

EASTERN DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
MINUTES - DRAFT
FRIDAY OCTOBER 4 – SATURDAY OCTOBER 5, 2019

Friday, October 4, 2019 - St. John Lutheran Church, 45367 South Buffalo St. Orchard Park, NY. 14127

Attending: Chris Wicher, Mark Erbelding, Dan Hahn, Fred Hoover, Brian Smith, Terry Miller, Garrett Nash, Susan Bell, Melissa Fultz, Carl Frethold, John Pingel, 2020Cyndi Alviani, Jim Carr, Carl Prostka. (*Excused: Jon Allen, Cyndi Alviani*)

OPENING DEVOTION [Prostka]

(Eccl. 3:1-8. The Byrds; **composer is Pete Seeger**. Time-each day/moment is a gift from God which we manage, spend, save, kill; it heals wounds and when time runs out your time is up! "Time" is pervasive, yet precious & priceless. (κρόνος vs. χάρις, [*chronos vs chairo*] *quantifiable vs a moment or season*) Christ entered the world of time all for us, in perfect obedience to his and our heavenly Father. Long hours on the cross and in the grave, but rose from the dead at the right time to make our time different: in God's kingdom and with God's peace. So...we make the most use of our time because our time here is a prelude to eternity to which we look forward.

BOARD BUSINESS [Erbelding]

- **Meeting officially called to order**, 1:53 pm
- **Approval of Minutes**. Motion approved by Jim Carr & seconded by Susan Bell to accept minutes of the May meeting. Approved.
- **Approval of Agenda**. Motion to accept (with schedule adjustment to end by 5pm) by Dan Hahn, seconded Carl Prostka. Approved.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT [Wicher]

- **Written report summary:** Introductory remarks on the work of our District-Chris shared the story of an astronaut interviewed on the space station who commented upon his return, "Life is always traumatic." So what...God is always faithful. There's always been times (& will be times) when the church is under pressure. BUT...there's no better time for the church to be a beacon of hope in the world! That's our shared staff attitude at the District office. Looking forward, the trend is indicating that the work of the church will be occurring through numerous smaller churches, so the question is how can we "right-size" our congregations for mission and ministry? Our primary focus, encouragement and advice to congregations as District President and staff is Outreach. Our methodology is teaching responsibility at the grass roots. We're also building bridges between congregations, raising awareness of present realities. At present in our Eastern District, we have 16 partnerships and 2 satellites.

Lawsuit update was given with a long discussion. Dan Hahn moved to release the Long Term Investments (listed on the Financial Dashboard as \$213,827) of the Eastern District, placing them into a separate Steward account for legal expenses. Second by Terry Miller. Approved.

(Break-3:15pm)

BOARD BUSINESS, [Wicher/Erbelding]

- **Auditor Report. [Dopkins & Company]**. The meeting was held on Aug. 20th with Jim Carr, Chris Wicher, Barb Sigafos & Barb Williams. Final Draft is not yet in-hand as we're awaiting Pioneer's final payment of their bill, which is approximately \$8,000.00 This is a combined audit (Eastern District & Pioneer; audited together as "Organizations", but also separately later in the report). No deficiencies were indicated,

though last year we were \$54,000 off due to decrease in congregational giving. Questions were asked about wording of the document, which has been updated and is being reviewed by Pioneer. Chris previously sent an email, seeking guidance on posting/publishing the Auditors' Report, perhaps on the District website. In the past, the report was physically available at the District office, and there's concern about giving access that would lead to misunderstand this very complex report. Barb said no one has requested it in 21yrs, so no action taken,

