

**MINUTES**  
**MONTANA SYNOD COUNCIL**

**SEPTEMBER 16-17, 2011**  
**URSULINE CENTRE, GREAT FALLS, MONTANA**

The Montana Synod Council gathered for opening worship led by Chaplain for the meeting, Rev. Shelley Wickstrom, Regional Coordinator for Region 1, with Bishop Crist presiding.

Present: Bishop Jessica Crist, Vice President Mike Young, Secretary Peggy Paugh Leuzinger, Treasurer Harold Spilde, John Munding, Scott Southwick, Pastor Amanda Liggett, Pastor Al Beyer, Bev Larson, Cheryl Muncy, Cindy Larsen, Chris Holler-Dinsmore, Tom Gossack, Wayne Young, DEM Rev. Dave Peters, Rev. Shelley Wickstrom, Susan Hedahl, Associate to the Bishop John Allen

**Call to Order:**

Vice President Mike Young called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.  
Those in attendance introduced themselves.

**Appointment Of Synod Council Member**

Bishop Crist recommended that Pastor Amanda Liggett be appointed to the Synod Council from the Shepherd Cluster to finish out the term held by Mike Young.

Motion

Second: Appoint Amanda Liggett to serve on the Montana Synod Council.

**SC11.09.01**

**VOTE: APPOINT AMANDA LIGGETT TO SERVE ON THE MT SYNOD COUNCIL**

**Minutes of Synod Council Meeting from June, 2011**

Motion

Second: Approve the Minutes from the June 3, 2011 Synod Council meeting

**SC11.09.02**

**VOTE: APPROVE MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 3, 2011 SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING**

**Strategy and Vision Session**

The meeting was recessed for the Strategy and Vision session led by John Munding

The notes of the Session are included below.

**Faithfulness Model**

**The following indicators would demonstrate the Montana Synod's faithfulness to its mission:**

Those who want to grow in faith have the opportunity to do so,

✎ We are sought out as a credible voice for social justice.

- ✚ Deepen souls – develop community – we make the world a more beautiful place.
- ✚ We help the less fortunate.
- ✚ We are a resource to pastors and congregations
- ✚ Congregations take advantage of what we have to offer.
- ✚ Who exists for whom? Congregations are the focus of mission. The Synod is focused on support.
- ✚ Trust that God uses us in the midst of our uncertainty.
- ✚ We help people accept who they are. They joyfully grow into their calling.
- ✚ Comforting and challenging
- ✚ Faithful preaching and teaching, even when it is risky.
- ✚ Willing to work with the difficult questions
- ✚ We are witness to the fact that the Spirit is among us.
- ✚ We develop and use networks.
- ✚ Everyone – really everyone, not just Lutherans – know that Lutherans serve God and neighbor.
- ✚ We know what is special about being Lutheran, but maintain an ecumenical focus.
- ✚ All people experience and know Christ by our witness
- ✚ Faithful to the ELCA Constitution
- ✚ Functional ecumenical partnerships
- ✚ Churches in larger communities work together
- ✚ The silos are broken – we are more open and not bound by tradition
- ✚ Still preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments
- ✚ It is ok to look back and know that God is faithful
- ✚ We still have hope
- ✚ New leaderships will arise
- ✚ We are a multi-generational church
- ✚ Fearless about the future
- ✚ We celebrate both/and; saint/sinner etc. etc. We celebrate both sides of the paradoxes and ambiguities
- ✚ The past is a resource – it is not the recipe
- ✚ More lay involvement
- ✚ All are welcome – all are strengthened in faith – all are empowered in discipleship
- ✚ We can't ignore our past and traditions
- ✚ Quality – not quantity; do a good job and let it go
- ✚ We see God at work through the people of God
- ✚ We stand up for what we believe in without stomping on the beliefs of others.
- ✚ We have forgotten the differences between “us and them”

## **Trends**

### **The following trends will influence the Montana Synod’s ability to be faithful:**

- ✚ More competition for our time
- ✚ Technology
- ✚ Young families unavailable on weekends
- ✚ Economy
- ✚ There are 2 new grain terminals with jobs in Chester. At least in the near term, the

community is vibrant.

