

THE EASTERN DISTRICT LCMS BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MINUTES APPROVED
ZOOM Conference Meeting
Friday, February 19, 2021

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

Meeting Called to Order at 10:02am by Mark Erbelding.

Roll Call conducted by Secretary Brian Smith. See attendance above.

Jon Allen shared the Opening Devotion: "Finding Joy"

Motion to approve the Executive Session Minutes of January 22, 2021 by Susan Bell seconded by Garrett Nash. Motion carried

Motion to approve the Executive Session Minutes of January 29, 2021 by Jim Carr, second by Terry Miller. Motion carried

Motion to approve the Agenda by Cyndi Alviani, second by Susan Bell. Motion carried

President Wicher's Report (submitted electronically)

Chris shared his appreciation for Vice Presidents who have represented him at ordinations during COVID-19.

Chris shared information about the monthly Leadership Enhancement Opportunities (L.E.O.) on a variety of subjects: PPP loan forgiveness, School/Church relations, hosting VBS in the pandemic, and helping churches re-open (i.e. preparing for a new normal) after COVID. The Calendar is set for the coming year for activities such as conferences & conventions.

Ratification of Congregational Constitutions: First Trinity-Tonawanda, NY had slight changes, but a provision to allow for virtual meetings (committee rejected the virtual meeting of members as it is contrary to NYS law; current Executive Orders stand until 12/31/2021). Bread of Life-Rome, NY (soon-to-be new congregation using a "boiler-plate" congregation) returned with one typo change; however, the committee moves for adoption. St. Michael's-Akron (Wolcottville) NY had changes that were approved, but lacks a provision on the sale of the property; hence a standard policy recommendation from the committee that the property should be disbursed appropriately or handed over to the District.

Motion to approve the Constitutions of First Trinity (Tonawanda, NY), Bread of Life (Rome, NY), and St. Michael's (Akron, NY) as submitted by the committee by Carl Prostka, second by Dan Hahn. Motion carried.

Holy Trinity-Albion (previously SELC member congregation), PA has requested a transfer to the English District, which must be acted upon by the Board of Directors.

Motion to approve the transfer request of Holy Trinity (Albion, PA) from the Eastern District to the English District by Carl Fretthold, second by Garrett Nash. Motion carried.

Concordia-New York recently announced that it will cease operations as of the end of the current academic year. It has \$20-30 million in liabilities, and the sale will not likely cover those obligations; however, it will continue as a Christian (Jesuit: Iona College) ministry. A resolution was presented by the LCMS Atlantic District to address concerns regarding provision for called workers who are not covered by unemployment insurance. The effort seeks to raise \$2-3 million. In summary of the resolution, the Atlantic District would-by committee-administer said funds and is seeking the Eastern District's (financial) support in this effort.

Motion to release 10% of the debt repayment, from Pioneer to the Eastern District (pursuant to the sale of Pioneer Camp & Retreat Center), to the Concordia New York staff relief effort and to authorize the committee to contact individuals and congregations within the Eastern District to raise funds by Carl Prostka, second by Dan Hahn. Motion carried

The Praesidium (Council of Presidents) met on Feb. 8 and discussed various topics. Chris noted the Lay Led Diaconate exception for Word and Sacrament Ministry was approved for Gene Keiter (at Faith-Herndon, PA)

Chris shared stats on Eastern District calls as compared to Synod: 17 sole pastorates, (vs. 410) and 40 part-time (vs. 484) pastorates, both of which are trending upward.

Looking forward, the District President has a number of items to address: ByLaws revisions to remove Pioneer references and incorporate a new synodical addition (May BOD meeting), offer consultation with workers & congregations, lead L.E.O. and District Gathering Zooms, navigate staff transitions, guide through district office transitions, assist with the Pioneer sale/closure, see that Pioneer, Inc. ByLaws are redefined, steward the Pioneer Assets, secure Pioneer Paper/Electronic files, and serve as point of contact for CVA lawsuits.

Finally, we were shocked and saddened by the unexpected death of Bob Wirth (LCMS Foundation officer) from the district office.

