



Allegheny Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

916 Hickory Street, 1st Fl., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

814-942-1042

MISSION: *Inviting people to love each other.*

VISION: *All creation living in harmony with Christ.*

SC24.09.11 - Motion to adopt the minutes of the September 21, 2024 meeting. Motion made by Timothy Albright, Jr., seconded by Rev. Ralph Hamer, the motion is adopted.

SYNOD COUNCIL Meeting Minutes November 16, 2024

1. The meeting was called to order by VP Ann Ferry at 9:05 am.
2. Devotions – Reading by Pr. Becky Horn and Prayer by Bishop Barb Collins.
3. Adoption of the agenda
 - A. **SC24.11.01** – Motion to adopt the agenda for today’s meeting, motion by Pr. Ralph Hamer, second by Pr. Marty Jo Irvin-Stellabotte, motion carried.
4. Mission/Vision/Values discussion
 - A. Season of Healing and Reconciliation Plan
 - 1.) Thoughts
 - a) Hospitality, welcoming, making people feel valued, intentionality and communication.
 - b) The work of the mission statement of loving each other – we struggle to live into this.
 - c) We need to “fix” that some pastors can’t be in the same room with each other. We will at least try to get everyone in the same room. “Mandatory Invite” so congregations understand it is necessary, if someone doesn’t come, they will receive a visit from Bishop Barb Collins to hold the conversation and ask for input, so all voices are heard.
 - d) Expectations of Bishop Barb Collins (as part time)
 - a. Don’t burn yourself out and stay accountable to part time.
 - b. Are there specific areas that need attention other than listed above?
 - i. Relationship building
 - ii. We need someone to hold “us” accountable to working together with love. There is a tendency to silo and hold grudges. It is easier to distance ourselves than to intentionally show up and take the time and energy to truly engage with one another.
 - iii. Setting realistic expectations for one another. Recognizing that there are different ways of doing ministry and engaging with one another. We also need to

see that we are not the “end all be all.” We need to reign in egos and “Holier than Thou” attitudes.

- iv. Need to give congregations and pastors permission to try things new and/or differently. It is okay to fail, or it is all part of a learning curve. We learn each time we fail, so even in a seeming failure there is really success.
- v. How can we utilize our resources – especially people on council to help in the process of showing up and communicating with congregations and the Office of the Bishop? Make a point to set aside time ahead of time for synod council members to go to congregations to answer questions, not just attend worship.

- e) Communication is paramount.
- f) Just because we know someone doesn't mean we trust them. Trust is also paramount.
- g) Hopefully by May will have engaged with each congregation of the Synod to all who have showed up. Make a point to have a centralized question for all congregations to engage in.
- h) A script for council members to use when showing up to congregations on behalf of the Office of the Bishop/Synod. Have council members be sent beyond their backyard so they too can learn and others will see you in another light.

5. Ministry Updates

A. Treasurer's Report and Financial Management (*Provide financial planning and resources to guide the Synod*)

- 1.) Questions on Balance Sheet or Income? No questions raised
- 2.) Bank signatures status, DYD signatures in process:
 - a) **SC24.11.02 – Motion to approve Michelle Bossler as a second signature for the DYD account. Motion made by Pr. Tyler Graham, second by Michele Peese, motion carried.**
- 3.) Audit: approval of draft
 - a) Formal lease agreement needed for use of ALSM office space. This is a work in process.
 - b) Several corrections needed to be corrected. Paula Nihoff will make the recommended corrections by the auditor.
 - c) **SC24.11.03 – Motion to approve the draft of the Audit from the auditors as presented, Motion by Paula Nihoff, second by Pr. Tyler Graham. Motion carried.**
- 4.) Budget status
- 5.) Seminary Support Fund distribution (\$15,4018) (no more than 5% of Fund Balance)
 - a) The balance of the Seminary Support Fund \$475,669.65 x.05 = \$23,783.48/6 seminarians = \$3,963.91 per active seminarian.
 - b) **SC24.11.04 – Motion to allocate \$3,900 to each active seminarian. Motion made by Paula Nihoff, seconded by Terry Koch. Motion carried.**
- 6.) Startzel estate monies received thus far is \$113,757