- ✂ We live in an atmosphere of fear – political, economic uncertainty
- ✂ Young folks moving in and old folks moving on
- ✂ Multiple sources of unfiltered information; accessible all of the time
- ✂ Changing demographics; young folks are moving out; old folks are moving “on”
- ✂ Spiritual poverty – the church is not relevant to people
- ✂ Shifting cultural perspectives
- ✂ People have a spiritual hunger; however they have no desire for church affiliation.
- ✂ Distrust of institutions including distrust for the church
- ✂ People have a spiritual desire but no desire for church affiliation
- ✂ Distrust of authority/institutions
- ✂ Lingering problems with CCM and human sexuality decisions
- ✂ Christendom has collapsed – young people abhor Christianity
- ✂ Information technology facilitates a “flattened” social structure. The world is flat – the church is hierarchical
- ✂ Cynicism
- ✂ Skepticism of leadership
- ✂ People expect to get their way – young and old
- ✂ We live in an “or” world – you are with me or against me
- ✂ With all of the technology we still are challenged to communicate with one another
- ✂ Community does not require face to face
- ✂ “Green” consciousness / energy issues
- ✂ Large number of Christians who are not grounded in scripture and teachings and traditions (illiterate – don’t know bible stories)
- ✂ New ways of belonging – changing relationships, changing family structure, new ways of belonging
- ✂ Some people don’t want to be responsible for their own spiritual lives – lack of commitment
- ✂ People commit to what they value and they don't seem to value the church
- ✂ Church is not a priority; society competes with church on Sunday mornings
- ✂ The church is another piece of infrastructure. It will always be there regardless of personal commitment to it.
- ✂ The church continues to have meaning for some people even if they don’t participate
- ✂ It’s all about me but the church better still be there when I need it
- ✂ Church seems irrelevant to much of the world
- ✂ Core group of “doers” with a large number of folks not involved
- ✂ People worship but don’t fellowship – not a church family
- ✂ Church folks that don’t know how to tell the story
- ✂ Globalism – Pluralism
- ✂ Cultural diversity in the world and in the church
- ✂ Churches should publicize the positive we do
- ✂ Changing sense of being human; free will; brain function; etc.
- ✂ We have a great capacity to adapt to change
- ✂ Changing sense of community; social networking; etc.
- ✂ Mission trained but not mission focuses
- ✂ Increasing social isolation; we don’t know who our neighbor is

- ✚ Very easy to vulcanize ourselves; affiliate with the same and avoid the different
- ✚ Church is the only place with the potential for multi-generational association
- ✚ Exchange of virtual word

## **Scenarios**

**The Synod Council developed three possible futures (scenarios) based on the trends.**

### **Technology – A Networked World Scenario**

There is a short-term future and a longer term future, both worlds employ networks and a vigorous tool for getting people together and connecting people to resources. These networks will allow conversations and relationships on a non-geographical basis. In the shorter term, every church will be wired and every meeting room will have a screen for viewing meetings and resources. In the longer term, holographs will be available that will allow a remote person to “attend” meetings, etc.

“Home churches” will become more prevalent as those attending will be connected to other home churches, traditional worship services and so forth. “Shut ins” and others in remote locations will be able to be connected to others as an additional way to be in relationship.

The role of the synod, congregations and leadership will be to teach people to discern what is creditable on the networks and to model civil debate. Clergy will be relied upon to equip members with tools for identifying and participating in networks and other resource sites. Our pastors will be coaches.

Further into the future, “Church” will be not be a building so much as a gathering of the faithful for service. Likewise, educational institutions will utilize fewer buildings; there will be fewer physical institutions.

The challenge will be to use this emerging technology as a means to augment and support relationship rather than to replace the human need for face to face relationship.

### ***Additional Comments:***

- ✚ We don't know what we don't know
- ✚ Technology change is rapid – we can't predict the technological changes that will occur over the next decade.
- ✚ Technology provides opportunities; potentially exciting
- ✚ Technology offers opportunity to expand on communication, etc.

### **Social Constructs Scenario**

Society 15-20 years from now has the potential to be very pluralistic with non-traditional relationship ties. Society is very fluid and has ever changing needs.

The challenges of the “church” will be to act in a non-traditional sense, conforming to the way that people live their lives in the sense of time, yet provide an atmosphere of sacred and sanctuary. The church will exist more outside the brick & mortar but in the form of discipleship

and mission.

