

**The Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod**  
**Minutes of the Synod Council Meeting**  
**January 29—30, 2010**

The Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Council met at Alvin Lutheran Church in Alvin, Texas, on January 29—30, 2010.

In attendance:

Council Members: Bishop Mike Rinehart, Evan Moilan, Paul Monroe, Grace Taylor, Kurt Goedecke, Rev. Robin McCullough-Bade, David Hollrah, Arthur Murphy, Rev. David Tart, Rev. Pete Lopez, Don Hodde, Sue Moehring, and Rev. Barbara Simmers. Synod Staff and Visitors: Peggy Hahn, Kerry Nelson, Reyna Pereira, Glenn Holdt, and Bishop Andre Golike.

Absent: Karee Viergutz, Don Carlson, and Mandy Faucett.

**Summary of Actions:**

Friday, January 29, 2010.

Vice President Evan Moilan called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Bishop Mike Rinehart led an opening devotion on Luke 15:11-32, the Prodigal Son, exile and homecoming, Cain and Abel sibling rivalries, Lost Sheep, Lost Coins, and Lost Sons. The devotion was followed by prayer.

SC.10.01.01 We met with Pastor Joe Summerville of Alvin Lutheran Church in Alvin. The new sanctuary was built in 2001. The congregation was founded in 1937. Alvin has about 500 members and 140 in average worship attendance. Stewardship has been reprioritized.

SC.10.01.02 One-year action plan review by Evan on Key Result Areas (or KRA's). Don Carlson is away at a conference. Other staff is in attendance as a part of our plan for working more closely together.

SC.10.01.03 Robin matched persons with synod congregations, so she has matched lay SC members with 10 congregations and SC pastors with 4 congregations. She will send a master list around when finalized.

SC.10.01.04 ELCA sexuality decision discussion. Visits and communications have been held with Memorial Drive in Houston, Martin Luther in Carmine, Joy in Richmond, and First Evangelical in Houston.

SC.10.01.05 The Synod online survey was discussed. There were 103 responses to the survey. Trends: 103 people: 7 gave a negative answer to sexuality decisions over

first 5 questions, so that would be about 2-3 people out of 103 who responded negatively on this issue.

1. Values Topic: 82 answers to values question #1:

- 18: witness in the community;
- 16: welcoming the community;
- 16: integrity; transparency; honesty;
- 14: justice;
- 13: Lutheran identity;
- 11: education training of lay and clergy;
- 24: Christ at the center

2. Culture: 74 responses to this question group 2

- 16: diversity
- 16: Honesty and integrity
- 14: education training
- 10: innovation
- 6: Christ centered
- 6: Lutheran identity
- 5: overarching theme of "don't cave into modern culture"

3. Strengths and Opportunities: 67 responses

- 25: Leadership
- 9: Bishop's leadership
- 10: Lutheran identity
- 9: gifts
- 4: youth
- 7: diversity
- 6: deeper connection with synod
- 2: Louisiana
- 4: needs of greater community

4. Weaknesses and Threats: 71 responses

- 13: Internal conflict
- 16: disconnect between synod and congregations, either communications back and forth, or clergy unwilling to work with broader community.
- 4: social issues

- 10: concern for future generations
- 4: lack of outward focus
- 2: geography divides us

5. Gap between vision and current reality: 71 responses

- 19: synod and local
- 11: internal conflict
- 9: lack of focus
- 6: future generations

Bishop Mike notes the similarities with his initial survey at the time of his election. Kerry notes the difference between the “synod” and the “synod office” perception of what the synod is. The WISE synod priorities (Worship, Intergenerational Ministry, Spiritual Development, and Evangelism) are embodied in the responses.

SC.10.01.06 Bishop's annual evaluation report by Evan Moilan. Bishop Mike received high marks from all respondents, and was thanked and congratulated by the council.

SC.10.01.07 Financials report by Paul Monroe. Questions on Dec. financials. Initial discussion of 2011 budget proposal. Motion to receive December financials. Motion by Kurt Goedecke. Motion passed.

SC.10.01.08 Motion to approve housing allowances as proposed in the agenda: Don Carlson at \$34,000 and Bishop Mike at \$25,000. Motion by Paul Monroe. Motion passed. Abstention: one.

Adjourned at 9:30 pm for worship in the nave of Alvin Lutheran. Holden Village prayer and song service.

Saturday, January 30, 2010

Meeting called to order at 8:05 a.m. by Evan Moilan. Devotion by Barb Simmers on Nehemiah 8, followed by prayer.

SC.10.01.09 Discussion of 2010 and 2011 budgets, and financial matters, and program and staffing cuts. Bishop Mike says that unless we turn it around, we will have to cut from 1.67 million to 1.5 million. Would rather have a smaller well-paid staff than a larger badly paid staff. Would be good to put together a team and look at how we can go to congregations and talk to them about their giving. Congregations do not have a clear sense of what the synod does for them. Suggestions given to Bishop Mike for program and staffing cuts, followed by prayer. Staff welcomed into the meeting thereafter.

