

SES Personnel Planning for the 3rd Decade of the 3rd Millennium Anno Domini

(Known colloquially as CE or the “Common Era”

(For SES Council Consideration January 18-19, 2019)

ISSUE: When Julian Gordy was first elected Bishop in 2006, the Synod staff budget for FTEs¹ was 10.5, not including DEMs². The recession of 2008 and CWA decisions of 2009³ resulted in a significant decrease in benevolence dollars to many congregations, the synod and the ELCA. Serious cuts were made in the budget across the board that ultimately led to decreased SES staff salaries and a decrease of 3 FTEs today. Since that time, salaries have largely recovered but the work load as shown below has significantly increased and staffing has remained at the lower level.

I. Input Information

- A. Money will be left over in staffing salary budget at end of this fiscal year
 - 1. Rachel Alley left at end of July, replaced by Jill Henning (part-time)
 - 2. Michelle Angalet left December 20, replaced by Melissa Fuller (part-time)
 - 3. Sandra Gustavson will be “retiring” soon after the new Bishop comes on board
 - 4. Ben Moravitz is intending to “retire” after the new Bishop comes on board
 - 5. Carolyn Davis intends to “retire” after the new Bishop comes on board
 - 6. Rent for new office significantly cheaper than downtown offices
 - 7. Appears income this year will be at least as expected, perhaps more
- B. New Bishop to take over first of September (funding already available for starting one (1) month earlier for “cross-over”)
- C. Staffing model may be different with new Bishop; Bishop responsibilities more than can possibly be performed effectively⁴, new Bishop may have different emphasis and/or different way of doing things
- D. Mobility and especially candidacy are taking up much more time due to more candidates and more second career and/or special circumstances candidates. LFE⁵.
- E. Congregations, ever decreasing in size, are looking for innovative ways to maintain full-time pastoral care, alternative types of pastoral care, merging, and/or closing. All these require additional staff time
- F. As technology increases and ability to use it increases, more can be done with less; however, that will only make it more possible to perform some of the constitutional requirements that currently do not get the attention they deserve

¹ Full Time Equivalent

² Director for Evangelical Mission paid by ELCA (Chicago)

³ Churchwide Assembly (CWA) decisions of 2009 were three-fold, culminating in the ordination of gay and lesbian pastors that were either celibate or in a monogamous relationship and simultaneously available for call

⁴ See Section 8 of constitution (attached at end of document) as it relates to the responsibilities of the Bishop

⁵ Lutheran Formation Experience – started in this synod as Atlanta Lutheran Formation Experience. See Michelle Angalet Confidential Report re: Synod Staffing Concerns attached at the end of this document.

- G. Frequent and specific communication is a proven method of increasing participation whether that be spirituality, participation and/or giving. It (frequent communication) is often the first thing sacrificed when personnel are required for other priorities.

II. Discussion Items

A. Ministry style/priorities

1. What do we like about current Synod staff ministry style/priorities?
2. What about the current ministry style could be improved?
3. What about the current ministry style does not have value?
4. What should be added to the current ministry style?

B. Staffing/Salary Issues (First realistic impact to budget will be February 1, 2020 to January 31, 2021 fiscal year)

1. What personnel resources will be required?
2. What monetary resources available or can be made available?
3. What is realistic timeline to make decisions?
4. What other resources may be required? How will they be acquired?
5. What can be done between now and then to enhance resources available?