People will be challenged to better define their faith as a result of the proliferation of competing doctrines. There will be a heightened sense of “Sabbath” that will exist in a “hybrid” form outside the current norm as a means of providing respite from life's demands.

***Additional comments:***

- ✚ Increasing realization of the need for a “Sabbath” of some sort; going “hybrid” with it, i.e. not-traditional
- ✚ social issues become non-issues
- ✚ How does self-centeredness affect the scenario
- ✚ Tendency for people to define for themselves the deeper meaning of spirituality.
- ✚ More multi-generational living arrangements
- ✚ Collapse of volunteerism
- ✚ Volunteerism serves personal/family interest

**Economic/Political/Global Scenario**

***Environmental:***

- ✚ Scarce water resources
- ✚ Rape and pillage of the land for energy use

***Health Care***

- ✚ Medicare and Social Security benefits reduced
- ✚ Decreasing capacity to care for the elderly and people with chronic diseases

***Political***

- ✚ Decline in federal \$\$ equals a lack of opportunity and infrastructure in Montana
- ✚ If resources for education declines, less chance to learn about others, human rights, etc. and more polarization
- ✚ Christian right has a decreased influence
- ✚ Hispanic woman is president and a Chinese man is secretary of state
- ✚ Gang wars on our southern border
- ✚ Indian reservations will be the first to see cuts
- ✚ Limited resources for poor, education and the university system

***Economic***

- ✚ Decline in federal \$\$ equals a lack of opportunity and infrastructure in Montana
- ✚ MSU Bozeman leads the way in technology research
- ✚ On-going decrease in home ownership
- ✚ US taxpayers are on the hook for EU debt
- ✚ Indian reservations will be the first to see cuts
- ✚ Limited resources for poor, education and the university system
- ✚ Fastest growing segments of society – the very wealthy and the poor
- ✚ The work force continues to age and the younger generation continues to experience high rates of unemployment

- ✚ Chinese firms buying up Boeing
- ✚ Food prices rise
- ✚ The number of family owned farms has become negligible

***Additional Comments:***

- ✚ Private groups will have to pick up the slack left by government
- ✚ Changing “complexion” - the browning of America
- ✚ Changing global economic power structure – China and India up/US down
- ✚ Negative economic impacts in college communities

**Strategies**

**Technology Scenario**

The synod has a choice of three strategies to exploit the future of enhanced technology: it can let it happen, it can make it happen by taking a leadership role in developing and managing technology, or it can participate in what others are doing. The preliminary path will be to learn the features and benefits of Region 1’s “Soul Café” then use it as the primary resource for its technology efforts.

Such efforts include planning, developing and managing the myriad of networks that are created to serve both short term and long term needs in education, worship, community service, etc. Importantly, the synod will also equip leadership to teach members how to discern faithful networks and resources available on the web and how to engage in civil discourse in this future.

**Additional Comments**

- ✚ Don't get caught up in the technology
- ✚ The Soul Cafe is the training wheels
- ✚ Use technology more during our meetings
- ✚ Synod Council could do its work on Soul Cafe; need to check out the security issues
- ✚ If we need tech support, we could contract for it.
- ✚ We do not want to get ahead of Soul Cafe
- ✚ Lutheran voice on the internet; google

**Economic/Political/Global Scenario**

- ✚ How we use this to witness
- ✚ Build relation with various Lutheran Social Service entities to improve effectiveness of their services, example is our support of the various homes in the Synod. Ask how we can uplift their works and help them
- ✚ Formation of lay health care team Churches can become wellness centers which may entail ecumenical partnerships or interfaith groups.
- ✚ Connecting our Lutheran resources with local entrepreneurs in partnership with local congregations
- ✚ Churches spearhead “think tanks” on various community issues
- ✚ More intentional about applying social statements in terms of issues within the

- community or synod.
- ✚ Being more public in our witness on public issues such as American Indian issues
- ✚ Help churches deal with diversity
- ✚ Hospitality skills
- ✚ Connecting them with groups such as Kaleidoscope
- ✚ Connect them with churches of different cultures or companion synods through technology.
- ✚ Help network churches with environmental issues such as energy and recycling with educational institutions and other groups within synod.
- ✚ Help organize CO-OP efforts to increase buying power in green technology or products or other via clusters, region or synod wide endeavors
- ✚ Help church leadership become coaches of ministry. Helping people in congregations realize their ministry passions.

