

Synod Council September 2020

Synod Council Report from Directors of Evangelical Mission

Greetings Council Leaders in the Southeastern Synod and thank you for your commitment to leading this Synod in the work and ministry we all carry out in congregations, agencies, communities and with our global partners.

Melissa – I missed being with you during our last Synod Council meeting in June due to the loss of my Nephew. I have been mixed with emotions but do appreciate all the well wishes throughout the synod. It continues to be a joy as we walk with congregations during their journey of doing what God has called them to do. I have recently reflected on the following scripture taken from Joshua 1:9 : *“I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”* It is most important that we are reminded of the fact that God is present with us as we live and as we do his work.

Since the last Council meeting Patti and I attended our regular MORC committee where we considered over nine requests for funds to help with ministry in this synod. We are pleased to submit seven requests for approval. In addition, we are excited that five individuals have agreed to join the committee. We continue our work with Pastors and Church Leaders listening to their visions and progress made for living out the call to do Gods work. We are beginning to meet with our Mission Developers on a regular basis so that we can find ways to best support their needs and the work of the synod. Recently we held our second Virtual Candidacy meeting where we met with seven candidates. We sincerely thank the Candidacy Committee for their patience and for this very important work they do. We also thank the committee’s new chaplain Pastor Beverly Brown Shaw for her support and commitment. I continue to work with Rev. Tiffany Chaney and the UMOYO team. We are pleased that each congregation has been assigned a coach to walk with them during this sustainability phase. More to come at a later time!

Patti – Doing this work in a pandemic is certainly a challenge but I dare say, all of us could say that and we are not alone. In addition to what Melissa has shared, Melissa and I, with quite a few of our Mission Developers, have participated in the Congregational Vitality Event by Zoom. This event is usually held in “exotic” places in the country to bring us together for conversation and to learn but this year we met by Zoom and will have three large group events and a number of cohort gatherings learning about increasing the vitality of ELCA congregations of all types. In addition, we have gathered a group of mission-minded folk in the Synod to serve on the Synod Vitality Team. In the process of gathering the team we are meeting with a group from Churchwide, led by Dave Daubert to learn more about Synod Vitality and how to provide resources the congregations in our Synod need to be vital and engaging in this unpredictable time we are living into. We are excited about this group and the ideas that will be generated by the Holy Spirit in our midst.

In addition to Congregational and Synod Vitality, Melissa and I are networking with other ELCA coaches to develop our Coaching network in the Southeastern Synod. UMOYO has a cadre of coaches trained and we would like to add to that so that any congregation in the Synod who is interested would be able to have a coach as they navigate the uncharted waters we are in. Coaching and Vitality go hand in hand.

We are learning how to navigate these challenges as Synod staff and are grateful for the networking and conversation we can share as we work with each other, the Deans, individual Pastors and lay leaders. God has given each of us gifts to build up the body and though we may have to meet over a Zoom screen, we are still able to communicate effectively and meet the needs of those who need to hear and feel the presence of Christ in our midst. We continue to give thanks to you for entrusting this work to us for the sake of the Kingdom.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ms. Melissa Fuller-Sims & Pastor Patti Axel
Assistants to the Bishop and Directors of Evangelical Mission

