

The Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
Minutes of the Synod Council Meeting
July 9-10, 2010

The Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Council met at Lutherhill Ministries, La Grange, Texas, on July 9 and 10, 2010.

In attendance:

Council Members: Evan Moilan; Bishop Mike Rinehart; Kurt Goedeke; Gregory Goedeke; Pastor Sue Beall; Don Hodde; Paul Monroe; Sue Moehring; Grace Banks; Corey Heidt; Pastor Barb Simmers; Diane Campbell; Pastor Pete Lopez (Saturday); and Arthur Murphy.

Synod Staff: Kerry Nelson; Peggy Hahn.

Absent: Pastor Bradley Fuerst; Dudley Piland; Pastor Don Carlson.

Guests: Matt Kindsvatter.

The Synod Council retreat focused on orientation for newly elected members, planning for the year to come, worship, devotion, and prayer, all of which will not be reported here for the sake of brevity. The purpose of these minutes is to summarize the business of Synod Council, and record its decisions and actions.

Friday, July 9, 2010

Vice President Evan Moilan called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

SC.10.07.01 Orientation and Introductions were led by Evan Moilan. Serving on the Executive Committee are Bishop Mike, Evan, Barb, Paul, and Arthur. Bishop Mike led a devotion on the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 1, followed by prayer. Evan led a PowerPoint presentation on Synod Council leadership.

The Synod's mission statement: A network of growing, Christ-centered, outwardly-focused congregations passing the faith to the next generation. A clear and common understanding of the mission is the most important factor in organizational leadership.

The Four Synod Priorities are:

- Evangelism;
- Spiritual Growth;
- Intergenerational Ministry; and
- Worship.

The Council's constitutional duties from the synod constitution were discussed, as well as the duties of nonprofit boards of directors. Dates and times of Synod Council (SC) meetings were set for 2010, but not for 2011:

- September 24-25. Chinese Lutheran in Houston.
- November 19-20. Either Grace Lutheran or Tree of Life Lutheran in Conroe.

Evan proposes quarterly SC meetings plus the Synod Assembly (SA) meeting, which would be a total of 5 in 2011: Jan.; April; May; September; and November 2011. January date for 2011: Jan. 28-29 in Brenham area. April 1 and 2 will be determined by the EC tomorrow. Worship began at 9:30 p.m. The meeting recessed until Saturday, July 10, at 9:00 a.m.

Saturday, July 10, 2010

Vice President Evan Moilan called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. We were joined by Craig Settlage, ELCA Director for Mission Support. The devotion was led by Bishop Mike Rinehart.

SC.10.07.02 The Synod Financials were presented by Paul Monroe. Adjustments for contribution shortfalls by congregations were explained. Motion to accept financial report as provided. Motion by Sue Moehring. Motion passed.

SC.10.07.03 Presentation by Craig Settlage. Currently serving as ELCA Churchwide Director for Mission Support of the ELCA. He is the contact person between the 65 Synods and Churchwide. He meets frequently to share our communications directly with Bishop Mark Hanson.

The primary gifts that leave a congregation should be for mission support, and the goal should be 10% of congregational receipts. Mission support decreased by 5.5 million between 2008 and 2009, 65.5 to 60 million. This led the ELCA Churchwide Council to lay off Chicago-based staff. 2009 to 2010 is expected to drop further, perhaps from 60 to 51 million. Very few programs have been eliminated, so a much smaller staff is trying to do all the programs in this economic climate. This probably cannot continue without cutting programs at some point.

Mission support explained. Importance of Kerry Nelson, as our Synod's Director of Evangelical Mission, which is a Churchwide position funded by Churchwide in our synod. Barb Simmers thanked Craig and the ELCA for providing that position and staffing it with Kerry, who has been a wonderful resource for the synod and for her particular congregation as well.

ELCA Stories of Faith in Action brochure explained. Every story is a result of mission support. Our goal should be to build stewardship in our congregations. Our synod should try to move from 4.7% as an average in mission support giving to 10%. Personal witness about our own giving as a part of our faith is important in communicating that goal to our synod congregations.

SC reviews two videos by Bishop Hanson and Craig Settlage. Craig comments that this year will be the most critical for the ELCA as a body, and so what we can do for mission support this year is now the critical time in which to do it. Evan and the SC thanked Craig for his time and presentation.

