

# Minutes

Montana Synod Council  
17-18 September 2021 – ZOOM Electronic Meeting

Present: Bishop Laurie Jungling, Vice President Dick Deschamps, Treasurer Sue Ost, Secretary Amanda Liggett, Allen Hansen, Rev. Peter Erickson, Robin Matthews, John Sheppard, Rev. Doris Tollefson, Kevin Johnson, Rev. Gretchen Wagner, Lana Buerkle, Celeste Pogachar, Rev. Wendy McAlpine, Rev. Scott Hedegaard, Associate to the Bishop Jason Asselstine, DEM Peggy Paugh Leuzinger.

Guests: none

Absent: Mary Hutchinson

*Bishop Laurie Jungling welcomed the council and led a brief devotion.*

*New members of the council were installed: Lana Buerkle, Rev. Scott Hedegaard, Rev. Wendy McAlpine, and Celeste Pogachar.*

## **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.

### **SC21.09.01**

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

## **INTRODUCTIONS**

The members were invited to share what is happening in their lives and communities.

## **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

VP Deschamps outlined for the council the work the executive committee has been doing.

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Secretary Amanda Liggett gave her report.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion

Second: Approve the minutes of the April 2021 meeting.

### **SC21.09.02**

**VOTE: APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 2021 MEETING.**

## **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

Treasurer Sue Ost shared her report with the council.\*

Motion

Second: Accept the Treasurer's report as presented.

### **SC21.09.03**

**VOTE: ACCEPT THE TREASURER'S REPORT AS PRESENTED.**

#### **REPORT OF THE ASSOCIATE TO THE BISHOP**

Rev. Jason Asselstine delivered his report.\* He pointed out that the current Covid spike has put a pause on gathering the new LPA class in person. They will begin with a ZOOM meeting and personal study.

#### **NRIT REPORT**

Jenny Kunka delivered a report for the Northern Rockies Institute of Theology. She outlined the mission of NRIT. Many things had to change because of the pandemic. All classes have been offered through ZOOM, with the help of Colter McCarty. It also impacted the types of classes held, with offerings about grief and trauma along with the normal theological, bible based options. Lay people are also always welcome in the classes. In-person classes have not yet resumed. NRIT also helps to provide some of the resources for LPA courses. She expressed her thanks for the financial support of the synod.

#### **REVIEW OF THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE (CONSTITUTION CHAPTER 6)**

VP Deschamps led the council in a review of our constitutional statement of purpose.

#### **REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT**

VP Dick Deschamps delivered his report.\* Adding to his written report, he highlighted his work as the liaison with Lutheran Disaster Response. Several years ago, the synod started a disaster fund, which was developed to help in any kind of disaster for unmet needs. He asked the synod council members to keep our ears to the ground in our communities for people who may need a hand. He also is working on a personnel manual for the synod, which is a work in progress.

#### **CREATION CARE TASK FORCE**

John Sheppard gave a brief report. He highlighted the Singing Plains and Calling Mountains liturgy, which was used successfully by several congregations and may be used at the Chico pastoral retreat. There are several solar projects going on, including possibly the Center for Campus Ministry in Bozeman. Patrick Miller has put together a small spreadsheet that can create a carbon footprint for a facility. He brought a question. They are looking at a new project to support regenerative grazing on grasslands and carbon offsets by creating a fund for ranchers. Where would that fund reside? The Western Sustainability Exchange has offered to host that fund, but they wondered if the synod has a place for this. Sue responded that if necessary create a line in the restricted funds. This may exceed the role of the task force, and the synod must keep liability issues in mind. John suggested the task force create a proposal to be brought before the council and determine if it aligns with the Care for Creation and Changing Climate resolution. Bishop Jungling invited them to bring that proposal to her for review.

#### **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop Laurie Jungling began her report.\*

*The council recessed for the evening at 5:00pm.*

*The council reconvened on Saturday morning at 9:00am. Rev. Gretchen Wagner led morning prayer.*

## **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop Laurie Jungling concluded her report.\*

## **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR EVANGELICAL MISSION**

Rev. Peggy Paugh Leuzinger presented her report.\* Regarding retaining the further services of Dennis Trotter as a stewardship consultant, Peggy encouraged the council to do so. He has proven very helpful to the stewardship task force in their plans for changing the culture of stewardship throughout the synod. Thy hope to provide more educational opportunities for congregations in the future. *We discussed creating a line item for stewardship consultation for 2022, so this item needs to be added to budget considerations for the February meeting.*

Motion

Second: Fund \$3000 for Dennis Trotter for continuing stewardship efforts in the 2021 calendar year.

