant to the Bishop, and subsequently as the Bishop), the personnel policies of the Synod permit her to observe a three-month sabbatical beginning in the fall of this year. Her plan is to be away during the months of October, November, and December. The Synod will need to plan for the additional expense of an interim bishop during her absence. Bishop Ortiz noted that these personnel policies only take into account time served on the Synod staff and not time devoted to the ministry as a whole. Accordingly, Bishop Ortiz also proposed to grant a shorter, one-time sabbatical to all full-time staff other than the bishop. To ensure the continuity of Synod operations, this leave will need to be taken after the 2022 Synod Assembly has concluded and at least one month before the beginning of Bishop Ortiz's leave.

**SC22.01.05:** That, in light of the extraordinary work of the staff of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges of 2020 and 2021, and in light of our desire to encourage and support the opportunity to engage in meaningful and restorative Sabbath, the Synod Council supports and affirms the Bishop's desire to give full-time staff of the Synod four extra weeks of renewal leave in 2022, with such four-week leave to be taken consecutively and staggered to ensure staff coverage.

- vi. Other Updates. Bishop Ortiz discussed the dismissal of Pr. Nelson Rabell-González as pastor of Misión Latina Luterana in Stockton, California, by Bishop Megan Rohrer, Sierra Pacific Synod, on December 12, 2021. Members were provided with links to additional resources and background on this action and its aftermath.

- b. Assistant to the Bishop and DEM, Pr. Bailey:

Pastor Bailey provided a written report and gave additional remarks updating on the work of two tables and the Racial Equity Team. The Synod Council was directed to the updates regarding the Holy Listening Project of the New and Renewing Mission Table, the Sabbath grants supporting nearly 40 rostered ministers, cultural competency, and coaching activities.

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

Pastor Swenson-Reinhold provided a written report and gave additional remarks, noting that there were three entrances and one approval in the candidacy process. In response to a question from a member, she advised that 23 congregations in the Synod were currently in some form of leadership transition.

d. Assistant to the Bishop, Youth and Family Ministry, Deacon Julie Stecker:

Deacon Stecker is on leave and did not provide a report. Alternative leadership has been arranged for the youth retreat to be held at the end of the month.

e. Vice President Jennifer Slagle Peck:

Vice President Slagle Peck provided a written report in advance of the meeting and emphasized two matters described in the report. A contract with Gold Enterprises LLC was signed on January 7 as the second part of the Synod's plan for racial justice. Several vacancies still exist for liaisons from the Synod Council to tables, teams, and committees of the Synod.

f. Treasurer Julie Hamre:

- i. Year-to-Date Financial Statements. Treasurer Julie Hamre had distributed copies of the financial statements for the first 11 months of the current fiscal year, *i.e.*, the period ended December 31, 2021, in advance of the meeting. These statements reflect a surplus of undesignated receipts, compared with expenditures, of approximately \$11,800 before consideration of the relatively large surplus from the prior fiscal year and the transfer of a smaller amount from the Congregational Mission designated fund.
- ii. Disbursement of 2021 Budgeted Ministry Support Funds. The Finance Committee reported out its support for disbursing the budgeted amount of \$40,000 in financial support for the United Lutheran Seminary. No specific action was taken by the Synod Council inasmuch as the expenditure had already been authorized by the Synod Assembly in its approval of the budget for the current fiscal year.
- iii. Synod Investment Policy. The Finance Committee also updated an Investment Policy for the Synod and recommended its approval by the Synod Council.

**SC22.01.06:** To approve the adoption of the document entitled "Investment Policy for the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" in the form presented to the meeting ("12-11-21 Draft").

- iv. Revised Directory of Synod Restricted Funds. The Finance Committee also revised and updated the Directory of Synod Designated and Restricted Funds and recommended its approval by the Synod Council.

**SC22.01.07:** To approve the adoption of the document entitled “Directory of Synod Designated and Restricted Funds” in the form presented to the meeting.

- v. Authorization of 2022 Clergy Housing Allowances. The Treasurer also brought forward recommendations for housing allowances for ordained staff for the calendar year 2022, noting that Pr. Swenson-Reinhold had not requested an allowance.

**SC22.01.08:** That for the calendar year 2022, 35 percent of the compensation paid in the form of salary to Bishop Leila M. Ortiz and 78 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.

g. Secretary Kevin Anderson:

- i. Proposed Amendments to *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions*. Secretary Anderson distributed a set of proposed amendments to the Synod’s *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* in advance of the meeting. The principal purpose of the amendments is to alter the size and composition of the Synod Council as discussed during the November 2021 meeting. Additional changes would increase leadership opportunities for ministers of Word and Service as conference deans and representatives to the Synod Council from their respective conferences. All such changes require approval by the 2022 Synod Assembly.

**SC22.01.09:** That:

1. The proposed modifications to the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod, in the form presented to the Synod Council, be recommended to the 2022 Synod Assembly for approval; and
  2. If approved by the 2022 Synod Assembly, none of such modifications will be applied so as to shorten the term of any Synod Council member that began before the approval of such modifications.
- ii. Amendments to Peace Lutheran Church/Bermuda Constitution. Secretary Anderson provided an update on the process of updating the Constitution of Peace Lutheran Church, Bermuda, to conform to the 2019 Model Constitution for Congregations. That congregation had been advised by its local legal counsel

that certain required provisions in the model constitution regarding the ownership and transfer of property were not consistent with applicable Bermuda law and thus could not be adopted by the congregation without being modified. After discussions involving the Secretary of the Synod, the Synod attorney, and the General Counsel of the ELCA, the Synod Council was authorized to permit deviations from the required provisions of the model constitution so as to conform to applicable local law.

**SC22.01.10:** That:

1. The congregation of Peace Lutheran Church, Paget, Bermuda, in adopting modifications to its Constitution, be authorized and permitted to modify the required provisions of the Model Constitution for Congregations so as to comply with applicable Bermuda law regarding the ownership and transfer of property by Bermuda entities; and
2. The Secretary of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod be authorized, in their [sic] discretion, to approve any deviations to the 2019 Model Constitution for Congregations that they [sic] deem necessary and appropriate so as to comply with applicable Bermuda law.

**2. Synodical Women's Organization**

[No report]

**3. Youth Organization**

[No report]

**4. New Business**

[None]

**The meeting adjourned** with the Lord's Prayer at 12:20 p.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting: March 12, 2022; Epiphany Lutheran Church, Burtonsville (location tentative)

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin D. Anderson  
Secretary