SC.10.07.04 Motion to receive SC minutes of April 2010 as corrected. Motion by Sue Moehring. Motion passed.

SC.10.07.05 Bishop Mike presents Don Carlson's report on the call process in our synod in general, and then discusses specific congregational situations. General categories include: self-study to begin; intentional interim ministry; self-study in progress; self-study completed; interviewing now; call meeting scheduled; call issued; and call accepted.

SC.10.07.06 Action items for his report: on leave from call status requested by Pastor Jeremy Shih and George Brookover. Motion to grant on leave from call status to George Brookover and Jeremy Shih. Motion by Paul Monroe. Motion passed.

SC.10.07.07 SC approval of board nominations to Mission Endowment Fund (MEF). Larry Petershagen submitted a letter to SC requesting approval of board nominations to the MEF of: (1) Carolyn Jones for a term ending January 31, 2011; and (2) Bonnie Parker for term ending January 31, 2012. Motion to approve nominations to MEF Board of Directors of Carolyn Jones for an unexpired term ending January 31, 2011; and Bonnie Parker for an unexpired term ending January 31, 2012. Motion by Kurt Goedecke. Motion passed.

Recess for lunch at noon. Call to order after lunch at 1:00 p.m. by Evan Moilan.

SC.10.07.08 Bishop's Report. Bishop Mike welcomes the new members of SC. Bishop Mike discussed oversight, vision, and accountability among the SC and Bishop and synod staff.

Congregational visits by Bishop, staff, and hopefully by SC members too. Visiting once a month would be great for SC members. The synod is more than a staff, it is a network of members working and serving together. Bring greetings on behalf of the synod. Ask the congregation: What is the mission of this church? If you need anything for your

visits, please ask. Arthur asked for a video of the Bishop to present to congregations that we visit.

Finances: down 50,000 in the first quarter. We are low on cash, and do not want to dip into restricted funds. We contacted congregations to pick up mission support and that was successful. The synod staff implemented a 7-point plan to make up the difference.

Staffing changes. Resignations of Reyna and Jessica. Glenn resigned for health reasons. Melissa and Mandy are picking up job responsibilities of Reyna and doing great at that. Peggy is taking over the role of Jessica with the help of Sally Ahrens. Glenn was doing full time in disaster response, but Peggy is picking that up too and the synod is better prepared this year for hurricane season than ever before.

Churchwide Assembly response: Peace in Rosenberg has taken a first vote. Sept. 12 consultation with Bishop will take place.

Resolution deadline for SA's. Should the SC propose a new rule for SA resolutions? Perhaps a one-month deadline on all SA resolutions will be presented by Bishop Mike for the next SC meeting.

Stipend for disaster response coordinators. We will begin a stipend of \$400 for a covenant signing to be an area disaster response coordinator. Stipend of \$400 again at the end of a year of service.

Staff Reports:

1. Peggy Hahn: **Disaster preparation and recovery:** Team leaders met once for a day-long workshop to prepare this year. Local RRT Rapid Response Teams being formed and supervised by Peggy. Formal training is a new and important part of this. Storm Sanctuaries for 20 congregations in our synod based on evacuation plans of gulf coast areas. 12 storms in the gulf expected for 2010 Hurricane season. Protocol for Hurricane Response tested at the Disciple Project. Clean underwear; drinking water; and pillows were the top three priorities after a disaster.

Domestic Justice: immigration reform education and information sharing. Video by Bishop Mike on website. NY Times article on the Metropolitan Organization's focus on immigration on July 4 in synod and Gulf Coast congregations of all faiths.

International Justice: CAR and Peru teams have grown. Peru team has focused on how we send money to Peru, which has pros and cons in foreign countries. There will be a Walkathon to raise money for CAR motorcycles in the western sector of the synod. 100 kilometer walk on September 29, 30, and October 1.

Children Youth & Family Ministry: Disciple Project was a success with 200 attendees and 9 learning tracks. A Disciple Project Advisory Board met for the first time this year to focus on theology; diversity; and financial support. More Latino leadership needed on our teams for Latino attendees. Corey would like to see young adult ministry happen, and would like to help Peggy with that age group. There is a \$19,000 designated fund for young adult line item, some of which is designated specifically for campus ministry.