### **SC21.09.03**

**VOTE: FUND \$3000 FOR DENNIS TROTTER FOR CONTINUING STEWARDSHIP EFFORTS IN THE 2021 CALENDAR YEAR.**

## **RETIRED PASTOR REVIEW**

Bishop Jungling presented her work for the year in reviewing the retired pastors of the synod. She works to review 1/3 of retired pastors each year. We have around 98 retired pastors on our roster. She presented the names to the council of those she worked with his year and asked that we accept that review.

The bishop highlighted one person of concern, Pastor Lynn DeYoung of Helena, and recommended that he be removed from the retired roster. He and his family remained in the congregation after his retirement and have interfered with the ministry since then. There was much discussion around how this action might impact the congregation in negative or positive ways, and whether and how the synod can offer help to them in terms of healing and moving forward. This requires a 2/3 majority vote of the council.

Motion

Second: The Synod Council revoke the retired status of retired Pastor Lynn DeYoung from the ELCA retired roster.

### **SC21.09.04**

**VOTE: THE SYNOD COUNCIL REVOKE THE RETIRED STATUS OF REV. LYNN DEYOUNG FROM THE ELCA RETIRED ROSTER.**

The vote was unanimous.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

*Consent Agenda*

### **Retirement**

Pr. Aprille Jordan – 7/1/21

Pr. Steve Schmidt – 7/1/21

Pr. Arne Bergland – 7/1/21

Pr. Barb Gwynn – 6/1/21

Pr. Rand Drollman – 9/1/21

### **On Leave From Call**

Pr. Stacey Siebrasse Heggem, entering 2<sup>nd</sup> year on leave from call – July 17, 2020

Pr. Natalie Faltin, entering 2<sup>nd</sup> year on leave from call – June 7, 2020

Pr. Kim Peterson, entering 1<sup>st</sup> year of on leave from call – September 1, 2021

Pr. Kathleen Larson Aasheim, entering 1<sup>st</sup> year of leave from call – June 1, 2021

Pr. Halcyon Bjornstad, entering 1<sup>st</sup> year of leave from call – September 15, 2021

### **Annual Retiree Review**

Establishment of date for September 2022 Synod Council Meeting: September 16-17, 2022

Motion

Second: Approve the consent agenda as presented.

**SC21.09.05**

**VOTE: APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED.**

Motion

Second: Approve Pastor Doris Tollefson as a member of the Synod Council executive committee.

**SC21.09.06**

**VOTE: APPROVE PASTOR DORIS TOLLEFSON AS A MEMBER OF THE SYNOD COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.**

Motion

Second: Approve the appointment of Pastor Wendy McAlpine to the Synod Council, replacing Pastor Jessie Obrecht, representing the Golden Triangle Cluster.

**SC21.09.07**

**VOTE: APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF PASTOR WENDY MCALPINE TO THE SYNOD COUNCIL, REPLACING PASTOR JESSIE OBRECHT, REPRESENTING THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE CLUSTER.**

Motion

Second: Affirm Presbyterian Pastor JP Carlson as the pastor of Lutheran Campus Ministry on the campus of MSU Bozeman.

**SC21.09.08**

**VOTE: AFFIRM PRESBYTERIAN PASTOR JP CARLSON AS THE PASTOR OF LUTHERAN CAMPUS MINISTRY ON THE CAMPUS OF MSU BOZEMAN.**

*Council retreat discussion.*

In hopes of having discussion around the vision for ministry in the Montana Synod, VP Deschamps proposes trying to have an in-person meeting in February. Some expressed concern that we wait until covid recedes considerably.

*Salary Guidelines*

Treasurer Ost explained that in the past we have used the CPI-U (Consumer price index urban inflation rate.). This year it is 5.1%, which the executive committee found concerning in terms of whether congregations can afford that large an increase. The executive committee suggested that we move to using the 3-year average this year and going forward. The motion came moved and seconded from the executive committee.

Motion

Second: Use a three-year rolling average of the CPI-U for salary guidelines.

**SC21.09.09**

**VOTE: USE A THREE-YEAR ROLLING AVERAGE OF THE CPI-U FOR SALARY GUIDELINES.**

Treasurer Ost revised the guidelines according to this practice and presented them to the council for approval at a 3% increase for the year.

Motion

Second: Approve the salary guidelines for 2022 as presented.

**SC21.09.10**

**VOTE: APPROVE THE SALARY GUIDELINES FOR 2022 AS PRESENTED.**

*Synod Gift Policy*

The MT Synod has a current gift acceptance policy. DEM Peggy Paugh Leuzinger solicited examples of policies from other synods in hopes of finding best practices for the revision of our own policy. Some she highlighted:

- Non-cash gifts should be sold as soon as practical.
- Some synods had an automatic tithe of any gift to the ELCA.
- Stipulate that after a certain period of time, unused restricted gifts would be moved to unrestricted.

