

**THE EASTERN DISTRICT, LCMS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES**

October 15 & 16, 2021

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
851 N. Science Park Rd., State College, PA 16803

Attending: Chris Wicher, Mark Erbelding, Dan Hahn, Jon Allen, Brian Smith, Susan Bell, John Pingel, Cyndi Alviani, Carl Prostka, Carl Fretthold, Melissa Fultz, Terry Miller, Fred Hoover [via Zoom-Jim Carr]. Excused: Garrett Nash

Opening Devotion: Cyndi Alviani shared about being “thirsty for God”, seeking his presence in life as an expression of desire for intimacy and closeness. Psalm 63 shares David’s dark night of his soul (“in the wilderness”) and his desperation and earnest longing for God as reflected in worship. Jesus, the Son of David, is the center of our worship, offering his body and blood to satisfy our ultimate hunger for God. We “drink deep”, praying, remembering, and reflecting on His faithfulness, allowing Jesus to fill and refresh us in worship.

Meeting Call to Order at 1:16pm

BOARD BUSINESS [Erbelding]

Roll call was conducted by Secretary Brian Smith and is noted above.

Motion to approve the May Minutes with corrections by Susan Bell, second by Carl Prostka. Motion carried

Motion to approve June Minutes by Carl Prostka, second by Jon Allen. Motion carried.

Motion to approve the Agenda by Fred Hoover, second by Dan Hahn. Motion carried.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT [Wicher]

President Wicher offered a summary of his written report (submitted) with the highlights below. It will be a year of transition as we prepare for the upcoming convention and a new District President.

EIIT (Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology) Program: Participant Vincent Mroz, of Christ Lutheran in Pittsburgh (Pastor Ron Breight) is in the program and working with Trinity Deaf Lutheran. Concordia-Cabot, PA has offered to pay for his education!

Constant Contact is our primary newsletter/communications service. We have about 2,800 email addressees in this community group. On average, about 35% opens general communications, which is higher than the national average of 15-20%. ”In Sympathy” emails get a 41% open rate. A response rate of 45% was noted to the Board’s email encouraging churches to support pastors with time off in the wake of added duties and stressors due to the pandemic. Our specialty emails had a 50% rate. Our Facebook posts reaches 120-180 people per week.

Staff transitions: After nearly 24 years of service, Barb Sigafos will retire and John Fretthold will step in the Financial Services office, beginning Oct. 18. On January 1, 2022, Bruce Sutherland will join our staff full-time, taking over the responsibilities Discipleship Development and serving as Building Manager, among a host of other responsibilities assigned by the District President.

GPS is a 2-year mentoring program for new pastors in the district. Two sessions have taken place with three participants and two coaches.

Zoom Visitations by President Wicher will take place with congregational representatives (October through January) in order to discern the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to our ministries and report to the next District President for his consideration. To date, we've not had a great response to our intended groups of 10, but we're expanding the invitation to groups of 30.

The Concordia-Bronxville Care and Comfort Fund has distributed \$370,780 to address the needs faculty/staff of the recently-closed institution. There is approximately \$70,000 - \$80,000 remaining. The Eastern District, at the direction of the Board, directed 10% of the Pioneer proceeds, allowing us to give approximately \$30,000.

CVA update: To date, the Eastern District has been named in six New York State Child Victims Act lawsuits, dating back 40 – 60 years. (The window for new cases closed in August of 2021.) Our Legal Counsel is Julia Hilliker, of Hodgson Ross law firm in Buffalo. Over the course of these three years, we've paid more than \$100,000 in legal fees as part of the process, sadly taking those funds away from mission and ministry. The first case is anticipated in court some time in 2022.

Fall Pastor and Educator Conferences will take place Nov. 1-3 and 3-5. We're proceeding, though at least one host-site has delivered updated COVID policies which required us to close registration early and add (masking, etc.) restrictions.

Pioneer Update: The official records for Pioneer are now stored at St. Paul-N. Tonawanda, NY.

