

**Southeastern Minnesota Synod Council  
Executive Committee  
Minutes  
February 1, 2008**

Members present: Bishop Harold Usgaard, Vice president Shirley Gangstad, John Petersburg and Rev. Richard Spande.

Members absent: Treasurer Mark Bradley and Secretary BettyAnn Hernke both excused.

Staff present: Deborah Norrie, Recorder

The Executive Committee meeting scheduled for January 29, 2008 was postponed due to bad weather and rescheduled for Friday, February 1, 2008 at 10:00 AM.

Bishop Usgaard began the meeting with a brief reflection and prayer, substituting for BettyAnn Hernke who was unable to attend the rescheduled meeting.

The minutes of the meeting October 23, 2007 were reviewed. John Petersburg made a motion which was seconded and carried to adopt the minutes as printed

**Voted**

**EC08.02.01 to adopt the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting October 23, 2007.**

Ms. Norrie distributed a variety of reports in the Treasurer's absence.

- The December accounting report was reviewed.
- The transactions for January were reviewed by the committee; the ending bank balance January 31, 2008 was \$436,679.22.
- 2007 Mission Support totaled \$2,150,491 which is \$66,509 (97%) behind budget; \$98,587 behind 2007.
- Ms. Norrie reported that the budget was under-spent an estimated \$60,000.

Rev. Richard Spande made a motion which was seconded and carried to approve the Treasurer's report.

**Voted**

**EC08.02.02 to approve the Treasurer's report.**

**Old Business**

Mission Support Consultation. The ELCA Mission Support Consultation at the November Synod Council meeting was one of the best consultations the synod has experienced. Ms. Gangstad expressed disappointment that the ELCA representatives could not stay for the entire time. In the future we should request that their time with the synod council not be driven by flight schedules.

Synod Council budget meeting. The meeting February 23, 2008 will be for the purpose of revisions to the 2008 approved budget and prepare a proposed 2009 budget. Bishop Usgaard, John Petersburg and Larry Iverson will attend a meeting with all Minnesota synods and synod supported ministry partners to discuss budget issues. All the synods are experiencing flat income and increased demands on budgets. The committee discussed the use of the 2007 budget surplus to ministry partners and to the synod's reserves. This will be discussed further and the next meeting prior to the council meeting.

Synod staff issues. Bishop Usgaard reported that we had received information that supports the decision to make the Call Process Administrative Assistant a salaried position. This has been clarified with Cheryse Brenno Sloan. John Petersburg made a motion which was seconded and carried to pay Ms. Brenno Sloan a bonus.

#### **Voted**

**EC08.02.03 to pay a bonus equal to one pay period to the Call Process Administrative Assistant in recognition of the extra work done while the Executive Assistant was on sabbatical September – November 2007.**

Bishop Usgaard also discussed the proposed Director of Planned Giving position. Rev. Lester Horntvedt has been serving in this position funded by the Leadership Initiative Thrivent Grant. The ELCA Foundation may be interested in hiring a person to do the development work. The bishop would like to designate the reserve amount in the Personnel budget for this position. The synod would fund this position cooperatively with the ELCA Foundation and Good Earth Village. He would look at a three year term contract for this position. He is asking for permission from the Executive Committee to pursue this with Good Earth Village and the Foundation. The committee is in support of exploring this idea.

Bishop Usgaard and Ms. Norrie reported that Ministry Planning reviews have been completed with Kathryn Livingood, Cheryse Brenno Sloan and Carolyn Goulet. Their job descriptions have been updated and will be distributed to the Executive Committee and the Synod Council.

Ms. Norrie has reviewed the number of hours Carolyn Goulet has worked during the last 7 years. We have consistently budgeted for 22 hours a week and every year she works well over those hours. In an effort to be more realistic in the budgeting process we have increased her hours to 28 per week. She will work full time Monday-Thursday. The committee approved this change.

Bishop Usgaard reported on the Children, Youth and Family Ministry Task Force. A report will be coming to the assembly but the task force will not have a proposal this year. The task force has clarified that this proposed position will not be a program position but a relationship person to support Children, Youth and Family Ministries in the

synod. The task force is reporting their work at all of the conference assemblies in February, also.

Update on flood relief. The bishop reported that \$155,000 has been distributed from the gifts received. Every pastor in the flood area has received a respite weekend coordinated by the Root River Conference Dean Jodie Archer. Ms. Gangstad asked whether these pastors should be offered ongoing counseling and encouraged the bishop to work with the La Crosse Area Synod bishop to offer follow up counseling. The bishop also commented that we will invite Cindy Johnson, LDR, to give a report at the synod assembly.

#### Other Old Business.

The personnel policy manual has been revised but not approved. Ms. Norrie reported that most of the revisions have been completed but the document still needs work. It is on the back burner until after synod assembly. Ms. Gangstad asked that it continue to be on the agenda so it doesn't get forgotten.

Ms. Gangstad reported good discussion about reconfiguring the council. The task force is making no recommendation for change at this time.

There was no other old business.

#### New Business

Synod ministry visits. Bishop Usgaard reported that he, Larry Iverson and Rev. Linda Gunderson have scheduled several days in February through May to visit with each active rostered person in the synod. These visits will center on wellness – body, mind, spirit and ministry. The visits seem to be well received since pastors are calling to schedule time.

Strategic plan. The bishop announced that he will probably use the same process as before but the questions on the congregation survey will be directed out rather than inward. We prayed, studied and told our faith stories – now what?

Legal issues. Bishop Usgaard received a report from the attorney from the synod who attended the ELCA Attorney's Association meeting in November 2007. Several items were discussed at that meeting that need the attention of the synod. That list was reviewed and prioritized. The list is attached to these minutes.

Ms. Gangstad read a thank you note from the synod staff for the Christmas dinner staff celebration.

The Executive Committee received Bishop Usgaard's sabbatical request for July – September 2008. Rev. Richard Spande made a motion which was seconded and carried to approve the request.

**Voted**

**EC.08.02.04 to approve the sabbatical request of Bishop Harold Usgaard for July, August and September 2008.**

Ms. Norrie received the final agenda for the synod assembly. The only addition will be a report from Lutheran Disaster Response on Saturday afternoon. The committee had previously designated the offering for World Hunger.

There was no other new business.

The Executive Committee will meet Tuesday, February 19, 2008 at 3:00 PM for budget discussions and to develop budget recommendations for the Synod Council.

The next Synod Council meeting is April 5, 2008 tentatively set for Salem Lutheran Church, Albert Lea.

The next regular meeting of the Executive Committee will be May 27, 2008. BettyAnn Hernke will have devotions.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 PM.

Deborah Ann Norrie  
Recorder

## Tasks recommended by the ELCA Attorneys' Association – November 2007

*(Prioritized by the Executive Committee February 1, 2008)*

1. Review synod's sexual misconduct policy.
2. Protection of children & prevention of abuse
  - Background checks, waiting periods
  - Policies for congregations
3. Implementation of background check for synod officers.
4. Non-congregational calls
  - Screening
  - Structure of supervision
  - Regular synodical review
5. Vehicle use/general risk management/insurance
6. Inventory of synodical representation on social welfare organization boards, schools, etc.
  - Determine governance responsibilities
  - Exercise or relinquish power to select board members
  - What is the synod's liability?
7. Advise congregations to update Articles of Incorporation.
8. Conflict of interest policy.

Two items of concern are addressed by office practices:

1. Records retention – synod staff follow the Records Retention policy of the ELCA.
2. Financial management – addressed by the annual audit by outside accounting and audit firm.