Campus Ministry: Kale Wetekamm at LSU as a volunteer college student. Brad Fuerst in Houston.

Brazos Valley Campus Ministry presentation by Pastor Sue Beall. In 2007, Sue worked with them weekly. Task Force of Peace and Our Savior's in College Station was created to look at campus ministry. Blinn campus in Bryan with 12,000 and Blinn in Brenham with 5,000, and Texas A&M with 53,000 students.

The funding of this campus ministry position was discussed. There will be \$28,000 from the synod (accrued for the last two years at 14,000 each year as one-half of the commitment to Aggie Lutherans annually prior to 2007); \$10,000 from an estate; plus \$10,000 for seed money; but only 3 of 30 congregations in the area responded to a plea for campus ministry in the Brazos Valley area.

SC.10.07.09 Motion for the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod to extend an employment agreement to Mindy Roll for Campus Ministry Leadership at the campuses of Texas A&M and Blinn College in the Brazos Valley on behalf of the ELCA Campus Ministry of the Brazos Valley, and also a call to that ministry subject to the approval of the Conference of Bishops. Upon issuance of the call to Mindy Roll by the synod, the call will be supervised and funded by the Board of the ELCA Campus Ministry of the Brazos Valley. Motion by Pastor Sue Beall. Motion passed.

Barb asked how you will fund past the first year? Sue thinks expenses for position annually will be 100,000 per year. A letter is going out to Aggie alumni asking for 100 a year, but they expect they will receive 1000 a year per person responding, and so the position will be funded annually.

Paul asks about calling agent for ministry and whether one congregation or several shared congregations could be the calling agent. Pete asks about first call importance of a regular congregation, which was very helpful for him, even though he wanted to go into a specialized call instead of a regular first call in a parish.

2. Staff Report by Kerry Nelson:

Mission Support board did not originally want a consultation but eyes have been opened by the presentation by Craig Settlage today.

Stewardship: Currently preparing a package for every congregation for September. Majority of congregations vote on their budget in November. We need a three-year rotation of a team of people to visit church councils. Another group will receive a mailing. Another group will be invited to meet with the Bishop one evening for council presidents and stewardship chairs. Our hope is to raise the bar of expectations and give resources to people who need them, in order to give something in mission support to the Synod and Churchwide expressions.

Evangelism: separate campus starts is a challenge. Satellite campus is a challenge. Best strategy is to get to a place where every congregation knows that they are a part of the local new mission strategy for their local area. "Local area mission strategy." The Oromo church was not supported by local congregations at the requested amount of 10,000, but only at 2,300, which is not a financial problem. It is a vision problem.

There is a new mission strategy for the African American population in the Sugar Land/Missouri City area. Tyrone Partie is a mission developer in CA. who was available last year. Support sought by local congregations but at this point they have offered no

firm financial commitments. ELCA grant up to 50,000 for the first year. No financial assurances can be made and he cannot be paid synod guidelines.

Two problems: racism and mission blindness. White congregations must be opened to welcome other ethnic groups. We have to admit that it is a problem. Generational? Steven Klineberg research in Houston with 99% over age 70 saying they never dated anyone of another race, while 69% of adults under age 20 saying they had. We need to do mission in neighboring communities like Caldwell and Deanville.

We don't welcome ethnic groups well as Lutherans because we don't welcome anyone well.

Diane: let's agree to take this in daily prayer for ourselves and take this to our own churches as SC members.

Gregory: we need to take an extra step to make sure that everyone is welcome.

Sue: We could all use the three-minute rule at the end of the service to meet somebody you don't know.

Kerry Nelson will be back to revisit the River of Life mission in November with the SC after we try to get congregations to support it.

SC.10.07.10 Elections Slate for the next few years. The first job of any board is to begin recruiting for the next open positions for the next year's election. SC members will be matched with congregations for visits. Revisions were made to the Excel spreadsheet list based on matching factors for SC members that are contacting congregations. Tomorrow, SC members will be visiting congregations in the western sector area. Bring greetings from the synod; uplift the campus ministry for Aggies and Buccaneers (Blinn College); announce the leadership event at St. Paul's in Brenham; and the CAR walk at Cat Spring on Sept. 29, 30, and Oct. 1.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m., followed by prayer and Eucharist in the Carby Chapel.

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Murphy
TLGC Synod Secretary