- **2020 Proposed District Budget:** Highlights-Barb wants to correct the Line of Credit Disbursement, which is limited to money loaned to Pioneer. (In Dec. 2017, the District advanced Pioneer the 2018 grant of \$45,000, by borrowing against our Line of Credit. Again in 2018, there was a need for \$75,000 by Pioneer, but it was not given as an advance on the grant. This year's grant (2019) was reduced to \$15,000 bringing us a total of \$115,000 out of a maximum of \$150,000 available from our Line of Credit. At present, we're about \$26,000 off expectations and we'll send an appeal to congregations; usually, we see an up-tick in the final months of the year. Assessment billing of congregations per-communicant member covers expenses: Year A-synod convention, Year B-pastors & educators & all workers conference, Year C-District Convention expenses. Next year there will be no grant for Hananiah-Buffalo (they were notified well in-advance). Our Ignite & Light loan (2002) has been paid off. The balloon payment on the former St. Matthew's-Rochester property is due in April 1, 2020 although we anticipate they may not be able to make the payment; we've met and would like to negotiate and extend mortgage payment arrangement instead of the required balloon payment. The Eastern District Office Building has been well-maintained. The 2020 Preliminary Budget was sent to Board members for review. The budget is static-we don't anticipate upward changes in congregational giving in 2020-and the budget is balanced. Major changes are minimal according to Barb. The revenue for 2020 is higher because the All-Worker conference generates more revenue this year. Looking at budgeted revenue (current deficit), we're in a better position for this year than last year.

Motion to receive the preliminary budget by Carl Prostka. Second by Fred Hoover. Approved.

- **NEXTchurch Task Force Update [Committee presentation].** One of 2 task forces currently in place. This one is looking to the future of the Eastern District. John Pingel reported after conversations with other Districts and have the following recommendations:
 1. Stewardship of the District President: Maintain a Full-Time position for D.P. (Given the responsibilities and expectations-both local and synodical-it cannot be a part-time position).
 2. Building: We can't do better than our current building; we own the property and are centrally located; what's more, the building is paid for. We can utilize the lower level of the building for rental space as there are already 2 entrances and we're in a desirable location for rental. (An architect is doing preliminary work for ADA compliance, entrance and bathroom. Funds are available from LCEF's "operating results" for projects) Potential revenue could be \$30,000-\$35,000 with savings in staff reconfiguration.
 3. Staffing: Maintain with some minor reconfiguration ("right-sizing")

The goal is to have the property ready and available for rental in 2021. A written report will be provided at the next BOD meeting. No actionable items for the Board.

- **CCM (Commission on Constitutional Matters, LCMS) 17-2807** This group's primary concern is application and interpretation of the Synod's Constitution and ByLaws; for example, District ByLaws changes (& occasionally-policies) are subject to CCM review.

Their chief concern about the proposed policy is that the primary concern of the office (role) of District President is not more clearly defined in this model as a pastoral presence, an equipper/helper. The D.P. is *the* representative of the Synod, while also (locally) accountable to the District Board of Directors and its policies. In ecclesiastical matters (e.g. supervision), the D.P. falls under the purview of the Synod and is accountable to the Synod rather than the Board. Ultimately, the Board exists to establish and enforce policies, “keeping the D.P.’s feet to the fire” and “keeping his hand on the rudder of the ship that is the Eastern District.”

A motion to form a committee to investigate and provide a written proposal and response to CCM by May 2020 was made by Mark Erbeling. Second by Susan Bell. Approved. (Potential participants: Gordon Tresch, Rick Porter, Jon Allen)

- **Pioneer update:** Given the District’s legal issue and the financial concerns that have faced Pioneer, is it time to consider some type of separation from the District, securing Pioneer’s identity? There is precedent in other Districts (Perhaps Michigan and Wisconsin), though none have faced the concern we now face. At present, Eastern District holds the deed (ownership) for Pioneer.

A motion was made to establish a joint committee with Pioneer’s Board of Directors to explore the ownership of Camp Pioneer and options for its continued relationship with the Eastern District by Mark Erbeling. Seconded by Jim Carr. Approved.