Beth Adams, our regional gift planner, is willing to consult with us as we consider revising this document.

VP Deschamps invited comments:

- Need to address whether gifts go to the general operating fund or be kept separate to be put to specific ministries.
- List ways to make a gift, including types of gifts.
- Non-designated gifts should be split between operating funds and missionary funds.
- We should also keep in mind that some gifts can do damage to a ministry.
- Is there a difference that needs to be made between a gift and a grant? For example, what happens if a private foundation provides an unsolicited designated grant?
- “Socially conscious” investing was mentioned.

Pastor Scott Hedegaard and Pastor Doris Tollefson volunteered to work with DEM Paugh Leuzinger and Beth Adams to put together a draft policy for the council to consider.

*VP Deschamps led the council in a closing prayer.*

VP Deschamps adjourned the meeting at 1:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Amanda Liggett  
Secretary, Montana Synod

**Upcoming Meetings**

**Council Meetings**

-- February 18-19, 2022, Great Falls

-- June 2, 2022, Billings

--September 16-17, 2022, Great Falls

**Assembly**

--June 3-5, 2022, Billings (need to discuss the June 5<sup>th</sup> date at the February meeting)

\* Addendum

#### TREASURER'S REPORT 9/23/21

At 58.33% of the year, the Synod's budget is in good condition. Mission Support is at 56% of the budget, so it's keeping up; however, we did have a large gift early in the year and that has kept the % up. I calculated an average monthly amount and then annualized it. That shows a prediction of just over \$916,000.

We still have the "cushion" of the PPP loan that was forgiven - \$62,662 - and those funds are just waiting for us to need them or to make a decision on what we'd like to use them for. Transferring funds into Restricted Accounts would be one way to use the funds for specific ministries. Another way would be to "make whole" the ministry partners who will not receive 100% of what was budgeted if our Mission Support does not reach 100% of the budget. We may want to wait and see how the rest of the year goes before we make those kinds of decisions.

Expenses have been going along pretty well within budget. I noticed we have spent very little in the "Programs" category. That's probably because we aren't doing business as usual, but most could be used in the next five months. We're on track in Compensation/Benefits, Travel is under, and Administrative is a little under budget.

The very last line of the report Net Operating Total shows Income less Expenses at \$68,480.12 - without the PPP funds, that number would be just over \$5,800 - so, we're doing well overall. I don't feel we need to make any budget revisions to 2021 at this time.

Regarding the 2022 budget that was passed at the Synod Assembly, there may be some revisions now, or we can wait until this year is complete to make those decisions. I'm looking at Mission Support, since we increased the budget in 2022 by \$15,000 - if we don't meet our 2021 budget in that category, we might not want to budget for even more next year. The other area where we might consider a revision is the transfer in from Restricted for the Synod House Mortgage Interest of about \$16,000. We should have enough in Restricted to cover the interest for 2021, but donations have been low for a couple of years, and there may not be anything to transfer in next year. Those two revisions would both decrease income, and thus we would have to decrease some expenses to balance the budget. It's something to think about, as we will need to revise the 2022 budget either now or in February.

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Synod Council Report September 2021  
Associate to the Bishop Jason Asselstine

#### LPA progress

- Retreat scheduled for new class to begin October 1-2 in Great Falls
- Final Pastoral Care Retreat currently being scheduled for either the end of October or in Nov.

#### Youth Gathering

- July 2022. Contacting Congregation to offer support and encouragement.
- No Transportation this time

#### First Call Theological Education

- Dec 5-8 in Great Falls

## Montana Synod Mobility

### Open Congregations (active)

First Lutheran, Circle Has been without a pastor for almost 2 years.

Immanuel, Absarokee Interviewing a First Call Candidate.

Zion, Lewistown Ready to interview. Stacey Heggam working as Interim pastor.

Baker, Ekalaka, Plevna Could use a couple. Been open for several months. Working with LPAs

Peace, Billings Interviewing candidates. Working with Linda Rose as Interim and LPAs

Trinity, Hot Springs Working with LPAs. They hope to have a full-time First Call pastor

American, Chinook Working with LPAs.

Trinity, Choteau Working with a First Call pastor in a temp position with the hope of Call

Our Redeemers, Helena Trina Johnston Interim

New Life, Helena New opening. Working with Ken Duvall as Interim.

St. Paul, Cut Bank Working with Presbyterians and LPA

St. Paul and Grace, Fairfield Working with SAM Cynthia Thomas

Big Sandy and Havre (Messiah) Working with LPAs.

