



## **Synod Council Meeting Notes October 3 - 5, 2019**

Saskatchewan Synod Council members met at Luther College in Regina for their fall meeting. The bulk of the meeting time was spent in Strategic Planning with Kellie Garrett. Five years before, Bishop Sid had just been elected; there were structural changes in the office, and many stakeholders were in on the process. Kellie managed to steer 35 people into a focused future to guide 2015-2020.

This time, the room and number of people at the table were significantly reduced, but the debate no less intense. Members of Synod Council, Synod Staff, and two committee representatives met Thursday afternoon and Friday morning to determine the vision and priorities for the next 5 years. Kellie Garrett asked hard questions and kept the group on track. She will compile a summary report that will require further work on setting measures and 'who will do what by when.' The final plan will be shared through the congregations and on the website.

A key takeaway is the reality of growing into a new future while still retaining all the trappings of what was. We have limited staff resources and finances and will have to make decisions about what to stop doing. The struggles of our rural churches to keep the lights on are real and we don't know how to admit that some branches of the tree are dying.

Communicating the good news has been an important activity in the office in the last year. Bringing all contact information up to date and setting up a new system has been a big priority and it is almost completed. The listing of study resources in the office have recently been made available and we hope it will provide more access.

When the strategic planning session was over, Council began the business meeting. Iris Krisjansdottir, our pastoral representative on National Church Council (NCC) brought us her report via skype. NCC met in September in Winnipeg. There are several new members including a new treasurer, Gene Blishen and a new lay representative from Saskatchewan, John Nilsson. NCC will review an area of the strategic plan at each meeting. They are developing a covenant to guide their work based on respect, trust, flexibility and clarity of purpose. There are updated stewardship resources available on the website. The national convention was reviewed very favourably: venue at Luther College worked well and table talks were particularly well received. Reimagining Church was a resource at the National Convention that was discussed at the Synod Council table at some length. A Code of Conduct of expected behaviours has been developed by the Lutheran World Federation that Synods may want to adopt. They are also encouraging the whole church to observe Thursdays in Black (solidarity and advocacy against all forms of sexual and gender based violence).

Financials to the end of September were reviewed. The audit was more expensive this year due to more time required with new staff in our office as well as the audit firm. Good news is that benevolence has gone up a bit and that interest losses from earlier in the year have recovered.

The Bishop's report highlighted the work of the Assistants to the Bishop helping to 'be present' and connect this wide province across the miles. There are many files to attend to and the workers are few. Dennis Serfas and Jerry Borkowsky have enabled Bishop Sid to provide support when he can't physically be there.

There are new developments on the movement of Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS). The University of Saskatchewan has indicated to St. Andrews that they will not be renewing their lease of space within St. Andrews in 2020. St. Andrews has reached out to LTS and offered to host their space requirements. This would bring the seminaries under one roof and provide collegial support to the LTS small team of educators. This is an unforeseen gift and will affect the plans that were looking to change the Student Centre to host LTS.

The call process manual on the website has been updated. The pastoral team continues to meet with individuals interested in pastoral ministry and the Bishop continues to work with the Candidacy committee through the Bishop's representative.

The pilot project on Lay Ministry (Duval, Govan, Quinton, Raymore-ACC, supervised by Vice Pastor Dennis Lueck) continues and will be reviewed in December. A ministry area north of Regina is developing to provide support and sharing to the clergy there and to see when working together is possible.

Among the committee reports received, St. Paul's Lutheran Home in Melville has hired an administrator and has 4 new board members. Although it is a struggle for affiliate health boards to have their concerns heard in the new configuration of one health region, the Home has passed through its time of uncertainty and is not looking for new affiliations at this time.

The Council worked through the long agenda and wrapped up Friday evening. Future meetings will alternate between Regina and Saskatoon. Work on the Strategic Plan will continue in January. The next regular meeting of Synod Council will take place March 27 - 28, 2020.