



Report of the Department for Synodical Relations

Organization

Executive Staff

Director: Pr. Kathie Bender Schwich

Associate Director for Administration and Synodical Relations:
Ms. Tammy Jackson

Associate Director for Synodical Support and Planning: Ms. Marcia
L. Johnson

Assistant for Federal Chaplaincies: Pr. Ivan G. Ives, interim
Coordinator of ELCA Resource Centers: Ms. Julie K. Aageson
Regional Administrator, Region 1: Mr. Steven H. Lansing

Shared-Deployed Staff, Region 1: Pr. Neal G. Buckaloo
Shared-Deployed Staff and Regional Administrator, Region 2:

Ms. Margaret Schmitt Ajer, diaconal minister
Shared-Deployed Staff and Coordinator, Region 3: Pr. Craig A.
Boehlke

Shared-Deployed Staff, Region 4: Pr. Donald R. Just
Shared-Deployed Staff and Coordinator, Region 5: Pr. Carl Richard
Evenson

Shared-Deployed Staff and Coordinator, Region 6: Ms. Marilyn R.
McCann Smith, associate in ministry

Shared-Deployed Staff and Coordinator, Region 7: *vacant*
Shared-Deployed Staff and Coordinator, Region 8: Pr. Judith Ann
Cobb

Shared-Deployed Staff and Coordinator, Region 9: Pr. Harvey L.
Huntley Jr.

Statement of Purpose

“This department shall coordinate the relationships between the churchwide organization and synods, including regions, develop and implement synodical-churchwide consultations and services, render support for synodical bishops and synodical staff, and provide staff services for the Conference of Bishops” (continuing resolution 15.21.F91.). The guiding vision for this department’s work is “to foster effective, empowered leaders in healthy, mission-driven synods.”

Report of Work 2003-2005

Conference of Bishops

Supporting the work of the Conference of Bishops and its committees is the highest priority for this department. Departmental staff work with appropriate committees in planning and conducting two annual meetings of the conference, the annual Academy for Bishops and annual orientations for newly elected bishops, and newly called assistants to bishops. Part Two of this report provides a detailed summary of the work of the Conference of Bishops during the past biennium. Additionally, the work of the conference is highlighted on the department’s Web page.

First-Call Assignment Process

Once approved for call by their candidacy committees, candidates for rostered ministry in this church are assigned to regions and synods. The department’s deployed staff play an integral role in the assignment process both regionally and at each churchwide consultation. Each year the department

receives and distributes to bishops and seminaries approximately 400 candidate résumés. Assignment consultations currently are held in February and September. The number of requests for first-call candidates continues to exceed the number of candidates available by a significant ratio. Fall bishops’ visits to the eight ELCA seminaries have been well received by seminarians as they develop a greater appreciation for ministry opportunities throughout the church and discern their preferred areas for rostered service.

Rostered Leader Mobility

Assisting and supporting congregational call committees is the responsibility of synodical bishops in this church. The department’s deployed staff assist bishops and synodical staff in identifying appropriate candidates for call, particularly as rostered leaders indicate openness to relocate to another synod or region. In some regions, regular mobility conferences in which bishops interview candidates open for call are organized by the deployed staff. “Availability for Call” forms and “Congregational Mission Profile” forms used in the call process have been placed on the department’s Web page for easier accessibility. The department has developed a Web site called “People and Places” to support and promote greater mobility for the lay rosters of this church. The site is available to synods as they seek to match the gifts of our lay rostered leaders with the needs of congregations and other ministry sites. With support from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, and in response to a memorial from the Arkansas-Oklahoma synod, the department currently is facilitating a study of best practices used by synods in facilitating the call process.

Synodical Leadership Support

Providing support to bishops and their assistants, as well as synodical officers, is ongoing work of the department in partnership with the Bishops’ Orientation and Academy Committee and other units of the churchwide organization. Each year, orientation sessions are provided for newly elected synodical bishops and new assistants to bishops. During the last biennium the department has been working with the Alban Institute on a pilot orientation project, funded by a grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, and in cooperation with The Episcopal Church. Through this project, nine synodical bishops have taken part in a three-year intensive orientation and formation process. The department hosts biennial gatherings of bishops’ assistants and associates, providing opportunity for these leaders to experience support and to learn from one another. In addition, department staff are working with synod vice presidents to develop materials that can be used for orienting new synod council members to their leadership roles.

Synodical Planning and Consulting

This work ranges from one-time visioning or planning events to multi-year consultation with synods developing

long-range strategic plans or synodical restructuring efforts. Transition teams also have been created to assist synods as they face changes in staffing and leadership.

