

Minutes

Montana Synod Council
18-19 February 2022
Synod House, Great Falls, MT, and ZOOM

Present: Bishop Laurie Jungling, Vice President Dick Deschamps, (and Ginger) Treasurer Dave Scholten, Rev. Wendy McAlpine, Lana Buerkle, Rev. Scott Hedegaard, Rev. Peter Erickson, Celeste Pogachar, Allen Hansen, Rev. Peggy Paugh Leuzinger - DEM, Rev. Jason Asselstine - AB, and Beth Adams - Region 1 Gift Planner

Present on line: John Sheppard, Rev. Doris Tollefson, Robin Matthews, Rev. Gretchen Wagner, and Mary Hutchinson

Absent: Amanda Liggett, Evan Ceaicovschi, Kevin Johnson

Chaplain, Rev. Peggy Paugh-Leuzinger led the council in a devotion on the text from 1 Kings 17:1-16: Stewardship and Generosity

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Deschamps called the Montana Synod Council to order at 2:40pm.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion

Second: Adopt the agenda with the privilege of the chair to revise.

SC22.02.01

VOTE: ADOPT THE AGENDA WITH THE PRIVILEGE OF THE CHAIR TO REVISE.

INTRODUCTIONS & CHECK-IN

Each of the members of the Synod Council and staff introduced themselves.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Rev. Peggy Paugh Leuzinger shared the secretary's report, including passing around thank you letters received in the last few months from our ministry partners.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion

Second: Approve the minutes of the November 30, 2021 meeting.

SC22.02.02

VOTE: APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 30, 2021 MEETING.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Treasurer Dave Scholten shared his report with the council.

- January 2022 end of fiscal year financial report.
- The Council asked for clarification around the synod's salary guidelines. Is the synod staff being compensated fairly? Also, how can we offer more clarity to the congregations around the guidelines? Treasurer Scholten will work on this with some others and the bishop's and associate to the bishop's salary will be examined to ensure that they are being paid fairly.

PRESENTATION OF THE BUDGET

Treasurer Scholten presented a powerpoint of the Synod's budget with revisions to the 2022 budget and the proposed 2023 budget. There was discussion around these.

Treasurer Scholten will review the *designated fund categories* to clean up and clarify them.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Laurie Jungling presented her report.* She highlighted several things, including the question of how to we tell the story of the Synod staff and Synod equipping for the gospel? The Synod staff is working on how to equip for the ministry of the Gospel in these ways:

- Equipping leaders – rostered and lay
- Congregational life and in the midst of transitions – equipping for innovation and exploration
- Helping congregations and ministries collaborate, especially to function in relationships and avoid being in silos.
- Stewardship to see abundance and not scarcity
- Polity and administration issues –
- Faith formation opportunities
- Justice and love – task forces
- Uplifting, encourage people.... In the midst of transitions and relationships
- Relationship building with ministry partners and ecumenical partners\interfaith

How can we help you all do these things!

In September, she was looking to gather people for a dreaming: how do we open ourselves up to be transformed by the Holy Spirit? In the months since, Bishop Laurie acknowledged the the whiplash and trauma in this time. She commented using material from Betsy Stone, that we are affected in body, mind and spirit! Our ability to think and manage emotions has been impacted. That is where our leaders are. This is what Bishop Jungling is seeing across the whole church.

In the midst of this situation, Bishop Jungling is slowing down and working to help people find a way to recover and manage this trauma and experience this in healthier ways.

The Synod staff is working to “get back out to the congregations...” The staff is traveling again.

ASSOCIATE TO THE BISHOP'S REPORT

Pastor Jason Asselstine gave his report.* In conversations with the lay leaders, he observes that there are some congregations who do not have pastors and are happy about that. The lay leaders have been doing a great job. The cost savings is so significant, but the reality is that some of these congregations have been more generous because they have more money to give. These congregations are using a variety of resources from the Synod and other places. These have been interesting observations even as there is such a shortage of clergy...

The assignment process has been changed – our own candidates are defaulted to our own Synod. The LPA program and TEEM program have been so very important in the shape of the Synod.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

VP Dick Deschamps referred the council to his written report.*

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR EVANGELICAL MISSION

Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger gave her report.* She shared ideas about the message map for the Synod to communicate more effectively about all the impact of the Synod. She also used a document to wonder about the potential givers to the Synod – people who know and trust what the Synod is doing and why. She also suggested that Synod Council members be asked to give to the Synod to model generosity for the sake of others as the Synod looks for new income streams rather than relying only on Mission Support from congregations.

SYNOD GIFT POLICY

The council walked through the policy and made editorial changes.

PERSONNEL POLICY

Motion

Second: Amend the document at paragraph 4.50 and approve the Synod Personnel Policy.

SC22.02.03

VOTE: AMEND THE DOCUMENT AT PARAGRAPH 4.50 AND APPROVE THE SYNOD PERSONNEL POLICY.