Atonement, Billings New Opening

American, Livingston Interviewing First Call candidate

### Other Openings/Transitions

First English, GF Working with Tammy Bull and New Hope

First English, Billings Working with LPAs

Bethlehem, Billings Working with LPAs and possible TEEM candidate

Lambert Voting to close

St Johns, Westby Need to close

Dodson Need to close

Devon and Galata Working with Retired pastor Bear and LPA

Redeemer, Livingston Working with Tim Spring and LPAs

Shields River, Wilsall Working with LPAs and Paul Siestrand

Joliet Lutheran Working with LPAs

Barber Working with Vice Pastor and LPAs

Dagmar Working with LPAs

Froid Working with LPAs

Ebenezer Working with LPAs

Fort Peck Working with LPAs and Pastor Christine HD

First American, Hardin Working with LPAs and

Prince of Peace, Missoula ?

### Coming Transitions:

Northridge, Kalispell (December 2021)

Broadus (Nov 2021) remote, Part time or ecumenical possibility for FT with UCC

### Installations

Marlow Carrels Gold Hill, Butte

Judy Lamb Hope, Anaconda

Scott Kiehn First, Glasgow

Tim O'Shields Zion, Fairview

Ben Cherland Messiah, Red Lodge

Jamie Schmeling Terry/Fallon PCUSA (October 16, 2021)

Heidi Hester Hope, Bozeman (Nov 7, 2021)

Will Rima Harlem, Hogeland, Turner



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Vice President Report  
Montana Synod Council  
September 17, 2021

If there is anything I have learned over the last year and one half, since the arrival of the COVID-19 virus, is that patience is truly a virtue. The quote from a Buddhist monk in the Tom Selleck movie, High Road to China, “The oxen is slow, but the earth is patient”; reminds us it is okay to take things slow in this world-on-steroids, because Reality, however we define it, i.e. Earth, God; is patient. We really can take our time, and should, particularly for those things that take a certain amount of discernment before decisions are made.

I say this, because as a council of the ELCA, Montana Synod, by nature we take our time to move through important topics. Decision-by-committee is never a hurry up process. This meeting as, in past meetings, will find us working on issues, that will take some time to work through. Some of these issues include:

- Salary Guidelines for Rostered Leaders
- Funding for the Synod House mortgage
- Synod gift Policy
- Ministry Priorities
- Stewardship Guidance

I ask that you get some rest and be prepared to work through the important business of the council. ZOOM is not the ideal way to conduct our business, but we are getting better at it, and it is what is available in this time when we are trying to practice safety for our brothers and sisters. I look forward to seeing each of you, and for a constructive and spirit-led meeting.

Peace to you.

Respectively Submitted,  
Dick Deschamps  
Synod vice President

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Synod Council  
September 17-18, 2021  
Bishop’s Report – Rev. Laurie Jungling

Dear Friends in Christ,

It’s been two full years since I began serve in this office of bishop for the Montana Synod. It feels like more than that but then again time feels like it goes faster when life seems out of control.

I often wonder what time felt like for those disciples during the first years of the early church, filled with Holy Spirit and proclaiming the gospel even as the world they were living in was messy with social, political, and religious upheaval. I’m guessing they too felt the rollercoaster ride we feel today (though they wouldn’t have had the rollercoaster to compare it to). But those disciples and the many who

came and experienced the gospel through their ministry kept powering through even in the midst of their sufferings, finding their resilience in Christ and their trust in God's love.

And we can too! Despite the return of Covid-19 in its delta form, despite the uncertainty of our society, despite the many uncertainties we are grappling with, we too have been empowered and equipped by the Holy Spirit to do the work that Christ calls us to do in, with and for his church and on behalf of the world. So we keep on keeping on, fulfilling the vocations we have been called to serve.

### Montana Synod Mission Theme and possible Mission Statement

As the Montana Synod moves forward into the future that God is calling us to explore, the staff and I are more and more functioning under the Synod Mission Theme of "Equipping for Ministry" and an emerging yet unofficial mission statement that sounds something like "Equipping the followers of Christ in the Montana Synod for the ministry of Building Up the Body of Christ and Living Christ's Love into the world." For those new to the council, this theme and statement have grown out of our (staff and council) continued engagement with the text from Paul's letter to the Ephesians 4:1-16, particularly verses 11-13:

*"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."*

Through listening to this text and God's voice through it, we keep hearing that the Synod's call is to equip, encourage, support, and empower people to receive God's grace-filled love into their lives, to proclaim the gospel, to mature in the body of Christ and to do love (includes justice) in their communities, state and world. And so we're exploring what that "Equipping for Ministry" can and should look like in its particularities for the church and society of this time and into the future. One thing is certain: that ministry will in many ways look quite different than it has in the past forty or even twenty years. Moreover, what it will actually look like is still a mystery, one that we continue to discern by listening to God, neighbor, community and each other.

