



Indiana-Kentucky Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Report of the Secretary and Synod Council

Judith A. Bush, Secretary

June 1-3, 2017

As I look back on this last year in the Synod Council, I can report that the highlight of the year was the Churchwide Assembly in August held in New Orleans. The synod was represented by the voting members that the 2015 Synod Assembly had elected and the officers of the synod. The theme was Freed & Renewed in Christ – 500 Years of God’s Grace in Action. There were 980 voting members from 65 synods and more than 9,300 congregations. The Churchwide Assembly is the primary decision-making body of the ELCA; the highlight for me were the worship services. Our synod was well represented in leadership roles in the outstanding mid-day worship services; E. Louise Williams preached on Friday, Sr. Nora L. E. Frost was Assisting Minister on Thursday, both Assistants to the Bishop Pastor Heather Apel and Pastor Rudy Mueller were participants in the worship services. Among the legislative actions, the Assembly voted to unify the three lay service rosters into a roster of Ministry of Word and Service; the memorial that was passed by the 2016 Synod Assembly on the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery was joined with similar memorials from other synods and approved; and the memorial passed by the 2016 Synod Assembly on behalf of a peaceful resolution between Israel and Palestine was also affirmed. A most significant action was the overwhelming approval of the thirty-two agreements of the “Declaration on the Way”; another was the approval of the Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) strategy as a whole church response to the migration of children and their families around protection, advocacy, representation and opportunities. The budget for the church was approved and a new vice president elected. There were several changes in both the Synod Constitution and the Model Constitution for Congregations, particularly with the change in unification of the three lay service rosters. Some of constitutional changes were required and those changes in the synod constitution became effective with notification from the ELCA; others will be addressed at the 2017 Synod Assembly. The most impactful impression from the Churchwide Assembly is the spirit of the ELCA under the leadership of Bishop Eaton; it was very inspiring.

The synod council acts as the board of directors of the synod and serves as its interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly. Members are elected by the Synod Assembly. There are four officers: the bishop, vice president, secretary and treasurer; the bishop serves a six-year term and the other officers serve four-year terms. Additionally, there is one lay member from each of the ten conferences, eight clergy under call, one lay rostered leader, one youth and one young adult member. The adult members serve three-year terms and the youth serves a two-year term. The clergy members, lay rostered leader, youth member, and the young adult member are elected at large by the Synod Assembly upon nomination by the Nominating Committee. Lay members representing conferences are nominated by their conference with no nominations from the Synod Assembly nor from the Nominating Committee. If no persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English are elected to the Synod Council, the Synod Council at its first meeting following the Annual Synod Assembly shall elect to the Synod Council for a three (3) year term up to two (2) lay members to ensure that there are two (2) persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English on the Synod Council.

The Indiana-Kentucky Synod Council has met four times since the 2016 Synod Assembly and will meet in June prior to the 2017 Synod Assembly. Meetings were held in September, November, and April over two day periods beginning on Friday evening through Saturday afternoon. Due to predicted weather

conditions the regularly scheduled meeting in January was changed to an electronic meeting using an application that allowed members to see and hear other participants. Minutes that have been approved are found on the synod website: <http://iksynod.org/documents-category/synod-council/>. The minutes of the April meeting will be reviewed by the Synod Council Thursday, June 1, and will be available at the Synod Assembly. Also, available on the website are the minutes for recent Synod Assemblies, including the 2016 Synod Assembly.

During the September Synod Council meeting, the council met with the conference deans at the Waycross Conference Center in Morgantown, Indiana, and discussed the Conference Dean Proposal that had been developed in conversations and consultations with the deans. Jim Swinford was elected as a synod council member to serve until the 2017 Synod Assembly. An update on two of the Holy Conversations was provided. The synod Guidelines for Adopting or Amending Congregational Constitutions was amended. Synod Attorney Josh Tatum provided a review of his work as synod attorney.