SYNOD ENDOWMENT FUND

Bishop Jungling presented the Endowment Fund history and original purposes. The ELCA Pooled Trust (of which the endowment funds are a part) would have distributed \$12,708 from the endowment funds in 2021, with potential for \$13,000 in 2022.

The Bishop and staff would have some freedom to disburse the Emmaus Funds for Our Saviour's Rocky Boy in 2022 and use the Planned Giving Fund to disburse the funds for ministries in the Synod.

Motion

Second: Add Allen Hansen as a signer on the Endowment Authorization for the Endowment Fund.

SC22.02.04

VOTE: ADD ALLEN HANSEN AS A SIGNER ON THE ENDOWMENT AUTHORIZATION FOR THE ENDOWMENT FUND.

SYNOD FINANCES – NEW INCOME STREAMS

The council discussed this issue. Some suggestions included crowd-source funding and a Synod Giving Club.

SYNOD HOUSE

The executive committee made the decision to refinance the Synod House mortgage. There was a \$1,060 processing fee to lower the interest rate by .5%. The new monthly payment is \$2,109 (versus the old payment of \$2369).

Motion

Second: Affirm the executive committee's decision to refinance the mortgage on the Synod House.

SC22.02.05

VOTE: AFFIRM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S DECISION TO REFINANCE THE MORTGAGE ON THE SYNOD HOUSE.

The council entered into recess for the evening. Rev. Scott Hedegaard led the closing prayer.

The council gathered again on the morning of February 19th with all who attended the first day, except for Rev. Doris Tollefson. Chaplain Hedegaard shared a devotion on "Even So", reflecting on Isaiah 43.

2022 SYNOD ASSEMBLY – THEME: EQUIPPING FOR THE GOSPEL

Agenda: Bishop Jungling presented the proposed agenda for the upcoming assembly, scheduled for June 2-4 at the Billings Hotel and Convention Center.

Motion

Second: Accept the 2022 Synod Assembly agenda as presented.

SC22.02.06

VOTE: ACCEPT THE 2022 SYNOD ASSEMBLY AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

Rules of the Assembly: The rules have been used over several years. The Synod Council had a conversation about the expectation of vaccines and boosters, masks, and social distancing. Bishop Jungling will write up language on covid related rules and expectations, which the council will vote on electronically.

Resolutions and Memorials: Linda Nelson, Jim Nelson, Marlow Carrels, Dick Deschamps and Peter Erickson will constitute the committee. The deadline for submissions will be April 15th.

Council Assignments:

- Credentials Committee: Rev. Gretchen Wagner and John Sheppard
- Elections Committee: Robin Matthews, Celeste Pogachar, Lana Buerkle, Rev. Wendy McAlpine, and Allen Hansen.

SPIRIT OF LIFE MINISTRIES

Pastor Chris Holler-Dinsmore has retired. The Synod will do the paperwork and disburse the remaining money in the Mission Investment Funds.

NEW BUSINESS

Montana Jewish Project

Former bishops, Rev. Mark Ramseth and Rev. Jessica Crist gave a background presentation on the Montana Jewish Project. They request that the Montana Synod make a gift to help purchase

back the Jewish Synagogue in Helena, MT. They believe that this is in keeping with the *Agreement between the Montana Synod and the Montana Association of Jewish Communities*, approved by the synod assembly in 1995. Bishop Jungling shared that she has a meeting with the leaders of the project coming up on March 8th. Someone suggested that the synod find a way to accept gifts and set up a line item to disperse them to the project. For more information, visit www.montanajewishproject.com

Motion

Second: Give \$1000 to the Montana Jewish Project.

SC22.02.07

VOTE: GIVE \$1000 TO THE MONTANA JEWISH PROJECT.

Consent Agenda

The council reviewed the consent agenda, striking Immanuel Lutheran in Absarokee and the future meeting dates and adding a call to special service for Rev. Darren Paulson. Presented here as amended:

Roster Issues:

On Leave from Call:

Pr. Kendra Wilde – entering 1st year on leave from call – November 14, 2021

Pr. Kristi Bummer – entering 2nd year on leave from call – December 1, 2020

Retirement:

Pr. Dan Heskett – January 1, 2022

Pr. Julie Long – December 1, 2021

Pr. Christine Holler-Dinsmore – February 1, 2022

Pr. Kristina Mitzman – November 30, 2021

Call to Special Service:

Pr. Darren Paulson to Saint John’s United in Billings – October 11, 2021

Appointments to Ongoing Committees:

NRIT Advisory Committee:

Pastor Tim O’Shields

LPA Deb Oldfield

Motion

Second: Accept the consent agenda.

SC22.02.08

VOTE: ACCEPT THE CONSENT AGENDA.

