



**Southeastern Minnesota Synod Council**  
**Minutes**  
**September 9-10, 2011**

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod Council met on Friday, September 9, 2011 in Walters Library, Assisi Heights, Rochester, Minnesota.

Members present: Bishop Harold Usgaard, Vice president Ann Peterson, Secretary Jodie Archer, Treasurer John Petersburg, Lilah Aas, Allan Bieber, Timothy Bremseth, Rev. Roger Claxton, Rev. Kathy Fullarton, Bonnie Hermann, Barbara Kittelson, Glenn Leckband, and Rev. David Rossow.

Members absent: Martha Bec, Michael Determan, Rev. Julie Malone, and Samantha Stanley.

Staff present: Rev. Linda Gunderson, Larry Iverson, Deborah Ann Norrie and Karen Gieseke

Staff absent: Rev. Peter Reuss

Guests present: Barbara Schepp, Craig Ludtke, and Anna Wencil.

Dinner was served in Walters Library at Assisi Heights. Following dinner Vice president Peterson asked the members of the council to introduce themselves.

Ms. Peterson welcomed Lilah Aas who is new to the council.

Ann Peterson shared her faith story with the council. She told the council that she is a Lutheran by choice and still feels drawn to the liturgy, music and living Lutheran.

Bishop Usgaard introduced Karen Gieseke to the council. Ms. Gieseke is the new children, youth and family ministry coordinator. Karen expressed appreciation for the opportunity to join the synod staff and to shape this ministry in the synod.

Guests at the meeting were Craig Ludtke, Anna Wencil and Barbara Schepp. They were voting members from the synod to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly. Bishop Usgaard and Ann

Peterson led conversation sharing their experience as voters to the churchwide assembly.

The Mission Support Table led worship with Holy Communion in Lourdes Chapel at 8:00 PM. Following worship the council enjoyed a time of fellowship.

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Saturday morning, September 10, 2011 began with a time of worship in Lourdes Chapel led by the Mission Support Table.

At 10:00 the council was called to order by Vice president Peterson. Rev. Linda Gunderson was introduced as the presenter for the morning program. Rev. Gunderson is the synod's Director for Evangelical Mission. She led the group in a discussion of the mission planning that all congregations will be asked to do in the coming year.

Rev. Gunderson challenged the council to answer the question: What does it mean to be Lutheran in this time and place? The churchwide assembly challenged the church to be about mission.

Many congregations have mission plans in place and those will be honored. But many congregations need to be invited into the process to develop a mission plan, use the resources available to do the planning and then evaluate or review the plan regularly.

Four events are to be hosted around the synod. Pastors will be asked to come at 3:30 for conversation. There will be a meal at 6:00 where up to 5 key leaders from congregations are invited. Special speakers will be brought in to make presentations at the meal. Following

the meal there will be conversation about budgets. Information will be given on how to do a program budget and how that reflects the mission of the congregation. Each event will also have a panel discussion of best practices.

The events are quite different from the stewardship/Mission support consultations of the past. We are focusing on mission.

Rev. Gunderson invited the council into conversation about

Identity – Who Are We?

Purpose – Why Are We Here?

Context – Who Is Our Neighbor?

She shared a demographic report from Tom Gillespie, the demographer for the State of Minnesota.

The New normal of these demographics show that:

Labor and talent will be the scarce resources  
A single-minded focus on productivity  
Chronic government deficits mean cuts in services

Worries about how to pay for past promises  
Disruptive events/ innovations more frequent  
A whole new set of opportunities

The church can become the place where people can care for others and tell the Good News. But the church has to be willing to change and adapt to the new norm. The mission plan becomes all the more important to being ready to adapt to the new norm because we know what the vision and mission are.

Grieving for the old normal:

Denial – this is not happening, just wait, things will return to normal

Anger – who is to blame? Rage and gridlock rule and anyone who symbolizes life, energy, progress, success, happiness, etc. is treated with resentment and mistrust.

Bargaining – I'll change if this just goes away. Somehow, we can get back to the old normal if we just return to good, old fashioned values.

Depression (emotional not economic) – what's the point in trying? We are all doomed anyway.