**The Synod Office's Responsibilities:** One of the ways that the staff has practiced this discernment over the summer is by having a staff retreat. Jason, Peggy and myself gathered for 2.5 days in July at a cabin near Choteau (donated by a member of Trinity Lutheran) to do some thinking, praying, dreaming, planning and general organizing of our brains, hearts and spirits about where we are going next as the synod. (Pictures 1 & 2) which emerged from our time together.

In picture #1, we used my incredible not so artistic skills to clarify what we believe to be the synod office's and wider synod's primary responsibilities. Here they are in no specific order:

- Leadership (clergy and lay) -- Equip and Support
- Congregational Life -- Equip and Support
- Faith Formation – Equip and Support
- Collaboration for ministry – Equip and Support (includes Communication, Tech)
- Stewardship – Equip and Support
- Love and Justice Ministry – Equip and Support (ex. Task Forces)
- Spiritual Support
- Administration of the Synod (Staff and council)
- Relationship with Ministry Partners (Bishop and council)

Note that these responsibilities are intertwined in many ways. Also, except for the administrative role and relationships with ministry partners, these are not things the synod office/council actually do *for* congregations, leaders and members; rather the synod office (and synod council?) focuses on *equipping them* to engage in healthier and thriving ministry in their contexts. See Peggy's report for more details re: Faithful innovations and Fed by Ravens.

However, I believe there is another role for the bishop as well as the staff and the council in serving today's church that is just as important: leading the synod as we walk together on a journey toward the uncertain future into which God is guiding us. That doesn't mean defining and controlling the future but rather equipping the ministries of the synod to listen for, discern, and innovate to discover the future of the synod and its ministries as part of the wider Church, ELCA and beyond. That will mean more listening, learning, relationship building, and experimenting (with some failing) than strategic planning.

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 (Christ's gospel and Jesus' way) and what we're called to seek and do, while at the same time letting go of what is either holding us back or no longer functional. We need to spend time discovering new (or old), exciting ways to be the church and follow Christ's mission to proclaim and live the gospel for the world we live in. And we need to allow ourselves as individuals and church to be transformed by the Spirit, losing ourselves to gain ourselves in Christ.

And so one of the plans that is beginning to form in the synod office is to use a "Theory U" approach to open minds, hearts, wills and spirits to our future possibilities and collaborate together with congregations, leaders, synods, ecumenical partners and churchwide in active experimentation and then co-creating empowered by the Spirit to find that future. (Pictures 3 & 4) While I/we are still figuring out what this process is going to look like, the first step will include creating a Dream Team of clergy, LPAs and others. We as staff will also be reaching out in various ways to leaders and congregations to brainstorm with them ideas for ministry, gathering as much "collective genius" as we can from the people of the Montana Synod.

**Challenges.** All of this future-looking comes during a time of many specific challenges. As you heard from Jason, rostered leadership transitions – retirements; moving; leaving ministry – are happening at a pace the church has not seen in years if ever and this is happening all over the ELCA. Pastors are leaving their congregations due to retirement, family obligations, looking for their ideal call, congregation mistreatment of pastors (and vice versa), and other reasons. And there simply are not enough pastors to go around the whole ELCA. One reason among many is that we as church have not been doing our part to raise up leaders, whether pastors or lay.

In response to this need, we are putting extra energy into raising up leaders in the synod, especially LPAs who hopefully could become SAMs who hopefully might consider TEEM or another ordination strategy. [What are some ways we as council members can encourage people to become pastoral leaders?] We are also beginning a process of strategizing with local congregations in clusters to find new ways of doing ministry together rather than each congregation having their own pastor. This will involve brainstorming with a variety of lay and clergy leaders rather than a top-down "tell them what to do approach." We have our first exploration gathering with the Bear Paw cluster in early October.

Another response to this need for strong leaders is to offer leadership support and equipping for our current pastoral leaders. This includes providing for Excellence in Leadership training for three of our pastors, a Thriving Leaders Formation cohort for 10 of our pastors, developing more LPAs this fall, and inviting NRIT to help provide spiritual and professional workshops for all of our leaders. In many ways, the Montana Synod is being lifted up through the active ministry of many of our LPAs in their settings and to other congregations, though our pastors are also doing amazing work fulfilling their call to ordained ministry in their locations and beyond. Thank you to all are doing this ministry! Now go out and find five more to follow this call!

We also continue to face the challenge of Covid-19 and its consequences which is not going away soon. In many ways we are fortunate that we don't have the congregational blowups that some synods are having across the ELCA around vaccines and masking and other things. (Or maybe they are still festering.) Sadly there are places in this church where congregation members are not only refusing to wear masks themselves but are telling others, including the pastor, that they can't wear them either. This has led to some pastors getting Covid and even dying from it. As the bishop, I have chosen to offer

guidance and empower local responsibility rather than attempt to control congregations in very different contexts by dictating what congregations/pastoral leaders should do. My constant reminder has been to always act in accord with God's law to love your neighbor in all that you do. In the meantime, we at the synod office continue to be adaptive in our own practices facing Covid even as we encourage congregations and ministries to do the same.