Mark shared a concern about the recent pattern of requests for financial support from Pioneer; Chris noted that Director Alex Knowles anticipates (very soon) an estate gift that will cover expenses. Pioneer is unable to get its own Line of Credit as it is awaiting approval from the Supreme Court as per NYS law.

CLOSING PRAYER – [Prostka] 5:02pm

Dinner: Ilio DiPaolo’s (5444 Camp Road, Hamburg, NY)

EASTERN DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS Saturday, October 5, 2019

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MORNING DEVOTION [Nash] Garrett shared a devotion about the Lord’s unworthy servants and joyful children. He cited the examples Elijah, with a reminder of God’s faithfulness in the face of his people’s unfaithfulness, and Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles. Luke’s Gospel refers to the unworthy servants who do their duty. How often we have a sense of superiority when we are, in fact, servants whose task is to serve, poor miserable sinners-unworthy servants who have only done their duty or less than our duty. Our master came to be a servant, adopted us and has made us his children.

- **Policies work [Committee]** – held for our next meeting with the Policy Committee to review
- **Circuit Reconfiguration Task Force [Committee]** Chris explained that we have Visitation Circuits & Electoral Circuits; the former have counselors (“visitors”) & meet monthly, the latter once every 3 years for synodical elections. Electoral Circuits are required to be between 7-15 congregations and 1,500 or more communicant members. At present we have 16 visitation circuits, but only 9 qualify as electoral circuits. We could request an exception for a visitation circuit to be an electoral circuit (e.g.

Philadelphia & Susquehanna), though it doesn't qualify; we can also combine, such as Pittsburgh South, Central New York, and Buffalo-South Cattaragus. Synod Sec'y John Sias would like, however, to see the number of (Visitation & Electoral) circuits align. This necessarily re-aligns the circuits to fit the parameters, bringing us from 16 to 13 visitation circuits, and congregational changes such as partnerships or closures could change those alignments, which are complicated by the requirements noted above. No actionable items for the Board

- **Synod Convention Report [Participants]** Chris summarized his written report on the July convention in Tampa. We didn't have all of our delegates; some circuits had no alternate to replace their delegates. Most resolutions passed by more than 90% with some "hot" moments regarding the closure of Concordia University in Selma, AL and the issue of Ecclesiastical Supervision. Legal counsel could not share all the details the informed the closure. Looking to the future, the Concordias in Bronxville, Chicago and Portland may similarly be on the line. Our schools were created originally for church workers, but that has changed. Ecclesiastical Supervision was a significant issue pushed to the latter hours of the convention and ultimately postponed. There are many issues of division in our synod on which we remain sharply divided. The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) process will be studied further; Specific Ministry Pastors are required to be under supervision of a regular-ordained pastors, whereas G.P.' (General Pastor) are not. Closed Communion will also be addressed to our Districts by means of a study document. Finally, the issue of cremation will be studied not to bind consciences, but to give a sanctified understanding. No nominations (for laity or pastors to serve at the synodical level) came from congregations of the Eastern District, which may be an indication of apathy or a sense of disenfranchisement. The Deacon-to-Pastor transition has taken place (as per the President's report), with some deacons remaining in place to serve, so long as it's not "regular and consistent" work in Word and Sacrament ministry; if regular and consistent, then we'd like to get the ordained.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- **St. Matthew loan renegotiation:** A motion was made to enable President Wicher to renegotiate the contract on the loan with Free Deliverance Church of God in Christ at the former St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Rochester, NY by Dan Hahn. Seconded by Carl Prostka. Approved.
- **Misc. Item:** Mark received 2 invitations to nominate laity to serve terms on the following: LCMS Board of Missions (Central District) and the LCMS Board of Directors (Great Lakes District)

MEETING REVIEW AND BOARD CALENDAR [Erbelding] Next meeting will be a Hope-Rochester, Feb. 7-8, 2020. Motion to adjourn by Carl Prostka , seconded by Susan Bell. Approved.

CLOSING PRAYER [Nash]