

Sask Synod Council Meeting Notes
October 2021

Sask Synod Council met for the first time in person since October 2019. We were masked and socially distanced in the Good Shepherd Lutheran Sanctuary, Saskatoon. (Thank you so much for providing a very accommodating meeting space, Good Shepherd). God does love irony, so Ali Tote zoomed in as his daughter's school is experiencing a COVID outbreak.

We welcomed Murray Patzwald and Victoria Mwamasika, newly elected Council members to the table. We participated in an orientation lead by our Secretary, Bishop and Chair to remind us all of the language, acronyms, partners, governing documents and other business that intersects with our governance.

President Bill Harrison, Lutheran Theological Seminary, joined us after coffee break when we began the regular portion of our meeting. He reported that they are enjoying their new space and had their first in person, on site eucharist that day, Thursday, October 21. The first on site, in person class had been held on Monday that week. Seminaries across North America are all experiencing dynamic change. Issues of reconciliation and decolonization are in the forefront as well as moving the church away from the pastor centric model. COVID has accelerated this. LTS has received a \$50,000 US grant to help re-imagine what theological education could be and to explore delivering courses possibly at the Kamloops residential school site for example. There are intense conversations with St. Andrews and Emmanuel St. Chad about what more can be done together; 3 very small seminaries with independent operating structures doesn't make sense. There may be an opportunity to work with St. Thomas More as well through a shared library director and possibly teaching duties. The former LTS building is the responsibility of the University and no action has been taken. COVID has made physical infrastructure across the university a challenge.

The meeting continued with the Bishop's report. Bishop Sid has re-organized his reporting under the Strategic Plan initiatives. Under 'Creatively Transforming Church,' he outlined that group email to lay and rostered contacts, and the virtual Town Halls have been the main vehicles for connecting the church. In person visits, installations, council meetings are beginning again this fall with the Bishop and his assistants.

Support of Lay Leadership in Congregations and Ministries: 5 retirements have created new call processes. With only 3 students looking to graduate from LTS in 2022, there is a shortage of supply. Diaconal ministry and lay leadership can help to fill this need. Recruitment of people suitable to ministry is a job for all of us to identify, encourage, support and direct them to the resources that are available. Recruitment from across the synods and every congregation is needed.

The Fall Leadership Conference was a combination of in person and zoom attendees; 57 in person and 46 virtually. There were 26 Anglicans participating from the Diocese of Qu'Appelle as well. Thanks again to Ali Tote for his affirmation that a heavily vaccinated group following protocols could meet safely with a high degree of confidence.



The National Church Council met in September virtually again as did the conference of Bishops. National Church is working on re-establishing a National Data Base.

Courageous Innovation: COVID has taken us places we never thought we could or would go. We have been forced into innovation. Dr. Ann Salmon has been contracted to develop a network of Lay Pastoral Associates (LPA). An LPA is trained in ministry areas through the Seminary built LIFT curriculum and mentored by a rostered minister. It is designed to support a parish without a called pastor and to assist a pastor to broaden their ministry.

Bishop Sid, after consultation with the Officers, has decided to take unused study leave in January and early February. He is working with the Administrative and Pastoral teams to provide coverage.

Synod Council broke for supper and then proceeded to the Synod Office for installation of Council and an office dedication ceremony.

Victoria Mwamasika opened our Friday morning with a reading of the Gospel for this Sunday on the parable of the blind man who Jesus asks, 'What do you want me to do for you?' It was a wonderful way to start our day with that question posed to us.

Iris Kristjansdottir, Sask Rostered on National Church Council (NCC), attended by Zoom. NCC engaged in an anti-oppression training session. They approved the One Flock/One Shepherd agreement among the Moravian, Anglican and Lutheran churches and will develop education materials to present this at Convention. Work continues on the strategic plan. Women of Faith Fund was officially closed; \$50,000 allocated to 19 applications and the remaining funds were given to Lutheran World Relief to support gender affirming programs. A new Mission Statement is ready for further fine tuning: 'God's grace and unconditional love calls us to be a diverse, inclusive community that celebrates all and upholds life giving relationships'. She reported that the National Convention format slated for Calgary in July 2022, is still undecided (in person and/or virtual format). The format and status of Covid uncertainty may be contributing to the low number of Sask Synod delegate nominations received to date.

Iris as chair of the Candidacy Committee, also brought up issues for further discussion. The Clinical Pastoral Education (internship in a congregation) component of the student's education is a problem. It is a Synod requirement before graduation. The Committee recommends that this requirement be reviewed. Bishop Sid acknowledged that the Conference of Bishops have been talking about this and the requirement may fit into the First Call program.

Synod Council moved to extend the deadline for nomination of 2022 National Convention delegates to January 31, 2022. Council members were encouraged to submit their nominations, and to encourage others throughout the Synod. The topic will be brought up in the next virtual Town Hall.

Treasurer, Lyndon Carlson reported on the financial position of the Synod. Thanks to government grants and faithful giving by our churches, our financial position is holding steady. Revenues and expenses are as predicted; travel costs are still low. Synod Council approved the revised Investment Policy, and the Finance & Audit Committee which includes the Investment Management Committee will investigate the use of ELFEC as an investment partner.



Synod Committee memberships were reviewed. New terms will begin January 1. Work will continue to fill vacant positions, and Council members were asked to identify people that may be interested in Synod committee work. Thank you to retiring committee members for their service to our church.

The Compensation Committee, chaired by Sean Bell, brought forward their proposal for mileage and salary grid increases for 2022. We acknowledge the difficult times churches are facing due to many factors, but we also agreed that pastors should not bear all of the inflationary cost. The committee had proposed a three-year scale to help congregations with planning, but COVID continues to create much uncertainty. It was agreed that the recommendation be for one year in the event that inflation pressures recede. There are also taxation issues if the mileage rate exceeds CRA guidelines. Motions were passed that for 2022, the Rostered Salary Grid increase be set at 2 %, and travel mileage reimbursement increased to \$0.53.

A motion to thank Ali Tote for his continued service to the Synod on the pandemic information and interpretation was supported unanimously.

Synod Council will meet virtually in December/January, and hopefully in person at Luther College, Regina, on March 17 / 18, 2022.