The Department for Synodical Relations—together with the Division for Congregational Ministries, the Department for Communication, and the Department for Research and Evaluation—has established a part-time position to support the work of ELCA Resource Centers. This position supports the needs of 71 Lutheran resource centers throughout this church, including several developing synodical centers. The coordinator of ELCA Resource Centers provides daily on-line support to resource centers on Lutherlink. In addition, the director pursues the development of technology needs among the resource centers and works to continue promoting ecumenical cooperation on behalf of the centers, the Department for Synodical Relations, and the churchwide organization.

Synod Assembly Representation and Mission-Support Consultations

The department's associate director for administration and synodical relations, in consultation with the director of the department and the presiding bishop, carries out the annual assignment of churchwide representatives to synodical assemblies. In partnership with the coordinator for mission support and the Synodical-Churchwide Relations Committee of the Conference of Bishops, annual consultations with each of the 65 synods also are planned and conducted. In the fall 2003, synod leaders met in 11 regional consultations throughout this church to review and discuss the first draft of the churchwide strategic plan and provide responses that were sent to the ELCA Church Council. Consultation participants included synod officers, members of synod councils and ELCA Church Council, and synod and churchwide staff. In October 2004, conversations on mission support were held during the joint meeting of the Conference of Bishops and synodical vice presidents. In the winter of 2005, synod leaders met in nine regional consultations to share 2006 mission support goals, to discuss the report and recommendations of the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality, to review the new directions in culture, structure and governance of the churchwide organization, and to strengthen synodical and churchwide partnerships by developing goals together for greater coordination, cooperation, and collaboration.

Regional Coordination

Churchwide budgetary support is provided for the work of this church's regions. Departmental staff assist the regional coordinators and administrators in planning their semi-annual meetings. Support is provided for regional planning and the department assigns a churchwide staff member to each region's steering committee or governing council. Regional coordinators play a significant role in welcoming new bishops, synod staff, and other leaders into their respective regions.

Federal Chaplaincies

As interim assistant to the presiding bishop for federal chaplaincies, Pr. Ivan Ives has provided support for this church's 400 active duty as well as guard and reserve military chaplains, as well as 130 clergy persons in other federal chaplaincies. The department's director serves as a member of the Federal Chaplaincies Advisory Committee.

Good Samaritan, Shared Risk, and Special Needs Retirement Funds

These three funds are managed by this department. 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 Board of Pensions 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.

Departmental Communications

The department remains committed to communicating with the larger church through the most accessible means possible. In 2004, the department's Web site, as well as the Bureau for Federal Chaplaincy Ministries Web site, were re-designed in order to create easier usability and integration with the entire ELCA site and services. The sites feature new and updated resources for synods in transitions, synodical leaders and officers, assembly planners, and information seekers. The Federal Chaplaincy Ministries' site also includes journal entries from a Chaplain serving in Iraq. Staff have developed a new information resource for candidates entering into the assignment process and an on-line discussion group for synodical vice presidents.

Major Directions 2005-2007

The staff of this department continue to welcome feedback and input from those whom we serve, the Conference of Bishops and synodical leaders of this church. Some priorities that have surfaced through this collaborative process include:

- strengthening the orientation and formation process for new bishops and staffs;
- developing and supporting a network of consultants to assist synods in asset-based planning processes and in managing change, including a resource manual for synod councils;
- assessing the ongoing needs of synods and the impact on synodical-churchwide relations and partnerships as a result of synod restructuring processes;
- a thorough evaluation and review of the work of regions, in an effort to be more supportive and effective in our work together;
- developing a training manual for use with newly elected synod council members; and
- developing a best practices resource for synods to use in the call process.

Conference of Bishops 2003-2005 Membership

The Conference of Bishops consists of 65 synodical bishops, and the presiding bishop and secretary of this church. The members of the Conference of Bishops, as of February 1, 2005, were the following:

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson
Secretary Lowell G. Almen
Bp. Roy G. Almquist, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

