

**The Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod  
Minutes of the Synod Council Meeting  
January 28, 2012**

The Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Council met at Providence Lutheran Church near Nederland, Texas, on January 28, 2012.

In attendance:

Council Members: Evan Moilan; Bishop Mike Rinehart; Stephanie Wehring; Don Hodde; Paul Monroe; Pastor Sue Beall; Pastor Barb Simmers; Grace Banks; Diane Campbell; Pastor Bradley Fuerst; Pastor Brad Otto; Gregory Goedecke; and Arthur Murphy. (Dudley Piland joined by conference call during financial and budget discussions).

Synod Staff: Pastor Don Carlson; and Assistant to the Bishop Peggy Hahn.

Absent: Pastor Pedro Suárez; John Turnquist; Corey Heidt; and Dudley Piland.

Guests: Pastor Clay Falk and the hospitality team of Providence Church.

Evan Moilan called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m. on Saturday, January 28, 2012.

Introductions. Pastor Clay Falk at Providence Church in Nederland is serving as a Presbyterian-trained, Presbyterian/Lutheran pastor to the Providence Church. Providence merged with St. John's Lutheran of Port Arthur in the last year. They worship 150 weekly and have doubled in attendance over the last year. They have a contemporary space and an Andy Stanley-based satellite church worship service, as well as a traditional worship service on Sundays. Pastor Falk shared stories of Providence's history and growth, including successful stewardship, banking, and giving technologies and ideas. Evan thanked Pastor Clay for his and Providence's hospitality in hosting the SC's meeting.

Devotion. Bishop Mike led the SC in a prayer litany, a hymn, and a devotion centered on Mark 1 and the ministry of fishing for people.

**SC.12.01.01** Motion to receive minutes of SC meeting in November of 2011, SC.11.11, by Don Hodde. Motion passes.

**SC.12.01.02** Financial report presented by Paul Monroe. Motion to receive financial report for 2011 by Don Hodde. Motion passes.

**SC.12.01.03** Synod Budget Draft for the financial year 2013 presented by Paul Monroe for approval. Motion to approve the synod budget for 2013 by Brad Otto. Discussion ensued. Discussion of campus ministry budgets, financial status, and need to raise funds from Churchwide, synods, and congregations and individuals. Discussion of budgeting by SC and/or by an Advisory Committee for Campus Ministries that has made these allocation decisions among the campuses in the past. Pastor Barb Simmers noted her repeated requests for additional monies for

Louisiana campus ministries, and her desire to be added to the synod's Campus Ministry Advisory team. The synod staff agreed to add her to the team.

**SC.12.01.04** Motion to amend the 2013 budget to close the Tulane ministry line item 1.55630 for 500 and make a new line item 1.55640 for Louisiana campus ministries for 1000 with the intention that if the money is not spent in 2013, the money will roll into a designated fund for future years. Motion by Brad Otto. Motion passes.

**SC.12.01.05** Motion to amend by Bishop Mike to add a new line item 1.55300 for the worship team in the amount of 1000. Motion passes.

Motion by Bishop Mike to add a new line item 1.51035 designated as Bishop Transition Expense for potential new bishop expenses of 15,000 in the event that a new Bishop might be elected and would need moving expenses and one month's salary that would overlap between the current bishop and the new bishop. Motion fails. Discussion that it might be more prudent to find alternate sources to fund the 15,000, including the Bishop's discretionary fund, or a new designated fund for Staff Transitions, or for the electors of a new bishop in either 2013 or six years later in 2019 to contribute to pay for any transition costs.

Discussion by Dudley Piland to add a new line item for strategic planning expenses. Stephanie Wehring agrees and notes that we should talk about strategic planning expenses first before we address the budget items. Bishop agrees and notes that money follows mission. Budgeting occurred prior to first draft of strategic plan that was written just last month. Plan will be vetted by all interest groups, including clergy and lay, and then will be voted on at the 2012 Synod Assembly. Evan notes that we can as a SC amend the budget during the year to account for the Assembly's approval of a strategic plan in terms of reallocating monies for strategic plan items.

**SC.12.01.06** Motion by Dudley Piland to add a new line item 1.53000 for Strategic Initiative Expenses in the amount of 1000, to be amended from the floor of the Synod Assembly as necessary. Motion passes.