III. Summary

1. What actions have been decided?
2. What is the timeline to make them happen?
3. Who will be responsible?

Chapter 8. OFFICERS

- †S8.01. The officers of this synod shall be a bishop, a vice-president, a secretary, and a treasurer. S8.10. Bishop
- †S8.11. The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly. The bishop shall be a minister of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- †S8.12. As this synod's pastor, the bishop shall:
- a. Preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church.
 - b. Have primary responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in this synod and its congregations, providing pastoral care and leadership for this synod, its congregations, its ministers of Word and Sacrament, and its ministers of Word and Service.
 - c. Exercise solely this church's power to ordain (or provide for the ordination by another synodical bishop of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament (and as provided in the bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).
 - d. Consecrate (or provide for the consecration of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for service as ministers of Word and Service.
 - e. Attest letters of call for persons called to serve congregations in the synod, letters of call for persons called by the Synod Council, and letters of call for persons on the rosters of this synod called by the Church Council.
 - f. Install (or provide for the installation of) rostered ministers whose calls the bishop has attested.
 - g. Exercise leadership in the mission of this church and in so doing:
 - 1) Interpret and advocate the mission and theology of the whole church;
 - 2) Lead in fostering support for and commitment to the mission of this church within this synod;
 - 3) Coordinate the use of the resources available to this synod as it seeks to promote the health of this church's life and witness in the areas served by this synod.
 - 4) Submit a report to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly concerning this synod's life and work.
 - 5) Advise and counsel this synod's related institutions and organizations.
 - h. Practice leadership in the mission of this church and in so doing:
 - 1) Exercise oversight of the preaching, teaching, and administration of the sacraments within this synod in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church;

- 2) Be responsible for administering the constitutionally established processes for the resolution of controversies and for the discipline of rostered ministers and congregations of this synod;
 - 3) Be its chief ecumenical officer.
 - 4) Consult regularly with other synodical bishops and the Conference of Bishops;
 - 5) Foster awareness of other churches throughout the Lutheran world communion and, where appropriate, engage in contact with leaders of those churches;
 - 6) Cultivate communion in faith and mission with appropriate Christian judicatory leaders functioning within the territory of this synod; and
 - 7) Be ex officio a member of the Churchwide Assembly.
- i. Oversee and administer the work of this synod and in so doing:
- 1) Serve as the president of this synod corporation and be the chief executive and administrative officer of this synod, who is authorized and empowered, in the name of this synod, to sign deeds or other instruments and to affix the seal of this synod;
 - 2) Preside at all meetings of the Synod Assembly and provide for the preparation of the agenda for the Synod Assembly, Synod Council, and the council's Executive Committee;
 - 3) Ensure that the constitution and bylaws of this synod and of the churchwide organization are duly observed within this synod, and that the actions of this synod in conformity there-with are carried into effect;
 - 4) Exercise supervision over the work of the other officers;
 - 5) Coordinate the work of all synod staff members;
 - 6) Appoint all committees for which provision is not otherwise made;
 - 7) Be a member of all committees and any other organizational units of this synod, except as otherwise provided in this constitution;
 - 8) Provide for preparation and maintenance of synodical rosters containing the names and addresses of all rostered ministers of this synod and a record of the calls under which they are serving or the date on which they become retired or disabled;
 - 9) Annually bring to the attention of the Synod Council the names of all rostered ministers on leave from call or engaged in approved graduate study in conformity with the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of this church and pursuant to prior action of this synod through the Synod Council;
 - 10) Provide for prompt reporting to the secretary of this church of:
 - (a) additions to and subtractions from the rosters of this synod and the register of congregations;

- (b) the issuance of a certificate of transfer for rostered ministers in good standing who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested, regular letter of call under the jurisdiction of another synod; and
- (c) the entrance of the names of such persons for whom proper certificates of transfer have been received;

- 11) Provide for preparation and maintenance of a register of the congregations of this synod and the names of the lay persons who have been elected to represent them; and
- 12) Appoint a statistician of this synod, who shall secure the parochial reports of the congregations, and make the reports available to the secretary of this church for collation, analysis, and distribution of the statistical summaries to this synod and the other synods of this church.

†S8.13. The synodical bishop may appoint an attorney, admitted to the bar within the territory of the synod or the state where the synod is located, to be Synod Attorney. The appointment must be approved by the Synod Council and reported to the Synod Assembly and to the ELCA secretary. The appointment continues until resignation or until a successor is appointed. The Synod Attorney provides legal advice and counsel to the synodical officers and the Synod Council. The Synod Attorney is expected to be familiar with the governing documents and policies of the synod and, as necessary, to attend meetings of the Synod Council. The Synod Attorney serves without salary but may be retained and compensated for specific legal services requested by the synod.

S8.14. The bishop may have such assistants as this synod shall from time to time authorize.

