

**TEXAS-LOUISIANA GULF COAST SYNOD
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING**

Date of Meeting: September 23, 2023

Venue: St. Paul Lutheran Church, La Grange, TX

Attendees: Bishop Mike, Robert Rivera, Paul Antolik (Zoom), Deidre Hayes (Zoom), Rev. Anthony Chatman, Irene Del Arco (Zoom), Rev. Ariel Otterstad, Caleb Parks, Taylor Rivera (Zoom), Rev. Sergio Rodriguez

Absent: Adele Montgomery, Rev. Chon Pugh, Tom Wildrick, Calea Wirtley

Staff: Rev. Tracey Breashears-Schultz, Rev. Ele Clay, Rev. Chris Markert

The meeting was called to order at 9:40 am by Robert Rivera,

Opening prayer/devotions on the Laborers in the Vineyard were led by Bishop Mike.

Actions Taken

1. Approved the Consent Agenda. Motion: Caleb, Second: Sergio.
 - a. The consent agenda included:
 - i. May 18, 2023 Council Minutes, and minutes of the July 7, 2023 and September 8, 2023 electronic meeting.
 - ii. The On Leave from Call request for Rev. Jen Kindsvatter.
 - iii. The Retirement request for Deacon Sandra Fletcher.
2. Approved a continuing resolution that establishes the synod LGBTQIA Coalition as an organizational unit as specified in the synod constitution (S11.01). Motion: Rev. Anthony, Second: Paul.
3. Approved the Synod Strategic Plan. Motion: Bishop Mike, Second: Caleb.
4. Appointed Rev. Sergio, Rev. Anthony, and Caleb to the Nominating Committee.
5. Approved issuing a call to Pastor Jose Luis Escalera to for the position of Bishop's Associate for Mission. Motion: Rev. Anthony, Second: Taylor.
6. Accepted the resignation of Tom Wildrick as Synod Treasurer.

Discussion

Bishop's Associate for Mission Report: Brother Chris

- Thanked the Synod for the opportunity to serve the last nine years.
- Reviewed the purpose of the LGBTQIA coalition and introduced a recommendation recognizing the coalition as an organizational unit within the Synod.
- Provided mission updates on four missions and campus ministries.
- Provided a summary of the status of SAWCs, Restarts, and Redevelopments within the Synod.

Bishop's Associate for Leadership Report - Rev. Tracey

- Reviewed a summary of the call process noting that there were currently 17 calls currently open in the Synod.
- Gave an update on candidacy and also on congregations in leadership transitions.

Vice-President's Report – Robert

- Noted the resignation of Adan Plata from the Synod Council.
- Presented the Nominating/Elections Committee report resulting in the appointments to the committees noted in the Actions Taken section.
- Candidates for committees and council are being pursued.
- Council is asked to donate to Central African Republic via the website.

Policy Discussion

- Conflict of Interest Policy – it was suggested to add a date to the document.
- Reimbursement Policy
 - i. Increase the amounts listed for lunch and dinner to \$25 and \$40 respectively.
 - ii. Add ride share to shuttles as an option for transportation from an airport to a hotel

Secretary's Report – Paul

- Only the minutes submitted in the consent agenda.

Treasurer's Report – Bishop Mike for Tom

- Presented the current status of the finances.
- Bishop Mike will check on the status of the final audit report

Bishop's Report:

- Reviewed the Synod Strategic Plan
 - i. Priorities are 1) diversity and 2) leadership
 - ii. Diversity #1
 1. Develop Bible Study to lift up and engage people to live out the bible.
 2. Develop a slate of educational opportunities
 3. Commit to new action by creating partnerships informed by study
 - iii. Diversity #2 - Establish an RIC team
 - iv. Leadership
 1. DEI training
 2. Create a two year lay ministry school
 3. Get more help with youth ministry
 - v. Discussion
 1. Are we too focused on training and certification?
 2. For youth ministry, be careful not to re-create what worked years ago, rather tailor it to current needs and interests
- Reviewed the Synod Stewardship Plan
- Accepted the resignation of Synod Council Treasurer Tom Wildrick
- Will put out communication to congregations about the need for advance planning on insurance since insurance companies are giving short notice of non-renewal of existing policies.
- Discussed activities with our companion synods in the Central African Republic and Peru. Bishop Mike and others will be travelling to the CAR in November. Members of Peru will meet with Synod members at Camp Tejas.

Overview of St. Paul Lutheran, LaGrange – Caleb.

Meeting adjourned at 1:31 pm. Motion: Caleb, Second: Taylor.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Antolik
Secretary