

MINUTES
of the
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Minnesota North District
The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod
Brainerd, Minnesota

December 7, 2020, 8:30 am
(via Zoom)

MISSION STATEMENT: *“The Minnesota North District exists to further the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and to assist congregations as Great Commission Churches.”*

1. **DEVOTION/BIBLE STUDY** **Rev. K. Weber**

Rev. Weber led the Board in the Opening Devotion (attached.) Speaking to the Gospel for the 3rd Sunday of Advent, Rev. Weber talked about all the questions that they had for John, attempting to trap him. John’s response is Messianic, pointing to Christ, our kinsman and Redeemer, He recalled for the group the account of Boaz and Ruth as her kinsman redeemer. Now, as Christ is our Redeemer, we have the opportunity to be a kinsman redeemer, of sorts, and share the good news with others and also with our hands in serving them.
2. **ROLL CALL/MINUTES** **Rev. M. Mably**
 - a. **ROLL CALL**
 - i. **Members Present:** President Fondow; Vice Presidents Finnern, Lee and Weber; Secretary Mably; Treasurer Uran; Lay Members Gilbertson, Kading, Meyer, Moldenhauer and Rydberg; Advisory members Rev. J. Lee, Rev. M. Meyer, A. Ringstrom.
 - ii. **Members Absent:** Lay Member T. Browning.
 - b. **MINUTES – Board of Directors Meeting – Sunday, September 27 - Monday, September 28, 2020 (attached)**
 - i. **MOVED and SECONDED:** Approve the minutes of the September 27-28, 2020, Board of Directors meeting amended with minor changes.
 - ii. **ACTION:** Motion carried.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. M. Uran

- a. Mr. Uran shared the "Financial Statement", dated 11/15/2020 (attached). He reported that everything is proceeding normally and as expected. He noted on page 3, that the deficit shown for the year was due to an accounting of the recently sold properties. Cost savings are being seen this year due to personnel changes.

MOVED and SECONDED Approve Treasurer's Report as presented.

ACTION: Motion carried

- b. Mr. Uran presented and went through the audit, dated September 18, 2020 (attached). Mr. Uran highlighted that there were no concerns and the District received good comments.

MOVED and SECONDED Accept the Auditor's Report for fiscal year 2019.

ACTION: Motion carried

- c. Mr. Uran reported that Angie Ringstrom completed a reconciliation of the funds remaining in the Stepping Out in Faith (SOIF) campaign account. As part of that work, it was identified that the campaign had a provision that 10% of the funds received were to be allocated to administrative expenses. The District chose not to take this offset and covered the expenses at that time. Those funds total \$95,104.54 and currently remain undisbursed. After consulting with President Fondow, George Miller, and Angie Ringstrom, it is recommended that the Board of Directors consider allocating these funds to the six focus areas (Mission starts, American Indian Outreach, Pre-schools, Rural/Small Town Ministry, LIC, Church Worker Recruitment) of the campaign according to the formula established for unrestricted gifts during the campaign. If approved, a portion of the LIC disbursement will be retained by the District to cover the \$11,307.17 account receivable for LIC.

MOVED and SECONDED: Distribute the Stepping Out in Faith (SOIF) campaign proceeds designated for administrative expenses to the six focus areas of the campaign according to the percentage distribution established for each.

ACTION: Motion carried

- d. Mr. Uran presented recommendations for housing allowances as follows:

- i. Rev. Meyer and Rev. Lee - up to 50%
- ii. Rev. Fondow - up to 40%

MOVED and SECONDED: Approve Housing allowances as presented.

ACTION: Motion carried.

- e. Mr. Uran presented the staff recommendations for distribution of the Minnesota North District Endowment Fund earnings as follows:
 - i. Rev Meyer - Bring it Home expenses
 - ii. Rev. Lee - Office technology
 - iii. Angie R. - Office technology
 - iv. Rev. Fondow - "My Savior Lives" Broadcast and the CROSS appeal

MOVED and SECONDED: Approve distributions as presented.
ACTION: Motion carried.
- f. Mr. Uran shared a letter from Bremer Bank, dated November 2nd, that the District's \$146,400 PPP loan had been forgiven and is now being shown on the Financial statement as a Grant.