We also face a challenge that has been around for a while but is finally being addressed by the ELCA: the issue of retired pastors interfering in the life of congregations they attend. While most of the retired pastors of the church know their boundaries when it comes to engaging the life of the congregation they and their families are members of, the problem has become significant enough that the Churchwide Council updated the "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline of Rostered Leaders, Congregations and Members" to include such disruptive behavior by retired pastors and their families. In the MT Synod, the synod council assists in enforcing these guidelines by reviewing the retired pastor roster every year in September (a third of them each year) and removing someone from the roster if necessary. Here is the language from the document:

*Relationship with prior congregation(s) or ministry: Rostered ministers who have resigned or retired from or otherwise no longer officially serve a congregation or other ministry shall honor the integrity of the congregation or ministry. They shall respect and honor the current rostered minister(s) and mission of the congregation or ministry they no longer are called to serve. They shall decline invitations from members to perform pastoral acts and refrain from asking members to directly or indirectly seek permission to perform such acts from the currently serving rostered minister. They shall not participate or interfere, whether personally or through a proxy, in the life of the congregation or ministry in any way, unless invited to participate by the current rostered minister(s) in conjunction with the congregation council or governing board. Such interference constitutes conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office or retirement status. ("Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline," p. 10.)*

RE: Synod Ministry Partners – no reports at this time.

Some other things to report:

At the **Churchwide** level, the Vice President of ELCA, Mr. Bill Horne, died of a heart attack earlier this summer. The previous VP, Mr. Carlos Pena, is serving as interim. The VP of the ELCA is the highest office a lay person can hold in the ELCA and Bill was great at it. He will be missed.

**Congregation Issues** – Prince of Peace in Missoula is still on hold. Messiah Lutheran in Billings is approaching its dissolution. They will vote on Monday, Sept 20 to close on November 30, 2021. As part of their process of ending their ministry, they are also dispersing their funds from the sale of their building. The synod has been included in their legacy giving plans with an amount that currently stands at around \$50,000, though this is not final until the vote. Also, the synod will be receiving a legacy gift of around \$22,000 from an individual's estate after his passing. As congregations close and people of a certain generation die, there may be more legacy gifts coming to the synod. As you see on the agenda we'll be exploring developing a new gift policy for the synod to better receive these gifts through a mentality of generosity rather than scarcity.

**Boy Scouts of America Lawsuit.** As continuing members of the council may remember, in May 2020 the synod and one of our congregations (New Hope Lutheran) were served as part of the BSA lawsuit that is pending resolutions. For practical purposes there have been no changes to our status – we are in waiting mode until whatever bankruptcy deal between the BSA and the plaintiffs/their lawyers is finalized. It's quite complicated and changes every news cycle as the parties renegotiate various parts of the agreement. However, the synod attorney has indicated that either a deal will be reached regarding dismissal of suits against "Contributing Chartered Organizations," i.e. congregations and synod so it will all go away or they won't and we'll go to court with a motion to dismiss because the synod didn't even

exist when the abuse happened the 70's. Several others synods are caught up in the same situation so we are not alone in watching how this all plays out.

Finally, in my role as Bishop I am continuing to see through the lens of being a transition pastoral leader for the Synod in this time of rapid change and uncertainty. I am constantly asking how can the church, and particularly the synod, live out its calling in ways true to the gospel in this time place rather than just doing business as usual. I have also had the opportunity to offer some faith formation to our synod leaders and future synod leaders (LPAs) by teaching a NRIT workshop by zoom about "Leading Holy Conversations" and teaching an 8 hour series on Lutheran Theology basics for the LPA program. I am participating in Year 2 of the Excellence in Leadership program through the Rocky MT synod and doing considerable work toward my own leadership skills through reading, attending on-line workshops.

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**Director for Evangelical Mission: Report to the Montana Synod Council  
Sept. 17-18, 2021**

**ELCA Purpose -- Future Church Design:** Activate each of us that more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love."

**Montana Synod "Vision Statement":** "Equipping for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."

**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:

The ELCA Purpose Statement, the "Vision" statement for the Synod and the description of the DEM role that are included above guide my work on a daily basis as I serve the Montana Synod as the DEM. Now that I have been in this role for four years, I am beginning to feel like I have made some significant progress in some key areas in the Synod.

