

EASTERN DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
MINUTES - DRAFT
FRIDAY MAY 10 – SATURDAY MAY 11, 2019

Friday, May 10, 2019 - St. John Lutheran Church, 501 North Ave, Millvale (Pittsburgh) PA

Attending: Chris Wicher, Mark Erbelding, Dan Hahn, Fred Hoover, Jon Allen, Brian Smith, Terry Miller, Gary Nash, Susan Bell, Melissa Fultz, John Pingel, Cyndi Alviani, Jim Carr, Carl Prostka.

OPENING DEVOTION [Hoover]

Fred shared The Red Letter Challenge, a 40-day discipleship challenge recommended by Susan Bell from a presentation at Best Practices in AZ. Rather than analyze & talk about the words of Jesus, this takes us into *doing* what he says-discipleship. The topic began with worship as “fun” – something that you *want* to do, something that’s attractive to people. Life can be difficult, but through the difficulty & hard work is the fun of being a Christian; they aren’t mutually exclusive.

In Luke 15, the father runs to the son & restores him. It’s what happens for all of us even as Paul points out to the church in Ephesus 3:1-10. We have a new identity because of God: *He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing*. (Can you imagine the breadth of those blessings?) We’re inundated with information about how the church is in decline, but how about we start here, with God who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing? What’s our condition here: Holy & Blameless. Before you can mess it up, God set you apart-according to his love; there’s not cause & effect other than God’s love and choice to adopt us according to the purpose of his will. No matter our fears of the church’s future, this is where we need to begin, with God’s choice informing all we do and who we are. Because of what Jesus has done for us, this will never change, and it is amazing! The church is the best thing ever because we’re part of God’s story where we take our faith seriously and bring that message to the world.

BOARD BUSINESS [Erbelding]

- **Meeting called to order**, 1:24pm
- **Approval of Minutes.** Motion approved by Terry Miller & seconded by Jim Carr to accept minutes of the January meeting. Approved. Motion to approve minutes of the special meeting in March by Susan Bell, seconded by Gary Nash. Approved
- **Approval of Agenda.** Motion to accept by Dan Hahn, seconded Jim Carr. Approved.
- **Election results:** Due to a vacancy in the Office of Secretary in March, the BOD was notified, nominations were received (Brian Smith & Chuck Whited) and the Board voted with the result that Brian Smith was elected secretary of the ED BOD with notification sent on April 5, 8:41pm. Carl Prostka moved to accept this report, Susan Bell seconded. Approved.

INSTALLATION of BOD member Jon Allen and secretary Brian Smith by President Wicher.

MEMBER SHARING

- Welcomed Brian Smith, new District Secretary

PRESIDENT’S REPORT [Wicher]

- **Written report summary:**

This report is part of the rhythm of the schedule and our spring meeting takes us to new locations in the ED other than Buffalo. Typically, no major decisions to be made at this time, mostly reporting. Two items not on the report: 1. We’re in the middle of two regional conferences (PA & MD and Buffalo/Rochester). 2. Call services took place at Ft. Wayne & St. Louis (Sam Fink was called as Assoc. Pastor to St. John’s-Orchard Park). No other requests for vicars or candidate calls to the ED; but there’s no better time to be part of the church than now! Opportunities are

incredible and the wealth and freedoms of our N. American churches are amazing. How we adjust to challenges is fun to witness.

Almost complete with the Deacon-to-Pastor transition. Final approval for 3 men to be ordained. John Rushton (Alpha-Deaf, Rochester) is the only 1 remaining to be interviewed on Monday; he is the only deaf deacon in LCMS to be ordained a pastor. A Deacon was certified at Hope-Levittown (Pastor Rick Mokry) to serve, though not in sustained Word & Sacrament ministry.

Staffing: see note of compliance with NYS law for training that was accomplished.