SC.10.01.10 Providence Church plan and agreement. Bishop Mike discussed partnership with Presbyterian Church, and Don Carlson's work with both churches. Motion to accept the proposed constitution and plan of agreement of Providence Church. Motion by Kurt Goedecke. Motion passed. Special thanks to Don for shepherding this item.

SC.10.01.11 On leave from call status for 2010 discussion. Two new requests are by Karen Wilhelm and Lydia Paterson. Motion to approve these two requests for on leave from call status. Motion by David Tart. Motion passed.

Motion to renew all persons in one-year, two-year, and three-year renewals of on leave from call status in items b., c., and d. of Bishop Mike's on leave from call roster for one more year. Motion by Bishop Rinehart. Motion passed.

Request by Suzann Guinn for a four-year renewal for discussion only. Normally goes to the Conference of Bishops, who rarely grants renewals out to five years. No action taken.

SC.10.01.12 Motion by Bishop Mike Rinehart to approve list of pastors for retirement roster in his report. Motion passed.

SC.10.01.13 Specialized calls from the synod council discussed for information only. No action required. Bishop Mike reminded the council of the unspoken expectation that the council will keep them busy, and that they will be willing to go anywhere in the synod. They are supervised by the synod bishop. Don Carlson will work on this list for categories of concern to the council, especially long-term supply situations.

SC.10.01.14 Transfers and rostered leaders new to the synod. Discussion of Evan McClanahan at First Evangelical and the disengagement with our usual synod call process. Salary was originally under synod minimum guidelines, so Bishop refused to sign it at Evan's request. Disability status also discussed.

Motion to request Bishop to report to synod council at its March meeting before signing the letter of call of Evan McClanahan. Motion by Paul Monroe. Motion passes 5-4-3.

SC.10.01.15 Celebration Lutheran change of status discussion. Pastor Chris Markert and Celebration are now on their own as a mission start. Kerry Nelson reported that there are three ways a new mission starts: satellites, second sites, or synod start. Celebration functioned as a satellite of Kinsmen Lutheran Church. This is really only a change in relationship between Kinsmen and Celebration. The call now needs to come from Celebration to Pastor Chris Markert, and by this time next year, they need to move toward organization. Mission support from ELCM will now be reduced for this year to 10,000. Motion to approve a synodical call to Pastor Chris Markert at Celebration

Lutheran for the purpose of mission development. Motion by Kurt Goedecke. Motion passed.

SC.10.01.16 Nominations for Nominating Committee position vacated by Mike Aus. New SC positions for youth and young adult discussed. Three positions on SC also to be filled for regular rotation. Jennifer Grove position also needs to be filled due to her resignation.

Motion to set youth term of office for SC as a one-year term. Motion by Paul Monroe. Motion passed.

Motion to bring forth candidates at April 2010 SA for a youth position to SC for election to take office immediately. Motion by Paul Monroe. Motion passes.

Discussion of election of two persons to be the two nominees for ELCA church council representative to be sent on to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly for election of one of them to a six-year term.

SC.10.01.17 Motion to approve the following slate of candidates for the Melanchthon Institute Board to be presented to Christ the King as has been agreed so that the process of bringing the Melanchthon Institute and the TLGC Synod's educational program into alignment will continue with their new board. Motion by Melanchthon Committee of the SC. Slate as follows:

Terms to expire March 1, 2013

\*David Hollrah

\*Pr. Robert Moore

\*Susan Giesecke

\*Pr. Don Carlson

\*Pr. Beth Marie Halverson

Terms to expire March 1, 2011

Carroll Shaddock

Mathais Henze

Allen Warner

Pr. Jim Fowler

open

Terms to expire March 1, 2012

Bishop Mike Rinehart

\*Lon Hilman

John Boles

John Williams

\*Fatima Skalski

\* To be nominated by Synod Council to be elected at the Christ the King February Congregational Meeting.

Motion passes with two abstentions.