Constitution Changes for St. Peter in Lockport (North Ridge, NY)-meeting dates, elections, budget and calendar. Requires Board action.

Vacancy Report: To date, the district has 10 vacancies (sole pastors) out of 121 congregations, with 40 congregations served by pastors on a part-time basis. One congregation has closed.

Pioneer Nominees: Names and bios of five potential Members were received. Board action required to elect three.

3:00 *Break*

LCEF Operating Results are funds made available to districts; this year, we received \$45,234. This money is above-and-beyond the district budget, with 10% returned to LCEF as a re-invest. Funds for 2021 are distributed as per needs, such as worker assistance, worker debt reduction, GPS program, office IT, staff development and transition, CVA assistance, and congregational education fund. A second distribution (another \$45,000) will come from LCEF; meetings are anticipated to consider future distributions.

District Audit was conducted and the report indicates no discrepancies or material mistakes. Our de-coupling from Pioneer will greatly simplify the auditing process going forward.

BOARD BUSINESS CONT'D [ERBELDING]

Motion to approve the constitutional changes submitted by St. Peter Lutheran Church in Lockport (North Ridge, NY) by Terry Miller, second by Cyndi Alviani. Motion carried.

Motion to approve district staff changes by Carl Prostka, second by Jim Carr. Motion carried.

Motion to nominate Jim Carr as the Board representative to the new Pioneer Board in the event that Pioneer, Inc. is reconstituted by Jon Allen, second by Carl Prostka. Motion carried.

Financial Report [Sigafos] President Wicher shared a summary of Barb's submitted report with the following highlights:

We have deficit of approximately \$30,000, not atypical for this time of year; as such, Barb will send a follow up letter to congregations. The District President will also send out a November letter soliciting 2022 congregational commitments to the district.

Proceeds from the sale of Pioneer are \$285,000 with all debts satisfied. It was suggested that we consider investing these funds with LCEF and pursue options such as establishing an endowment, perhaps with a minimum of \$100,000. President Wicher will ask Rick Porter to propose options for investment of these funds and forward such proposals to the Board.

Proposed 2022 Budget [Wicher] The proposed budget remains static, with hope for a small increase in revenue. The major budget shifts are internal due to district staffing changes approved by the Board.

Board Governing Policies [Committee] are under review, with process leadership by Jon Allen. We anticipate finishing the review at our February 2022 meeting and presenting recommendations at the May 2022 meeting.

Motion to adjourn by Dan Hahn, second by Carl Prostka. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 4:20pm with closing prayer by Cyndi Alviani.

**THE EASTERN DISTRICT, LCMS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES
Saturday, October 16, 2021**

Members attending: Chris Wicher, Mark Erbelding, Carl Fretthold, Cyndi Alviani, Susan Bell, Melissa Fultz, Fred Hoover, Terry Miller, Dan Hahn, Carl Prostka, John Pingel, Jon Allen. Brian Smith, [via Zoom: Jim Carr, Rick Porter, Dee Gryzb]. Excused: Garrett Nash

Meeting called to order at 9:47am

Roll call was conducted by secretary Brian Smith and is noted above.

Meeting Evaluation and Board Calendar [Erbelding]

Jon noted that the meeting of the board governance review committee raised the need to evaluate the regulations, which would necessarily go to the 2022 District Convention. Thanks expressed to the committee and to Jon Allen for organizing and leading the process.

A recommendation of assembling a committee to consider including youth as potential advisors to the Board of Directors might prove useful.

Motion to adjourn by Dan Hahn, second by Carl Prostka. Motion carried.

Closing Prayer [Carr]

ED BOD meeting adjourned at 9:56am.

FUTURE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

February 11/12 , 2022 - First Trinity, Tonawanda, NY.

May 13/14, 2022 - Salem, Buffalo

August 19, 2022 – Orientation for New and Returning VPs and CVs – place TBD

August 20, 2022 – Orientation for New and Returning Directors – place TBD