**Additional Comments:**

- ✚ The social statements provide a springboard for congregations to help communities talk about social issues

**Social Constructs Scenario**

**Assumptions:**

- ✚ There will be congregations
- ✚ Hybrid incarnational theology & distance technology
- ✚ Laity and clergy more equal in leadership

**Relationships:**

- ✚ Create networks of gifts
- ✚ Combined congregations, without competition; redefine “neighborhood”
- ✚ The church is a place for human sanctuary
- ✚ Mentoring; impossible not to find something that suits
- ✚ Accidental Sabbath; a whole day outdoors at church
- ✚ Filling the hunger for the Holy
- ✚ Technology connection; youth gatherings....stay connected

**Worship:**

- ✚ Change days of services
- ✚ More options, more days, most pastors, more voices
- ✚ Interactive sharing of the Word
- ✚ A rebellion of the elders
- ✚ Learning the old before the new; non-traditional with traditional ties
- ✚ Networking w/ different music styles
- ✚ Sharing a campus ecumenically; de-emphasize “our” building; have an outdoor place
- ✚ Church music can and should be diverse

**Synod**

- ✚ Resourcing

- ✚ Supporting
- ✚ Administration
- ✚ Network center
- ✚ Don't waste people's time

***Other:***

- ✚ Subscriber networks
- ✚ Sanctuary – moveable; outdoors preaching

**Ideas for Change**

**Council members offered the following suggestions:**

- \* Facilitate more networking among congregations.
- \* Use clusters (or other groups) to help build and validate the Synod's vision for mission.
- \* Best practices; build on the work of the Mission Table.
- \* Network congregations in the large cities.
- \* Use the deans to alleviate the Bishop's travel.
- \* Use Council members to assist the deans.
- \* Training to ensure consistency among those who are who are assisting with the Bishop's work.
- \* Fewer Synod business assemblies; more gatherings like Growing in God's Field.
- \* There should be a trained lay Bible study leader in every congregation.
- \* Replace the clusters with new possibilities for networking
- \* New roles and/or expand NRIT.
- \* Enforce expectations for clergy participation in NRIT.
- \* Schedule Saturday NRIT classes.
- \* Every congregation is wired and techno-savvy.
- \* NRIT facilitate distance learning.
- \* Every congregation tithing.
- \* Encourage ecumenical relationships within communities.
- \* Every congregation should have a mission plan.
- \* Younger leadership
- \* Regional meetings among congregational leaders (groups smaller than clusters); discuss issues pertinent to the context of those congregations.
- \* Synod VP host a meeting of congregation presidents.
- \* The cluster should include a council of presidents.
- \* Synod host a summit of all of the Lutheran ministries that are affiliated with the Montana Synod; what does it mean to be in ministry together?
- \* Neighboring congregations periodically worship together.
- \* Reorganize the Council committees; committees work on alternative funding, development, etc.
- \* Reorganize Council meetings – less reporting; more focus on strategic work
- \* Revise Council composition and representation

**Business Session II—Saturday, September 17, 2011 9:00 AM**

**PRESENT:** Vice-President Mike Young, Bishop Jessica Crist, Treasurer Harold Spilde, Secretary Pro Tem Susan Hedahl, John Munding, Scott Southwick, Rev. Al Beyer, Rev. Amanda Liggett, Cheryl Muncy, Tom Gossack, Cindy Larsen, Wayne Young, , Bev Larsen, AIM, Dr. Chris Holler-Dinsmore, Rev. Dave Peters, DEM, Rev. Shelley Wickstrom, Region 1, Margie Fiedler, FLBC Director

**Morning Prayer**

Chaplain Shelley Wickstrom led the Council in Morning Prayer

**Call to Order**

Vice President Mike Young called the Council back into session.

**Adoption of Agenda**

Motion

Second: Adopt the Agenda as presented

**SC11.09.03**

**VOTE: ADOPT THE AGENDA**

**Report of the Secretary**

Susan Hedahl, filling in for Secretary Peggy Paugh Leuzinger passed around thank you letters from the Mission Partners.

