

## **EASTERN DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2016**

Conference Call originating from the Eastern District Office, Williamsville, New York

### **REGULAR MEETING**

**Directors Present at District Office:** Vice Chair Claire Carlson; Melissa Fultz; Rev. Karl Haeussler; Rev. John Pingel; Chair Gordon Tresch, ESQ; Rev. Chris Wicher.

**Directors Present at Conference Call:** Rev. Murray Brindle; Deaconess Jacqueline Duke; Mark Erbelding; Jacqui Green; Maureen Grunder; Terry Miller; Rev. Carl Prostka; Rev. Daniel Strussenberg.

**Director Absent:** Bradley Dreier.

**Meeting called to Order.** A roll call was taken by the Secretary and a quorum was established. It was noted that Bradley Dreier was absent as he is recovering from surgery. The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:04 pm.

**Opening Devotion.** An Opening Devotion was led by Pastor John Pingel which had an appropriate Lenten emphasis.

**Approval of Minutes.** A motion was made by the Chair and seconded to approve the minutes for the Special Meeting - Orientation of October 1, 2015. It was noted that Tresch was not spelled properly. The Secretary vowed to go to a blackboard and write Tresch one thousand times! The motion to adopt the minutes as amended was approved unanimously.

A motion was made by the Chair and seconded to approve the minutes for the Special Meeting - Visitation of the Synodical President of October 2, 2015. The motion was approved unanimously.

A motion was made by the Chair and seconded to approve the minutes for the Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of October 2 & 3, 2015. It was noted that the cost of putting a new roof on the Clyde property was \$14,000 and not \$21,000. The motion to adopt the minutes as amended was approved unanimously.

**Approval of the Agenda.** A motion was made and seconded to approve the revised agenda. The Chair explained that in view of the inclement weather which forced the cancellation of our meeting in Batavia, New York and necessitated this Conference Call, we would try to get through the entire agenda that afternoon. The revised agenda was approved unanimously. A copy is attached. (See attachment 1)

**Approval of Minutes.** A motion was made by the Chair and seconded to approve the minutes

for the Special Conference Call of January 7, 2016. The motion was approved unanimously. (Minutes are attached. See attachment 2)

**Member Sharing.** In view of the bad weather situation, the Chair asked the members to keep their sharing brief - and they did! The Chair asked the Secretary to call upon each member for their time of sharing.

**President's Report.** Our President presented his report at the District Office with the aid of a breath-taking powerpoint presentation which those on the Conference Call sadly missed!

\* As District President, he focuses on three fundamental points.

1) Always Mission! Everything we do is about the Mission given to us by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! We are called and empowered to share Christ, to be Christ in the world.

2) Worker Wellness. Referred to the report he is sharing at Circuit meetings on worker wellness based upon Elijah's burnout experience in 1 Kings 19 and how pastors can learn how to deal with their own moments. He shared how Danny Wegman shared with his son the following: "The most important people are not the customer, it's the workers. If they are healthy and well and have a positive attitude, everything else flows well." An important lesson for pastors and leaders of our congregations - locally and Synodically.

3) Focus on Strengths. Do what you do well and strive to do it in fresh and exciting ways. This will always overshadow our weaknesses.

\* New faces of Missions.

+ St. Luke Lutheran in Cabot, Pennsylvania is looking to start a new mission in the Natrona area.

+ Good Shepherd Lutheran in State College, Pennsylvania is doing mission work in the Huntington area.

+ Peace Lutheran in Scranton, Pennsylvania establishing a Lutheran Center reaching out to Muslims and Hindus.

+ Central New York pastors are looking to start something new in the Syracuse area.

+ Linc - Rochester is active with Hispanic outreach.

+ St. John Lutheran in Accident, Maryland has been overseeing a mission congregation in the Clarksburgh, West Virginia area. They are planning to bring in a Vicar.

+ Grace Lutheran in Hamburg, New York (which left our District a few years ago) has now become a satellite congregation of St. John Lutheran in Orchard Park.

+ Lifetree Cafes have been doing well all around the District.

\* There have been two special appeals to the District.

+ Christ Assembly in Philadelphia has a Vicar and is requesting for half of his salary to be paid.

+ The Liberian Mission led by Pastor Zogar is requesting \$5,000.