**SC.12.01.07** Motion by Paul Monroe to amend line item 1.4020 on Other Income in the amount of 69,210. Motion tabled.

Car expenses discussed. Motion to amend line item Auto Expenses Bishop 1.51050 to increase the amount from 5000 to 10000. Motion fails. Discussion of leasing a vehicle instead of buying a vehicle because the synod financial situation is cash strapped on a tight budget. Motion to amend line item 1.51125 Vehicle Replacement—Bishop to increase the amount from 4000 to 10000. Motion fails.

Pastor Sue Beall asks about line item 1.52420 - Office rent for 53,000 and the use of office space for the synod office. Bishop notes that the last building advisory committee recommended the current office space in a commercial building, and

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never buying a building. A new committee in a new financial situation and with a new bishop staff operating differently may arrive at a very different conclusion. Bishop would prefer to have the synod office be in a church within the synod instead of commercial space if we could get out of our current commercial lease at low cost.

Motion to remove 1.51125 and 1.56145 line items from the budget in the amounts of 4000, relating to automobile replacements for Bishop and Peggy Hahn's position. Motion by Paul Monroe. Motion fails.

Dudley notes a lot of expenses for travel. Perhaps we need to have more descriptive items for mandatory and discretionary travel. With tight budgets travel is one of the first things to look at in terms of reducing discretionary travel. The staff should go back and look at mandatory and discretionary travel. Bishop Mike notes that travel has been cut already and feels that the staff is doing only mandatory travel now, and is no longer doing discretionary travel.

Evan notes that the program staff voluntarily is taking salary cuts in this budget that is proposed for 2013, and thanks the synod staff for its sacrificial servant leadership, and that this should not happen every year in order to balance the budget.

**SC.12.01.08** Motion by Don Hodde to amend the budget to restore salaries of Peggy, Mike, and Don to their 2012 levels instead of being cut in order to balance the 2013 budget. Paul speaks against the motion because of the leadership of Bishop, Don, and Peggy in making these cuts to make the budget work. Greg agrees and does not think that second-guessing the staff or taking away their leadership decision to make these cuts makes sense. Sue notes that the proposed budget will send a message to congregations that it is okay to cut staff salaries in order to balance a budget, and she disagrees with that message. Brad Fuerst says the question is how this will be interpreted by the congregations, youth ministers, and pastors in terms of cutting their own salaries to make budgets, and that they cannot get raises if the synod staff does not get a raise. Motion passes. Call for division. Motion passes by a counted vote of 6-5.

**SC.12.01.09** Motion to take from the table the adjustment to Other Income. Motion to amend the amount from 69210 to 73310, and approve the motion to amend line item 1.4020 on Other Income in the amount of 73310. Motion by Paul Monroe. Motion passes.

Break for Lunch at 12:00 noon. Mealtime prayer by Pastor Brad Fuerst.

**SC.12.01.10** Motion to approve the 2013 synod budget as amended. Motion by Pastor Brad Otto. Motion passes.

**SC.12.01.11** Nominating Committee discussion. David Hollrah has served two years and rotated off the committee. Therefore, SC needs to appoint a new committee member. Grace notes that the committee met on Jan. 16 for preparation

for the Synod Assembly nominations. Next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 30 at 12:30 p.m. as a conference call. Nomination applications are due on March 1. They were emailed to the entire synod email list and are available on the synod's website. Evan notes that we need to recruit SC members ourselves in order to get good nominees to serve on the SC. Motion to appoint Pastor Barb Simmers to the Nominating Committee. Motion by Diane Campbell. Motion passes.

Evan notes that we need a youth nominee and asks SC members to find a youth from among their congregations.

Synod Constitutional amendments are needed for presentation to the Synod Assembly. The Executive Committee will produce a draft for the SC to review and approve at its next meeting.

Synod Bishop Election procedures are discussed. The Executive Committee will meet and recommend an election procedure for the next SC meeting to review and approve for presentation to the Synod Assembly.

New Business.

**SC.12.01.12** Housing Allowance Allocation for ordained synod staff. 30,000 and 35,000 are estimates for Bishop Mike Rinehart and Pastor Don Carlson. Motion by Brad Otto to approve the 2012 tax year housing allowance for Bishop Mike Rinehart at \$30,000 and Pastor Don Carlson at \$35,000.