Acceptance

Larry Iverson was called on to talk about how budget reflects the mission statement. A program budget interprets the ministry of the congregation:

shows how pastor and other staff time is ministry not just overhead

reduces confusion

Clarifies the significance of the congregations ministries

Connects ministries to one another and to staff.

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#### Call to Order

The business meeting of the synod council was called to order by Ms. Peterson at 12:45 following lunch.

Members present: Bishop Harold Usgaard, Vice president Ann Peterson, Secretary Jodie Archer, Treasurer John Petersburg, Lilah Aas, Allan Bieber, Timothy Bremseth, Rev. Roger Claxton, Michael Determan, Rev. Kathy Fullarton, Bonnie Hermann, Barbara Kittelson, Glenn Leckband, Rev. Julie Malone, Rev. David Rossow and Samantha Stanley.

Members absent: Martha Bec.

Staff present: Rev. Linda Gunderson, Larry Iverson, Deborah Ann Norrie.

Staff absent: Rev. Peter Reuss

#### Secretary's Report

Secretary Jodie Archer presented the minutes of the Synod Council meeting April 2, 2011.

#### Council Action

**SC11.09.01 to accept the minutes of the meeting April 2, 2011.**

Ms. Archer read thank you notes from Shirley Gangstad, the Global Mission Committee and from Deborah Ann Norrie.

#### REPORTS

Executive Committee: Ann Peterson called attention to the minutes of the Executive

Committee from May, July and August. There were no questions of the Executive Committee.

Rev. Linda Gunderson reported on the mission planning that is happening with congregations this fall. She also highlighted the First Call Theological Education program for the fall and noted that potential seminary students are calling to begin the discernment process.

Larry Iverson reported that the fall stewardship consultation is being done differently with the mission planning meetings. He noted that the stewardship web page is now active and they are proceeding with grants from the Macedonia Project to congregations that are doing stewardship programming for members. They will also be sponsoring a video contest for congregations about the Macedonia project.

Bishop Usgaard reported:

There is ongoing conversation in Region 3 about a hay lift to northern Texas.

North Dakota continues to experience flooding. ELCA congregations have experienced \$3,000,000 of damage. Three congregations will close because they don't have the energy to clean and rebuild.

announced that the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary offering has reached the \$100,000 goal

Congregations that are voting to leave: Emmons will vote September 25 for the first vote and West St. Olaf will take another first vote that has not been scheduled. We have lost 7 congregations thus far.

Cuts to Churchwide staff will have an impact on the work of synods. He passed out A Focus on Synods...and Bishops that is a discussion piece that the bishops have used.

Minutes from the Congregational Renewal Table, Mission Support Table and the New Ministries Table were e-mailed to all council members. There were no comments by any table members and no questions from the council.

Old Business

Review of 2011 resolutions

The council reviewed the 2011 Synod Assembly Resolutions Recommended Actions report.

Resolutions needing action by the synod council were Resolution 2011-02 Journey to Macedonia that was referred to the Mission Support Table;

Resolution 2011-03: Speaking and Acting to prevent bullying and harassment and related violence. The council was asked to utilize its existing partnerships...and encourage the formation of new partnerships to prevent bullying, harassment, and related violence. Ann Peterson noted that October is national bullying awareness month. MCC is working on anti-bullying as well.

Resolution 2011-04: Support for the ELCA Malaria Campaign. This resolution requested the synod council encourage congregations and individuals to financially support the ELCA Malaria Campaign. The World Hunger task force is working on this response.

*OTHER OLD BUSINESS*

Rev. Roger Claxton asked if there would be further conversation about the term limit for the synod bishop. Ms. Peterson indicated that this would be on the agenda again in November.

There was no other old business.

New Business

*CLERGY ROSTER CHANGES*

The synod council voted to extend Letters of Call.

**Council Action**

**SC11.09.02 to extend Letters of Call to:  
Rev. David Beckstrom, interim at Good Shepherd, Rochester effective September 6, 2011;  
Rev. Shari Mason, visitation pastor at First United Methodist, Austin effective August 1, 2011;**

**Rev. David Jore, interim at Christ, Preston effective April 1, 2011;**  
**Rev. Ann Svennungsen, interim at Saint Olaf College Student Congregation, Northfield effective August 15, 2011; and**  
**Rev. Margaret Pleiss-Sippola, interim at Little Cedar & Marshall, Adams effective July 1, 2011.**

The synod council voted to approve on leave from call requests.

