

Synod Council Retreat Highlights
March 11-12, 2016
Mulhurst Lutheran Camp, Pigeon Lake
Synod of Alberta and the Territories



Worship and Prayer

Chaplain at our Synod Council retreat, Michael Harmon, ordained ministry candidate and lay member of Synod Council from the Northern Conference, led Council in a time of Dwelling on the Word each morning, prayer throughout the day, and assisting at the Eucharist Friday evening.

Each morning, prior to breakfast, Marilyn Murray, Council secretary, led interested participants in a time of Centering Prayer.

Guests – National Bishop, Susan Johnson and National Church Council member (NCC)

Guests to our Synod Council were our ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson who shared highlights of the recent meeting of National Church Council, led in each evening's *Holden Evening Prayer* worship, and presided at the Eucharist. Judy Wry, one of our Synod representatives on our National Church Council also participated in the retreat.

Guests – Acting President, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon

The Rev. Dr. Michael Nel shared an update with Synod Council regarding Lutheran Theological Seminary. Dr. Nel serves on a two-year interim contract as president of the seminary. We were encouraged about the positive signs at LTS – enrollment numbers are up and some significant repairs to the infrastructure are being undertaken. The seminary retains a positive reputation in the eyes of many outside bodies. We are challenged, along with our western synod partners, to help revive the reputation of LTS among our members and provide needed financial support on an ongoing basis.

Spirit-Led Leadership – Mission Priority

Participating in Hope

A significant part of Synod Council's agenda time was focussed on reviewing the material heard and gathered at the recent *Participating in Hope 2.0* gatherings across the Synod (Synod Council and Executive members and Deans facilitated geographically close church council gatherings for the purpose of listening to their stories of mission - of God at work; fostering the faith and ministry of the congregational leaders; thanking them for their past partnership in ministry; and inviting them to participate in God's hope-filled future, in partnership with the Synod and each other). Listening and discerning together led to the identifying of common themes heard which will be sent in the form of a letter to each rostered leader and congregational chair in April 2016.

Hope-filled Discipleship – Mission Priority

Missional Formation

The Assistant to the Bishop for Mission, The Rev. Dr. Julianne Barlow, reported through the Bishop's report on the second iteration of the missional formation in the Southern Conference of our Synod. The first iteration continues with clergy cohorts and congregational guiding teams continuing to gather in Edmonton and in Calgary. A third iteration will begin in the Camrose area with an information time set for Saturday, April 30 at Scandia Lutheran, Armena.

Innovative Tradition – Mission Priority

Creative Initiatives

By June 2016 each Synod will have received funds (a total of \$200K for use through June 2018) from the National Church Extension and Capital Fund (CECF) to provide funding to congregations and ministries to support or create learning opportunities as people join in the work God is already doing in our neighbourhoods and communities. Information is available on the Synod website under the Missional Formation tab or you may contact The Rev. Dr. Julianne Barlow for further information and an application form.

Collaborative Partnerships – Mission Priority

Promoting and Renewing Right Relations between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Peoples.

Council members participated in a Blanket Exercise facilitated by synod council member, The Rev. Ann Salmon, and Carl Rausch.

Synod Convention

In preparation for our Synod Convention (June 16-18) in Camrose, the Synod Constitution and Bylaws were reviewed. Council is thankful for the work of the Standing Committee on Constitutional Review for its work in formulating changes needed as a result of changes made to the constitution and bylaws of the National Church at the 2015 ELCIC National Convention, for example: the addition of Synodically Recognized Ministries.

Synod Council reviewed the Synod Mission Priorities in preparation for recommendation to the Synod Convention for the next biennium (2016-2018): Spirit-Led Leadership, Hope-Filled Discipleship, Innovative Tradition and Collaborative Partnerships.

Synod Council approved the Executive Officers recommendation that the offerings at Synod Convention be designated to the ELCIC Reformation Challenge (Opening Eucharist) and the Bishop's Discretionary Fund (Closing Eucharist).

Synod Budget

Synod Treasurer, Stephen Wildfang, shared the 2015 Audited Financial report and presented the 2016 budget which was approved. 2015 benevolence contributions fell by about 5% from 2014 and the Synod ended the year with a small deficit in operations. The budget for 2016 forecasts a "hold the line spending approach".

Bishop's Performance Review

The Council's Bishop's Performance Review met with Bishop Larry to consider the input gathered. Thanks were expressed to the Bishop for his continued dedication, vision and leadership.

Sabbatical Granted

Bishop Larry presented a sabbatical proposal at the retreat, "A Sabbatical Leave Proposal: Unwrapping the Gift of a Sabbatical Leave". The Synod Council granted the bishop sabbatical leave for the period of November 1, 2016 – January 31, 2017 in accordance with the Synod's sabbatical policy.

Nominations and Election of Synod Delegates to National Convention

At the 2015 National Convention a new governance structure was adopted that included provisions to reduce the size of national conventions. Each synod was tasked with the responsibility of determining how it would elect its delegates to future national conventions. Synod Council approved the process for selecting synod delegates to national conventions which will come before our Synod Convention in June 2016 as an amendment to Synod bylaws.