**Faithful Innovation Process:**

The Faithful Innovation process has been created by leaders at Luther Seminary. The process is crafted to train congregations: to listen to God, one another, and their community; to act—experimenting and reflecting on what they do; and to share and continue to reflect on their

listening and experiments. It draws from work in innovation and adaptive change. It is intended not to be a “program” but to be a different way of being the church – and engaging lay people to be transformed and to (hopefully) lead to transformation in the congregation. The Synod received a grant from churchwide to cover costs of participation in the process and continued guidance from Luther (in regular conversations that I engage in). Luther folks have been modeling adapting and pivoting in the last 18 months as they moved their training materials on-line.

The Faithful Innovation leadership team consists of Pastor Andy Wendle, Pastor Anna Merritt, Dick Deschamps, Pastor Ken Carrothers and Marilyn Hall. The process includes three training sessions for guiding teams from congregations and then each guiding team meets with a coach, on a monthly basis during the first nine months of the process.

On Aug. 29<sup>th</sup>, the Faithful Innovation Leadership team led the first three congregations in their third training. As part of the leadership team’s learning, we pivoted offer a “hybrid” training process for the congregations to continue to work on their learning over the next year. All three congregations agreed that they wanted to continue to engage in the learning process. The leadership team and I have learned a lot in the past year and as we prepare for a new cohort of congregations, we are working to implement our learnings as we begin with new guiding teams. The process is a big paradigm shift for people to grasp. The power of the model is to then repeat the model over and over again!

A second cohort of congregations is set to begin their training on Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>. The five congregations are American in Harlem, Christ in Libby, First in Plains, Our Saviors in Thompson Falls and Our Saviors in Columbia Falls. I am also expecting that one or two congregations will join our training from the Northwest Intermountain Synod.

I anticipate that a third group of congregations will not begin again until next fall. One learning we had was that it was difficult for the guiding teams to keep momentum going through the summer. I have also been communicating with the pastors of the congregations who will be joining that I hope and expect that they will continue in some way in the process into the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, in order to go deeper into understanding and grasping the process of listening, acting and sharing.

### **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.

We had planned for an in-person retreat earlier this week, but shifted to just a 2 ½ hour zoom. I had asked the Task Force to read the book, The Innovative Church, by Scott Cormode. We spent time processing the book during our retreat. With the Vitality Task Force, I will offer a “series” for leaders in congregations to begin to ask questions about what it means to be a vital congregation and to introduce concepts of Faithful Innovation in the early winter. I am working with NRIT about timing and a process for offering this. Now that the Faithful Innovation process is underway, this team is making some adjustments to focus on the future church direction about new ministry possibilities in the Montana Synod. Do you know of any setting around the Synod

where there is a new ministry possibility? Is there something bubbling up that you have heard about or wonder about? How is the Holy Spirit calling forth new possibilities in the Synod? If you know of something or wonder about a possibility, please reach out to me!

### **Coaches in the Montana Synod:**

Marilyn Hall, of Immanuel Lutheran in Missoula was appointed as the Synod Coaching coordinator in the Montana Synod last spring. I continue to draw upon those who have been trained as coaches in the Synod to work with congregations in the Faithful Innovation Process. There are also a few coaching 1<sup>st</sup> call pastors, and a few coaching other leaders in the Synod. I have a coach myself and value the chance to process and think out loud about my own next steps. I see the value of coaching in the power of asking questions and allowing space for people to seek their own answers and solutions. We are in the process of creating a positive coaching culture here in the Montana Synod. (If any Synod Council members are interested in receiving coaching or being trained as a coach, please contact me.)

### **Stewardship Task Force**

The Stewardship Task Force meets almost monthly via zoom. The Task Force has a working draft for a year-round Stewardship plan for the Synod, including regular communication to congregations from Bishop Jungling, and me through short videos, letters and other means to “ask, tell and thank” congregations for their generosity. For the seasons of Advent and Christmas, and the Easter season, I compiled a devotion written by pastors in the Synod that was made available through the website and social media so that it could be made available to congregations. Should that be repeated again in 2021?

The Task Force also approved piloting a process that we called “Fed By Ravens”, a stewardship accompaniment process, with five congregations in the Synod over the past six months, to teach and coach these congregations about stewardship, and to help them think in some new ways about stewardship and generosity. The Synod’s Stewardship Consultant, Dennis Trotter and I have met with these five congregations as a group about four times and then with each “team” from the congregation about four times. As we have been meeting with them, we have heard about the context of each congregation and have marveled that each situation and context have been so different. We entered this convinced that stewardship as a program to plug into a congregation is not helpful. As we are coming closer to the end of the process, we are even more convinced of the need to value each congregation and to encourage and nurture each congregation in their own context. Dennis and I work well together and as these congregations have been aided by his calm presence, knowledge and commitment to the church. After some evaluation and tweaking, I anticipate that we will engage a new group of congregations in the process. I would be excited to include a few participants in the second group who have been a part of this group to offer their perspective and leadership. We want to encourage more people to be able to share their story of generosity and stewardship in the Synod and congregations. One of the big moments in the process with Fed By Ravens was to observe the challenge the participants had to share their own understanding of generosity. Most people need practice to learn to talk about their own stewardship story.