SC.10.01.18 Bishop's Report. Discussion with council and staff. Nothing requires SC action at this time. Much of his report discussed in prior items. First, Bishop notes the importance of staff being so responsive over the last years to needs of congregations, with the example of Pastor Kerry responding to a request from Alvin Lutheran for financial and mission advice and help on a few hours' notice. Second, the visit of Bishop Golike of the Central African Republic and its impact at the Tri-Synodical Theological Conference. Call to Common Mission of the Episcopal Church is now at a 10-year anniversary. Celebrations to come later this year. The Worship Team is up and running at synod level by encouraging growth in quality and sensibility of worship, and awareness of resources for worship. Misconduct issue with Mike Aus was discussed. A third person has come forward, but this person is not a member of the Living Word congregation. The national statistics are that about 20 percent of persons accusing a pastor of misconduct ultimately sue. The prime motivating factor is the relationship that either does or does not develop with the bishop. Living Word is about 125,000 in the red now at last report. One victim came and spoke with Pastor Emmanuel Jackson. A lot of healing still needs to take place. Marriages may still come apart. Bishop Mike will go to Baton Rouge at Our Saviour's to make a full disclosure as part of the policy of the ELCA. Bishop Mike is going to do this next week. Light of Christ in La Porte's previous pastor was Karen Wilhelm. Her salary was supported by one member who gave 10,000 per month, and she was talked into giving until the end of the year. She called Bishop Mike to object to the use of funds, mostly hers, to support a halfway house instead of the general operation of the church. When she stopped giving, the church immediately defaulted on its next mortgage payment. This may be an issue for synodical administration. Experiences of Lamb of God and St. Paul in Galveston who divert property and remaining money to non-Lutheran charities were discussed. Request for SC member to accompany Don Carlson on a visit to Light of Christ this Sunday. Question: all congregations are under the ELCA 501c3 rubric. We think Light of Christ set up its own 501c3. Legal cost may be more than the value of the property. We need more information on Light of Christ to make a decision on a synod plan of action here. Gary Morgan-Gohlke is supply preaching there right now, but is not involved in the administrative details of the church. Paul Monroe may go with Don Carlson on Sunday to get more information.

Peggy Hahn gave her report. Exciting launch of the Center for Justice and Learning in New Orleans. How do we make this a destination for adult pilgrimages and youth events? The need to feed kids in July and August is approaching and there are great ways for congregations to get involved in State of Texas program that needs space and volunteers. Not a financial commitment. The Houston Interfaith conversation on Immigration Issues was held with Bishop Rinehart on the panel. Pastor Glenn Holdt has resigned and is here to answer questions about it. He has a thyroid condition and is resigning for health reasons. Motion to thank Pastor Glenn for his service to the synod. Motion by Pastor David Tart. Motion passes. Peggy says that Kevin Massey at LDR informed her that the money is not necessarily for a staff position, which will be tough to fill just for one year, and so the synod can spend it in other ways for disaster response and recovery. Peggy recommends that we use the money for five area team leaders as stipends instead of trying to find another person to fill an Assistant to Bishop position. Galveston, Houston, the Golden Triangle, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans.

Kerry Nelson gave his report. He talks about a new mission narrative for new mission starts. There are three areas of focus: Lakewood Chinese Church, an African American church in Sugar Land, and Kiho Song.

Motion to cease our efforts toward Jesus the Friend Korean ministry as of June 1, 2010. Motion by Bishop Mike Rinehart. Motion passes with one abstention.

Kerry will meet with two Taiwanese pastors who worship over fifty persons about becoming a synodically authorized congregation of the ELCA.

Break for Lunch

Welcome to Bishop Andre Golike.

Devotion by Grace on Luke 4:14-21 and Jesus preaching in Nazareth, followed by prayer.

SC.10.01.19 Motion to receive the November SC meeting minutes (SC.09.11) as corrected. Motion by Sue Moehring. Motion passed.

SC.10.01.20 Motion to approve the Mission Endowment Fund nominees to its Board at the request of Larry Petershagen, with the addition of the identifying phrase, Christ the King, Houston. Motion by David Hollrah. Motion passed.

SC.10.01.21 Consensus of SC to approve bylaw changes for SA elections of youth and young adult by mid-February email vote, for immediate publication to synod congregations.

SC.10.01.22 Welcome and presentation by President Andre Golike. The Lutheran Synod of the Central African Republic has 70,000 members with 67 pastors, 27 districts, 70 regions, and 400 congregations.

President Golike: We cannot imagine we have salaries because it is hard to say that pastors receive only 50 dollars a month. Pastors travel to many congregations and receive payments in kind of food and other goods. Motorcycles are needed and used to transport pastors and sick people to hospital in the CAR. Church roofs are traditionally built by the CAR synod, after the congregations build the four walls. We have about 30 buildings with just walls built by the congregations, but still wait for roofs to be added by the synod of the CAR. Some have been waiting for years. Some get money, but yet are still reluctant to put the roof on due to tradition of the church. Roofs cost about 10,000-11,000 for materials from Cameroon and transportation costs. It is President Andre Golike because only "bishops" receive their title for life, and he must step down once and be reelected thereafter to become a bishop for life.

President Golike was warmly thanked by the council for his presentation and presence among us.

Evan Moilan provided a brief synod assembly update, and will have a more detailed report for the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned for Eucharist in the Alvin Lutheran sanctuary at 2:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Murphy  
TLGC Synod Secretary

(Minutes received on March 26, 2010)