

**TEXAS-LOUISIANA GULF COAST SYNOD  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING**

**Date of Meeting:** November 14, 2020

**Venue:** Zoom (Electronic)

**Attendees:** Bishop Mike, Robert Rivera, Paul Antolik, Deidre Hayes, Carol Flores, Rev. Marcia Kifer, Rev. Chris Michaelis, Rev. Rodwell Thom, Caleb Parks, Julie Peltier, Tom Wildrick, Shelli Williamson

**Absent:** Aden Planta, Adelaide Herman

**Staff:** Rev. Tracey Breashears-Schultz, Rev. Chris Markert, Gretchen Lundquist (joined at 12:15pm).

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 by Robert Rivera, Opening prayer/devotions led by Tracey Breashears-Schultz was about waiting. Council were asked what they were waiting for and if they were good at waiting.

**Actions Taken**

SC.20.11.01 Approved the Consent Agenda. [Motion: Marcia;  
Second: Caleb]

a. The consent agenda included the agenda, September 26 Council Minutes (with an attendance change), on leave from call requests, and retirement requests.

SC.20.11.02 Approved Appointing Caleb Parks as Nominating Committee chair.  
[Motion: Rodwell; Second: Marcia]

SC.20.11.03 Approved authorizing the proceeds of the sale of the Freeport property to be invested in the new mission at Holy Trinity.  
[Motion: Paul; Second: Carol]

SC.20.11.04 Approved denying Rev. Sharon Kapsch's request for On Leave From Call status. [Motion: Paul; Second: Tom]

SC.20.11.05 To prevent phishing attempts by voice and text messages, Council requested that member phone numbers be removed the Synod website and replaced with direction to contact the Synod Office if someone wants to contact a Council member.

**Discussion**

1. Bishop's Report: Bishop Mike gave an update on his progress on his doctoral degree program. He noted that most congregations are having limited in-person worship, some are doing streaming of worship services, and some are doing both. Expanded or even continued in-person worship may be curtailed or eliminated if the current increase in Covid-19 cases continues. Assistance for congregations impacted by hurricanes was also discussed.

The anti-racism team is now working with a coach/facilitator to clarify its mission, which will focus on how we live into our commitments around resisting the disease of racism, white supremacy and privilege.

Progress on Bishop's 2020 goals was given. Staff will begin work on the 2022 budget and a revised 2021 spending plan later this month.

2. Vice President's Report: Nominating Committee: Caleb has agreed to lead the nominating committee, and the Council will be the committee. Caleb reviewed a list of positions needed filling, including those which might be filled by current Council members eligible for another term. Members should forward names to Caleb and be prepared to approach possible nominees about serving. Qualities needed include people who can operate at the policy level, who can represent smaller and/or rural congregations, and also represent congregations of color.

We will need to be looking for people who can represent the Synod at the 2022 Churchwide assembly in Columbus, Ohio. In addition to the Bishop and Vice-President the synod will have five at-large, one youth, one person of color attendees. People recommended at the meeting were Richard Rhoades and Anthony Chatman.

3. Treasurer's Report: Tom noted that we have a deficit of \$65,412 through October 31, which is \$15,000 larger than 2019 and \$5,000 larger than 2018 through the same date. However, if the PPP loan is converted to a grant, as hoped, we would have a \$37,218 surplus. The current cash balance is higher than recommended by audit, so Tom is in the process of moving excess cash to the ELCA Fund A, where it can earn a better return.
4. Bishop's Associate for Leadership Report: There have been several unexpected exit interviews for pastors leaving their call or retiring. The stress caused by coping the pandemic is a significant factor.

Tracey is part of the team planning for an online Theological Conference January 25-27. The list of congregations in transition was reviewed.

5. Bishop's Associate for Mission Report: The synod Disaster Team has been working hard to coordinate funds received for Covid-19 related ministries and hurricane related issues. A big focus is helping St. Paul Church in Lake Charles to raise funds to build a multi-purpose building that could be used for worship as well as for community assistance

Work continues on the Holy Trinity mission. A food pantry is hoped to be started at Christmas and an immigration welcome center in early 2021. We hope to

develop the mission in partnership with the Episcopal church that has deep roots in the community.

6. The Personnel Policy was reviewed. Suggested changes were forwarded to Gretchen in the Synod Office who will update the policy document.
7. Other Business
  - a. Synod Assembly: Gretchen described the preparations underway for the 2021 Synod Assembly, scheduled for May 21 and 22. It is planned to be a virtual meeting, but logistics will limit us to one host/broadcast site, and Synod staff is looking to find the best location. Gretchen is also evaluating alternative electronic meeting platforms to use.
    - i. Initial estimate of costs is \$50/participant, but Council noted that amount will likely be increased.
    - ii. Gretchen also noted that the biggest challenge is finding people who will agree to help with testing, planning, and execution of the effort.
  - b. Synod Office Space: Lessons learned from working during the pandemic have shown that the essential office needs for the Synod staff are space to securely store the Synod files and a space for staff to meet a couple of times a week. The lease on the Synod offices runs through October 2022, but with an option to terminate the lease in October 2021. Gretchen is checking on the cost of exercising the early termination option.

Meeting adjourned 12:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Antolik  
Secretary