**SC.12.01.13** Bishop Mike Rinehart's report. See detailed written report for more information.

Strategic planning discussion update. Holy Cow Consulting got statistical data from congregational leaders. Kairos Consulting filled out the picture of our synod with leader interviews of both clergy and laity. Crossover language that makes both types of leaders say yes to a vision and strategic plan is most important. The language that resulted for this synod is that "the synod needs to be about the ministry of helping congregations grow." The staff has reviewed the key result areas once, but is continuing to look at the entire plan for further comments and suggestions.

The key result areas are:

**KEY RESULT AREA 1:** We will establish a Center for Ministry Excellence. A Center for Ministry Excellence will help congregations by providing leadership training for congregational leaders in many areas. A Center will also provide opportunities for leaders and congregations in our synod to teach in areas where they have expertise. A Center will also be able to receive grant money and other charitable contributions that the synod standing alone is not able to receive.

**KEY RESULT AREA 2:**We will help congregations become better known in their communities.

- Standard web page for congregations;
- Standard signage for church sites;
- Collaborate with ministeriums to advertise in TV, radio, newspapers and social media;
- Help congregations connect with their community through re-rooting, and continue that effort throughout the synod.
- Provide congregations with outside eyes. Secret “shoppers” who would worship in congregations and give them feedback on how they are coming off to outsiders.

**KEY RESULT AREA 3:**We will start at least one new worshipping community each year for the next four years.

- Self-explanatory, but the costs of each new ministry will have to be carefully estimated.

**KEY RESULT AREA 4:**We will reimagine and streamline synod structures to match a flatter, leaner organizational structure.

- Deaneries and ministeriums;
- Synod office space;
- Virtual offices and tele-commuting by the synod staff;
- Create a well-trained team to handle congregational conflict. The team could be trained by Pete Steinke’s group.
- Reconfigure synod staff around Center for Ministry Excellence Priorities.
- Do an annual fund campaign for the synod with pledge cards that includes consultation with congregations and opportunities for individual donors to give.
- Develop a pay-as-you-go system that helps congregations that are giving little or nothing beyond their walls to support call-process, conflict management and other work in their context.

Congregations in transition update. Only six congregations have left the synod in response to the 2009 ELCA Churchwide decisions. Two of them have had their pastors leave and are having great difficulty getting new pastors from either NALC or LCMC. Danavang took a second vote and the vote to leave the ELCA lost by a vote of 13-7 with 20 members present. A mission-developer type candidate and Evangelical Mission money from the ELCA could really help that church grow into a vibrant ministry. Bishop notes the sad story of a Roman Catholic priest who was disciplined by his order for unknowingly participating in a Lutheran rite of ordination in our synod.

Bishop Mike was the first bishop of our synod to travel to our companion synod in Africa in the Central African Republic. Mike discusses his own and the synod staff’s allocation of time spent on different aspects of their ministries and work on behalf of the synod. Peggy and Don also discuss their allocation of time estimates.

**SC.12.01.14** Pastor Don Carlson's report. Bishop Mike is now appointing all interim and intentional interim pastors throughout the synod. A training session was held with all interim pastors to explain the new process. There is an extensive list of people in AIM, ordained, and TEEM candidacy tracks. A list of congregations in transition is in his written report. No roster items for SC action at this time.

**SC.12.01.15** Peggy Hahn's report. See written report for more information. One item for SC action. Malaria team has been formed with a goal of raising 150,000 from the synod for the ELCA/Malaria campaign. Motion by Brad Fuerst for the Synod Council to support and encourage synod congregations to be leaders in the ELCA/Malaria campaign. Motion passes.

Peggy notes that the CAR is a country where the malaria campaign is especially critical, so the campaign really benefits our companion synod in a large way. A new book donation in our synod for the ELCA Youth Gathering will increase literacy in the New Orleans area. Peggy and Lucia go to the CAR from February 17—March 1 on a women's trip of six persons through Global Health Ministries.

**SC.12.01.16** Pastor Pedro Suarez's written report is submitted for SC review.

Motion to adjourn. Motion by Brad Otto. Motion passes.

The meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m. for prayers and Holy Communion in the sanctuary of Providence Church.

Next SC Meeting: April 21, 2012, at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Baton Rouge, LA.

Respectfully Submitted,

Arthur Murphy  
TLGC Synod Secretary

Minutes received, as corrected, April 21, 2012.