†S8.15. The presiding bishop of this church, or the appointee of the presiding bishop, shall install into office, in accord with the policy and approved rite of this church, each newly elected synodical bishop. †S8.16. Conflicts of Interest

†S8.16.01. The following procedures shall govern matters of potential conflicts of interest for synodical bishops:

- a. Whenever a synodical bishop determines that a matter of the kind described in †S8.16.01.b. may require his or her determination or action with respect to a related individual as defined in †S8.16.01.c., the synodical bishop shall withdraw from personal involvement in such matter and shall so notify the presiding bishop. The presiding bishop shall then appoint another synodical bishop from the same region to handle the matter to conclusion. In dealing with such matter, the appointed bishop shall exercise all of the functions and authority to the same extent as if the appointed bishop were the elected bishop of the withdrawing bishop's synod.
- b. Matters include any proceedings under Chapter 20, proceedings under provision 7.46 of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (†S14.13.), candidacy, reinstatement, and similar matters where determinations or actions by the synodical bishop could change, limit, restrict, approve, authorize, or deny the related individual's ministry on one of the official rosters of this church.

c. A related individual is one who, with respect to the synodical bishop, is a spouse, parent, son, daughter, sibling, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, grandparent, grandchild, including corresponding members of blended families and in-laws (parent, son, daughter, or sibling of a spouse, spouse of a sibling, or the parent or sibling of the spouse of a sibling).

Confidential Report - Synod Staffing Concerns
Deacon Michelle Angalet, Assistant to the Bishop
ELCA Southeastern Synod
April 11, 2018

Background

As the Personnel Committee prepares to gather for a meeting later this week, I give thanks for the work to which you have committed yourselves on behalf of the Southeastern Synod and the people who serve as its synod staff. Like most of the work done on behalf of who we are as a synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, you do what this committee has been tasked to do as volunteers who manage many other responsibilities and you do so with very limited financial resources to support your efforts. Like my synod staff colleagues, I appreciate you and what you do on our behalf.

One of the ways that the Personnel Committee has advocated on behalf of synod staff most recently is to call for restoration of salaries for synod staff following deep cuts to compensation following the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly decisions. While this has taken some time, progress has been made in recent years for which I am personally grateful.

However, as one of the eleven people (bishop, three full-time assistants to the bishop, a full-time DEM and a half-time DEM – both of whom are paid by the churchwide organization – three full-time administrative support staff, a half-time administrative dean of the Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta paid for by the churchwide organization, and a fiscal advisor who receives a stipend) who comprise the synod staff and who are compensated for the work that they do as part of their calls to service, and as one who has been called to tend to administrative matters on behalf of the synod, I write this report because I am compelled to speak about what I see as a significant concern for the future of the Southeastern Synod. As you know, this synod is understaffed for the work that its staff has been called to do. This committee has given public voice to that in the recent past.

In the last 12-18 months, it has become increasingly apparent to me that the current level of staffing to accomplish what the bishop and office of the bishop are responsible for is unsustainable. As we stand just a little over a year away from calling a new bishop, I believe part of my call is to name this reality and be sure that it is included in conversations about the current and future needs of the Southeastern Synod.

As you are likely aware, between 2009 and 2012 a full-time administrative support staff position had to be cut as did one full-time and one half-time assistant to the bishop (A2B). This included an A2B position which was dedicated to the synod's candidacy work. This was in addition to salary cuts that had to be made after mission support giving declined dramatically following the 2008 recession and the 2009 Churchwide Assembly decisions.

Current Concerns

Today, a number of new realities exist that continue to stress the capacity of the already understaffed office of the bishop. I believe that they are vitally important to address on behalf of the future of the Southeastern Synod. Without some change in resource allocation, they cannot be adequately addressed by the current staffing level and configuration:

1) Congregations are in need of more synod staff time and direct support for many reasons:

