

The Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
Minutes of the Synod Council Meeting
March 26-27, 2010

The Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Council met at Bethlehem Lutheran in Beaumont, Texas, on March 26 and 27, 2010.

In attendance:

Council Members: Bishop Mike Rinehart, Evan Moilan, Paul Monroe, Grace Banks, Kurt Goedecke, Rev. Robin McCullough-Bade, David Hollrah, Rev. David Tart, Rev. Pete Lopez, Don Hodde, Sue Moehring, and Rev. Barbara Simmers.

Synod Staff and Visitors: Peggy Hahn, Kerry Nelson, Don Carlson.

Absent: Arthur Murphy, Karee Viergutz.

Guests: Mark Helmke, ELCA Church Council member, representing Southwest Texas synod.

Friday, March 26, 2010

Vice President Evan Moilan called the meeting to order.

Nominations for Synod Assembly. All adult positions have 2 candidates. A synod-wide e-mail went out March 26, 2010. Two nominees to be selected at synod assembly for ELCA Churchwide council position of a non-specific-gender clergy position. There is a form available for people to nominate folks. Executive committee from synod council can nominate folks. Nominating committee is complete with their work, and will not take on this work. Executive committee of the synod council will take this on.

Synod constitution and by-law changes. All changes from Churchwide are automatic and applied to the synod-level constitution. All amendments can be adopted in one vote, and Arthur recommends we do it that way. If we choose to change one or more bundled resolutions, or someone recommends a change, then a separate meeting must be held to approve the changes. Or it gets deferred to following year for 2/3 vote. Concern is that if we vote collectively, and change one thing, adoption for all must be postponed. Apart from synod constitution changes, any by-law changes require 2/3 approval vote of the assembly. Concern for confusion by asking for two votes.

SC.10.03.01 Bishop Mike Rinehart moves that we vote at 2010 synod assembly on constitutional changes in block as suggested by 2009 Churchwide assembly. For clarity, the by-law change to bring on a young adult as a SC member has to happen at

this assembly. That will be a separate motion for by-law change adoption. So therefore, this motion is only focused on constitution changes. Vote taken - passed.

SC.10.03.02 David Hollrah moves that by-law with respect to youth / young adult synod council position be brought forward at the 2010 synod assembly for action, and all other by-law change requests be deferred to 2011 synod assembly. Motion passed.

Synod compensation guidelines. Don Carlson led discussion on subject. Kerry Nelson recommended that phrase 'and their families' be added to end of first sentence under Pension and Medical program on Page 5 of the guidelines document.

SC.10.03.03 Kurt Goedecke moved that we put proposed 2011 synod compensation guidelines before the assembly in 2010 for adoption. Paul moved that we amend the proposed synod compensation guidelines document by adding the phrase 'and their families' to end of the first sentence under Section 3, paragraph titled "Pension and Medical Program" on Page 5 of the guidelines document. Amendment passed. Discussion on the motion followed. Motion passed.

Companion Synod discussion led by Peggy Hahn. Grief over Jessica leaving, but lots of energy around synod youth leadership to pick up the slack. 7 leaders have now been trained in how to train safeguarding of children. Will be teaching pastors same at fall leadership conferences. Financial commitments to companion synod relationships:

Central African Republic (CAR) - \$22,500

Education –

- Village ed – \$8000
- Mary Martha Centers: \$4,000
- Woman's Scholarships: \$3,000
- Transportation (motorcycles) - \$2,500
- Healthcare - \$5,000

Peru - \$40,000

- Pastoral Salaries - \$10,000
- Sowing Seeds (children's ministry) Pilot - \$30,000

Friday night meeting adjourned, closed with vespers service in the church sanctuary.

Saturday, March 27, 2010

Vice President Evan Moilan called the meeting to order. Bishop Mike led us in devotion, based on reading of Luke 19:29-42. Guest: Mark Helmke, ELCA Church Council member, representing Southwest Texas Synod.

Mark Helmke's comments:

- Focus on communication and interaction between congregation, synod, and Churchwide expressions.
- 2011 – Next person elected for Churchwide ELCA council between the southwest Texas synod and gulf coast synod will come from our synod, to be selected as nominees at our 2010 synod assembly.
- Process for elections changed in 2005, with intent to improve communication and accountability. Used to be limitation of no more than 1 council member per synod, but no guarantees that every synod would have a rep. In 2005, a resolution was adopted (33 elected synod council members, 65 synods), paired all synods together for purposes of election to ELCA church council and for election to boards of program units.
- Six year term, limited to one term, with every other person between two synods being elected every 12 years.
- Understanding was to foster relationship with neighboring synods.
- Mark can provide assistance with knowing who to go to and how with regard to Churchwide issues.
- Lots of time required now for changes in ministry policy last year. Council has appointed ad hoc committee, in addition to standing committees, to deal with legal and constitutional review and document updates, associated with these changes.
- Proposed changes to policies are available on ELCA website:
<http://www.elca.org/ministry/policies>.
- Council meets twice a year, November and April/May. Usually a short meeting leading up to the Churchwide Assembly in those years.
- Characteristics of a council candidate:
 - General Knowledge of workings of the church
 - Understanding the time commitment (not just 2 meetings a year and a Churchwide every 2 years).
 - Local Synod council meetings
 - Dealing with congregational issues at request of local bishop
 - Others
- How Churchwide council seats are filled in case of resignation, other reason for vacancy:
 - Under bylaws, church council has the responsibility to fill vacancies
 - Typically secretary will contact the synod for suggestions on who could fill the role
- Concerns on reactions to the decisions last year:

- Congregations considering leaving
 - 276 have taken votes to consider withdrawal (2.6% of 10,000+ congregations, as of March 4)
 - 197 of those have passed the initial vote
 - 79 first vote failed
 - 62 congregations have passed second vote, and in some process of withdrawal (0.6% of total churches)
- Many of those leaving going to LCMC, a smaller number to LCMS
- CORE considering forming North American Lutheran Church (NALC)
- Even though there is concern over decisions and action in response, there is still other important work ongoing
 - Hampered by budget constraints, but early planning and painful cuts early on have provided a small operating surplus. So financial stability is good
 - Mission support is down between 8-9% from congregations.
 - Earthquake relief in Haiti (close to \$6,000,000 to date)
 - 1st draft of social statement on genetics released last week (comment period thru Oct. 2010)
 - Provision requiring youth and young adults in synod councils and even church councils and other organizations

Thielemann Appeal

Our focus is merit of the process, not the correctness of the underlying complaint by a member. Evan suggested we move into a committee of the whole.

SC.10.03.04 Paul Monroe moved that the SC move into a committee of the whole for a period of 20 minutes. Motion passed.

SC.10.03.05 Motion to move SC out of committee as a whole made by Pete Lopez. Motion passed.

SC.10.03.06 Paul Monroe moved that we remand this case to the congregational council of St. Peter's Gay Hill with instruction to hold a discussion and vote on the issue of expulsion of Mr. Charles Thielemann in which both accuser and accused are present or in which neither is present. Discussion followed. The council prayed, prior to vote. The vote passed.

(It was noted after the vote, that if the pastor must be there for there to be an official quorum, then accused must be allowed to attend as well.)

Synod Budget

SC.10.03.07 Kurt Goedecke moved that we accept the proposed 2011 budget to be presented at the 2010 Synod Assembly for adoption. Discussion followed. Motion passed.

Pastor Lopez roster status

SC.10.03.08 Bishop Mike moved that we grant Pastor Pete Lopez's request to go on leave from call. Motion passed.

Synod call process for Pastor Evan McClanahan

Guest arrived: Carroll Shaddock, member of First Evangelical Lutheran, Houston. Discussion led by the Bishop Mike Rinehart. Recommendation is to sign the call and move on. Call is still below synod salary guidelines but Pastor Evan is okay with it. Carroll Shaddock assured the SC that the church and Evan are trying to reach those guidelines as soon as possible.

Concerns include fact that CORE is actively recruiting congregations to move to new Lutheran body, NALC. ELST is affiliated with CORE. We want ELST to stay in the ELCA, but if staying is used as an opportunity to divide congregations on issues, that would not be appropriate.

SC.10.03.09 Bishop Mike moved that the call to Pastor Evan McClanahan be accepted and signed. Discussion followed. Motion passed.

Bishop's Report

Bishop gave a state of the Synod; discussed church growth, justice and staff issues. Synod Assembly only has one resolution so we may cut down on the time for resolutions in order to give time to the Churchwide representatives. The time schedule was presented. Part of the ecology of the ELCA will be an L.I.F.T. study, which will be explained to voting members at the Synod Assembly.

The move to new synod offices has been stellar! Come see the space. Open house is scheduled on Wednesday, March 31 for the office. May 5 is open house for the synod. Worship space in front is in discussion.

Director of Evangelical Mission (DEM) Report

See Kerry Nelson's written report.

SC.10.03.10 Reference & Counsel committee to be comprised of Chair, David Hansen, and members, David Hollrah, Heidi Good, Jeff March, Sue Moehring, Carroll Shaddock, Linda Mosley. Motion by Paul Monroe to have the above persons as the Reference & Counsel committee for the 2010 Synod Assembly. Motion passed.

Letters will go to other nominees thanking them for their offer of service.

The next SC meeting will be April 16, beginning with dinner at 7:00 p.m. at Café Phoenix in New Orleans.

Motion to adjourn at 2:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Hodde and Kurt Goedecke for
Arthur Murphy
TLGC Synod Secretary

(These minutes were received as corrected on September 25, 2010.)