



Report of Synodical Relations

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25 YEARS TOGETHER IN CHRIST

Purpose

Responsibility for synodical relations shall be exercised by the Office of the Presiding Bishop to coordinate the relationships between the churchwide organization and synods, to render support for synodical bishops, officers, and synodical staff, and to provide staff services for the Conference of Bishops. The guiding vision for the work of Synodical Relations is to foster effective, well-equipped leaders in healthy mission-driven synods. The governing description for this section is contained in continuing resolution 15.12.F10 printed in Section XII of the *2013 Pre-Assembly Report*.

Report of Work for 2011–2013

Conference of Bishops

Supporting the work of the Conference of Bishops and its committees is one of the highest priorities of Synodical Relations. Staff members work with Conference of Bishops committees in planning and conducting two semi-annual meetings of the conference, the annual Bishops' Academy, and the New Bishops Formation event for newly elected bishops. The work of Synodical Relations on behalf of the Conference of Bishops during the past biennium is reported in detail below.

Bishops' Academy

The bishop and staff of the Caribbean Synod, along with the pastors and spouses who live near San Juan welcomed the members of the Conference of Bishops and their spouses with generous and warm hearts to the January 2013 Bishops' Academy. Daisy Machado and Luis Rivera-Pagan were the presenters. All participants were welcomed to San Pablos on Epiphany Eve to celebrate the Festival of the Three Kings and share a meal. Several congregations welcomed the group for Sunday morning worship and an afternoon lunch. Participants visited El Yunque National Forest and had time to relax and enjoy each other's company in the city of Old San Juan. Special thanks again to Bishop Lozada for the invitation to come to Puerto Rico and for a wonderful academy.

2013 Bishop Elections

As a result of bishops retiring, term limits, or choosing not to allow their name to go forward, 13 new bishops will be joining the Conference of Bishops in 2013. Prior to the 2013 bishop elections, Synodical Relations and the Office of the Secretary conducted conference calls with 26 synod leaders from the synods that were holding bishop elections in order to review election procedures and other issues more specifically. During these calls, processes that are unique to each synod were discussed, questions from leaders were answered, and helpful information was obtained which benefited the individuals who would preside at the elections.

New Bishops Formation

At this time, 12 new bishops have been elected and will be attending the Conference of Bishops meeting in fall 2013. The Bishop Formation Committee spent considerable time planning for the June 24–27, 2013, event which provided orientation and the opportunity to meet with churchwide staff. As 12 new bishops take office there will be significant transitions in those synods as well as for the bishops who will be leaving office. Synodical Relations staff welcomes them and looks forward to working with them as new synod bishops.

Synod Assembly Representation

In collaboration with Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson, Synodical Relations prepared for the 2013 synod assemblies. Churchwide representatives were assigned to each assembly and were equipped with resource materials to share during their attendance. The assemblies began in April and ran through late June.

The Assistants to Bishops Gathering

The Bishops' Assistants Gathering was held in San Antonio, Texas, at the Marriott Plaza San Antonio, March 7-10, 2013. The theme for this gathering was, "Go therefore...But How? Finding Our Way in a New Missional Landscape."

For the first time this gathering had two pre-gatherings and two post-gatherings. The first pre-gathering was "Child Protection and Sexual Misconduct Prevention" led by Barbara Keller, Phil Harris, and David Ullrich. The second was "The Making of the Texan Latino Identity/Post Alamo and the American-Mexican War of 1846-1848" led by the Rev. Jay Alanis and the Rev. Eliseo Perez-Alvarez. The post-gathering events were "Border Ministry: Migration, Mission, and the Quest for Biblical Justice" led by Paul Baille and "First Call Theological Education Conversation" led by Gretchen Anderson. The entire gathering was an opportunity to learn more about border ministry in Texas and Mexico. We enjoyed hearing from our three presenters: Kenneth Inskeep, Anna Madson, and Alan Roxburgh. There were 112 people in attendance including 33 new assistants to bishops.

Good Samaritan, Shared Risk, and Special Needs Retirement Funds

These three funds are managed by Synodical Relations. Good Samaritan grants are made to rostered leaders and family members or survivors to maintain health coverage in times of financial need. The Special Needs Retirement Fund subsidizes low income pensioners through the Portico Benefit Services and provides a minimum income level of \$1,000 per individual or \$1,250 per couple for this church's retired servants. The Shared Risk Fund is a self-insurance program in which all synods participate, reducing their financial liability for high cost disciplinary proceedings.

Bureau for Federal Chaplaincy

The Rev. F. Eric Wester provided the report of Federal Chaplaincy Ministries in Section III of the *Pre-Assembly Report*.