- a) Try to utilize it in areas that included Pr. Startzel's passions including education of leaders, music and worship.
- b) Separate into Groupings – put money into interest earning accounts
 - a. Make a taskforce to put together recommendations of groupings with policies for the following, and other items as the taskforce sees fit:
 - i. Rostered Leaders
 - ii. Lay Leaders
 - iii. New Rostered Leaders
 - 1. Ministry Grant – you and your congregation have \$XXXX to do ministry together
 - 2. Include education grants for TEEM candidates
 - iv. Stipends for Musicians
 - v. Others?
 - c) Taskforce – VP Ann Ferry will work on gathering a taskforce. The taskforce will include some from Synod Council and others who come recommended. Those who are interested in serving on the taskforce may contact VP Ann Ferry. The taskforce will investigate the types of groups, policies relevant to each group, and make recommendations to Synod Council.
- 7.) Financial Management of ministries/dedicated accounts and unused funds
 - a) Designated Monies have been updated per September Council Meeting.
 - b) Working towards supporting rostered and lay leaders for costs of training and education.
- 8.) Gathering of Investment/Finance Committee – the plan is to meet in December
- 9.) The bank for The Seminarian Endowment has had a name change from West Chester Capital Advisors to AmeriServe Wealth Advisors. The funds were not moved, only the name of the trustees was changed.
- 10.) Synod car: There is a question as to whether the council should sell or keep the car. The book value is listed between \$13-15,000.
 - a) Currently the car is not being utilized. Current staff do not see a reason to use this car instead of their individual vehicles. Since the car is not being used, it is recommended that we sell it. This raises the question of where we sell it.
 - a. Stuckey Subaru, Blue Knob – Paula Nihoff will get quotes from each location as they are local.
 - b) The basic information regarding the synod car is that it is a 2018 Subaru with more than 66,000 miles.
- 11.) Mission Investment Fund has approximately \$4000 – can we close this account and move it to First Summit. Bill Layton will need to do this. Consensus was to have Paula Nihoff reach out to Bill Layton to do this since this is no longer an active account.

- B. Worship and Service** (*Actively conduct worship and service ministries providing Word and Sacrament in accordance with Lutheran traditions throughout the Synod*)
- 1.) Congregational visits and worship

- a) Bishop Collins has visited 1 congregation for worship and has several coming up (including a confirmation at Mt. Olive, Fairhope), met with every conference (the 5 conferences and Vicki), sat in on Clearfield conference congregation meeting to discuss future ministry, met with longer term rostered leaders from the synod to gather history and information, in the office about 3 days a week, attended Go Tell it In the Mountain meetings, Deans meetings. Doing her best to get to as many of the regular meetings as possible.
 - a. Glad to have an on call legal adviser to find answers easily.
- b) Pastor Kevin has visited 8 unique congregations, 10 meetings around synodical or regional items, met with 7 clergy and 1 lay leader, presided for one wedding, attended Bishop Paula Lebo's farewell gathering, met with his intern and attended 1 internship cluster, and performed 3 baptisms.
 - a. Need a couple of lay people for Candidacy.
 - b. Working on delegating more of the tasks to committee members. And reestablishing a relator to the committee.
 - c. Discussed a gift of appreciation to
 - i. **SC24.11.05 – Motion to send a gift of \$250 to Evangelical, Duncansville for hosting Bishop Lebo's farewell event. Motion made by Ann Ferry, seconded by Pr. Marty Jo Irvin-Stellabotte. Motion carried.**

2.) Support partners and their ministries

- a) ALSM
 - a. Working with Pr. John and Go Tell It In The Mountains for a rostered leader educational event, interdenominational.
- b) Camp Sequanota
- c) Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State
- d) KELC
- e) LAMPa
- f) Grace Delivered
 - a. Trailer went to Luther Rock Camp in NC with Sequanota and other volunteers to help in the aftermath of hurricane.
- g) United Lutheran Seminary
 - a. Looking for a lay leader of the synod to serve on the Board of Trustees
- h) Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service/Global Refuge
- i) The ELCA Foundation

3.) Other

C. Leadership and Congregational Support and Development (*Welcome, develop, manage, motivate and retain a diverse workforce of Rostered and Lay leaders. Provide congregational support in order to conduct God's work within our Synod*)

- 1.) Staff engagement
 - a) Michelle has requested Mondays off in December to be able to attend to college visitations with her son.
- 2.) Bishop
- 3.) A2B Pr. Kevin