Motion

Second: Accept the Secretary's Report

**SC11.09.04**

**VOTE: ACCEPT THE SECRETARY'S REPORT**

**Report Of The Treasurer**

Harold Spilde thanked the Bishop and staff for their faithfulness to the Synod. He also stated that 27 congregations are not contributing to the Montana Synod. Thanks were extended to the Mission Table; revenue and income is up and expenses are down. John Munding encouraged gifts to Mission Partners if we have extra at the end of the fiscal year.

**Appointment Of The Mission Table**

Motion

Second: Appoint Rev. Joel Skindlov and Rev. Steve Van Gilder to the Mission Table for a three year term

**SC11.09.05**

**VOTE: APPOINT REV. JOEL SKINDLOV, REV. STEVE VAN GILDER TO THE MISSION TABLE (3 YEAR TERM)**

**Presentation By The Mission Table**

“Here we are .2” by Rev. Dave Peters

### **Report On The Churchwide Assembly**

Mike Young talked about his experience at the CW assembly. A one-page synopsis of actions taken at the assembly was handed out.

#### Motion

Second: The Montana Synod Council communicate to the ELCA Church Council that we wish to reaffirm the process of establishing social statements and the timeline of two current social statements on Criminal Justice and Women's Justice and resist changing the process.

#### **SC11.09.06**

**VOTED: THE MONTANA SYNOD COUNCIL COMMUNICATE TO THE ELCA CHURCH COUNCIL THAT WE WISH TO REAFFIRM THE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING SOCIAL STATEMENTS AND THE TIMELINE OF TWO CURRENT SOCIAL STATEMENTS ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND WOMEN'S JUSTICE AND RESIST CHANGING THE PROCESS.**

### **Report Of The Bishop (Written Report)**

Grace and peace to you, and thank you for service on the Montana Synod Council. Each fall we start with some new people in leadership in the Montana Synod. Thank you all for agreeing to serve in this position.

#### **Vision:**

I am looking forward to this Council Meeting, in which we will spend the bulk of our time creatively imagining what we might become as a Synod, as a Church. We have been operating with the same model since 1988 when the ELCA began, and it is time for us to think more expansively. Everything else has changed in the world since 1988, and the church, too, needs to change structure to minister in today's and tomorrow's world. My hope is that we will continue to focus on mission and outreach, even as we look at new ways to be church in this changing world. I do not want us to get so preoccupied with structure that we forget about our mission. I am aware that we as a Synod Council are pretty representative of the Lutheran population, which is to say mostly older and mostly white. And I am aware that the population is increasingly diverse, and much younger. So we may not be the best people to redesign the church for the younger crowd. But we will do the best we can, with God's help, a little humor and a lot of grace. In the end, we are not called to be popular, just faithful.

In addition to articulating our own priorities for mission in the next decade, we will be looking closely at Churchwide Assembly decisions based on the recommendations of the LIFT Task Force. Living into the Future Together looked at trends, and made recommendations, both constitutional and procedural, as well as missional. Some of the decisions that we can think about include the recommendation that every congregation have a mission plan by the end of 2012. That's right, not a mission statement, but a mission plan. This is really upping the ante. Pastor Dave Peters and the Mission Table will be helpful in giving us tools for congregations to use. And we are to expect some Churchwide resources, as well. I would like to challenge and empower all Synod Council members to begin to talk to congregations about their mission. For too long we have had conversations about survival, about denominational relationship, about staffing, about programming, about losses, about what we don't have. It is time for us to have conversations everywhere we go about why we do what we do. As Pastor Allen and Pastor Peters and I travel to congregations, regardless of why else we are there, we will invite them to

begin the process of establishing a mission plan.

### **Congregations:**

The LIFT report put a high priority on congregations. So what are the 130 congregations of the Montana Synod up to these days? With 3 ordinations this summer, we have 3 new pastors serving 8 congregations in our synod. In addition to these newly ordained, 3 congregations have extended calls to pastors who have accepted. And several more congregations are in the process of writing up a congregational profile, preparing to interview candidates. Still other congregations are seeking new alignments as shifting populations make old arrangements unworkable. Our newest (OK, not actually yet formed) congregation made into Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson's Churchwide Assembly report as an example of God's people reaching out and doing ministry. We are back to the search process for the Freedom in Christ Prison Congregation at the Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge.

