

Synod Council Minutes

May 1, 2021 9am – 12pm

Present: Bishop Daniel Beaudoin, Melissa Peper Firestone, Becky Seibert, Casey Cox, Rev. Mindy Elliott, Cindy Harris, Rev. Ann Marshall, Deb Noll, Rev. Steve Ramsey, Tom Ritter, Rev. Jarrod Schaaf, Michelle Schaffer, Rev. Ed. Strietelmeier, Christina Wheeler

Synod Staff Present: Jacob Henry, Jennifer Prueter

Excused/Absent: Brent Gardner, Cindy Milbry, Jari Knowlton Simard

1. **Opening Devotions** – led by Pastor Ed Strietelmeier

"You can never truly go home again." Memories are wonderful but that season is over. The past year makes me think of exile and going home. The exile is pivotal in the Old Testament. Our story is more like applicability. We see this in four phases: God's people are living in Judea and the best and brightest are carted off to Babylon. This 1st phase is one of pain. We were forced out of in person worship.

Phase 2 is life in exile, a life for themselves. How did we find ways in Northwest Ohio? Many by drive in and online worship services. We had the capability all along, but this pushed us out of the nest. We are utilizing zoom-some remarkably successful in some cases, more people are out in the parks finding solace in God's creation, we are discovering how much we need community. There can be life in the life of exile.

Phase 3: "Comfort my people" says your God... There is a sense of hope, of a new future. What are moments of future hope that have broken in your present? First truckloads of vaccine leaving the factory. Invitation to baseball game in person hearing the crack of the bat. Getting the vaccine, excited to get a shot. Visiting close friends in each other's home. Feeling of hope.

Phase 4: the return home. It is different when you get back. There is still transgression and deceit, people still do not seek after the Lord. Some things are as before. In between times... What are some of the problems our churches and communities facing during this in between time? A lot of unspoken judgement towards those who have been vaccinated and those who have not. Some people have a shorter fuse – a little more pointed, a little harsher than expected. The "covid burnout." Emotional toll has been high. We are languishing during this time. Where do we go from here? How do we connect /follow Jesus during this time? We are not the only ones, do not compound the difficulty with failure. God is here, Stuff happens-Jesus happened too, so hang on. In the end Jesus wins, it won't always be this way.

2. **Business Meeting Call to Order** – Led by Vice-President Melissa Peper Firestone

Approval of Jan 23 Minutes

Motion to approve made by Michelle Schaffer, 2nd Deb Noll; Approved.

Approval of March Email Meeting Minutes

Minutes will be included with next meeting and approve at that time.

3. **Bishop's Report and Teaching Time** – Led by Bishop Daniel

1 Corinthians 16:1-4. As a people of God, we never stand alone. A congregation does not stand alone it is intrinsically connected to its community and therefore the world. Paul says to mimic the churches in Galatia. Do as I do—imitate me. Can you think of a follower of Jesus that you strive to imitate? Responses shared: A pastor from youth, my spiritual director, my mother-in-law, two pastors I worked with during internship, good friend for many years.

One church may be imitating another church. Think of how others are watching you about how you follow Jesus.

Bishop Daniel gave an overview of his report included in this packet.

- Blessed to preach at the installation of two pastors. Focusing on strengthening our parishes. The new LIFT parish, the East Toledo parish now becoming a reality.
- Launching and nurturing new communities. A different mindset needs to accompany new Christian communities. Another way to think about new Christian communities is to consider the places and spaces that people are already gathering and nurture relationships that will form in these communities. Give some thought to the difference between launching and nurturing.
- Annual focus is The Year of Generosity. We have had a very successful mission campaign. A thank you video was shared. In May we are launching a monthly giving drive to support our Synod ministry. While mission support will continue, we will invite to our leadership circles, our synod staff and synod deans, and our parishes to a monthly gift.
- Discussion about doing another Year end campaign focusing on Global and the greater church. Kick off of a year-end campaign to help our global partners at the Synod Assembly in September.
- Next year is The Year of Vision. We will be asking for help from my companions. The Bishop reviewed upcoming events he will be participating in.