During the synod council meetings in September, November, and April sharing of the Eucharist led by synod council members and/or synod staff occurs. Changes in congregational constitutions have been reviewed by the Congregation Constitution Task Force with action regarding those constitutions reported to the Synod Council. The Indiana-Kentucky Synod Guidelines for Adopting or Amending Congregational Constitutions is available to help congregations when changing their constitutions. It can be found at <http://iksynod.org/document/guidelines-revising-congregational-constitutions/>. Also, during meetings, changes in the status of pastors have been reviewed and/or approved such as on-leave-from call, retirement, or interim assignments. Reports from staff members are shared as well as reports from committees and task forces.

The November meeting was held at the Synod office. Changes to the synod constitution were approved for adoption at the 2017 Synod Assembly. The council reviewed the principles from Structured for Mission led by Bishop Gafkjen. During the reports section of the meeting, Bishop Gafkjen reported that the regional coordinator positions would be eliminated as of the end of February. Assistant to the Bishop Pastor Apel reported on her trip to Peru for the ELCA Global Church Consultation for Latin America and Caribbean; she recommended that the Global Mission team in the synod be reengaged. Also, Pastor Heather reported that the theme of the 2017 Synod Assembly would be **Formed** in the image of God – **Reformed** by the cross of Christ – **Transformed** by the power of the Spirit. She also reported on changes in the format of Synod Assembly. For the synod assembly, the Plenary Bible Study Leaders will be Rabbis Dennis and Sandy Sasso. The keynote speakers will be Beth Lewis, Augsburg Fortress CEO, and Rick Rouse, Author. During the business session of the November Synod Council meeting, the forming of a task force to explore the possibility of a congregation behind bars at the Pendleton Correctional Facility was approved.

The January Synod Council meeting was held electronically due to weather conditions. Synod Assembly Committees were approved. With Assistant to the Bishop Pastor Rudy Mueller's resignation, a new configuration of synod staff responsibilities was recommended by Bishop Gafkjen. The proposal was to have two full time assistants to the bishop with one being Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership and the other would be Assistant to the Bishop for Discipleship. The general areas of responsibility for the Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership would include Candidacy, First Call Theological Education, Mobility, Call Process, and Congregational Transition, Leadership Support, Global Mission: IELCH.

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Pastor Heather Apel agreed to assume that position. The Assistant to the Bishop for Discipleship would include the general areas of responsibility of Lifelong Faith Formation, Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Synod Assembly: Program, and Global Mission: HKBP. Another full-time position was recommended, Synod Communications Coordinator with general areas of responsibility to include Synod Communications, Office Management, Synod Assembly: Logistics (including working with our contracted meeting planner). This will be one layperson (not rostered) working full-time. The council approved the bishop's recommendations. Registration fees for the 2017 Synod Assembly were approved. The 2017 Synod Assembly worship offering designations were approved. The Synod Council expressed its appreciation to Marilyn Smith for her service as regional coordinator to the Area 6 region and her service to the synod.

The April Synod Council meeting has not been held at the time of this writing. It will April 28-29 at the IN-KY Lutheran Center. It is expected Executive Committee action will be ratified, specifically that Pastor Daniel Fugate will be the Assistant to the Bishop for Discipleship beginning May 8 and that Deacon Marilyn Smith be the interim minister at Risen Lord, Bargersville, IN. Also, it is expected that the proposed Synod Assembly agenda and the proposed 2018-19 Synod Budget be approved for presentation to the Synod Assembly for approval. Bishop Gafkjen is expected to report on the Deans re-visioning process.

As we approach the 30th Annual Indiana-Kentucky Synod Assembly there has been much anticipation for the work of the Spirit as we come together in this the 500th year of the Reformation. The theme is particularly meaningful – **Formed** in the image of God – **Reformed** by the cross of Christ – **Transformed** by the power of the Spirit.

Respectfully Submitted in His Service,



Judith A. Bush, Secretary