12:00pm Break for lunch

Board Business, Items for Action [Sigafos, Wicher, Williams]

Chris shared highlights of Barb's report. End of year deficit was \$17,000 but is remarkable, especially in light of COVID. Convention assessment is billed annually at \$2.50 per communicant member (\$58.6k received of \$64.4 billed in 2020) Proposal is to postpone assessment this year since there will be no convention and expenses will be reduced by hosting on-site at First Trinity (Tonawanda) instead of Daemen College. (Assessments pay for triennial events: District Convention, Pastor/Teacher conferences, All Workers' Conference). Barb expects we'll be well within budget for 2022. PPP Loan Forgiveness request by LCMS Eastern District (\$90,955) was approved by the U.S. Small Business Administration. Praise the Lord! Grants made to some church worker students, plus annual \$1,200 grant to called workers for student debt reduction. Our line of credit (on behalf of Pioneer) it will be resolved upon the sale of Pioneer, leaving the Eastern District completely debt-free! The district office is in transition as (LCMS Foundation) files are digitized and space is cleared up.

2021 Proposed District Budget (available to Board Members at lcmسد.org) is static, but major adjustments assume no assessments with a \$66.6K decrease in revenue (with \$6k decrease in congregational revenue & reduction of \$6k from LCMS Foundation revenue for district office usage).

Motion to postpone the LCMS Eastern District Convention from 2021 to no earlier than June, 2022 by Jon Allen, second by Melissa Fultz. Motion carried.

Motion to approve the proposed budget (with suspended convention assessment) by Brian Smith, second by Carl Prostka. Motion carried.

President Wicher's 2021 Housing Allowance:

Motion to approve President Wicher's 2021 Housing Allowance (\$24,000.00) by Dan Hahn, second by Jim Carr. Motion carried.

2021 Conflict of Interest forms were distributed by email. Board members: please submit as soon as possible.

Personnel Change: Mary Ellen has retired, and Ruth Marzano now is the Administrative Assistant to the District President. A part-time receptionist will be brought on board at the district office.

Position Description Changes have taken place and should be approved by the Board. Bob Foerster is now officially retired. Peter & Stephanie Johnson (Faith-Penfield, NY) are new to the district staff as part-time (avg. 10hrs/week) communications and networking specialists. (Position description documents available on the Eastern District website)

Motion to approve all recommended position description changes (Communications & Networking-Peter & Stephanie Johnson, Discipleship

and Development-Lyle Heggemeier, Administrative Assistant-Ruth Marzano, Office Receptionist-new position) by Brian Smith, second by Susan Bell. Motion carried.

Motion to approve Peter & Stephanie Johnson as District Communications and Network Specialists by Carl Prostka, second by Jon Allen. Motion carried.

Pioneer Updates [Erbelding, Wicher]

Chris communicated with Nick Gatto, but nothing new to report other than Jay Pohlman is working with the potential purchaser.

Transfer of files is taking place now; Chris has the complete list of (1,200) donors and considering options for physical storage of records.

Board Dissolution with thanks. Chris suggested that the concept of the corporation changes with the sale of the property. The suggestion is to rewrite the ByLaws (restructure) since a Board is no longer needed; no property, therefore no management required. Chris suggest we investigate releasing the Pioneer Board of responsibilities (dissolution).

Stewarding the Net Assets (property of Pioneer, Inc.) for an indeterminate time in consideration of liabilities. Chris will investigate some possibilities for dissolving and redefining the corporation of Pioneer, Inc.

Rescheduling the Eastern District Convention, with Adjustments [Wicher]

Chris noted that with the postponement, there is a need to extend the nominations deadline

Motion to extend the deadline for convention nominations to January 2022, with the proviso that congregations may change, amend or rescind any current nominations for elected positions by the aforementioned deadline by Jim Carr, second by Susan Bell. Motion carried.

Motion to extend the deadline to January 2022 for convention delegates and alternates submitted by congregations, with the proviso that congregations may change, amend or rescind current submissions by the aforementioned deadline by Jon Allen, second by Terry Miller. Motion carried.

Anyone who does not wish to serve another year should contact the District President directly.

Changes to BOD meeting calendar (see below)

May 7/8 - Faith, Penfield

October 1/2 - State College (Penn State football by-week)

February 11/12 , 2022 - First Trinity, Tonawanda

May 13/14, 2022 - Salem, Buffalo (Pingel)

August 19, 2022 – Orientation for New and Returning VPs and CVs – in person

August 20, 2022 – Orientation for New and Returning Directors – in person

Motion to Close Meeting by Car Fretthold, second by Carl Prostka. Motion carried.

Closing Prayer at 2:20pm by Jon Allen