#### **Council Action**

**SC11.09.03 to approve on leave from call for:**  
**Rev. Leslie Neist effective June 1, 2011**  
**Rev. Lissa Kahl effective September 15, 2011**  
**Rev. Janet White effective August 15, 2011**  
**Rev. Krista Stokke effective September 1, 2011**

The synod council voted to approve retirements.

#### **Council Action**

**SC11.09.04 to approve retirements of:**  
**Rev. Alice Durst from chaplain, Mayo Clinic, Rochester effective July 27, 2011; and**  
**Rev. W. Bruce Benson from pastor, Saint Olaf College Student Congregation, Northfield effective August 1, 2011.**

#### *APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL MEMBERS TO FILL VACANCIES*

The synod council is authorized by the constitution and bylaws to fill vacancies left by resignations. Replacements to complete the terms of Zach Battelson, Karen Hagen and Magok Alim were appointed to serve on the synod council until elections to be held at the 2012 synod assembly.

#### **Council Action**

**SC11.09.05 to appoint:**  
**Lilah Aas, First, Albert Lea to fill the unexpired term of Karen Hagen on the Congregational Renewal Table;**  
**Michael Determan, Mount Olive, Rochester to fill the unexpired term of Zach Battelson as a youth on the synod council; and**

**To appoint Martha Bec, Sudanese Dinka Community, Rochester to fill the unexpired term of Magok Alim on the New Ministries Table.**

#### *APPROVE CONGREGATION CONSTITUTIONS*

Constitutions submitted by congregations were approved by the synod council.

#### **Council Action**

**SC11.09.06 to approve the constitution approved at the congregation meeting January 23, 2011 of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Glenville as it is generally consistent with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the constitution and bylaws of this synod, and the Model Constitution for Congregations of the ELCA. The congregation is strongly encouraged to make the changes recommended in the letter to Rev. Myers dated June 20, 2011 after the document is ratified at the 2012 annual meeting; and**

**Approve the constitution approved at the congregation meeting February 21011 of Evanger Lutheran Church, Sargeant as it is generally consistent with the constitution and bylaws of the ELCA, the constitution and bylaws of the synod, and the Model Constitution for Congregations of the ELCA. The congregation will ratify the document at the 2012 annual meeting.**

#### *AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS OF THE SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA SYNOD*

Deborah Ann Norrie presented the Notice of Proposed Amendments to the constitution and bylaws to the synod's constitution. The proposed changes are simple housekeeping amendments and do not involve major changes to the document. The council can proposed these changes for adoption at one meeting of the synod assembly if those proposed changes are published six months in advance of the assembly. The council will take action on the

continuing resolutions that need amending after the assembly.

**Council Action**

**SC11.09.07 to publish notice of constitution and bylaw amendments to the congregations of the synod in October 2011.**

Other new business.

Bishop Usgaard reported that significant damage was done to areas of the New England Synod during floods that resulted from the recent hurricane. The New England Synod is our sister synod. He asked if the council would be willing to withdraw \$3000 from reserves for flood relief efforts in the New England Synod.

**Council Action**

**SC11.09.08 to withdraw \$3000 from board designated operating reserves for flood relief in the New England Synod.**

There was no other new business.

**Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer John Petersburg was called on to give his report:

- 2011 Mission Support through end of august was \$975,232.
- Expenses are in line with income
- bank balance of \$242,117.44 does not include \$150,000 and \$90,000 in cash that is invested in CDs in other banks

Mr. Petersburg also reported that the Executive Committee is reviewing the outside accounting issue and possibility of bidding out the audit and bringing the accounting in house. The committee will keep the council informed.

\$60,000 is being withdrawn from the Children, Youth & Family Endowment to pay for the 2 ½ years of the project. This amount represents a portion of the current value of the endowment fund that is not permanently restricted.

*ANNOUNCEMENTS*

The next council meeting will be November 5, 2011. The planned agenda will include the Churchwide – synod Mission Support consultation and a report from the Global Mission/Companion Synod Committee. The New Ministries Table is responsible for worship.

*ADJOURNMENT*

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 PM and closed with prayer.

Jodie Archer, Secretary  
Deborah Norrie, Recorder