



Synod Council Meeting Communique February 12, 2021

Sask Synod Council met for their semi-annual board meeting (video conference), welcoming guests Bishop Susan Johnson and Harold Hesje, and staff Jerry Borkowsky, Judy Parker, and Dennis Serfas.

A check-in with Synod Council Board members, staff and guests began the meeting. Bishop Sid shared that his mother-in-law had fallen recently and is being moved to long term care. Cheryl Bauer Hyde's mother also suffered from a fall so we will add them to our prayers. Pastor Sean Bell has a very busy house where 4 children have had very few days where all have been able to attend school at the same time and 2 parents are trying to work from home. Other members spoke to trying to live in the moment because making plans when new variants are emerging and vaccine arrival keeps retreating, is futile. Bishop Susan has just returned from a 3-month sabbatical so she is trying to get back into gear. She shared that she is reeling from the devastating news of the murder of Pastor Fabian Kreischer. She and Bishop Sid met him in their visit to Argentina, and they are incredibly saddened for our global companion, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Argentina (IELU), and the world.

Harold Hesje was invited to review our board meeting governance processes in accordance with policy that states this will be done within a 3 year time frame.

Bishop Sid's report included:

- In the interests of rent savings and COVID, Bishop Sid moved his Regina office from the Diocese of Qu'Appelle to his home. Bishop Rob has generously invited him to continue to use the office if needed.
- Lutheran Theological Seminary continues to live into its new identity in the shared building at St. Andrew's. Bishop Sid sits on the Executive Committee of the LTS board.
- Lay Pastoral Associates Program: the pastoral team is working with Dr. Ann Salmon to get this in place. The manual for approval of an LPA is complete and applications for the training have already been received. The Alberta Synod is interested in this resource as well.
- Bishop Sid and Pastor Ali Tote continue to meet with Lay and Rostered leadership via Zoom as COVID issues surface, with 150 people participating in the latest consultation. These townhalls are followed by a letter from the Bishop and revised synod guidelines. There was agreement that in person worship suspension for the majority of congregations is appropriate at this time. These consultations will continue as the COVID situation continues to evolve.
- Bishop Sid had a brush with COVID via an ill-advised curling bonspiel. Two of his teammates tested positive and he was in a 14-day quarantine in November.
- Bishop Sid is participating in a Provincial Faith Leaders Working Group to replace another member who was ill with COVID. This is the only group of its kind in the country and is building a new relationship with government.
- Bishops across our country and the USA continue to meet via Zoom. There is great support and idea sharing as they all live into the new reality.

- Four hundred plus faith leaders from across the country met the Prime Minister via video conference, and he was reminded that we pray for him every week.
- Virtual 2021 Synod Convention plans proceed. Judy Parker is our convention manager and Anna-Marie Skogsrud will serve as registrar. A Saskatoon company has been engaged to manage the logistics. A levy of \$3 per confirmed member was approved to cover the cost of convention. Guest speaker Dr. Karoline Lewis will open the convention on June 4 and will have another presentation, Saturday. There is a large amount of business to conduct, so the emphasis will be on getting that done and navigating this new way of doing conventions. The convention theme is Walking Together: on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35).

Meeting outcomes and discussion:

- The Delegate selection process for National Convention in 2022 was approved. Saskatchewan has 19 lay and 12 rostered delegates, with 20% to be youth (ages 16 – 30). The previous process's long timeline (nominations called for prior to an election process at our Synod Convention) did not allow for careful consideration and demographic mix. The revised process will include announcement of the nomination process at the Synod convention, deadline for nominations of October 31, with the delegate list to be approved by Synod Council for the January 2022 deadline.
- The 2021 Budget was reviewed and revised. Thanks to Congregations for continuing their faithful stewardship to the Synod during these times.
- Synod committees participated in the triennial evaluation and review process. Synod Council would like to thank all the chairs and committee participants for their thoughtful responses that will inform everyone's work going forward. There was spirited discussion about the Compensation Review committee and what they should focus on in the next year. They are trying to give congregations a 2 - 3 year planning horizon. Diversity of the roster was highlighted and the need to continue to lift up diverse leadership to expand and increase the welcome and diversity of our church.
- Bishop Susan Johnson highlighted the unity that she has felt throughout the church and her thankfulness for the spirit of co-operation seen on every level. Pastor Ali Tote thanked her for her response to 'All Lives Matter' that she addressed in her message in the Canada Lutheran this month. Both the National Church and the Sask Synod will write to our global companion, IELU expressing our sorrow and that we are holding them in our prayers at the loss of Pastor Fabian.
- Synod Council's next scheduled meeting is June 3 prior to convention, with the fall meeting set for October 22/23.
- Bishop Sid closed with prayer.