NEXTChurch Task Force is addressing 3 key issues: 1. Stewardship of FT vs PT District President. 2. Feasibility of our building. 3. Staffing into the future (consideration of shared staffing possibilities)

Another Task force is working on redrawing electoral circuit lines.

St. Matthew-Rochester was vacant & purchased by another congregation with an anticipated balloon payment. An attorney informed us that a man in Rochester allegedly purchased the property from the church occupying St. Matthew. Harassing calls were being received from the individual in question. The ED attorney has been informed and this individual referred to him, with no recent action. Discussion about the sale will continue later this year.

Auditors are working as necessitated and the efforts are conjoined with Pioneer due to our relationship.

GPS is a program working with new graduates.

All worker's conference in the works (every 3yrs)

Delegate orientation. For the first time presented as a webinar.

Grace Place Retreat – 5 ED church worker couples will attend

Presidents' meetings: District President will meet with congregational presidents.

District Convention for 2021 is in the works. Costs at Daemen college have become prohibitive; as such, plans are to move it back to a church. (See Board Business below)

NEXTchurch conference is an opportunity to envision the future of the church with various topics such as house church, worship style, leadership, supervision, outreach, trimming the church building for more effective ministry.

There are 13 calling congregations (3 for Senior Pastor). The DP is involved in the process, providing call lists and assisting them with pulpit supply during their vacancies. Comprising the call lists is a challenging task. Congregations served by Deacons or on a part time basis (40 in total) are those that cannot support a full-time pastor. The number of congregations engaging in partnerships is a growing **phenomenon**.

- **Wicher Sabbatical approve.** Proposed for July-August 2020 (as per current ED policy) to consider his ministry and future as DP, especially with major staffing changes in the ED in coming years. (as discussed by the NEXTchurch Task Force). Chris has a coverage plan during his vacancy for supervisory items. This includes the suggested use of the Vice Presidents, perhaps even a "VP in Residence" for a week at a time.

Jon Allen shared that his parents' church ~~that~~ was the first in New England District to approve a policy change for sabbaticals in their church and district. Jon asked if 2mos is sufficient (as per his own research), and Chris indicated 2mos was sufficient.

Grant funding (e.g. Lilly Foundation, Wheatridge, Mission Central) is sought to cover (travel) expenses, not salary.

John Pingel asked about items not covered in the handbook and was concerned about addressing serious ecclesiastical supervision items; Chris indicated that the VP would be authorized to carry out any such official action.

Motion to approve the sabbatical for President Wicher. Terry Miller seconded. Approved.

- **Personnel Manual, ratify** It's a rather extensive document. One item was about insurance; if an ED employee opts out, we determined to offer a portion of the premium in cash, saving a great deal of money for the ED. Anti-harassment & Anti-violence policies were also added to this manual.

Jon noted the recent NY Election law, allowing employees to take up to 3hrs off for voting purposes (with 2day notification to an employer). Jon raised a question regarding policy on ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act). Also suggested a Table of Contents for quick reference.

Dan Hahn asked about the DAWG Day (Day Away With God). Pastor Wicher noted he encourages pastors to regularly take a day away from the church for scripture and reflection. This ties in with our District Vision of Healthy Leaders, Healthy Congregations.

Motion to approve personnel manual Moved by Susan Bell, Seconded by Jon Allen. Approved.

- **Crisis Plan Manual, ratify.** Serves as the "what if" guide for the ED. Motion to approve by Jim Carr, Seconded by Cyndi Alviani. Approved.

(Break)

BOARD BUSINESS, [Wicher]

- **Financial Report.** (submitted by Barb Sigafoos). Our deficit-to-budget at the end of March was \$1,400, but by the end of April we were \$3,000 above, which is in recent memory-unprecedented. Overall, as Chris noted, it was a good report and was received by the BOD with thanks.

Alex Knowles explained that a donor gift of company shares to Pioneer is going through an IPO (Initial Price Offering), meaning the funds won't be available this year. Given the uncertain nature of an IPO, the Board recommended Chris ask Jay Pohlman to provide a status report and Pioneer's payment plan on the Board-approved (7/7/2018) co-borrowed LCEF Loan.

