

2021 Montana Synod Secretary's Report

Below is a summary of the actions taken by the Council of the Montana Synod since the assembly held in June of 2019. Due to the pandemic, there was no assembly held in 2020, so this report encompasses a two-year period. The Council of the Montana Synod met nine times in the past two years. The Synod Council is commissioned to conduct the business of the Synod between Synod Assemblies, as well as set the direction for the Synod. The Council conducted the following business:

- Approved the new mission start in Missoula, *Conspire* (later renamed *Confluence*), as a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community.
- Appointed Pastor Lindean Barnett Christianson as churchwide voting member, replacing a member who could not attend.
- Elected Robin Matthews, Tonja Erickson, Allen Hansen, and Pastor Anna Merritt to the Montana Synod Council Executive Committee.
- Approved the changes to the 2019 and 2020 budgets.
- Approved the recommended minimum salary guidelines for 2020 and 2021.
- Allowed Messiah Lutheran Church (Billings) to move to Saint John's United for their worship space and a mailing address; and to operate with a council of the whole for one year (effective November 1, 2019), extended for another year in September of 2020.
- Ratified the appointment of Rev. Sean Janssen to serve out the term of Rev. Linda Webster on the Synod Council.
- Asked the stewardship task force to investigate a fiscal partnership with the ELCA foundation and the GSB proposal and make a recommendation to the council.
- Recommended the 2021 budget to the Synod Assembly.
- In March of 2020, chose to make interest only payments on the Synod House mortgage in accordance with an offer from Mission Investment Fund.
- Canceled the 2020 Montana Synod Assembly.
- Recognized the Covid-19 pandemic as a disaster and authorized the use of disaster response funds for congregations who had unmet needs.
- Approved the opening of a new account with the ELCA Federal Credit Union.
- Ratified the appointments of Kevin Johnson, John Sheppard, Rev. Peter Erickson and Kristi Lobdell to serve one-year terms on the Synod Council until the 2021 assembly.
- Approved \$1000 to be added to the ELCA Credit Union checking account to be used as a discretionary fund.
- Accepted the recommendation of the stewardship task force to enter partnership with the ELCA Foundation.
- Entered into agreement with Dennis Trotter to act as consultant for mission support.
- Adopted the 2021 budget.
- Called Pastor Christina (Trina) Johnsten to serve as an intentional interim minister for the synod.
- Resumed paying principal and interest on the mortgage beginning in October, 2020.
- Approved an experimental plan for the Synod Council to meet every other month until June of 2021.
- Voted to hold a virtual Synod Assembly over the weekend of June 4-6, 2021.
- Authorized the Stewardship Task Force to pursue a crowdfunding platform for ministry fundraising.
- Approved revisions to the 2021 budget.
- Recommended the 2022 budget to the Synod Assembly.
- Approved the use of funds from the Rudyard Lutheran Church telephone cooperative capital credits to support the Racial Justice Task Force.
- By unanimous vote, approved the council resolution for holding the assembly by virtual means.

- Requested the use of space at Bethel Lutheran (Great Falls) for the 2021 Synod Assembly.
- Designated the Synod Assembly Offering to First Call Theological Education, Care for Creation Task Force and Racial Justice Task Force (divided into thirds).
- Approved On Leave from Call Status: Pastor Roberta Smythe, Pastor Mary Morgenstern, Pastor Linda Webster, Pastor Jean Hay, Pastor Stacey Siebrasse Heggem, Pastor Natalie Faltin, and Pastor Kristi Bummer
- Approved Retirement Roster Status: Pastor Mark Taylor, Pastor Roberta Pierce, Pastor Steven Paugh Leuzinger, Pastor Kim Wilker, Bishop Jessica Crist, Pastor Char Schmiedeskamp, Pastor Steve Loy, Pastor Larry Stappler, and Pastor Steve VanGilder. The annual review of 1/3 of this roster was completed in 2020 by Bishop Jungling.
- Reviewed Synod Council Calls as of May 2019.
- Synod Council Calls to Special Service: Pastor Stacey Siebrasse (Director of Bridges and Leaders), Pastor Al Jensen (Chaplain, Immanuel Lutheran Communities, Kalispell),
- Removed Susan Penn (deacon) and Bob Nilsen (pastor) from the roster.
- Approved funding to continue our work with Dennis Trotter (Synod financial consultant) in 2021.
- Added funds to the 2021 and 2022 budgets to cover the cost of a stipend for the synod Candidacy coordinator.
- Approved the slate of candidates from the nominating committee (2021). Nominations from the floor will not be accepted.
- Appointed: John Munding and Pastor Steve Loy to the Candidacy Committee; Dr. Ashley Quanbeck, Vicky Nytes, Linda Nelson, Pastor Elizabeth Liggett, Pastor Seth Nelson, and Mindy Christensen (Grants Committee) to the Hetzel Foundation; Allen Hansen to the Freedom in Christ board as Synod Council liaison; Rev. Arne Bergland to the PLU Corporation board; Pastor Sean Janssen to the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary board; and Marilyn Hall as the volunteer Montana Synod coaching coordinator; .
- Ecumenical Appointments: Pastor Anna Viehland (Methodist) to Shepherd of the Valley, Townsend; Pastor JP Carlson (Presbyterian) to Christ the King, Bozeman; Pastor Jamie Schmelling (Presbyterian) to Hope American, Fallon.
- Received reports from Bishop Laurie Jungling, Associate to the Bishop Jason Asselstine, Director for Evangelical Mission, Peggy Paugh Leuzinger, Director for Technology and Communication Colter McCarty, Office Manager Candi Standall, Synod Treasurer Sue Ost, Director of NRIT Jenny Kunka, Secretary Amanda Liggett, Pastor Stacey Siebrasse (Racial Justice Task Force), Pastor Eric Huseth (Creation Care Task Force), Pastor Kendra Wilde (Montana Association of Christians), Trudi Paulson (Saint John's United Family Services), Pastor Dave Brauer-Rieke (Region 1 Lutheran Disaster Response), Beth Adams (ELCA Foundation), Dennis Trotter (Mission Support Consultant), Pastor Jessie Obrecht (World Hunger Coordinator), and Loni Taylor (ELCA Church Council and Our Saviour's Rocky Boy).

Some topics of discussion throughout the year were: our synod mission partners, Mission Support, disaster response, vision and mission, support for the synod task forces, and of course the pandemic. The council was asked to meet more regularly than in the past, via electronic meeting, so that we could stay informed and help guide the synod through a time of uncertainty. Significant time was spent discussing how to support congregations and pastors through the pandemic, as well as strategies for the synod to deal gracefully with any issues that arose.

Respectfully Submitted,



Pastor Amanda Liggett
Secretary, Montana Synod