

**Minutes of the Fourth Synod Council Meeting
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA
March 13, 2008**

Synod Council Members present: Dawn Baxter, Ed Cool, Scott Edelman, Guy Ehler, Martin Everhart Fran Ferrari, Pastor John Hassler, Dave Hinrichs, Pastor John Houck, Christie Kaufman Pastor Cynthia Kennett, Priscilla Kinney, Pastor Roxanne Kringle, Elaine Molnar, Ron Mordosky, Pastor Carl Shankweiler, Don Smith, AiM Barbara Taylor, Susan Wambaugh, Pastor Phyllis Wolford, and Pastor Sam Zeiser.

Synod Council Members excused: Nancy Bleam and Madison O'Neil

Synod Staff Members present: Pastor Michael Bennethum, Pastor Kurt Garbe, AiM Karen Matthias-Long, Smoky Schelly, Pastor Glenn Simmons, Bishop David Strobel, and Pastor Catherine Ziel.

Guests present: Pastor Richard Stough, Pastor John Minnich, and Mr. Dick Koch.

The meeting was called to order at 3 PM by Vice President Kinney at Zion United, Brodheadsville. Fran Ferrari brought greetings.

Bishop Strobel led devotions.

The Minutes

The Minutes were approved as presented.

Special Order

Information on the consolidation of the two congregations was presented by—

- Pastor Stough, interim pastor, and Council President Ron Mordosky of St. Michael's in Allentown and
- Pastor Minnich and Council President Dick Koch of Nativity in Allentown.

After discussion, the following resolution was adopted:

(2008.3.1) Resolved, that St. Michael, Allentown, and Nativity, Allentown, be given permission to consolidate at the current location of Nativity, upon positive votes of both congregations.

Bishop's Report

Bishop Strobel discussed the ELCA Draft on Human Sexuality. He explained that it uses "responsibility ethics" and urged individuals and congregations to respond as part of the study process.

Vice President's Report

A written report was submitted. Priscilla reported that the transition work is going well.

Secretary's Report

Barbara reported that anniversary letters were sent to rostered leaders and congregations.

Treasurer's Report

A written report was submitted. The new format reflects monies used from investments and other sources as well as congregational giving.

Committee Reports

Finance – Ron presented the report.

1. (2008.3.2) The following resolution is recommended to the 2007 Synod Assembly:

Resolved, that the 2009 program proposal (February 1, 2009, to January 31, 2010) be adopted. The Synod Council is hereby authorized to establish the 2009 spending program no later than its January, 2009, meeting, making any necessary adjustments to the budget proposal in light of both realistic anticipation of receipts and synod priorities (in consultation with the ELCA Treasurer with respect to the ELCA portion thereof.)

Program and Review – Pastor Zeiser reported on the process for electing a bishop:

- Focus Groups – 300 randomly-selected members of the synod were invited to attend. Participants included 80 clergy, 9 Associates in Ministry, 1 deaconess, and 48 members of congregations.
- Mission District Assemblies will receive a report on the groups, formulate a question for the seven candidates for bishop, and be told about the background check requirements.
- Days of Prayer and Discernment will be held on April 11 and 12. Pastor Ziel and Carol Weiser will send out a camera-ready bulletin insert and they will send email reminders to all voting members.
- After discussion, the following continuing resolution was adopted:
(2008.3.3) Resolved, that the following continuing resolution be adopted:

S9.01.A08.

The Synod Council Executive Committee shall provide for background checks for persons nominated for synodical office prior to the Synod Assembly at which the election will take place or as soon as possible after the Synod Assembly for newly elected officers nominated from the floor who were not identified as nominees prior to the assembly. The process shall be as follows:

- a. Prior to the Synod Assembly appropriate notice of the background check requirement and protocol will be provided to voting members, potential nominees, and others as directed by the Synod Council.

- b. Nominees and newly elected officers are required to provide written consent to a background check and all information necessary to complete a background check, which should be completed prior to the Synod Assembly with respect to nominees and prior to installation for newly elected officers, if possible.
 - c. The Synod Council's Executive Committee shall designate one Executive Committee or Synod Council member to obtain the background checks.
 - d. All background checks for nominees and newly elected officers will entail a criminal background check. A financial background check will be completed for nominees for treasurer. The Executive Committee shall decide whether additional types of background checks are appropriate for each officer position.
 - e. The background check results shall be provided to that nominee or elected officer and to the Synod Council's Executive Committee, which shall then take action as deemed appropriate. Further disclosure of the results may be determined by the Executive Committee.
 - f. The Executive Committee may adopt other procedures or protocols as are necessary to provide for background checks for nominees and newly elected synodical officers and shall report such actions to the Synod Council.
- The Transition Team has met twice. Pastor Ziel described their mission:
 - Support the staff and especially the support staff
 - Plan celebrations for the Staff
 - Plan the installation for the new bishop including finding a site to seat 1,000 people. Roman Catholic congregations will no longer allow Protestant groups to hold worship that includes Holy Communion in their buildings.