4. LCEF

Rev. J. Lee

- a. **Status Report** - Rev. Lee shared the December 2020 rate sheets for investments and loans. (attached). He noted that a low percentage of loans to investments will reduce investment interest rates.
- b. **Loan Application** - Rev. Lee requested ratification of the email vote, approving a \$25,000 loan to Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Moorhead.
MOVED and SECONDED Ratify approval (via email vote) for \$25,000 unsecured loan for Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Moorhead, MN.
ACTION: Motion carried.
- c. Rev. Lee discussed with the Board granting him permission to approve unsecured loans of up to \$100,000 for individual congregation loans. This is LCEF's limit for unsecured loans. This would allow him to meet the time constraints that often accompany these loan applications. The Board would ratify these loans at the subsequent Board of Directors Meetings.
MOVED and SECONDED to grant Rev. Lee the ability to approve unsecured LCEF loan applications of up to \$100,000 for individual congregations, with the Board of Directors ratifying the loan approvals at a subsequent meeting.
ACTION: Motion carried.
- d. Rev. Fondow noted that LCEF's Laborers for Christ program is ending in June 2021, the end of its fiscal year. He requested that the ownership of the Laborers for Christ trailer and its contents be transferred to Lutheran Island Camp.
MOVED and SECONDED Transfer ownership of Laborers for Christ trailer and contents to Lutheran Island Camp.
ACTION: Motion carried

5. Division of Mission and Congregational Outreach [MaCO] Report **Rev. J. Lee**

- a. Rev. J. Lee shared that the Committee has not met since that last Board of Directors meeting.
- b. The committee will be working on the 2021 budget soon.
- c. Rev. Lee shared that recent Barna studies are showing an expected decrease in worship attendance (projected to return to in person worship) of up to 30% due to streaming Worship Services during the COVID Pandemic.
- d. During Advent, he is encouraging churches to be creative in community outreach.
- e. Rev. Lee reported that the Seminary Interview Committee met this last week and approved one candidate.
- f. He also reported that Dr. David Hietala, a layman at Prince of Peace in Baxter has joined the Seminary Interview Committee for the Minnesota North District.
- g. Congregational commitments for 2021 have begun to come in.
- h. The recent Tech Conference in North Dakota had to change locations to Minot.
- i. Rev. Lee noted that two new stewardship Bible studies for 2021 were recently added to the website, increasing the total studies available to six.

6. LUTHERAN ISLAND CAMP REPORT **Rev. K. Lee**

- a. Ken Erlandson in anticipation of the Board's approval, thanked the Board for the donation of the Laborers for Christ trailer to the camp.
- b. The Camp has lost Wayne Hilchen, who died this fall. Also, Rev. Jeff Walther, chairman of the Board, died due to COVID-19.
- c. Susan Borglum has become Chair of the Lutheran Island Camp Board of Directors. Vice Chair will be filled at the January meeting. The Building New Bridges Campaign team is looking at some strong candidates and hope to fill the Campaign Coordinator position by the first of the year.
- d. Rev. Kirk Lee reported that the Camp is now looking at opening at the end of January and will hopefully be fully open by next summer.
- e. He reported that Melody Hobbie, the Camp's Operating Manager, is interviewing summer staff candidates.
- f. The Camp's finances are stable, and bills are up to date.
- g. Rev. Kirk Lee noted that the Camp is advertising through The National Lutheran Outdoors Ministry Association (NLOMA) for Program Director, Nutrition and Maintenance Positions. They are hoping to fill the Program Director position as soon as possible. Discussion followed, regarding the hiring of a Program Director before a Camp Director.
- h. He also reported that Marv, the maintenance person, is planning to retire at the end of the summer.
- i. Rev. Kirk Lee reported that a Foundation is offering workshops to all ministries they support, which the Camp is participating in. With COVID, the Foundation gave \$10,000 to each ministry that they support.

- j. He reported that a \$500,000 matching gift was given to the Building New Bridges Campaign in the form of properties. There is also the potential for a million-dollar donation coming. All total, the Campaign is approximately two thirds of the way towards reaching its goal. Both of the larger gifts are intended to see building projects happening soon.
- k. The Building New Bridges Campaign is looking at visiting Circuits in the District.

7. MINISTERIAL HEALTH COMMISSION REPORT

Rev. D. Fondow

- j. Rev. Fondow reported that the Committee met on October 8 and plans to meet on January 11.
- k. He noted that two of the members of the Committee, along with a number of Pastors in the District have been infected with COVID.
- l. Rev. Fondow also highlighted the pressures church workers are experiencing during the pandemic.

8. DIVISION OF PARISH LIFE and Nurture [PLaN]

Rev. M. Meyer

- j. Rev. Meyer reported Caleb Kunze is doing a great job with the campus ministry at St. Cloud State University. Love of Christ Lutheran Church has also benefited from the ministry.
- k. He reported that he is working with Mark Noennig in Moorhead on how to proceed with the campus ministry there in 2021.
- l. Rev. Meyer is still struggling with getting monthly reports completed from some campus ministries.
- m. He reported that the schools of our District are doing well.
- n. The “Someone You Know” campaign has been suspended due to lack of use of the program. Rev. Meyer is evaluating how to conduct and promote the campaign better.
- o. “Bring It Home, The Life of Christ” is coming out this week. Concordia Publishing House has assisted in putting a pack of Arch books together at a significantly discounted price.