Conference of Bishops 2013

The Conference of Bishops consists of the 65 synodical bishops and the presiding bishop and secretary of this church. The members of the conference of bishops as of February 2013 were the following:

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson
Secretary David D. Swartling
Bp. Thomas M. Aitken, Northeastern Minnesota Synod
Bp. Jon V. Anderson, Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Bp. James A. Arends, La Crosse Area Synod
Bp. Jeffrey S. Barrow, Greater Milwaukee Synod
Bp. Edward R. Benoway, Florida-Bahamas Synod
Bp. Wm. Chris Boerger, Northwest Washington Synod
Bp. Leonard H. Bolick, North Carolina Synod
Bp. David H. Brauer-Rieke, Oregon Synod
Bp. Michael L. Burk, Southeastern Iowa Synod
Bp. Claire S. Burkat, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod
Bp. Bruce H. Burnside, South-Central Synod of Wisconsin
Bp. Jessica R. Crist, Montana Synod
Bp. Robert L. Driesen, Upper Susquehanna Synod
Bp. Ralph W. Dunkin, West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod
Bp. Elizabeth A. Eaton, Northeastern Ohio Synod
Bp. Murray D. Finck, Pacifica Synod
Bp. William O. Gafkjen, Indiana-Kentucky Synod
Bp. Michael K. Girlinghouse, Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod

Bp. James W. Gonia, Rocky Mountain Synod
 Bp. H. Julian Gordy, Southeastern Synod
 Bp. Richard H. Graham, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod
 Bp. James E. Hazelwood, New England Synod
 Bp. Wolfgang D. Herz-Lane, Delaware-Maryland Synod
 Bp. Robert D. Hofstad, Southwestern Washington Synod
 Bp. Callon W. Holloway Jr., Southern Ohio Synod
 Bp. Mark W. Holmerud, Sierra Pacific Synod
 Bp. B. Penrose Hoover, Lower Susquehanna Synod
 Bp. Marie C. Jerge, Upstate New York Synod
 Bp. Ralph E. Jones, Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod
 Bp. James A. Justman, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin
 Bp. Kevin S. Kanouse, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod
 Bp. Donald P. Kreiss, Southeast Michigan Synod
 Bp. Wilma S. Kucharek, Slovak Zion Synod
 Bp. Kurt F. Kusserow, Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod
 Bp. Michael A. Last, Western Iowa Synod
 Bp. Marcus C. Lohrmann, Northwestern Ohio Synod
 Bp. Felipe. Lozada-Montañez, Caribbean Synod
 Bp. Brian D. Maas, Nebraska Synod
 Bp. Gerald L. Mansholt, Central States Synod
 Bp. James F. Mauney, Virginia Synod
 Bp. Wayne N. Miller, Metropolitan Chicago Synod
 Bp. Mark E. Narum, Western North Dakota Synod
 Bp. Dean W. Nelson, Southwest California Synod
 Bp. Duane C. Pederson, Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
 Bp. Gregory R. Pile, Allegheny Synod
 Bp. E. Roy Riley, New Jersey Synod
 Bp. Robert A. Rimbo, Metropolitan New York Synod
 Bp. William E. Rindy, Eastern North Dakota Synod
 Bp. Michael W. Rinehart, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
 Bp. Peter Rogness, Saint Paul Area Synod
 Bp. S. John Roth, Central/Southern Illinois Synod
 Bp. John D. Schleicher, North/West Lower Michigan Synod
 Bp. Thomas A. Skrenes, Northern Great Lakes Synod
 Bp. Ann M. Svennungsen, Minneapolis Area Synod
 Bp. Stephen S. Talmage, Grand Canyon Synod
 Bp. Ray Tiemann, Southwestern Texas Synod
 Bp. Steven L. Ullestad, Northeastern Iowa Synod
 Bp. Harold L. Usgaard, Southeastern Minnesota Synod
 Bp. Martin D. Wells, Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod
 Bp. Shelley R. Wickstrom, Alaska Synod
 Bp. Larry R. Wohlrabe, Northwestern Minnesota Synod
 Bp. Gary M. Wollersheim, Northern Illinois Synod
 Bp. Herman R. Yoos III, South Carolina Synod
 Bp. Samuel R. Zeiser, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod
 Bp. David B. Zellmer, South Dakota Synod

Committees

The Conference of Bishops organizes itself in committees, according to its identified needs and mandated tasks.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is comprised of the chair, vice chair, three at-large members, and the presiding bishop and secretary of the ELCA. The executive for synodical relations serves as staff liaison. The Executive Committee makes decisions on behalf of the conference, makes recommendations of appointments to standing committees, gives oversight for Conference of Bishops' meetings and, as needed, assigns work to committees and task forces; coordinates consideration of concerns, issues, and requests for or between meetings of the conference; offers advice, counsel, and support to the presiding bishop as requested; and prepares agendas for conference meetings.

Academy Committee

The Academy Committee is responsible for the annual continuing education event for members of the Conference of Bishops. Typically, the academy is held during the first days of January each year and seeks to provide stimulating presenters on a variety of topics. One of the most important components of the academy is the opportunity for fellowship and relationship-building among colleagues in the conference.

Bishop Formation Committee

The Bishop Formation Committee is responsible for assisting newly elected bishops in becoming familiar with the Office of Bishop, as well as helping them make connections with partners throughout the entire ELCA. The committee also assigns mentors (veteran bishops) to be available to each newly elected bishop for support and guidance as needed.

