

Bishop's Road Show

November 18, 2009

Dear Friends:

Grace and peace be unto you.

The Synod Council of the West Virginia - Western Maryland Synod met for its annual retreat over the dates of November 13 and 14, 2009.

Friday night of the retreat was spent reviewing financial figures, projections and a possible policy revision. Treasurer Matthew Riegel was commended for faithful and masterful job on putting together information and policy. On Saturday morning, Synod Council refined a "Policy for Redirection of Mission Support in Pastoral Sensitivity for Bound Conscience." This policy was adopted for congregations desiring to make a protest with Mission Support gifts due to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly actions related to Human Sexuality, only. A letter was mailed to the pastors of this synod on Tuesday, November 17, 2009 providing the details of this policy. This policy will be posted on the Synod web site by the end of this week.

Within my report to Synod Council (SC) in which I detail my activities, I noted that since our July meeting, my visits to congregations was unusually high (23 visits), 7 Council meetings and 63 visits (either in person or on the phone for 15 minutes or more) with clergy or interested laity.

SC approved committee changes with the addition of Pastor Sean Smith to the Professional Candidacy Committee and the removal of Pastor David Twedt at his request; the addition of Megan Clark from First English, Wheeling to the Synod Committee for Congregational Ministries and Appalachian Concerns. Lynda Grymala resigned from SC due to increased family needs. An appointment will be made to fulfill this year of Lynda's term with that seat up for election at the 2010 Synod Assembly.

Within Synod Assembly 2010, we will elect one clergy person, one female, one male laity and a person of color of whose primary language is other than English to the Churchwide Assembly that will be held in Orlando, Florida in 2011.

Pastor Ted Bessey requested of SC the status of "On-Leave-From-Call" and this status was granted from Nov. 1, 2009 – Oct. 31, 2010. This status is granted in only one-year intervals and may be applied for three times. He has permission to supply preach and to officiate for the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

SC approved additional scholarships for a Senior and Intern from the Warwood Lutheran Church Scholarship Fund. When awarded in December, two of our seminarians will receive notification of gifts of \$1,150 from this fund.

SC received correspondence from St. Timothy, Charleston and Zion, Letart concerning the withholding of Mission Support dollars. Letters from Pastor David Twedt (concerning the 2010 Mission support letter) was read along with a letter of resignation from the ELCA Roster by David Rockwood.

A discussion was held concerning the 2009 Synod Assembly. SC asked Pastor Riegel to write a rule concerning the calling of the question. Some felt that there were instances in which it was called too quickly. Thoughts were provided that at least five positive and five negative comments needed to be made before the question could be called. SC asked that such a rule be written and presented to SC for the February meeting for possible inclusion of Synod Assembly Rules, 2010.

A member of the Reference and Counsel Committee raised a question about that committee's need for direction prior to the 2010 Assembly. A study group was agreed to concerning Pastor Riegel's resolution on dissolving the ELCA with Pr. Riegel agreeing to chair said group.

Discussion then centered upon the Churchwide Assembly and this synod's memorials. This was referred to the February meeting of SC.

Bishop Dunkin shared with SC issues related to the model constitution and church property and to bylaws passed at the Churchwide Assembly for Synods. Those adopted for synods need to be added to constitutions now.

The Synod Treasurer presented ways to reduce the synod budget by ending our spending in some categories. Those reductions will equal \$18,000 plus with the possibility that we will use \$8,300 from savings to meet necessary spending.

SC will next meet on Saturday, February 6, 2010 in the synod office, Fairmont, WV.

Yours in our Lord's service,

+ Ralph

PS: Today, Nov. 18, I am working at home. The only time today that I am not available will be from 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. when I will be on a conference call. Tonight, I will drive half way to Gettysburg Seminary. On Thursday, Pastor Riegel and I will meet with faculty and six interested students who will do a two-week immersion into congregations of this synod in January. From 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m., I will be teaching a class of seminarians. On Friday morning, I will drive home. Sunday will find Terry and me at Shepherd of the Hills for morning worship. Next week, Thanksgiving week, I will be on vacation. That full week, the synod office will be closed as well. Should you need to reach either Maureen or me, please leave a message at the office, and we will respond to you on November 30, 2009.