\* Futures 2 is a special task force established by the President to examine and discuss future possibilities for our District. It is made up of 4 Pastors, 1 DCE and several lay people. Its facilitator is Daryl Pichan from Faith Lutheran in Penfield, New York. (Brad from our BOD is a member.) The group has been divided into eight focus committees. For example, Chris is on a committee (with former BOD member Kris Burris from Murrysville, Pennsylvania) focusing upon the purpose of the Church with an eye toward those unchurched who are 35 and younger. They will bring written recommendations to the BOD by the end of 2016.

\* A motion was made and seconded to approve the appointment of Jason Christ, DCE at First Trinity Lutheran in Tonawanda, New York, as the Commissioned Minister on the Constitution Review Committee. The motion was approved unanimously.

\* Some years ago, a change was made in the Articles of Incorporation for Pioneer Camp and Retreat Center. It was a change recommended by the Synod for camps in all of our Districts. Unfortunately, it is not in compliance with Resolution #411 passed at the 2004 Synodical Convention. The concern is over proper language regarding what happens to the organization's property if it dissolves (it must be returned to Synod). We need to see what may be decided about this issue at this summer's Synodical Convention. Our specific concern is whether or not such a decision will be in harmony with New York state law.

\* At the October meeting, we discussed a proposed resolution from First Trinity Lutheran in Pittsburgh that would move them from the Eastern District to the English District. Our President and Secretary visited First Trinity and met with their Church Council a few Sundays after our October meeting. The congregation has not acted upon this resolution.

\* Before and after pictures were shown of the new roof on the property in Clyde, New York. The Kise family now wants to deed this property to their children. This latest twist means that we are still working on the sale of the property.

\* Both Inglesias Nazeret Lutheran and Nazereth Lutheran led by Pastor Art Boone have closed.

\* Alpha Deaf Lutheran in Rochester wants to sell their property to The DiMarco Group. They cannot do this as their constitution contains a reversion clause stating that any profits from the sale of their property must go to the Eastern District. A motion was made and seconded to adopt a resolution in which we wave our right to the proceeds of the sale and allow them to sell their property to this group. The entire resolution (which is attached) was read by the Secretary. After brief discussion the question was called. The motion was approved unanimously. A signature page will be sent in the mail to each member of the Board. It needs to be returned as soon as possible so the sale may take place in a timely manner. (See attachment 3)

\* New York State recently passed a Revitalization Act which could mean changes for employees of non profit organizations. General consent was given by the Board for our President and Chair to meet with our attorney to see if any changes to our By-Laws need to be made.

\* A motion was made and seconded to nominate our Chair Gordon Tresch to both Synod's

Commission on Handbook (COH) and Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM). If he is selected to both, he can choose which one he will serve. The motion was overseen by the Vice Chair who called the question and then the vote. The motion was approved unanimously.

\* A motion was made and seconded to set President Wicher's Housing Allowance at \$24,000. It was approved unanimously.

\* The Chair and the Vice Chair met with the President on January 28, 2016 for his Year End Review. Some of the highlights shared by the Chair and the Vice Chair were as follows:

+ His top two goals for 2015 were a successful District Convention and to host a successful visitation of the Synodical President. He believes both of these goals were met.

+ He sees himself as a good communicator with a heart for workers.

+ His greatest disappointment concerning 2015 was the poor registration for both the Mission Summit and the Congregational Presidents' Conference.

+ His greatest joy from 2015 was the adoption of the new District By-Laws at the District Convention. This was a very long process that encompasses many years of hard work and planning.

+ He is thankful to the BOD for their continued support. In line with this, the question was asked how the BOD can help our President. His responses were "Keep my feet to the fire" and "Stay focused on the outcomes approved in 2015."

+ Another goal for him this year is to instill within the District a greater spirit of working together in Mission.

+ Additional goals for the coming year: a successful implementation of the District Visitation Program; bringing goals out of the Futures 2 Committee; continuing to help our District Mission Outreaches; and, planning for the 2017 District Convention. In line with this last goal, he is really hoping that a new site can be found for the 2017 District Convention.

+ He shared the recent challenge in his personal life concerning the recent death of his sister-in-law.

+ He will continue to oversee the transition among our District Staff.

+ Overall, he is very positive about his professional life. He continues to be excited about how the Spirit of the Lord will use his Vision for Ministry to promote healthy ministries for our pastors which will encourage growth for our congregations.