10. Constitution to be Acted Upon

- a. A Constitution and Bylaws was recommended for approval to the Board by the Committee on Congregational Constitutions and District Membership (Rev. Carnicom, chairman): St. Stephens Lutheran Church, Braham, MN.
- b. The Board had the following comments and suggestions.
 - i. There was inconsistency noted in the document between the use of “St. Stephens” and “St. Stephen’s.”
 - ii. On page 3, in the first paragraph, under 2.0 (Mission), it was noted that “(Word and Sacrament)” might be better placed after “means of grace” rather than at the end of the sentence.
 - iii. It was noted as unusual that, according to 14.2 (page 9), the voters assembly determines when the council meets.
 - iv. On page 10, 15.8, in the first line “otherwise” should be used instead of “other.”

MOVED and SECONDED: Approve the Constitution and Bylaws for St. Stephen’s Lutheran Church, Braham, MN.

ACTION: Motion carried.

10. President’s Report

Rev. D. Fondow

- a. Rev. Fondow commented that the District may need to look more seriously at restructuring some Circuits because of not meeting Synodical requirements for an Electoral Circuit.
- b. He reviewed with the Board a number of Synodical and District statistics, noting an increase in Emeritus Pastors.
- c. Rev. Fondow made special note of the passing of Rev. Jeff Walther from COVID.
- d. He discussed the book, “The Rise of the Nones” and the phenomenon of an increase in this group. The book notes pluralism, a negative view of the church’s exclusive claims, as well as the lack of trust in the church as an institution, as causes for the increase.
- e. Rev. Fondow reviewed and highlighted aspects of current District ministries.
- f. He went through questions that will be discussed by the Board at its next meeting regarding “Looking to the Future” for the District.
- g. He discussed the proposal to add one year to the Synodical and District Triennium due to COVID. This would move the District’s Convention to 2022.
- h. Rev. Fondow noted that any elected positions becoming vacant due to someone unable or unwilling to continue could be filled by appointment.

MOVED and SECONDED: Pending an affirmative vote to delay the Synodical Convention one year to 2023, delay the District Convention one year to 2022.

ACTION: Motion carried.

11. Congregational Care Counselor Report

Rev. L. Harvala

- a. Rev. Harvala reported that no congregations have needed his services since last December, due in part to COVID. He has consulted with a few pastors or congregations with concerns. He has presented Bible studies at Circuit Visitor and New Worker Conferences regarding conflict, how to avoid and how to handle it. Rev. Harvala also noted that the lack of congregations needing assistance is due partly to leadership at the Circuit and Regional levels of the District.
- b. Rev. Harvala thanked the Board for the opportunity to work in this area, noting that it was rewarding and challenging.
- c. The new Congregational Care Counselor, Rev. Sagissor, shared his excitement to be taking over the position.
- d. Revs. Harvala and Sagissor have already visited one church in conflict for an initial meeting.
- e. Rev. Fondow thanked Rev. Harvala for his service and Rev. Sagissor for agreeing to serve in the position.

12. Public Policy Update

Rev. F. Hinz

- a. Rev. Hinz updated the Board on how his work has changed because of COVID, including face-to-face meetings. These have become much less frequent. Also, much more time has been spent understanding and evaluating the rapid cultural and societal changes in our country.
- b. He recommended a couple of books, “American Awakening,” by Joshua Mitchell and also, “What It Means to Be Human” by O. Carter Snead. He commended to the Board, Minnesota South District President Woodford’s publication regarding social justice.
- c. He reviewed election results included in his report (attached) and their effects, federally and statewide.
- d. Rev. Hinz discussed efforts in regard to abortion, physician assisted suicide, religious liberty, marriage, family, sexuality, and parental choice in education.

Rev. Fondow shared a letter from a District congregation expressing support and giving thoughts regarding the upcoming District Convention.

He commended to the Board, the Synod’s “Joy:fully Lutheran” document (2016) regarding challenges that the church faces and also a CPH publication regarding racial issues in America.

In his final thoughts, Rev. Fondow talked in terms of “when will this end” sharing that Lewis and Clark, while on their expedition, saw more and more mountains rather than what they expected, rolling hills leading to the sea. He reminded the Board that the Lord Jesus will keep us strong to the end, remaining by our side through His Word and Sacraments.

He closed the meeting with prayer.

13. **ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEXT MEETING:**

- a. **DATE:** February 14-15, 2021
- b. **TIME:** 4:00 pm
- c. **DEVOTION/BIBLE STUDY LEADER:** Rev. Brady Finnern

14. **ADJOURNMENT**

- a. **MOVED & SECONDED:** Adjournment
- b. **ACTION: CARRIED.**

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Marty Mably, M.A., M.Div., Secretary
Minnesota North District
The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod