

Sask Synod Council Meeting, October 5-6, 2023  
Home Inn and Suites, Saskatoon.

Sask Synod met mostly in person, Thursday afternoon, October 5 and Friday morning, October 6. Chair Doug Schmirler was out with a severe cold and Rev. Sean Bell was fighting COVID by staying home and Zooming with his symptoms, for which we were all very grateful. Assistant to the Bishop, Rev., Dr. Ali Tote was taking a break from church duties and doing medical work in Northern Quebec.

Bishop Sid Haugen thanked Council for study leave and vacation that he took in between attending the ordination of Judy Bauereiss in Inglis, Manitoba; 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at Redvers; a congregational meeting on closure at St. John's Edenwold; National Convention in Calgary; the ordination of Wanda Walter in Regina; a parish leadership meeting regarding leaving the ELCIC in Shellbrook; the installation service of John Mayer Dut in Prince Albert; and attending CLAY in Waterloo. Pastor Ali being able to cover for him so ably in his absence, gave him peace of mind and less of a mountain of email waiting for him when he got back. Bishop Sid emphasized that 'being there' providing synodical support is of utmost importance to congregations as we grapple with whatever challenges a congregation is facing.

- Kevin Prouten was ordained as a deacon in Lemberg; serving in a 3 point shared ministry with St. Paul, Melville, Neudorf and Lemberg. The Bishop granted him license to administer sacraments for the duration of his call in the parish.
- Kirk Tastad has been installed at Augustana in Saskatoon.
- Significant challenge in pastoral resources with 40 of our 100 congregations not able to support a rostered minister, if there was one to be had. Work continues on the Lay Ministry Leaders (LML) program and a framework for House churches. If you have lay leadership that would be interested or that you would encourage to explore LML, please reach out to the Bishop Sid or Pastor Ali and further support will be forthcoming.
- The Fall Lutheran and Anglican Gathering (FLAG) in Moose Jaw saw about 70 clergy gathered; a joint event of the Sask Synod and the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) Diocese of Qu'Appelle. Speakers this year were from Argentina: Wilma Rommel, President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina and Paraguay (IELU) and Dr. Mercedes Garcia, pastor and theologian of IELU. This visit and further emphasis on Global Mission is rekindling our relationship.
- Work on proposed amendments to the Bylaws and Memorandum of Understanding between the Synod and Luther Care Communities has been progressing and are on track to come to the Convention next spring.
- National Convention in concert with the Anglicans was in many ways a

positive and affirming experience. One issue has created more division in our Synod. Shellbrook/Canwood leadership contacted the Bishop to begin the process of leaving the ELCIC. Pastor Ali was present for the first meeting where the vote was a nearly unanimous Yes to leave the ELCIC. Bishop Sid will be at the second meeting in November to monitor the process and provide representation of their sisters and brothers in the Synod that has accompanied them through the years.

- Bishop Sid will be calling a Town Hall meeting in November for lay and clergy, to discuss point 9 of the Task Force Report Addressing Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia. Point 9, passed at National Convention reads as follows: We encourage the ELCIC to create national resources which would support listening, safe conversations, and discernment at all levels of the church around healthy, consensual relationships, including ethical non-monogamous relationships. The Bishop's office is reaching out to both inform and frame the decision. It was raised at the FLAG gathering of clergy underlining that the motion on ethical non-monogamy (related to polyamory) was a motion not for specific action but at this point, to 'study.' The timing of the report, the timing of the convention in July, and the lack of participation in convention has not helped to clarify what happened.
- The Bishop's office accessed the Youth account to help CLAY participants enjoy an in person CLAY. COVID did not allow for the kind of fund raising necessary to support youth attendance, so with a small grant available, 50 youth and adult leaders attended. It was very encouraging, even if the numbers were a third of previous in person CLAY events.
- Work on the 2024 Sask Synod Convention is a priority right now to be held at Elim Church, Saskatoon. Convention will start with Registration and Worship Thursday evening, May 30. Registration and Business will begin Friday and continue to Saturday. There will be a vote for Bishop, Council Treasurer, Secretary and Members. Due to costs and the desire to reconnect, it was decided that it will be an in person convention, with the ability to watch on line, but not vote and actively participate. The Theme of the convention is taken from Ephesians 4:4, One Body, One Spirit, One Hope. We encourage anyone interested in volunteering with the Saskatoon community to get in touch with Synod Office. Convention Manager, Judy Parker can connect you to where your interests in helping lie.

Reports from many areas and ministries of the church were reviewed and considered. Many of our ministries are concerned about lack of funding and weariness of the folk continuing to attend meetings and working on the Synod's behalf. In our round table check in, there were glimmers of encouragement. Brother Munye of Good Shepherd and Sister Victoria in Weyburn are seeing growth in their congregations. For this we

give thanks. With a convention to plan for, and volunteers to replace those who will retire from various committees at the end of 2024, will again be on the agenda. We encourage our members to see where they may be called to help and let us know.

Synod Council will meet again via Zoom in January, and in Regina on March 14-15, 2024.