The Synod Council has certain responsibilities when it comes to congregational alignments. The Synod Council is tasked constitutionally with approving new alignments of congregations. In addition, if an ELCA pastor serving in our synod is asked to serve a congregation that is not ELCA and not in full communion with the ELCA, the pastor must receive approval from the synod bishop, the synod council and the presiding bishop. We will be facing that in our February meeting. Melville Lutheran has been in a shared parish arrangement with Big Timber Lutheran since before the beginning of the ELCA. When Melville voted to leave the ELCA in July, the parish agreement was dissolved and both congregations are technically without a pastor (although Pr. Baglien continues to serve both as usual.) Big Timber needs to vote to call a pastor, and then petition the bishop, synod council and presiding bishop to have that pastor also serve Melville. Because they were not aware of all the technicalities, Big Timber has not yet had the meeting to call their pastor.

We have one other situation in which an ELCA pastor is contracted to serve a non-ELCA church with whom the ELCA is not in full communion. The Devon-Galata parish, which includes Trinity, predates the current set of conflicts and defections. But to be fair, and to comply with the constitution, Devon/Galata and their Pastor, Roberta Smythe, will also comply with the regulation.

At the last 2 Synod Council meetings we welcomed 2 Synodically Authorized Worshiping Communities, New Hope in Great Falls, and Sanctuary of Hope in Chester—both started by faithful members of congregations that left the ELCA. Being a SAWC does not automatically turn into being a congregation. But it is a recognition and a step. And it is the least we can do for people who have struggled to be faithful to the church and whose congregations left them behind.

We have congregations who are between pastors or who will no longer be able to have a pastor serving them who rely on supply preachers. This is a satisfactory arrangement for Sunday to Sunday coverage, but does not give the congregation a designated pastor in charge. We need to look at Vice Pastors or an expanded role for Deans, looking at the model proposed by George Karres and the Southeast Cluster in 2009.

Many of our congregations are in formal or informal relationships with full-communion partner congregations. We have long-standing partnerships with Presbyterians in Terry/Fallon and White Sulphur Springs, and a newer one in Hot Springs. We have a Lutheran-Episcopal congregation in Big Sky, and Lutheran pastors are serving Episcopal congregations in a number of locations through a variety of arrangements. We have a UCC pastor serving our ELCA

congregations in Savage and Skaar. And we are working cooperatively with Methodists in Lavina, and now Thompson Falls/White Pine. And conversations are going on in other communities, as well. Our full communion partnerships give us an opportunity to work together ecumenically in small communities, and for the sake of mission. But there is risk as well. Most ecumenical parish arrangements are initiated locally, which is a good thing. But they can be pursued as a solution to very local issues without attention to the bigger picture. Greater communication among the judicatories is critical here.

### **Structure:**

At this council meeting we are going to assume that much of what we do as a Synod is on the table. Our way of organizing ourselves, our way of funding, our way of staffing are all up for conversation. Some things we cannot change without constitutional change. Some things synods are required to do by the ELCA constitution. But we have a lot of leeway with our own constitution and with our traditions and practices, and we can be bold. Starting after 2013, Churchwide Assemblies will be every 3 years instead of every 2. Many people have suggested that we could cut down on our annual synod assemblies/theological conferences. Proposals have ranged from doing it every 3 years, to having interim mini-events in 3 areas of the synod. Other people have emphasized the strength of the annual gathering as a way to gather a dispersed set of people.

Clusters: Ah, clusters. Our whole structure is based on the existence of viable clusters that include regular participation of clergy and laity. Rarely does it happen. Some clusters are gatherings of clergy only. Some meet annually with clergy and laity and have a program. We elect/appoint/acquire synod council members from the 12 clusters. In a rotation that insures the proper representation of lay and clergy, male and female, clusters are instructed to nominate a synod council member (who, technically, is elected at the synod assembly.) Clusters may not function the way they are envisioned in our constituting documents, but they still provide, theoretically, an opportunity for the faithful to gather in smaller geographic units. This is the time of year when I write to cluster deans asking them for an invitation to their fall cluster meetings. It is a good opportunity for the three of us—Bishop, Associate, DEM, to get to all the corners of the synod. And it would be a good opportunity for you, as the synod council member from the cluster, to be present, to report and to receive feedback. Chapter 12 of our Synod Constitution outlines the responsibilities and opportunities of cluster.

