

Synod Council Highlights 2016-2017

The NW MN Synod Council met four times since our 2016 Synod Assembly. Here are some highlights of their meetings:

JUNE 18, 2016 AT TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH OF DETROIT LAKES

During the lunch break there was a presentation by Jodi Harpstead, CEO of Lutheran Social Services of MN. She reported on a study on abundant aging, the opening of a LSS homeless shelter for teens in Duluth, and publication of two resources for congregations: “My Neighbor is Muslim” and for youth “Loving our Muslim Neighbors.” LSS is very involved in older adult services – they provide senior nutrition dining services in many communities, care giver respite services, and senior companions. All these programs help older people to stay in their homes

The council appointed a *Task Force to Prepare for the 2019 Bishop Election*, to be chaired by Pastor Matt Peterson of Trinity Lutheran Church, Moorhead. One of the tasks to be addressed will be the drafting of a Ministry Site Profile for the NW MN Synod (similar to the profile that congregations in the call process develop).

The council also appointed a task force to propose revisions to synod governing documents; JoEllen Thacker of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Fergus Falls, was named chairperson of this group.

Pr. Matthew Peterson, Jerry Peterson and JoEllen Thacker were elected as at-large members of the synod executive committee.

OCTOBER 7-8, 2016 AT CAMP MINNEWAKAN, CASS LAKE (PATHWAYS BIBLE CAMPS)

For the Friday evening “retreat” portion of this meeting member of the synod council used the ELCA’s “Called Forward Together” future-envisioning resources to guide discussion of our own future as a synod.

During the “staff reports” portion of the meeting, Bishop Wohlrabe reflected: *“This summer has been very busy. Pastor Laurie Natwick was on sabbatical, which meant more work for the other synod pastoral staff—much of it revolving around parish call processes. Nowadays it seems that every pastoral transition brings about a time of discernment and transformation in a congregation.....Structures of the past and parish alignments are up for re-imagination. Smaller churches may not be able to maintain previous staffing levels or previous levels of mission support.”*

The synod council voted to establish the Northwestern Minnesota Synod Fund for Leaders Endowment within the ELCA (churchwide) Fund for Leaders.

The council also appointed members of the Synod Nominating Committee and Synod Budget Team for the 2017 Synod Assembly.

FEBRUARY 11, 2017 AT TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, MOORHEAD

After facing a \$250,000 budget deficit last November, members of the synod council were overjoyed to learn that the synod appears to have ended fiscal year 2016 “in the black!”

Members of the synod council approved seven amendments to continuing resolutions in the synod’s governing documents. The synod council also voted to recommend that the 2017 Synod Assembly consider additional amendments to the synod’s constitution and bylaws, as proposed by the Task Force for Revising Synod Governing Documents. Two resolutions authored by Bishop Wohlrabe were also discussed and recommended for consideration by the 2017 Synod Assembly.

APRIL 22, 2017 AT CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CHURCH, FERTILE

The synod council received a year-end financial report that showed the synod ending fiscal year 2016 with nearly \$30,000 more mission support income than had been budgeted, leading to over expenditures. This happened in spite of some financial losses that impacted the synod budget, due to the weather-related cancellation of last November’s Middle School Youth Gathering.

Following thoughtful discussion of how few congregations chose to be involved in 2015 and 2016, the synod council voted to discontinue the MP4ME (“Ministry Partners for Me”) special appeal.

The synod council noted, with thanksgiving, the conclusion of Pastor Loren Mellum’s term on the ELCA Church Council. Pastor Mellum, who serves Our Savior’s Lutheran Church of Moorhead, represented the synods of Region III for the past six years.

The synod council approved a proposal from Holy Cow Consulting to work with the Task Force to Prepare for the 2019 Bishop Election. This consulting firm will meet with synod leaders, conduct a synod-wide survey of congregational leaders, offer a report on the survey and assist in drafting a Mission Site Profile for the 2019 bishop election.

This summary was drafted by Bishop Larry Wohlrabe, NW MN Synod ELCA.