Roster Committee

The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops reviews roster criteria and procedures for requests from synods and provides recommendations for action by the Conference of Bishops relative to ELCA constitutional requirements for roster categories. Specific roster matters addressed by the committee are:

- Exception for Three-Year Parish Service Rule
- Extension of Three-Year On-Leave-From-Call status
- Calls to Non-Congregational Service
- Calls to Non-Stipendiary Service
- Calls to Serve in Unusual Circumstances

Theological and Ethical Concerns Committee

Assisted by the Theological and Ethical Concerns Committee, the conference serves as a forum for reflection upon the theological and ethical implications of issues that affect this church.

Synodical-Churchwide Relations Committee

The Synodical-Churchwide Relations Committee is established to assist churchwide units and related organizations in securing review, advice, consultation, and recommendations by the Conference of Bishops on policies and programs. Connections with the three churchwide units—Global Mission, Mission Advancement, and Congregational and Synodical Mission—is encouraged as needed.

Ministry Among People in Poverty Committee

The Mission Statement of the Ministry Among People in Poverty Committee: “Rooted in the biblical witness and shaped by the compassion of Christ, we assist the Conference of Bishops in engaging the church in ministry with and among persons in poverty.” The committee’s work revolves around five strategies:

1. Hold one another [i.e., ELCA bishops] accountable for living out our commitment to ministry with and among persons in poverty in our synodical work,
2. Advocate for all our actions and decisions to be considered for their effect on the poor,
3. Build awareness of and support for current effective work and potential new work,
4. Serve as liaison with churchwide units and other partnerships, stimulating linkages with local ministries,

5. Encourage personal experiences and encounters, locally and globally, with people living in poverty as a way to enliven the church.

Synodical and Rostered Leader Care Committee

Synodical and Rostered Leader Care serves in two capacities for the conference. First, it oversees the Shared Risk Fund, established by the Conference of Bishops in 1992, which permits participating synods a degree of protection against the costs of disciplinary proceedings against rostered leaders and congregations. After a deductible of \$10,000 has been satisfied, eligible expenses may be submitted for partial or full reimbursement according to fund guidelines. Synods are assessed premiums of \$2.00 per rostered person and \$2.00 per congregation. Second, it oversees the Good Samaritan Fund, which provides limited financial aid to rostered leaders/spouses. It reviews the history of usage of funds and appropriate application forms.

Ecumenical Relations Committee

The Ecumenical Relations Committee facilitates communication and coordination between the Conference of Bishops and ecumenical conversations.

The committee will:

- assist in interpreting ecumenical work to the other bishops, be a channel for counsel and questions, and assist the Conference of Bishops in dealing with ecumenical matters by providing resources and resource people, framing questions, and consulting on related matters;
- encourage Conference of Bishops members in carrying out their ecumenical responsibilities within their synods, including their use of Lutheran Ecumenical Representatives Network (LERN); and
- encourage Conference of Bishops members who have accepted special assignments to dialogue teams or ecumenical governing boards.

Individual committee members may be given ecumenical assignments by this church.

Companion Synods Committee

The Companion Synods Committee of the Conference of Bishops seeks to enhance and strengthen relationships between ELCA bishops and their companion synods or dioceses. In addition, the committee seeks to assist when policy questions arise or difficult situations develop in these relationships.

Leadership Committee

The Leadership Committee serves in an advisory role to the staff of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. Proposed new and revised policies are reviewed and recommendations are made to matters under consideration by the unit in the areas of:

- Candidacy
- Book of Faith
- Disability Ministry
- Leadership Support
- Lilly Grants
- Misconduct Prevention
- Mission Schools/Colleges and Universities
- Outreach Leadership
- Seminaries
- Specialized Ministries
- Theological Education for Emerging Ministries

This committee reports to the Conference of Bishops at its meetings, receives the counsel of the Conference of Bishops, and raises with the Congregational and Synodical Mission staff any questions generated in meetings and conversations of the bishops.

New and Renewing Congregations Committee

The New and Renewing Congregations Committee serves in an advisory role to the staff of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. Proposed new and revised policies are reviewed and recommendations are made to matters under consideration by the unit in the areas of:

- New Congregations
- Congregational Renewal
- Campus Ministry
- Youth Ministry
- Youth Gathering
- Young Adult Ministry
- Outdoor Ministry
- Ethnic Specific/Multicultural Ministries

This committee reports to the Conference of Bishops at its meetings, receives the counsel of the Conference of Bishops, and raises with the Congregational and Synodical Mission staff any questions generated in meetings and conversations of the bishops.

In Conclusion

On behalf of the Office of the Presiding Bishop, Synodical Relations is pleased to provide service and assistance to the Church Council and Conference of Bishops in its efforts to strengthen relationships between the Church Council, synods, synodical bishops, and the churchwide organization.

The Rev. Walter S. May Jr., *assistant to the presiding bishop and executive for synodical relations*