Ministry Growth Fund

Motion

Second: Split the Ministry Growth Fund of the ELCA Foundation account in three accounts named: *Rural Ministry Emmaus Fund*, *Leader Support Ramseth Fund*, and *Montana Synod of the ELCA*; and set up automatic quarterly distributions for the ministry of the synod.

SC22.02.09

VOTE: SPLIT THE MINISTRY GROWTH FUND OF THE ELCA FOUNDATION ACCOUNT IN THREE ACCOUNTS NAMED: RURAL MINISTRY EMMAUS FUND, LEADER SUPPORT RAMSETH FUND, AND MONTANA SYNOD OF THE ELCA; AND SET UP AUTOMATIC QUARTERLY DISTRIBUTIONS FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE SYNOD.

Housing Allowance Resolution

Motion

Second: Accept the proposed housing allowances from Bishop Laurie Jungling and from Pastor Jason Asselstine for 2022.

SC22.02.10

VOTE: ACCEPT THE PROPOSED HOUSING ALLOWANCES FROM BISHOP LAURIE JUNGLING AND FROM PASTOR JASON ASSELSTINE FOR 2022.

Gift Acceptance Policy

Motion

Second: Approve the Gift Acceptance Policy as presented.

SC22.02.11

VOTE: APPROVE THE GIFT ACCEPTANCE POLICY AS PRESENTED.

2023 Budget

Treasurer Scholten shared a few updates to the 2023 budget.

Motion

Second: Approve 2023 budget as presented on Saturday morning, February 19th, 2022.

SC22.02.12

VOTE: APPROVE 2023 BUDGET AS PRESENTED ON SATURDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 19TH, 2022.

Set Council Meeting Date:

Motion

Second: Accept the upcoming Synod Council meeting dates of March 12, 2022 via zoom, June 2, 2022 in Billings, and September 16-17, 2022 hybrid meeting in Great Falls.

SC22.02.13

VOTE: ACCEPT THE UPCOMING SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING DATES OF MARCH 12, 2022 VIA ZOOM, JUNE 2, 2022 IN BILLINGS, AND SEPTEMBER 16-17, 2022 HYBRID MEETING IN GREAT FALLS.

Chaplain Rev. Scott Hedegaard led the council in closing devotions.

VP Deschamps adjourned the meeting at 12:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger, acting secretary

Synod Council
February 18-19, 2022
Bishop's Report – Rev. Laurie Jungling

Dear Friends in Christ,

“The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.” (Eph 4:

As I mentioned in my report in September, the functioning mission theme for the synod as the staff engages in our everyday work is “Equipping for the Ministry of the Gospel.” It is this theme that directs us and guides us as we fulfill our callings for the synod and all of Christ's Church. Most of our time, energy, and effort involves equipping and supporting:

- The Leadership (clergy and lay) of the Synod
- Congregational Life in their ministries, transitions, explorations and innovations
- Collaboration for ministry among congregations, ministries, and followers of Christ
- Stewardship grounded in God's abundance (rather than scarcity) and a discipleship of generosity
- Administration of the Synod in its practical life (financial, polity and governance)
- Faith Formation through education, resources, guidance
- Love and Justice work
- Spiritual, emotional and mental up-lifting
- Relationship building with ministry partners as well as ecumenical partners and interfaith colleagues and friends

Part of this effort concerns helping the synod ministries respond to the messiness of the present like recovering from the ongoing effects of Covid and assisting congregations in finding pastoral leadership in a time when ordained pastors are fewer. But our work also entails looking to the future and wondering with the rest of the church what God's future church will look like and how will we get there? This means leading the synod as together we walk on the path Jesus is calling us to follow. Leading in this way doesn't mean defining and controlling the future of congregations, but rather equipping the ministries of the synod to listen for, discern, experiment, learn, and take faithful risks in following Christ.

The church is in a time of Adaptive Challenge. What we've done before no longer works and there are no easy solutions to the challenges we face. So we need to spend time lifting up what is core to who we are, what we're called to seek and what we're called to do -- Christ's gospel and Jesus' way -- while at the same time letting go of what doesn't work and removing the stumbling blocks in our path.

How can we discover the excitement of being Christ's Church and passionately follow Christ's mission to proclaim and live the gospel for the world?

How do we open our ourselves to be transformed by the Spirit to co-create with Christ the vision of the in-coming realm of God in our midst?

These are questions I and the synod staff continue to grapple with and invite the synod council and the ministries of the synod to wrestle with as well. My hope had been to dive into some discernment conversations along these lines with some folks around the synod this winter. But after hearing from our pastoral leaders (lay and clergy), my colleague bishops, myself and my staff about the exhaustion of so many and the on-going whiplash-like trauma from which so many of us are trying to recover, I decided a slowdown was needed. While there are some who are ready to pounce on the opportunities this continuing crisis offers for change, others are just trying to stay afloat and need some space and time to heal before stepping too quickly into the future.

So the "Theory U process" for the synod I mentioned last council meeting has been put on hold. Instead, the staff and I will be taking some time over the next months to get back out there, connecting with congregations and leaders around the synod and listening to where folks are, even as we proclaim the gospel hope of God's incoming future that we cling to. In fact, this is already happening. During the past several months we have been to the Bear Paw Cluster twice to meet with clergy and lay leaders as they discern next steps for ministry in the area. I am encouraged by the openness to explore alternative ways doing ministry and some conversations are already happening around some innovative ideas on the hi-line. There are some amazing and thoughtful leaders up there, listening in love for the Spirit rather than giving in to fear.

Also, I've been to Sidney to preach at Pella and met with the joint team in Broadus as the Lutherans and UCC churches enter into an agreement to share a pastor. I've been working with the Lutheran congregation in Cut Bank as they too explore sharing a pastor with the Presbyterians. And I've been working with Bethlehem in Billings as we try to support this important congregation through a difficult transition time. And I conducted a Bishop's consultation with Immanuel in Absarokee who is taking their second vote to disaffiliate with the ELCA this weekend.

These are but a few examples of the work I've done alongside the rest of the staff to support and equip our many congregations with and without pastors. Due to various realities, this work will continue well into the future as we have fewer pastors to work with and fewer congregations that can afford them full-time. We are also offering weekly recorded sermons that congregations without pastors can use on a Sunday morning.

I have had some joyfilled opportunities to be out there with the people of the synod, celebrating 127th anniversaries with both St. John's in Helena and Bethlehem in Kalispell and 101 years with St. James in Columbus. I also conducted an ordination (Annela Rova) and installation (Melissa Johansson) and got to dedicate the new solar panels with a water blessing at Our Savior's in Bonner.

This week the staff and I are headed to Missoula to meet with the pastors about some strategic dreaming for the area. And I will be gathering with the Flathead Cluster pastors in March. The Chico Retreat is on again finally and so will be gathering with the pastors who attend (Hallelujah!).

Another way I am/we are using this slowdown time to the synod's benefit involves focusing our attention on the financial life of the synod. This time of transition between treasurers is the perfect time to ask new questions, explore different options, and ponder how we can use the generous blessings given by God toward the mission of "equipping the ministry of the gospel in the synod." That is why much of our time this weekend involves looking at various aspects of being faithful stewards as we follow Christ. We will be looking at the synod's endowments and how to use the proceeds for ministry in the synod. We will try to get a more robust gift policy functioning. We will look at constructing a healthy 2023 budget and update the 2022 budget with more realistic yet faith-filled perspective. We will begin conversations about the synod's financial future as mission support continues to decline and about how we are going to handle the Synod House and the mortgage in the years to come.

Synod Assembly is coming up quickly and since it is my first in-person assembly (and Candi's) and since we are still dealing with the realities of Covid, the work of preparation involves a steeper learning curve. This will be an assembly that combines both some theological work with some important business that we need to get done. We are adjusting the schedule a bit and trying find ways to streamline the event with fewer reports and more active conversations among people in workshops and larger group plenaries. This year we will be live-streaming the assembly for the first time; but delegates still must attend in person.

These past several months, I have been engaged in more ecumenical conversations, mostly surrounding sharing pastors but also regarding how we can find ways to be partners in Christ together across the state. One conversation that is just now beginning concerns the future of the Montana Association of Christians (MAC); the judicatories of each denomination and the MAC council representatives will be meeting this summer to discern where God is calling that ministry to go.

Also, as the Jewish community in MT looks to purchase the synagogue in Helena, I/we are reminded of our interfaith relationship and agreement with our Jewish siblings and I am thankful for the opportunity to build my own relationships with them even as we explore ways to help them in their project of cultural center to educate and challenge growing antisemitism and other forms of hate in Montana.

The two Task Forces, I'm glad to say, are up and running and functioning in the way their mandate calls for. The Racial Justice task force sponsored a group of 10 Lutheran leaders to attend the Wrestling with the Truth of Colonization training on zoom through Missoula Common Good. I was one of those leaders and found the training to be the best racial justice training I've ever done. (Ask me why!) Another cohort of 10 leaders from communities located near reservations are participating right now in the training. Both task forces have proposals for the synod council to consider and so, to give them the time they need to present those proposals, we will have a focused council meeting via zoom in March to address their ideas and reports.

Finally, my Conference of Bishops and Churchwide responsibilities have also demanded a lot of my time and attention during these past several months. I am the chair of the Theological and Ethical Concerns Committee which has taken on a much greater role in the work of the bishops as we explore questions concerning our core Lutheran beliefs that will guide us into the future of the ELCA, how we as a church can better talk with each other in healthier and holier ways, as well as ongoing wrestling with the theology of online worship, Holy Communion, and congregations. I am also serving as part of the Task Force of 9 (bishops) who continue to finesse the First Call process. And I'm active in the newly created rural ministry table of bishops to find ways to nurture, build up and advocate for rural congregations and pastoral leaders willing to serve them. Ministry in the rural church is important to me and I am concerned that all too often rural voices are diminished or forgotten in many conversations across the church.

Regarding our engagement with the Churchwide expression of the ELCA, a reminder that the Churchwide Assembly is happening this summer in Columbus OH. Those are usually live-streamed and can be interesting to watch. We have several delegates attending, including myself and Dick (VP). Unlike a representative form of government where delegates try to represent the will of the people who elected them, the Churchwide assembly asks delegates to listen to others in order to hear the guidance of the Holy Spirit which may or may not represent the will of the people. In other words, they seek God's will to be done, not my will be done. The churchwide offices have also been in a time of transition and so there are new faces and offices that we who interact with CW more often are having to learn. The Youth Gathering Event that was to be held in Minneapolis this summer has been cancelled. We are exploring with our camps what opportunities might be available for our high school youth here in MT or elsewhere this summer.

Respectfully Submitted in Christ,

Rev. Laurie Jungling
 Bishop, Montana Synod, ELCA
 Feb. 15, 2022

February 2022 A2B Synod Council report

Mobility/Transitions

Open Congregations

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Shepherd | Intern Keith Weatherford |
| • Billings, Bethlehem | in Transition |
| • Circle | Interviewing |
| • Northridge, Kalispell | Interviewing |
| • Zion, Lewistown | Interviewing |
| • St. Paul/Grace, Fairfield | Waiting on Candidates |
| • Atonement, Billings | Waiting on Candidates |
| • Baker, Ekalaka, Plevna | Waiting on Candidates |
| • New Life, Helena | in Transition |
| • Hot Springs | Waiting on Candidates |

- St. Paul, Cutbank in Transition
- Peace, Billings Interviewing
- Our Savior's, Broadus in Transition
- Messiah/Big Sandy in Transition
- American, Chinook in Transition
- Our Redeemer, Helena Waiting on Candidates

Transitions

- Harlem, Hogeland, Turner Called Will Rima
- Livingston American Lutheran Called Melissa Johansen
- Hardin Called Josh Wyman
- Trinity, Choteau Called Annela Rova

Travels

January was a busy month getting back into congregations. I traveled to several congregations to visit with their call committees including, Northridge in Kalispell and Peace in Billings. I visited First in Havre for an area strategy and to Big Sandy to work with their anxious congregation. I travelled to Circle for their annual meeting and to Wilsall to walk with them through some transition anxiety. I also travelled to Hardin to install their new pastor, Josh Wyman. Along the way I checked in with several of our pastors to see how things were going and to pray with them.

LPA

- Held an initial orientation for new class over Zoom. Waiting for next in person class until we can do so safely.

Youth

- ELCA Youth Gathering has been cancelled until 2024

Synod House

- Frozen septic lines caused back up.

Other Misc.

- Working with Nominating Committee on securing nominees for the Synod and Churchwide Assemblies.
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In Christ, Pastor Jason Asselstine

Vice President Report
 Montana Synod Council
 February 18, 2022

We have two bylines in the heading of our agenda, mini mission statements if you will, and I would like to address one of them in my report. That one being, Financing the Synod Ministries.

At first glance, one would take from those few short words, that a major part of our mission is working on the financing of the synod; income streams, budgets, expenses, personnel benefits, etc. I think, however, it is better to focus on Synod Ministries.

The Synod is in place to serve. We serve congregations, pastors, lay leaders, the wider church at home and abroad, partner ministries and through those ministries, the people of Montana and Wyoming. Having an efficient and reactive financial structure allows us to serve in an efficient and beneficial manner. We have been blessed to have a great treasurer in Sue Ost for many years. We will miss Sue at our meetings; always ready with answers to our questions and a willingness to work tirelessly for the benefit of the Synod. We wish Sue only the best in the future. We are further blessed to have David Scholten to take over the reins from Sue. Dave will bring new eyes to the process with fresh ideas of how to continue to manage the finances of the Synod. Welcome Dave.

In this meeting we will be talking finances a lot. Beth Adams from the ELCA foundation will be with us to help us talk about endowments and a revised gift policy. We will be exploring new ways of generating income as mission support continues to decrease. We will be starting a discussion of how the Synod House fits into all of this. So, I ask you to bring your financial questions and ideas as we better prepare ourselves to serve the congregations and partner ministries of Montana and Wyoming in these new and changing times.

I look forward to an exciting and productive meeting.

Peace to you.
Respectfully Submitted,
Dick Deschamps
Synod vice President

Director for Evangelical Mission: Report to the Montana Synod Council Feb. 18-19, 2022

Directors for Evangelical Mission – ELCA Website: “In order to coordinate the partnership between the ELCA’s churchwide ministries and the 65 synods of this church, DEMs serve in positions shared by both of these expressions of this church. They are fully churchwide staff who are fully embraced by synods.

DEMs convene leadership tables in their synods, which oversee four main areas:

- mission development or “new starts”
- congregational renewal or "redevelopment"
- Mission Support and stewardship
- missional vision and planning for the synod

DEMs are a key resource for congregations and leaders seeking tools and counsel for starting a new ministry or revitalizing existing ministries, as well as identifying, developing and equipping leaders for mission and ministry.”

Greetings to the Montana Synod Council members:

In my report to you for the September Synod Council meeting, I included the statement above from the ELCA about the DEM position. This, along with the vision statement from the Synod guides the work that I do. As part of the ELCA churchwide staff, I completed a 6 page “performance evaluation” that I shared and discussed with Bishop Jungling last month which was then shared with my direct supervisor at the ELCA, Rev. Dr. Sandra Chrostowski.

As part of the rhythm of my week, I participate in the weekly churchwide staff/DEM zoom meeting. This meeting began nearly two years ago and has continued as a way for there to be conversation and sharing across the church. I am grateful for my fellow DEMs and for the work of the churchwide organization, especially the CCL team that DEMs relate to. This has been a substitute for in person meetings over the last two years.

Activities/updates since Sept. 2021:

Faithful Innovation Process:

On Aug. 29th, the Faithful Innovation Leadership team led the first three congregations in their third training. We had hoped that the three congregations would continue to utilize the process of Faithful Innovation of listening to God, one another and the community, and experiment and reflect. Due to differing circumstances in each congregation, the congregations wanted to continue in some way, but having “completed” the process, backed off from continued movement. After a conversation with the leaders in January, we encouraged and supported them to continue as they can in the next months. The leadership team and I have reflected on why it has been difficult for the congregations to continue to engage in a process formally. We have some hunches and each have said that they do want to engage with the process in differing ways going forward. This is a reminder to me that context of each congregation makes all the difference and I am encouraging them to move forward in ways that work for each of them. They each have access to a coach to walk with them.

A second cohort of congregations began their training on Oct. 17th 2021. The five congregations are American in Harlem, Christ in Libby, First in Plains, Our Saviors in Thompson Falls and Our Saviors in Columbia Falls. They will meet for their 2nd training on Feb. 27th. Pastor Will Rima stated this in his report to the Bishop: “ALC in Harlem is taking part in the faithful innovation process, we are looking toward the youth in our community as a new opportunity for ministry. Also, we are touching base with people that used to attend Harlem ALC. At this point we have an open mind to the ministry that God is calling us to in Harlem. We are trusting in the Faithful Innovation Process and God to help us see what God is doing in our community and how we can serve God in this capacity.”

I anticipate that a third group of congregations will begin the Faithful Innovation process in the fall.

Vitality Task Force:

Members of the Vitality Task Force are: Pastor Paul Anderson, Faith, Hamilton; Dick Deschamps, Synod VP, LPA, Hope, Bozeman; John Mundinger, LPA, St. John’s, Helena, Pastor

Brenda Frelsi, Zion, Glendive, Rick Brown, LPA, Faith, Hamilton and Marilyn Hall, Synod Coaching Coordinator, Immanuel, Missoula. This group will gather for an in-person retreat in June to focus their energy on congregational vitality. Several of them are involved in the ELCA Reboot training currently going on. I plan to gather participants in that training soon to ask how that impacts the work in their congregation and to invite collaboration across the Synod.

As a part of Congregational Vitality, I have offered a 30 minute “Dwelling in the Word” most every Thursday morning over the last two years. It is often the same people attending, but I have received the feedback that it has been valued and holy time to just spend in dwelling in the word. It fits with my hope and goal of helping each other to listen intentionally to God and to others.

Coaches in the Montana Synod:

Marilyn Hall, of Immanuel Lutheran in Missoula was appointed as the Synod Coaching coordinator in the Montana Synod. I offered and have made suggestions for a coach for each of the 1st Call pastors who requested one. Because of the ELCA Coaching network, I have even reached across Synod lines to recruit coaches for some of our leaders. (If any Synod Council members are interested in receiving coaching or being trained as a coach, please contact me.) Marilyn and I have arranged that there will be a Mentor Coaching training offered for the coaches in the Synod sometime this year in order to help our coaches increase their skills.

Stewardship Task Force/ Dennis Trotter as Synod Stewardship Consultant

Dennis and I will continue to offer another session of Fed By Ravens to a number of congregations. As I have just begun the Certificate in Religious Fundraising program, I am looking forward to new insights and ideas about how to communicate this around the Synod. I am also thrilled that by the end of April, there will be 4 pastors in the Synod who will have completed the Certificate! I hope to engage all of us in regular conversation about how to spread “stewardship education” around the Synod.

I have also coordinated the creation of a third Synod Devotional for the Christmas through Epiphany seasons. This required contact with many pastors across the Synod to encourage and invite their participation. I hope that this has been a helpful way for the Synod leaders to share and support one another in our lives of faith!

Ministries that Receive Synod and Churchwide Funding:

Freedom in Christ Prison Ministry at the Men’s Prison in Deer Lodge: Pastor Rob Nedbalek continues to serve this ministry. The FIC Board met for a retreat in December (the 2nd such retreat in 2021.) The Board has clarified the job description of the pastor and the executive director (Bea Rosenleaf) and the board itself. Dennis Trotter has been a consultant to the Board at these two retreats. I am feeling much more confident that the ministry of FIC will be strong enough to weather changes in staffing upon Pastor Rob’s retirement (no time line stated yet.) The board has clarified that the original premise that congregations and individuals from around the Synod would come to the prison and develop some relationships with the inmates has never been feasible due to the distances in the Synod. As the prison has been challenged with staffing and Covid in the last years, they have made changes as to how inmates are able to gather to worship. Because of the changes at the prison, the Board is beginning to wonder about what new direction

the ministry may take in the future – work with re-entry or a ministry presence at the Women’s Prison in Billings. With a large gift from Messiah in Billings, and fundraising efforts of Bea, the ministry is fairly stable financially. They will receive the same amount from churchwide this year as last -- \$12,000.

Spirit of Life Ministry Lutheran Ministry on the Fort Peck Reservation: Pastor Chris Holler-Dinsmore has retired (see the consent agenda) and so the funding that Spirit of Life had been receiving both from Churchwide and from the Synod ended on 1/31/22. Pastor Chris and Pastor Greg continue to live in Wolf Point and Chris will continue to volunteer at the Tribal Correctional Facility. I will be working with churchwide folks to “end” that ministry officially this year. I have also asked Chris to write a communication to the Synod stating that the “ministry” is not continuing and that she has retired.

Rocky Boy – Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church: Pastor Tom Gehring will be leaving the ministry on the Rocky Boys Reservation and with Our Saviour’s Congregation as of March 6th, 2022. I will be visiting Tom and Rocky Boy on Tue. Feb. 15th, so will have an update as to how the leaders there will continue as we meet in person. I will be in conversation with churchwide as to their funding for 2022. The agreement had been that they would receive \$30,000 in 2022, but without a pastor there, that the amount will be less.

Confluence Collective: Intern Pastor Rebekah Cochrane, serving at Immanuel in Missoula has been serving as the Mission Developer of Confluence Collective. She, along with Pastor John Lund and others have formed a leadership group and are coordinating the twice a month gathering of Confluence. I have been hearing really positive comments about their gathering. I will be meeting with them in person on Sunday, Feb. 20th and will meet with the leadership team the next morning. At this point, this ministry will be receiving \$10,000 from the ELCA as a “New Ministry Exploration” but are not receiving any funding from the Synod.

Having completed my performance evaluation recently, I share with you my focus and goals for 2022.

- Complete the Executive Certificate in Religious Fundraising
- Complete the Excellence in Leadership Program through the Rocky Mountain Synod
- Participate in and complete Mentor Coaching
- Continue to receive Coaching for my own leadership development and personal growth
- Read 1 – 2 books each month on leadership/stewardship/adaptive change and theology over the course of the year
- Continue to collaborate with Synod staff, NRIT, leaders in the Synod and across the ELCA to strengthen leaders in ministry

And finally, as I ended my performance evaluation, I share this information with you, the Synod Council:

I am strongly considering that I will retire on Jan. 1, 2023. As I reflect on the work that I have accomplished in 2021 and what I still hope to do this year, I am motivated to continue this work through the year, but also anticipate that retirement from ministry will be a gift. I

do see and know that I have accumulated knowledge and skills that I am still hoping to use for the sake of the Synod even in retirement but will relish the flexibility that comes in being retired.

I consider this call as DEM has been the pinnacle of my ministry and career and has used my gifts of creativity and visioning and I hope that what I have offered has been life giving for the sake of ministry in and around the whole Synod. I am and will always be grateful that I have had the chance to serve the Synod as the DEM. I am open to some conversation and negotiation about this time frame for retiring but feel that it is best if I am clear and open about this at this time. Thank you for the opportunity to serve God and God's church in this place that I love.

Peggy Paugh Leuzinger
Director for Evangelical Mission, Montana Synod
Feb. 13, 2022

NRIT Report to the Synod Council
February 2022

Greetings from the Northern Rockies Institute of Theology:

I first want to thank you for your continuing support of NRIT. The financial support and the embrace of NRIT's work throughout the years has been invaluable as we strive to provide quality theological education to pastors, LPAs, SAMs, and other lay leaders.