### **Communication:**

At our Synod Assembly, some of the discussion generated by proposals to change the way the church operates focused on better communication and ways for people in the synod at large to become more involved in the work of the church. I'm not sure that having fewer opportunities to get together is the way to do that. But if we can figure out some better ways to get together, that might work! I ask all of you, as Synod Council members, be proactive in communicating to your congregations and to your clusters ways that they can become more informed and involved in the work of the church beyond the congregation. Encourage them to get on the synod email list, to read the newsletter, to get on the ELCA news release list, to visit the ELCA and Montana Synod websites, to read The Lutheran. One of the things that we learned in 2009 was that people were not well-informed. I think we can do better. And as the Synod Council, it starts with us.

I receive frequent and demanding emails from an individual who is unhappy with the

2009 Churchwide decisions on human sexuality. Each email contains an article or an excerpt that is extremely anti-ELCA, and the sender requests that I engage in dialogue about the article. I try to be polite. Finally, I got smart. I started sending back things from my email inbox—The Lutheran Magazine online, news from the Lutheran World Federation! Onward!

Our synod assembly adopted a resolution on bullying, and we have set up a Task Force of interested folks to identify resources and promote them within our Synod. I hope you'll be able to read about them in the newsletter and hear from them in February. We have a lot of talent in our synod, and one of our challenges is to figure out ways to use it.

### **Leadership:**

In the fall we always have a lot of activity generated in our office. LPA candidates meet for their training, in early October, and current LPAs meet in retreat for continuing education in mid-October. We are widening the circle of LPA oversight. It now includes Kathy Johnson and Greg Holler-Dinsmore, as well as Cheryl Muncy, Mark Gravrock and staff. We are looking for ways to support congregations and LPAs. And we are introducing background checks for LPAs and LPA candidates, just as we have them for candidates for the roster (pastors, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, deaconesses.)

We have a strong candidacy committee functioning and a good group of candidates. We continue to have TEEM candidates lifted up to serve rural congregations in our Synod, who travel to PLTS and Luther several times a year for classes. We have growing interest in the Distributed Learning MDiv program at Luther that offers courses online for qualified students, who meet online in cohorts, and travel to seminary from time to time for on-site courses. We have AIM candidates, who generally do their work while taking classes. And we have traditional MDiv students, who go off to seminary. All this is to say that the work of the candidacy committee is diverse and complex, as they follow candidates through their varied journeys. We have a cadre of Deans who are willing and able to help in the duties of the synod office. One cluster is still without a Dean, but we are working on it.

We have a Convocation of Rostered Leaders scheduled for Lewistown for November 11.

### **Staffing:**

Our staff members have been gracious in living with our reduced means. Particularly John Allen, whose position was cut to .6, has been faithful and gracious. For the last 2 months of 2010 he voluntarily deployed to Antarctica, with the Guard paying him. And in September 2011 we are taking advantage of an opportunity for him to work full time for the Guard in Great Falls, saving additional money for the Synod. In the spring he served part time as an interim pastor in Fairfield, in addition to his Synod work. But these other work opportunities come at a cost to the synod, with some disruption and lack of continuity. It is a reality we are working with, but it is not ideal.

As we look at new ways to structure our synod and do the work that needs to be done, I am hopeful that we will be able to design and pay for adequate staffing for the job. John, Dave, Susan and Susan are fine colleagues who work tirelessly on behalf of the synod, and I hope you will join me in thanking them.