Administration – Ed presented the report. A report from the Credentials Committee will be presented prior to each ballot for bishop.

(2008.3.4) The following resolution is recommended to the 2008 Synod Assembly:

Resolved, that the 2008 Assembly program (as printed in the Bulletin of Reports) be adopted.

(2008.3.5) Resolved, that the Synod Council requests of the ELCA Conference of Bishops approval to issue a call to non-stipendiary ministry for the Rev. Kim Lengert. The resolution was adopted.

(2008.3.6) Resolved, that Pastor Bennethum's salary be changed to add \$2,000 per month to "housing" and to remove \$2,000 per month from base salary. The resolution was adopted.

En Bloc Items

(2008.3.7) Resolved, that in accordance with sections 7.31.16. and 7.52.22. of the ELCA Constitution, "on leave from call" status be approved as follows:

Clergy (second year):	Michael Peters
Clergy (second year):	Rebecca Knox

(2008.3.8) Resolved, that Scherelene Schatz be removed from the roster of associates in ministry, effective March 13, 2008.

(2008.3.9) Resolved, that a call to special service be extended to the Rev. Scott Davis to serve as Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisor of Lehigh Valley Hospital, effective January 21, 2008.

(2008.3.10) Resolved, that a call to special service be extended to the Rev. Carey Miller to serve as interim pastor of St. Mark UCC, Cressona, effective July 1, 2007.

(2008.3.11) Resolved, that the 2009 Synod Assembly be held June 5-6, 2009, at a location to be determined.

Reports of Liaisons from Mission Districts and Organizations

Lehigh – Ron reported on the activities of clusters and of EMBRACE.

Bethlehem/Easton – Elaine announced that the assembly is April 24.

West Berks – Dawn shared information on a "Rehab Rally" to spruce up blighted properties in Reading. The Lutheran pantries have distributed canvas bags with their names on them both to help the environment and to advertise the pantries.

East Berks – Pastor Houck announced that the assembly is May 8.

Schuylkill – Pastor Kennett discussed the up-coming retreat and announced that the assembly is April 21.

Pocono – Fran discussed the continuing work on the problems associated with gambling.

Northern Lehigh Valley – Scott reported on the project to adopt a home to repair in Biloxi.

Hazleton/Lehigh – Pastor Wolford announced that SYMDANO is April 19 and the assembly is April 27.

Scranton/Wilkes-Barre – Marty reported on a planned pulpit exchange and member exchange. A 25% grant is given to any youth from the district that is accepted for a Companion Synod trip.

Lutheran Congregational Services – Ed submitted a written report and highlighted plans for Camp Noah and the planned June 1 celebration.

Lutheran Men in Mission – Ed submitted a written report. The group needs a representative from each Mission District.

New Business

(2008.3.12) Resolved, that the revised “Policy on Sexual Misconduct of Rostered Leaders” be adopted. The resolution was adopted.

(2008.3.13) Resolved, that the Synod Council (a) set synod membership decline as a major item for discussion and action at the June 2008 Synod Council Retreat and (b) consider at that time making numerical and spiritual growth/decline within our synod an item of high priority, with action to begin as soon as feasible and in a way that engages all of our congregations in a serious examination of this issue and its related factors. The resolution was adopted.

Priscilla reminded lay members of Synod Council to read the Assembly packet and to attend the Assembly if possible.

Pastor Simmons submitted a written report. He discussed the new ministry with the Indonesian community.

Bishop Strobel thanked Susan, Elaine, Ron, and Pastor Houck as they completed their work on Synod Council and gave them each a small gift. He also thanked all who serve on the Council.

Smoky provided to Mission District Liaisons the list of the congregations in their districts that have not returned a mission support form.

Future Synod Council Meetings

- June 28, 2008
- October 22, 2008
- January 14, 2009
- March 12, 2009

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Taylor
Secretary