10:13 a.m. Melissa called for motion to go into Executive Session to discuss a roster matter. Pastor Jarrod Schaaf moved to go into Executive session. 2nd Casey Cox. Approximately 10:40 a.m. Deb Noll moved to go out of Executive session 2nd Cindy Harris. No action taken.

The Bishop gave an overview of Roster Report included in our packet and continued with action items.

Action SC 21.14 On Leave from Call Request

"At the recommendation of the Bishop, Synod Council approves on leave from call status for Pastor Dana Bjorlin (year 3)."

Bishop moved 2nd Tom Ritter—motion approved

Action SC 21.15 Approval of Synodically Authorized Ministers

"At the recommendation of the Bishop, Synod Council authorizes the following individuals to serve as Synodically Authorized Ministers for service to the designated locations for one year: Tom Fleming for St Mark's Ada, Shawn Schneider for First Galion, Deacon Steve Basselman St. Martins Archbold.

Bishop Daniel moved to approve; 2nd Cindy Harris approved

Action SC 21.16 Invitation to Extended Service

"Upon the recommendation of the Bishop, Synod Council approves the Invitation to Extended Service to Pastor Kimberly Thomas and Pastor Bill Thomas of the United Methodist Church, to serve as pastors Trinity Convoy."

Bishop Daniel moved to approve 2nd Pastor Jarrod Schaaf.

Melissa asked the Bishop how he is seeing congregations opening and about those that are still closed. The Bishop replied that many parishes are open for worship and precautions are in place. It seems that the ELCA parishes are the last to open for in-person. There is a love of neighbor and that says who we are and that it is important. IT is out of love of God and love of neighbor.

(10-minute break)

4. Vice President's Report – Led by Melissa Peper Firestone

No updates. Covid fatigue and covid burnout.

5. Secretary's Report – Led by Becky Seibert- nothing new to report.

6. Treasurer's Report – Led by Synod Administrator Jacob Henry

Congregational giving and mission support reports are included in this packet. Unaudited financial statements for the 2020/21 fiscal year are included.

Jacob reviewed the included reports.

Our audit for the 2020/21 fiscal year should be concluded by mid-May and the final audited financial statements will be distributed to the council electronically.

The new system being used seems to be working well and approval from the Audit was received. There will be some differences when final report comes in May. We have been over the past year streamlining and simplifying some procedures.

(10-minute break)

7. Administrative Matters – Led by Synod Administrator Jacob Henry

Action SC21.17 Recommendation of the Office Taskforce

"The Office Taskforce recommends that Synod Staff undertake a four-month period of intentional study and conversation on hybrid-remote work. This time of study would include time spent utilizing space at other locations for staff related meetings and work, downsizing files and unused office furniture/equipment, conversation on staff culture, conversation and study on hybrid/remote work models, and conversation on related personnel policies. Towards the end of the study period, the Office Taskforce will reconvene to hear feedback and will make a further recommendation to the Synod Council or Executive Committee on engaging in a sale of the office building."

Motion to approve Action made by Casey Cox, 2nd Christina Wheeler.

Approved

8. For the good of the order – Led by Vice-President Melissa Peper Firestone

- Bishop Daniel suggested to meet August 14 outside for Synod Council 10-12pm meeting time.
- Sept 24-26 Synod Assembly dates. Looking at a hybrid model. Those whose terms end will continue until the next assembly.

9. Sending Blessing and Prayer

- Jarrod Schaaf shared from recent LOMO Board meeting-Personnel staffing is an issue for resident camps to happen. Main recruiting has been difficult due to covid. Please let all know of availabilities for summer camp employment. Young adults especially.
- Michelle Schaffer: WELCA president. The newsletter Sonlight is being sent to all parishes. Please copy and distribute to the women of your congregations. A lot of great plans are being offered and please share with the women of your congregations.
- Deb Noll was installed as a SAM and it was a beautiful Sunday. The two churches are still in the call process and interviewing. Asking for prayers for them and Deb.
- Casey Cox asked for prayers for Pastor Bob Cochran as he continues to fight prostate cancer.

Melissa closed with prayer. 11:21 a.m.

- **Next meeting August 14th. Place and time to be announced.**
- **Synod Assembly September 24-25. Place and time to be announced.**

Respectfully submitted,

Becky Seibert
Secretary

/bis