\* Every congregation in our District will be visited during the next 18 months either by our President himself or by one of his ecclesiastical representatives. All representatives have been

trained and have received their assignments. During the visit the Visitor will meet with the Pastor and his wife. The primary purpose of each visit is to support and encourage the Pastor, the staff, and the congregation. If problems are found, the District will focus upon how it can help. Pastor Pingel commented very positively upon his training and upon the program itself.

\* A preparatory meeting for Synodical Convention Delegates - elected and alternates - will be held for each of our four regions during April. Chris will share how the Convention works along with his takes on hot topics. (Of course, each delegate is to vote as their conscience leads them to do.) Bruce Sutherland will assist with the presentations.

\* There are 10 members of the committee that is organizing the 2017 Eastern District Convention. This is down from 17 members. Lyle Heggemeir is looking at new sites. The Regional Vice Presidents are encouraged to look for possible new venues and pass on any possibilities to Lyle.

Break at 3:14 p.m.

Annual Meeting of the Pioneer "Owners" begins at 3:25 p.m. (See separate minutes)

Reconvened as Board of Directors at 4:27 p.m.

During the Annual Meeting of the Pioneer "Owners," all of the Directors attending the meeting via conference call were disconnected. A quick informal roll call was done to make certain that everyone was reconnected.

In view of the worsening weather situation, the Chair is hoping to finish all that needs to be done so the Board will not have to meet tomorrow.

### **District Budget.**

\* There was a shortage of \$40,000 in this past year's budget. Treasurer Barb Sigafos sent out an appeal and the response was phenomenal and we are only \$11,000 now. (Money is still being given toward last year's budget.)

\* We were able to pay off another \$10,000 of the Ignite and Light loan. It is now at \$60,000 down from its original \$200,000!

\* \$186,000 of the budget is not strictly Eastern District as it comes from Lutheran Church Extension Fund (Rick Porter is an employee) and Lutheran Foundation (Rich Paul is an employee). This means that the real Eastern District budget is around \$760,000.

\* Almost all of it comes from congregational giving. In recent years, congregational giving has dropped about \$30,000 per year.

\* The Eastern District financial year had been ending at January 15. It now ends at December

31.

\* 10% of what is given to the Eastern District from congregations goes directly to the Synod. (In the big picture we are a very small District geographically, numerically and financially.)

\* We are giving \$40,000 to Pioneer, \$20,000 to Hananiah (\$5,000 less each year), and \$6,000 to the regional mission organizations which apply for aid.

\* We are helping new Seminary graduates with their educational indebtedness. They are asked to serve in our District for at least five years. Five are in this program.

\* Kathy Fretthold is doing well in her position of assisting our congregations with schools, yet it is becoming apparent that we need to pay her for more than 10 hours a week.

\* Barb shared that it is a static budget with many of the expenses remaining the same year after year. It costs about \$14,000 a year to operate and maintain the District Office. (The building is paid for.) This coming year, we already know that the flooding at the front entrance will need to be fixed along with the need for the entire complex to be recarpeted.

\* Looking at the report of congregational giving to District, it was noted that part of the reason for not meeting the budget last year was due to three congregations that were unable to meet their pledges for various reasons. The majority of the giving to District is done by approximately 50 of our 128 congregations. There are 30 congregations that give nothing at all. There was a discussion on how we should approach these congregations.

\* It is a balanced budget.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2016 Budget. It was approved unanimously.

### **Board Business.**

In view of the inclement weather, the Chair suggested that items not covered on the agenda be deferred to our May meeting which will be held in the Scranton area.

Reference was made to an email received by all Board members from a disgruntled member of a congregation. The Chair noted that this was a matter of ecclesiastical supervision which would be handled by our President and Regional Vice President.

### **Review of Meeting.**

It was mentioned that this meeting was challenging as conversation is difficult when you are unable to see others face to face. It was also noted that our members on the phone were cut off during the conference call at one point. It was agreed upon that we will devise a cut off plan in case for similar situations in the future.

**Closing Prayer and Benediction.** This was handled by Pastor John Pingel.

**Motion to Adjourn.** A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. It was approved unanimously. The meeting ended at 4:53 p.m.

Constitution Review Committee