- a) The number of retirements are increasing and will continue to do so for the next several years;
- b) Congregational membership/participation is declining which is not an inherently negative reality in and of itself; but it has usually meant that congregational budgets are simultaneously shrinking and congregation leaders (rostered and lay) do not know how to respond and increasingly call on the synod staff for guidance;
- c) Shrinking financial resources mean that many congregations are beginning to think about moving to part-time pastorates which is, again, not inherently bad but which require more time and attention from synod staff to assist with this discernment;
- d) We have fewer interim pastors available to serve our congregations which means we spend more time helping them manage their periods of transition and more time trying to find interim pastors to serve;
- e) Our smaller congregations that have scarcer resources often request an increasing amount of staff time to deal with conflicts that result as members disagree about how to move forward; synod staff can (and often do) help congregations look at options for holy closure but this can be time and relationship-intensive work to honor the life of the congregation and the commitment of those who must make difficult decisions;
- f) All of our congregations are, to some degree or another, trying to make appropriate shifts in what it means to be a mainline congregation today. The answers that used to address difficult questions about congregational health and vitality are in most cases, no longer applicable. Some congregations are better equipped than others to wrestle with those questions. Many congregations aren't interested in wrestling with the questions at all. As staff, we do not come with easy answers to address congregational issues because there are not easy answers to address today's congregational issues. What we can suggest is a process for evaluating mission and ministry and for making decisions about how to discern what the Holy Spirit might be up to through them in their unique community contexts.
- g) For 157 congregations and new starts plus campus ministries spread over four states, four and a half staff (3 A2Bs and 1 full-time DEM and 1 part-time DEM) who have additional responsibilities other than just ministry support, and who spend a significant amount of time traveling (Bishop Gordy recently estimated that three of our staff spend an average of 10 hours per week driving, though more than three of us travel as part of our regular responsibilities), is simply not sufficient to meet the needs of our congregations and ministries today.

2) Significant changes in Candidacy in the ELCA means more is expected from synod staff:

- a) We used to have one A2B dedicated to candidacy, in addition to staff support Jeanette Burgess. When staff positions were cut in 2009, we lost our dedicated A2B for candidacy.
- b) Since 2009, there has been significant change in the candidacy process as well as who our candidates are. It used to be that the “traditional” candidate (young college graduate entering four-year ELCA seminary experience not long after college graduation) was the norm. In this case, timing of movement along the candidacy process was known and predictable. Today this “traditional” candidate is the exception. Most of our approximately 70 candidates today are either individuals embarking on a second career, those coming as “ordained in another tradition,” or people coming with MDiv degrees from non-ELCA seminaries. With this number of candidates, the Southeastern Synod is actually a net producer of candidates in the ELCA. In addition, theological education is undergoing rapid and significant change and our ELCA seminaries are responding with different education models which means our ELCA seminary candidates have different candidacy paths to track and to support. While the Candidacy Committee shares in responsibility for this work, the need for dedicated synodical level candidacy staff to manage and coordinate this increasingly complex and resource-intensive work is needed now more than any time in the recent past as all of our candidates have, in essence, their own Candidate Accompaniment Plan (CAP) that synod staffs and committees are responsible for guiding our candidates along.
- c) Specifically, the Southeastern Synod responded to some very specific needs that we had in this synod four years ago by creating what is now referred to as the Lutheran Formation Experience (LFE). It was originally called the Atlanta Lutheran Formation Experiment (ALFE). We worked with Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (LTSS) and the ELCA Churchwide organization to create a way for nine of our candidates who had done their seminary coursework at non ELCA seminaries to complete their candidacy requirements without doing what was then required as a Lutheran year in residency at an ELCA seminary. We worked with the candidates to help them get required courses without leaving Atlanta, found them congregations that could provide internship experiences, and provided for some Lutheran formation for them as a cohort of students in addition to the courses and the internship experiences. The coordination of this fell primarily to me as an Assistant to the Bishop. Today, the LFE model has been adopted for use by any synod in the ELCA Candidacy Manual given the flexibility it provides in assisting synods to meet the needs of its candidates as well as the leadership needs of the church. It will, in this synod, be a significant part of candidacy going forward and requires more time than what can currently be given to manage it efficiently for our candidates and congregations.
- d) Additionally, these rapid and significant changes require a systematic overhaul of how we manage candidacy in this synod. We will be best served by staff who are open to change and who are willing to proactively initiate systematic and process changes that will support the work that needs to be accomplished.

3) Need for frequent and targeted communication with all constituents is critical and cannot be adequately addressed with current staff:

- a) Quite simply, this synod needs a dedicated staff person for communications. We need additional staff who can work closely with the bishop and the assistants to communicate with our congregations and our rostered ministers. We need to be able to do regular Enews communications and social media posts and interactions that tell stories about the work that is going on across this synod and to tell stories about the work that we do as one of 65 synods and as 157 congregations out of some 9000 across the ELCA.
- b) We hear often that folks in our congregations don't know what's going on across this church that they are a part of. We hear that they don't know what a synod is and who the ELCA is. While this challenge is not unique to our synod and is made more difficult by rostered ministers who don't honor their ordination and consecration vows to lift up the work of this church seriously, synods have worked successfully at countering this challenge by committing resources to communications.
- c) As mission support continues to be flat, the Synod Council and staff have given voice to the need for increased communication to tell the story of what we do as church and how we do it together through mission support. It has also given voice to a need to have dedicated resources at the staff level to incorporate targeted capital campaigns as a source of revenue for ongoing funding of synodical work.

