

Talking Points

The fall retreat of Synod Council was held at Mulhurst Lutheran Church Camp at Pigeon Lake September 21 - 23, 2017. Thursday afternoon, Bishop Larry and Assistant to the Bishop for Mission, Rev Dr Julianne Barlow, met with the Area Deans. We welcomed new members to Synod Council including rostered members Rev. Heidi Wachowiak and Rev. Janice Whitelock, new National Church Council delegate, Rev. Dr. James Hendricksen, and newly appointed Area Deans Rev. Kevin Powell, Rev. Jeff Decelle, and Rev. Julianna Wehrfritz-Hanson.

Mark Ree capably served as our retreat chaplain leading Dwelling in the Word each morning, prayers throughout the day and Holden Evening Prayer each evening; Bishop Larry presided at the Eucharist each evening. Delicious meals were served by Cathy Kochendorfer.

Our guest at this retreat was Jeff Pym, Director of ELFEC (Evangelical Lutheran Foundation of Eastern Canada.) Jeff presented on the purpose and work of this foundation. He is available for consultation with congregations and will be present at Synod Convention 2018 where he will have a display table.

Much good work was accomplished each day arising from a full agenda but time was provided each evening for some fellowship after Evening Prayers.

The following are some of the many items dealt with by Synod Council during the retreat:

- The four Synod Mission Priorities were reviewed by Council. Some wording changes were made to some of the outcomes to better reflect our current realities; some new outcomes were added as well. These revised Mission Priorities and Outcomes will be presented at the Synod Convention for approval.
- The policies concerning the performance review of the Bishop were discussed by Council. Changes have been made to reflect a new two-year review cycle. A new Review Committee consisting of rostered members Rev. John Lentz, Rev. Dr. Deborah Ann Taylor and lay members Terrie Coombs and Wayne Street, will conduct the Bishop's formal review and report to the spring Council Retreat.
- Council reaffirmed support for Bishop Larry's responsibilities now that he is member of the Lutheran World Federation Council.
- Bishop Larry presented, and council appointed a list of those rostered and lay members to the Synod Area Leadership Teams, as well as an outline of training dates. The training will be led by Assistant to the Bishop for Mission, Rev. Dr. Julianne Barlow and Greg Linglebach (First Lutheran, Calgary) and initially will take place in Red Deer.
- A report was received from those responsible for planning and organizing the Ponder Anew events held across the Synod this spring. The comments received about the events were very positive. It was felt that similar events should be planned for the future.
- Bishop Larry presented information regarding next year's Synod Convention. The convention will be held at the U of A Augustana Campus in Camrose from June 14-16, 2018 under the theme: Faith, Hope and Love ... the greatest of these is LOVE. Drafts of the budget and agenda were approved.
- Treasurer Stephen Wildfang joined us for a time. He presented drafts of the 2016 audited financial statements, a proposed budget for 2018 and the Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Ministers for 2018. A good discussion was held on these documents, and they were approved.

- The ABT rostered delegate to National Church Council, Rev. Dr. James Hendricksen, presented information from the fall NCC meeting held in Winnipeg. Information shared included:
 - The status of the model constitution
 - The near-completion of the revised Candidacy Manual
 - The upcoming discussions between Synods and the National Church over areas of responsibilities and finances
 - The work of ELCICGSI (Group Services Incorporated) on the new Letter of Call and Employment Agreement
 - Some new strategic planning discussions that NCC is going through.
- To continue our work on Missional Formation, Rev. Dr. Julianne Barlow asked council members to share stories of “Where God has been at work in their neighbourhoods” recently. Many good stories and examples were shared.
- At each council retreat, some governance policies are reviewed to ensure that Council and the Bishop are in compliance with them. Some policies are also reviewed to determine if they need changing.
- Council viewed a power point presentation and heard highlights from the National Convention that was held in Winnipeg in early July. Rev Barbara Groote, Diaconal Minister Faith Nostbakken, and Wayne Street compiled photos and text information focusing on the highlights and the business conducted at the convention. This presentation and report will be made available on the Synod website so that it can be shared with all members.