### **Request for Synod Stewardship Consultant:**

I would like to ask that the Synod Council consider retaining Dennis as our Synod Stewardship

Consultant and to consider paying him more for all the work he has put in in 2021 and will continue to do in the next months. I would suggest paying him in the range of \$3000 - \$5000 for the rest of 2021. I would also like to suggest that the Synod Council consider adding a budgeted line item for Synod Stewardship Consultant for 2022.

In order for congregations (and individuals) to change, more often it is a process and the path needs to be clear. But creating (emphasizing) a culture of gratitude and generosity in the Synod will take time. I feel like Dennis' presence and help has been important to creating a shift in the culture of congregations and the Synod. But this is a long process and will not happen quickly! I did request input from members of the Stewardship Task Force about their perception of Dennis' involvement and heard strong and positive comments and appreciation for what he has offered to the Synod.

The Stewardship Task Force includes Treasurer Sue Ost, Barb Arensmeyer, Choteau, Pastor Phil Wold, Sheridan, Pastor Tim Tostengard, Billings, Pastor Scott Thompson, Kalispell, and Pastor Lindean Barnett-Christenson, Bozeman, and Dennis Trotter, Synod Stewardship Consultant. I am grateful for their input and work as we as a Synod provide stewardship education and support for leaders and congregations.

#### **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 August to discuss and try to clarify the roles of Rob as Pastor, Bea Rosenleaf, who has served as Administrator and the FIC board. The board and ministry have lacked clarity and direction for some time. At the same time, Pastor Rob's presence inside the prison has been valued as he is the only clergy that the prison allows to go through the units unescorted. The prison staff expressed to the board that they hope that the ministry provided by FIC will continue. Because of policy issues, (even before Covid) there has been limits as to how many inmates can gather for worship or other religious activities. The Board is committed to clarifying Rob's job description. The board is also working to clarify that Bea will function as the Exec. Director of the ministry. The Board will also be working on succession planning for when Rob retires and when Bea no longer continues in her role. The ministry has been receiving a decreasing amount from the ELCA over the years the ministry has been in existence. I am estimating that the ministry has received over \$200,000 in churchwide funding since its beginning. The Synod has supported the ministry at \$10,000 per year since the ministry began about ten years ago.

**Spirit of Life Ministry Lutheran Ministry on the Fort Peck Reservation:** Pastor Chris Holler-Dinsmore has been serving as the Pastor of the Spirit of Life Ministry. For the last several years, her primary ministry has been inside the Tribal Correctional Facility working with the incarcerated. She has told me that she intends to retire from the ministry at the end of 2021. Currently, she is receiving a churchwide grant of \$6000 for 2021. The ministry has also been receiving \$5,500 from the Synod in the last few years. She has been serving this ministry for about ten years. Again, because the setting is in a place where it is not self-supporting, I estimate that this ministry has received about \$200,000 in churchwide funding. Although in the beginning there was a hope that she would begin a worship service in Wolf Point or Poplar, that has not happened. Although I would like for the Synod to support some ministry on the Fort Peck



Reservation, I believe that the Synod Council needs to recommend that the ministry cease as the Spirit of Life Lutheran Ministry as there will not be a pastoral leader to serve in a leadership capacity. I do expect that Pastor Chris will continue as a volunteer with the Tribal Correctional Facility.

**Rocky Boy – Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church:** Pastor Tom Gehring continues to serve at the ministry on the Rocky Boys Reservation and with Our Saviour’s Congregation.

**Confluence Collective:** Intern Pastor Rebekah Cochrane, serving at Immanuel in Missoula, and Pastor John Lund are gathering a small group of leaders to begin meeting in October. They anticipate that the ministry will be more of a spiritual gathering than social justice and they are feeling like there are people in the area who are hungry and searching for such a community. This ministry “began” in the fall of 2019. They have received some churchwide funding as an “Exploration”, but have not received any funding from the Montana Synod.

**Montana Synod Gift Acceptance Policy:** The Synod does have a Gift Acceptance Policy that can be found on the Synod’s website. Given that there have been and that there are some new gifts that we anticipate, the conversation has been had that there is a need to have the current policy updated. Beth Adams, the Region 1 Gift Planner for the ELCA Foundation is a resource to us and is willing to help consult with a small group of people to suggest language for revising the current policy. I have acquired 8 different gift acceptance policies from other Synods that could be a resource to a group working on this. I am happy to share what I have with a group.

I continue to give thanks to God and to you all for the opportunity to serve God and the Synod as the DEM.

Peggy Paugh Leuzinger  
Director for Evangelical Mission, Montana Synod  
Sept. 15, 2021