- **2021 Convention General Plan approve.** (as required) Proposal is a change of venue from Daemen college as the rising costs will be prohibitive. (Daemen College costs: 2015-\$25,900. 2018-\$41,800. 2021-\$38,700 without miscellaneous expenses, which amounted to \$8,000, bringing the estimate for 2018 to \$46,000). First Trinity on Niagara Falls Boulevard in Tonawanda has approved hosting the convention the week before Father's Day, June 11-12, 2021. (However, Chris noted that the Synod in convention this year will consider moving from a triennium to quadrennium for convention, which may change our schedule.) We'll be using 4 local hotels, all within a mile. The Friday evening banquet would be hosted at a local restaurant. Dan Hahn moved to approve the motion to approve the 2021 Convention Plan as presented., Carl Prostka seconded. Approved.

Post Church Challenges & Opportunities [Wicher presentation with handout]. "Post Church" describes the culture we and our churches are experiencing. The challenge is how we might engage our increasingly post-church communities with integrity.

CLOSING PRAYER – [Hoover]

EASTERN DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Saturday, May 11, 2019

(Change of venue)
Zion Lutheran, 237 37th St. Pittsburgh, PA 15208

MORNING DEVOTION [Miller]

Terry's devotion brought us to Mother's Day. Whatever kind of day it would be for you as a mother or in remembrance of your mother, Jesus is there and gives strength for the challenges, forgives and allows us to live in all circumstances. We're thankful to him for the love of God reflected to us through godly mothers and women.

We enjoyed a brief tour of the 150 year old church with Terry Miller and Chris took a photo of the clergy members of the board (all 4 Regional VP's and the new sec'y), all graduates of Concordia College, Bronxville, NY.

"Canoeing The Mountains" book summary [Wicher – see handout]

Chris shared about the book by Ted Bolsinger, which uses the metaphor of the Lewis & Clark expedition for where the church is today. They were prepared for river travel, but they faced mountains. They had to change their approach & tactics to achieve their mission, which is what we face as the church today.

He highly recommends this book to church leader in a positive hopeful way about today's dilemmas in the church; they can crushing, halting...or invigorating! Normalcy, predictability is a rut-and it feels safe-but life is all about change, and God brings change even as He is Lord of the church. Consider the resources we have in the church today, and it's phenomenal for the exciting time in which we live and serve.

He also advocated the value of EQ (emotional intelligences vs. IQ) in navigating the changes. In that same area, Jon Allen recommend books by Richard J. Kriegel: If it Ain't Broke, Break it! and Sacred Cows Make The Best Burgers.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- **Future Board Meeting dates:** Chris provided a recommended list (included in the Board Section of lcmcsd.org). Motion to accept the recommendation by Susan Bell, seconded by Fred Hoover. Approved.
- **Vacancies in Synod:** Mark noted a replacement is needed for the Concordia University System Board of Directors. DPs and District Boards would serve as the conduit for nominations.
- **Policy Governance:** the committee will meet again to continue the review with Rick Porter and will present an update with needed approval by the Board. The strong suggestion is that we look at the expected [measurable] outcomes; the current list is more on aspiration than outcome. Rick suggested a few lead questions at the BOD meeting to inform the process of rewriting these outcomes. An ultimate question raised is "Why are we here?" Motion to the Board revisiting the outcomes, beginning in October, by Dan Hahn, seconded by Jim Carr. Approved.

MEETING EVALUATION AND BOARD CALENDAR [Erbelding]

Big thanks to Dan for the transportation and fellowship opportunities after the meeting and Terry Miller for hosting on the spur of the moment. Chris asked that Board member take time over the summer to review the policy information in advance of our meeting.

CLOSING PRAYER [Miller]

Motion to adjourn by Terry Miller, seconded by Carl Prostka. Approved.