4) Our churchwide organization has been slow to provide helpful resources for synods to support congregations and slow to configure itself to be responsive to the needs of this church.

- a) Through conversation with other bishop's staffs across this church, we have learned that many synods have assumed that helpful change won't come quickly enough to assist synod staffs and congregation so they have positioned themselves to make decisions based on their own needs and experience and staff accordingly. Of course, mission support impacts and drives these decisions.
- b) Of particular concern in this synod because of the large portfolio of new starts and redevelopments is the role of the Directors of Evangelical Mission and the expectations placed upon these positions. Despite feedback from bishops and synod staffs, and DEMs themselves, these positions, as well as most of the senior level positions within the Domestic Mission Unit of the ELCA, are often "rebranded" with a new name and a new organizational structure, but real change in how things are done and how decisions are made doesn't happen.
- c) Given the increasing number of retirements that are happening now and that we anticipate will continue to happen, and given the number of congregations that are in the call process (currently 23), a number that we also believe will continue to be constant, and the general challenges all of our congregations are experiencing as church today, we must begin to consider alternative ways for make the necessary resources available to support our congregations.

To be sure, the current synod staff are tireless in their work and go above and beyond for our congregations, rostered ministers and the ministry that we have been called to together. We experience relationships between our congregations and rostered ministers and the bishop and his staff to be, on the whole, positive and mutually respectful. We believe that the synod staff are seen by most as trustworthy and as having the best interests of our congregations at the heart of what we do.

We have also made significant strides in achieving some long sought-after goals. For example, in the last two years we have raised over \$600,000 in gifts and pledges for the new synod office. We've done this by working closely with lay leaders of the Living Lutheran Legacy Campaign, but without any additional staffing. We recently launched a new website and database, something we as staff were committing to make happen before the next bishop takes office. We also continue to make progress in our ability to work remotely as staff, relying more on technology to keep us connected and able to accomplish our work while minimizing commute time and increasing productivity.

However, we could use more time and resources to continue our office fundraising. I remain convinced that we have not tapped our potential, but we cannot do anymore than what we are currently doing to move the needle on this without additional time in our day to day ministry to do it.

While we have launched our new website and database, it took two of us six months of on-again/off-again effort (as time and other responsibilities allowed) to finally be able to launch the website. In addition, we have been paying one of our office volunteers who is familiar with our old database to get the new database current so the website could be launched. Because the new website is tied to our database, much of the content is data-driven which will mean more efficiencies in communicating and record-keeping in the future. But we were ultimately not able to accomplish this in a timely way without paying for additional help to do so. Our new communications platform also includes a new emailer system (replacing Constant Contact) and a new event registration system (also replacing Constant Contact). While we are using the new event registration platform for our Synod Assembly registration, we have not yet had time to invest in preparing the emailer for use.

While I can only speak for myself, I sense from conversations with other staff a growing concern that we they, like me, are less able to do the things we are called to do well because there is simply too much to be managed. Such a pace is not sustainable for any length of time. Combined with likely retirements of some staff after a bishop's transition, I am concerned that without some strategic investment of additional resources, or strategic decisions about what we can continue to do and not do, that our ability to be what our congregations need us to be will be further diminished than it is already is.

Conclusion

I realize that there are no easy or ready solutions to these concerns. I also realize that this is not something that the Personnel Committee can address as a committee. However, I believe that this committee needs to be aware of the complexity of concerns that the staff are dealing with as well as the critical threshold at which the staff stand in terms of their ability to adequately address the needs that this synod has and will have into the future. Your prayers are most appreciated as is your thoughtful consideration of the role that you as the Personnel Committee might play in ensuring that this conversation is continued in a way that serves the long-term needs of our congregations and those it serves as the ELCA Southeastern Synod.