- 4.) DEM
 - a) Things are going well in the discussions in Clearfield Conference.
- 5.) Go Tell It In The Mountains
 - a) Having John in the office is very beneficial.
- 6.) Clergy roster status updates
 - a) Pastor Paula Lebo is in an interim covenant with Zion, Boalsburg
 - b) Pr. Tiffany Marvich at Duncansville
- 7.) Congregation status updates
 - a) Mt. Calvary, Johnstown – Pr. Jim West Interim
 - a. **SC24.11.06 – Motion to enter Executive Session made by Bishop Collins, seconded by Pr. Becky Horn. Motion carried.**
 - b. **SC24.11.07 – Motion to end Executive Session moved by Bishop Barb Collins, seconded by Pr. Ralph Hamer. Motion carried.**
 - b) St. David's, Davidsville – has an active MSP
 - c) Salem, Altoona
 - d) Zion Lutheran, Boalsburg – MSP has been submitted
 - e) Ferguson Township Lutheran Ministries (Gatesburg and Pinehall), State College – MSP has been submitted
- 8.) Seminarian updates
 - a) Jennifer Bobolsky Sherbine, Internship at Mundy's Corner and Summerhill
 - b) Penny Kootz TEEM, Endorsed 7/10/24. Internship at Good Shepherd, Windber
 - c) Christy Harford TEEM, Internship, First, Johnstown and Benscreek
 - d) Steve Koths TEEM, Shiloh, State College. Internship began 1/1/24
 - e) Claudia Plows, TEEM, ULS, Trinity, Sidman
 - f) Josh Spangler, TEEM, LSTC, Laurel Mountain Lutherans
- 9.) First Call Group
 - a) Bishop Collins and Pr. Kevin will attend.
 - b) Region 8 Steering Meeting follows first call group. Pr. Kevin and Ann Ferry will attend.
- 10.) Conference Deans
- 11.) Portico Benefits
- 12.) Congregational Planning

D. Faith Formation (*Provide lifelong Christian nurturing and development*)

- 1.) Ignite Ministry – delegated to Pr. Nancy Hoover, Pr. Kathy Popp. They are also working with Pr. John Kratz and Go Tell It In The Mountains.
- 2.) Faith Formation Team
- 3.) Kindling Faith (ULS)
- 4.) Lutheran Letter – email, sign up to receive.
- 5.) Allegheny Synod Website sign up to get an email when updates are made.
- 6.) Living Lutheran will be published quarterly via print

E. Planning and Resources (*Provide strategic planning and resources to guide the Synod*)

- 1.) Synod Car – See notes in the Financial Management section.

- 2.) Transition Team – looking at names for the team to be put together in January 2025.
- 3.) Synod Assembly – regularly meeting to work on logistics and have Convention Center both days, Oct. 31 and Nov. 1, 2025
- 4.) Committee Personnel Needs/Appointments
- 5.) Congregation Vitality and Innovation Grants (more than \$26,000)
 - a) Do we want to roll this into the Startzell grant money to make it one fund that would be revamped into a better system and policy? More thinking and discussion.
 - b) Request if funding needed for Internship Project in conjunction with Congregational support.
- 6.) Churchwide Assembly 2025 – voting member mishap
 - a) Christy Harford now to go as an Alternate or Visitor – request to financially support this due to the misunderstanding of who was to be attending the Churchwide Assembly during voting at the Allegheny Synod Assembly 2024.
 - b) **SC24.11.08 – Motion to approve financial support, including flight, hotel, registration, meals and incidentals for Christy Harford to go as a visitor to the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. This is a special case of financial support due to the need of the Vice President of the Synod Council needing to attend as a voting delegate. Motion made by Pr. Becky Horn, seconded by Terry Koch. Motion Carried.**

6. Additional Items

A. Question regarding listing regular meetings on the Allegheny Synod website.

- 1.) Look into putting the regular times of meetings associated with the Allegheny Synod. Also remove the Google calendar from the top of the “Events” tab because it is not a complete reflection of the activities of the Office of the Bishop.

B. Council Term Extension for Joyce Long to extend to new Synod Assembly date, Joyce agreed to extend.

7. Adjournment

A. VP Ann Ferry called the meeting to a close at 12:13 pm.

Next Meeting: January 18, 2025 at 9:00 am at the Synod Office, Pr. Ralph Hamer to lead devotions.

Synod Council members in attendance... 13 of 14

- Executive Committee (*3-ordained, 2-lay*) (election year)
 - Bishop Barb Collins (Interim) – present
 - VP Ann Ferry (2021) – present
 - Secretary Pr. Becky Horn (2024) – present
 - Treasurer Paula Nihoff (2024) – present via Zoom
 - Member at Large Pr. Nancy Hoover (2024) – present
- Council Members (*3-ordained, 6-lay*)
 - Timothy Albright (2023) – present via Zoom
 - Austin Beirlair (2024) – absent
 - Pr. Tyler Graham (2024) – present via Zoom

- Pr. Ralph Hamer (2023) – present
- Pr. Marty Jo Irvin-Stellabotte (2024) – present
- Terry Koch (2024) – present
- Joyce Long (2022) – present
- Michele Peese (2023) – present via Zoom
- Margaret (Peggy) Thatcher (2024) – present via Zoom
- Vacancies:
 - 1 lay male
 - 2022 clergy (1-year term)
 - Youth (age 15-21)
- Synod Staff
 - Assistant to the Bishop Pr. Kevin Shock – present
 - Director of Evangelical Mission Sue Ellen Spotts – absent
- Guests
 -