The pandemic has provided new avenues for meeting NRIT's mission and we've embraced the Zoom platform, which has allowed us to reach out to colleagues in other regions and of other denominations. Even as we look forward to the time when we can meet and learn in person, we realize that we will continue to also offer educational opportunities online.

Throughout the pandemic, we've also shared news of educational opportunities not sponsored by NRIT. This is part of our mission as well, to lift up and support education occurring within our churches, partnering organizations and other synods.

Business:

At the end of December, two members of the NRIT Advisory Committee finished their terms. I am thankful for the work of Mr. Neal Wedum and Pr. Chris Flohr as they step off the committee. And I am grateful to nominate Ms. Deb Oldfield, LPA and Pr Tim O'Shields as new members. I am asking that Deb and Tim be approved by the Synod Council to each serve a three-year term.

Thank you for your support of NRIT.

Respectfully Submitted by

Jenny Kunka

Dir. NRIT

NRIT Advisory Committee Members: Dir. Jenny Kunka, Bishop Laurie Jungling, Chair Miriam Schmidt, Karen Dwyer, Marlow Carrels.

The Northern Rockies Institute of Theology exists to provide and promote lifelong learning for the people of the Montana Synod and their neighbors, for the purpose of equipping them in their ministry of the Gospel.

Presentation to the Montana Synod Council, 2/19/2022

"The Synagogue Project"

Thank you for allowing us a few minutes on your full agenda. We know about Synod Council meetings and we will be brief. We are here to give you some background information on the Montana Jewish Project, and why we think that the Montana Synod should support it. You should have in front of you the 1995 Agreement between the Montana Synod and the Montana Association of Jewish Communities, and a proposed resolution for you to consider at your March meeting.

I will give some brief comments, followed by Mark Ramseth giving some historical background. We should have time for some questions t the end.

The Agreement between the Montana Synod and the Montana Association of Jewish Communities is not just about the past. It is not just about acknowledging and repudiating the long and vicious history of anti-Semitism, and particularly the contributions of Martin Luther.

The agreement is about the present and the future. Over the years, the Montana Synod has reached out to the Montana Jewish community at times of horrific acts of violence towards Jewish communities across the country. Our Agreement commits us to pray and to stand in solidarity when our Jewish sisters and brothers are under attack. We have, unfortunately, had too many opportunities to offer our prayers and support during times of grief.

But our Agreement also commits us to working together for the common good and for peace and justice, as neighbors. The Montana Jewish Project, the official name of the effort to buy back the historic synagogue building in Helena, is an opportunity for us to work together for something positive. The buyback of the synagogue is a statewide effort, reflecting the historic nature of the building. The intent is a multipurpose space, with an emphasis on community space for education, conferences, and interreligious dialogue.

When we read about the project we immediately thought that it was an opportunity to live out our 1995 Agreement. Our proposal is for prayer and for a statement of support from the Montana Synod and some kind of financial gift, followed by publicity throughout the synod, and opportunities for individuals to pray and to become donors. Ultimately, the hope is that it can be a place where we can engage in education, dialogue and mutual understanding.

At a time when our society is fractured, this is an opportunity to work together in mutual respect and goodwill.

www.montanajewishproject.com

February 19, 2022

PRESENTATION TO THE MONTANA SYNOD COUNCIL

“The Synagogue Project—2022

In 1994 the ELCA Church Council, in concert with the Lutheran World Federation adopted a “Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community.” The effort on the part of the ELCA was to dispel any notion of antisemitism and instead a forward overture of commitment and support. The first lines of the Declaration read: ‘In the long history of the church, the treatment accorded the Jewish people by Christians has been among our most grievous and shameful legacies. The Declaration goes on to say that Lutherans (on account of the history with Martin Luther in the 16th Century feel a special burden to reconcile and make right the efforts that were up until the present made by Luther to deny the truth of Judaism.

The leadership of the Montana Synod at that time discerned that there was opportunity here to do something meaningful by making a statement in concert with the ELCA Declaration. The recognition was ELCA Lutherans outnumber those of the Montana Jewish communities 10 to 1. A study was initiated by synod leadership: Bishop Mark R. Ramseth; Associate to the Bishop, Thomas R. Lee, the Synod Secretary Jessica Crist and the Synod ecumenical officer, Paul Seastrand. A document was drafted and sent to the Synod Council for approval and for recommendation to the 1995 Montana Synod Assembly.

The presentation was as moving as anything that every happened under my 10 years of leadership. The resolution, with discussion and with members of the Jewish community present, passed unanimously. All of us felt the vote was a sizeable affirmation that Montana was presenting to the larger church. And, Montana was the first of the 65 synods to take this action which served as response to numerous events of antisemitism in the country.

Our presentation today, is an effort to celebrate and sustain a continued focus on our synod commitment of support and care for a Jewish community in Montana