Jessica Crist, Bishop

## **Report Of The Executive Committee**

### **2012 Salary Guidelines**

Motion

Second: Accept the 2012 MT Synod Salary Guidelines as presented

**SC11.09.07**

**VOTE: ACCEPT THE 2012 MT SYNOD SALARY GUIDELINES AS PRESENTED**

### **2012 Budget Adjustment Recommendation.**

Motion

Second: Adjust the 2012 Budget by reducing income for DEM from \$15,000 to \$10,000 and reduce expenses of DEM travel from \$15,000 to \$10,000

**SC11.09.08**

**VOTE: ADJUST THE 2012 BUDGET BY REDUCING INCOME FOR D.E.M. FROM \$15,000 TO \$10,000 AND REDUCE EXPENSES OF D.E.M. TRAVEL FROM \$15,000 TO \$10,000**

MT Association of Churches – Lay Ministry Institute --

Motion

Second: Move \$600 from MAC-LMI to MAC for 2012 for a total of \$1,600

**SC11.09.09**

**VOTE: MOVE \$600 FROM MAC-LMI TO MAC FOR 2012 FOR A TOTAL OF \$1,600**

### **Bishop Sabbatical**

Motion

Second: Approve the Sabbatical plan for the Bishop: December 2011 and one month during the summer, 2012

**SC11.09.10**

**VOTE: APPROVE THE SABBATICAL PLAN FOR THE BISHOP: DECEMBER 2011 AND ONE MONTH DURING THE SUMMER, 2012**

### **Preview of 2012 Synod Assembly and Theological Conference**

June 1-3, 2012. Theme is ecumenical relations. Kathryn Lohre, incoming president of National Council of Churches, and first Lutheran to hold that post will be our keynote speaker. She has also been named the director of Ecumenical Relations in the ELCA.

### **Appointment of Nominating Committee.**

The clusters are asked to appoint a person to serve on the Synod Nominating Committee from their cluster.

### **Roster Issues:**

Motion

Second: Place Rev. Josh Magyar, on leave from call, first year.

**SC11.09.11**

**VOTE: PLACE REV. JOSH MAGYAR, ON LEAVE FROM CALL, FIRST YEAR**

Motion

Second: Place Rev. Kristi Bummer, on leave from call, first year.

**SC11.09.12**

**VOTE: PLACE REV. KRISTI BUMMER, ON LEAVE FROM CALL, FIRST YEAR**

Motion

Second: Rev. Arden Barden, to retirement, September 1, 2011

**SC11.09.13**

**VOTE: REV. ARDEN BARDEN, TO RETIREMENT, SEPTEMBER 1, 2011**

Motion

Second: Rev. Al Baglien, on partial disability

**SC11.09.14**

**VOTE: REV. AL BAGLIEN, ON PARTIAL DISABILITY**

**Greetings And Reflections From Shelley Wickstrom, Region One Coordinator**

**Greetings From Margie Fiedler, Director Of Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp**

**Other Issues:**

Motion

Second: Future Synod Council dates: February 23-23, 2012, September 21-22 , 2012, September 20-21, 2013.

**SC11.09.15**

**VOTE: FUTURE SYNOD COUNCIL DATES: FEBRUARY 23-23, 2012, SEPTEMBER 21-22, 2012, SEPTEMBER 20-21, 2013.**

The Meeting was adjourned

Rev. Shelley Wickstrom led the Synod Council in Closing Prayer

Respectfully submitted,

Susan A. Hedahl, Secretary Pro Tem

Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger,

Secretary, Montana Synod

ADDENDUM:

Bishop Crist's Sabbatical Plan

Synod Policy—Sabbatical after 5 years

Reality—3 months is a long time to be gone, especially with reduced staff capacity and reduced

finances

Proposal—Bishop takes 1 month as sabbatical in December 2011.

Bishop takes additional month/s as sabbatical in Summer of 2012

Coverage—Pastor Walt Kirkegaard, who served as part-time interim bishop between the departure of Bishop Ramseth and the election of Bishop Omland, is available and willing to serve as Interim Bishop during the month of December and in a summer month.

Pastor Allen would continue his work as Associate to the Bishop. Pastor Peters would continue his work as DEM.

We would need to define duties and compensation for Pr. Kirkegaard. I do not see him engaging in day to day duties in the office. We might ask him to spend 10 hours/week in the office, to consult with staff and make any decisions that require the Bishop.

I propose that we pay him \$1000 for the month.

I propose that we take that \$4500 from the synod rebate of \$10,000 we received from the Board of Pensions.

What I will do: I propose to spend most of the month of December in Europe, visiting my children, and connecting with the cultural and religious heritage of the western church. I may spend some time with my sister, dealing with our mother's house.

I propose to spend the summer month hiking and writing. I have neglected hiking in the last several years, to my detriment. Writing helps ground me.