

Report of the Bishop to Synod Council

18-19 January 2019

Staff

At Synod Council's September meeting, I announced the resignation of Ms. Rachel Alley, Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Young Adult Ministries, to become Program Director for Youth at ELCA Churchwide and the appointment of Pr. Jill Henning as Interim Liaison for Youth and Young Adult ministry. In addition, Council learned that Pr. Ron Bonner would be leaving his position as half-time Director of Evangelical Mission to become Associate Pastor for Community Engagement at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Atlanta. In my report, I mentioned that, due to the limited time left in this administration, it would likely not be possible to find replacements for these positions.

By now, you likely know that Deacon Michelle Angalet, Assistant to the Bishop, has accepted a call to be Regional Director for Metro Atlanta Programs, Lutheran Services of Georgia (Inspiritus as of January 16). You can imagine the challenge these staff changes present. I am grateful to the Personnel Committee for their wise counsel in working through this staffing issue. Here is an accounting of what we are doing to fill the gaps left by these resignations:

First, together with the Domestic Mission unit of the ELCA, we have secured the services of **Pr. John Mocko** to serve as the Interim Director of Evangelical Mission in Pastor Bonner's stead. Pastor Mocko is rostered in the North Carolina Synod and lives in Florida. Before his recent retirement, he served as Director of Evangelical Mission for the North Carolina Synod and most recently as interim Director of Evangelical Mission for the Florida-Bahamas Synod.

Pr. Dale Sillik, recently retired pastor of Trinity, Lilburn, GA, has agreed to work with congregations in Georgia who are in the call process. He will also work with our DEMs on stewardship in the synod.

Melissa Fuller Sims, who recently completed nine years of service on the synod Candidacy Committee and was a tremendous help with candidacy during Deacon Jeanette Burgess' recent sabbatical, will assume the Candidacy responsibilities of Deacon Angalet in addition to some other duties.

Carolyn Nottingham Davis, Executive Assistant to the Bishop, will add to her portfolio the management of our upcoming Synod Assembly. We have contracted the services of **Elaine Schwartz**, who formerly did that work, to write the plenary scripts and monitor the flow of the sessions.

I am grateful to Pr. Bonner for his service to congregations and ministries of the synod, particularly in the metro Atlanta area during the past two years. His gift of leadership and passion for social justice and the gospel has helped our synod in many ways, most especially advancing our anti-racism initiatives. He will be a gift to Redeemer.

This Council is certainly aware that Deacon Michelle Angalet served this synod with unusual faithfulness, competence and commitment for six years. As you might imagine, I received

her resignation with deep regret, but recognize this as a singular opportunity for Michelle and for In Spiritus. Because of her service on the LSG Board and her role with congregations as an Assistant to the Bishop, I believe that Michelle will be able to help us continue the work of reconnecting with our synod's social service organization.

I am sure you join me in wishing Ron and Michelle well in their respective calls and praying for God's blessing as they continue in their ministry. I am grateful to Sandra, Melissa, John, Jill, Dale, and Carolyn for assuming these responsibilities and am confident that the synod will benefit from their work.

In other staff news, **Deacon Jeanette Burgess** has returned from sabbatical. Over the next few months, she will be offering some blog posts on our blog site in order to share with us some of what she learned while away.

Please express your appreciation of our office staff for their patience, competence, and hard work during our year of sojourn and office move.

Ribbon Cutting for New Synod Office Space

Immediately after this meeting, the Council is asked to join others from around the synod as we cut the ribbon for the new synod office space at St. John's. The new facility is beautiful and will be a better fit for the way we are now working as a staff. I am grateful to the staff and people of St. John's for their cooperation, hospitality, and help during our sixteen months of borrowing space in the congregation's facility. There will certainly be some bumps in the road as we learn to work with St. John's in this new space, but I believe the move will be of great benefit to the synod and the congregation.

Umoyo

After her sermon at the Synod Assembly, I asked to meet with Pr. Tiffany Chaney, Gathered by Grace SAWC, Montgomery, to discuss a couple of matters she had raised in the sermon. In that meeting, I expressed my shared concern with the health of our African descent congregations in this synod. All are struggling. At the end of the meeting, I asked Pr. Chaney to write some of her thoughts on the subject. She did more, writing a proposal for renewal for our 13 African descent congregations. She called the proposal "Umoyo." Subsequently, I learned about grant possibilities for initiatives like Umoyo, and asked our DEMs and staff for their input. After a few changes and some fine-tuning and with the shepherding of DEM Wayne Fell, we have received an \$80,000 grant to fund the Umoyo initiative! Pr. Chaney has offered to work with our DEMs and with the leaders of our African descent congregations in carrying out the initiative.

Other Matters

With other members of our synod, I plan to travel to Singapore and Malaysia to meet with our companion churches in those places. This is a long overdue visit and not an inexpensive one. We have some money in a fund for this relationship that, together with some continuing education funds will make it possible.

Lutherans from the Atlanta area will come together at the annual **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

worship this coming Sunday afternoon at 3 o'clock at Epiphany Lutheran Church in Conyers. This year's theme is "Jesus loves the little children."

The synod's annual **Advocacy Day** is February 2, and will be held at St. John's, Atlanta. Pr. **Amy Reuman**, Director, ELCA Advocacy Ministries, is the featured speaker. Numerous workshops will also be offered.

I am not sure how I managed to end up with all that is on my calendar for January and February. In addition to those events mentioned elsewhere in this report, I participated in a week of continuing education at the annual bishops academy, and have led or will lead four workshops or retreats for congregations. I am also scheduled to install two pastors and one deacon and to lead - with Pr. Jill Henning - a retreat for our deans and then a retreat for our first call pastors and deacons. Then I will travel to Chicago for the regional assignments of candidates and the meeting of the Conference of Bishops. Your prayers are appreciated.

As always, thank you for your partnership in the gospel,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+H Julian Gordy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+H Julian Gordy
Bishop