

Synod Council Retreat Talking Points
March 9-11, 2017
Camp Kuriakos, Sylvan Lake



Retreat Location. Synod Council's spring retreat was held at Camp Kuriakos, March 9 – 11, 2017. Beautiful snowfall and crisp temperatures greeted those who ventured out for walks. Cathy Kochendorfer prepared healthy meals and tasty snacks for us. *Holden Evening Prayer* was lead each night by National Bishop Susan Johnson, accompanied by Bishop Larry. Evening time after prayers was open for playing games, enjoying snacks and fellowship.

Worship and Prayer. Rev. John Lentz, pastor at St Paul's Lutheran Church in Olds, served as our retreat chaplain. Each morning Pastor John lead in "Dwelling in the Word" and presided at the Eucharist as well as leading in table grace prior to meals.

Guest – National Bishop Susan Johnson joined us for the entire retreat. She shared information from the most recent National Church Council meeting and lead a session focusing on the Lutheran World Federation's *Gender Justice Policy*. Information that Bishop Susan shared included:

- the four pillars of the strategic plan were highlighted: Spirited Discipleship, Healthy Church, Compassionate Justice and Effective Partnerships.
- her involvement in the joint ecumenical commemoration of the Reformation on October 31, 2016 in Lund, Sweden. Pope Francis, LWF President Dr. Younan, and LWF Secretary General Martin Junge led the Ecumenical commemoration.
- A 'Statement to Muslims in Canada' has been prepared and approved by National Church Council to bring to this year's National Convention in Winnipeg. It contains interfaith guidelines and follows closely the 'Welcoming the Stranger' document that was approved in Edmonton in 2015.
- referencing some of the recent bomb threats to the Jewish community, Bishop Susan urged us to speak out against such violence.
- a new Leadership Award has been introduced to mark the 500th Commemoration of the Reformation; the winner will be announced soon.
- the CECF has extended Synod Mission Initiative Funding for another two years; \$50,000.00 will be available in 2018 and in 2019 to each Synod.
- the National Church Council approved the distribution of a new resource called '*Study Guide for Conversations on Medical Assistance in Dying*' – a companion document to support the ELCIC's policy on Decisions at the End of Life. It will be available on the national website.
- members were reminded to review and encouraged to submit their feedback to the Faith Order and Doctrine Committee's *Orders of Ministry Study*; deadline is April 17.
- the urgent refugee crisis around the world. LWF feeds 2.7 million refugees everyday but the number of refugees worldwide is about 65 million; this is our modern-day crisis.

Guests – Fiona Brownlee, Aboriginal and Rural Communities Liaison for the Anglican Diocese of Edmonton's Indigenous Ministry program shared some of her work within the Diocese. Her presentation to Synod Council focused on the three Anglican Pillars of Indigenous Ministry: Education, Reconciliation, and Mission. Much of Fiona's work focuses on addressing recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Agenda Items of Synod Council

- Assistant to the Bishop for Mission, Rev. Dr. Julianne Barlow, facilitated two sessions for Synod Council members. The first was spent reflecting on the following: Many suggestions were shared during the Fall 2016 Area Gatherings about a different area structure and how we might still provide community. “We’re wondering what this might look like and how to move forward as a Synod to provide this leadership”? The second session focused on the question: “We have much input from the *Participating in Hope* sessions, the Synod Convention, and from the Fall 2016 Area Gatherings, ‘What have we learned from all of this and what might our next steps moving forward be?’” The work in this session dealt with the work of Dr. Craig van Gelder and his work with Diffusion of Innovation theory and posed the question to Synod Council members about what we can do collectively and individually, to share our stories and begin a new narrative about our missional formation work as we move forward together.
- Bishop Larry reported on behalf of Stephen Wildfang, our Synod Treasurer, that 2016 benevolence giving was slightly up from 2015. We are thankful in our current economy for the generous and committed benevolence giving.
- Synod Council approved the establishment of a Leadership Award for the Synod of Alberta and the Territories. Our Synod Office will advertise for nominations with one award being awarded at the 2017 Synod Convention.
- The 2018 Synod Convention will take place at the UofA – Augustana Campus, Camrose, June 14-16.
- Bishop Larry has asked the Deans of each conference, together with current conference council members, to submit four names to him; two rostered and two lay names. These will then be brought to the September meeting of Synod Council for appointment. These will begin to form the basis of the Area Leadership Team for each Area. Education and resources will be provided for these individuals as they undertake new duties and responsibilities for our work and ministry together.
- The Performance Review Committee met with Bishop Larry to complete the annual review of the Bishop. A series of questions developed jointly by the Bishop and the committee were used to guide the discussion. Many positives and successes, along with some challenges, were shared and reflected on. Three specific goals were set and will form the basis of next year’s review. A remuneration package was considered as part of the review. Synod Council unanimously approved to accept the review analysis and remuneration package, with much thanks!
- Councillors were reminded of the upcoming “Ponder Anew” Planned Giving events occurring in five locations around the synod. Please register for this opportunity for relationship-building, and of course, a free meal with Bishop Larry.

Reflections: from an Anglican Observer/Member. The Ven. Alan Perry, Executive Archdeacon, Anglican Diocese of Edmonton, participated throughout the retreat and shared his reflections. Because of his law background, Alan has been assisting the Synod on immigration matters. He shared about the similarities in the work that Lutheran and Anglicans are doing together, citing recognizing the 40th anniversary of the Ordination of Women and end of life resources and study materials. He also shared a document: *End Poverty Action Guide for Edmonton Religious and Spiritual Communities* insisting that we do not merely want to reduce poverty, we want to end poverty.