Bp. Jon V. Anderson, Southwestern Minnesota Synod
 Bp. Edward R. Benoway, Florida-Bahamas Synod
 Bp. Robert D. Berg, Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
 Bp. Allan C. Bjornberg, Rocky Mountain Synod
 Bp. Paul J. Blom, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
 Bp. William Chris Boerger, Northwest Washington Synod
 Bp. Leonard H. Bolick, North Carolina Synod
 Bp. Stephen P. Bouman, Metropolitan New York Synod
 Bp. George G. Carlson, South-Central Synod of Wisconsin
 Bp. Duane C. Danielson, Western North Dakota Synod
 Bp. David L. deFreese, Nebraska Synod
 Bp. Andrea F. DeGroot-Nesdahl, South Dakota Synod
 Bp. David A. Donges, South Carolina Synod
 Bp. Ralph W. Dunkin, West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod
 Bp. Murray D. Finck, Pacifica Synod
 Bp. Richard J. Foss, Eastern North Dakota Synod
 Bp. Warren D. Freiheit, Central/Southern Illinois Synod
 Bp. Gary L. Hansen, North/West Lower Michigan Synod
 Bp. Carol S. Hendrix, Lower Susquehanna Synod
 Bp. Robert D. Hofstad, Southwestern Washington Synod
 Bp. Callon W. Holloway Jr., Southern Ohio Synod
 Bp. Philip L. Hougen, Southeastern Iowa Synod
 Bp. Marie C. Jerge, Upstate New York Synod
 Bp. Craig E. Johnson, Minneapolis Area 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. H. Gerard Knoche, Delaware-Maryland Synod
 Bp. Wilma S. Kucharek, Slovak Zion Synod
 Bp. Paul R. Landahl, Metropolitan Chicago Synod
 Bp. April C. Ullring Larson, La Crosse Area Synod
 Bp. Michael A. Last, Western Iowa Synod
 Bp. Marcus C. Lohrmann, Northwestern Ohio Synod
 Bp. A. Donald Main, Upper Susquehanna Synod
 Bp. Gerald L. Mansholt, Central States Synod
 Bp. Margarita Martinez, Caribbean Synod
 Bp. Ronald D. Martinson, Alaska Synod
 Bp. James F. Mauney, Virginia Synod
 Bp. Donald J. McCoid, Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod
 Bp. Marcus J. Miller, Northeastern Ohio Synod
 Bp. David G. Mullen, Sierra Pacific Synod
 Bp. Michael J. Neils, Grand Canyon Synod
 Bp. Dean W. Nelson, Southwest California Synod
 Bp. Richard R. Omland, Montana Synod
 Bp. Margaret G. Payne, New England Synod
 Bp. Gregory R. Pile, Allegheny Synod
 Bp. E. Roy Riley Jr., New Jersey Synod
 Bp. Robert A. Rimbo, Southeast Michigan Synod
 Bp. Peter Rogness, Greater Milwaukee Synod
 Bp. Theodore F. Schneider, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod
 Bp. Floyd M. Schoenhals, Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod
 Bp. Thomas A. Skrenes, Northern Great Lakes Synod
 Bp. David R. Strobel, Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod
 Bp. E. Peter Strommen, Northeastern Minnesota Synod
 Bp. James R. Stuck, Indiana-Kentucky Synod
 Bp. Paul W. Stumme-Diers, Greater Milwaukee Synod
 Bp. Paul R. Swanson, Oregon Synod
 Bp. Ray Tiemann, Southwestern Texas Synod
 Bp. Steven L. Ullestad, Northeastern Iowa Synod
 Bp. Harold L. Usgaard, Southeastern Minnesota Synod
 Bp. Rolf P. Wangberg, Northwestern Minnesota Synod
 Bp. Ronald B. Warren, Southeastern Synod
 Bp. Martin D. Wells, Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod
 Bp. Gary M. Wollersheim, Northern Illinois Synod

Committees

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

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of the officers of the Conference of Bishops, the presiding bishop, the secretary of this church, and three at large members. The director of the department serves as staff to this committee. The committee prepares the agenda and program for the meetings of the Conference of Bishops, nominates conference members to committees, boards, and task forces, and offers guidance to the Department for Synodical Relations in providing budget and staff support for the Conference of Bishops. Members of the Executive Committee are:

Bp. Mark S. Hanson, *presiding bishop*
 Bp. E. Roy Riley, *chair* (2004-2007)
 Bp. Andrea F. DeGroot-Nesdahl, *vice chair* (2004-2007)
 Pr. Lowell G. Almen, *secretary*
 Bp. Paul J. Blom (2004-2006)
 Bp. Murray D. Finck (2004-2006)
 Bp. Carol S. Hendrix (2004-2006)

Orientation and Academy Committee

The orientation of newly elected synodical bishops and an annual continuing education event for all bishops (the Academy for Bishops) are the responsibility of this committee (ELCA 15.31.A91.g. and h.). Bp. Dean W. Nelson serves as chair.

Roster Committee

Through this committee, the conference responds to applications for call to “ministry in unusual circumstances,” exceptions to the three-year parish ministry requirement, and other exceptions to normal roster management (ELCA 7.41.11.15.). Bp. David R. Strobel serves as chair.

Theological and Ethical Concerns Committee

Assisted by this committee, the conference serves as a forum for reflections upon the theological and ethical implications of issues that affect this church (ELCA 15.31.A91.h.). Bp. Marcus C. Lohrmann serves as chair.

Committee for Liaison with the Division for Ministry

The conference works closely with the Division for Ministry in matters of roster definition, management, and supervision through this committee (ELCA 15.31.A91.c., e., and f.). Bp. A. Donald Main serves as chair.

Committee for Liaison with the Department for Ecumenical Affairs

The conference works closely with the Department for Ecumenical Affairs on ecumenical documents and the promotion of the unity of the Church through this committee (ELCA 15.31.A91.i.). Bp. Marcus J. Miller serves as chair.

Committee for Synodical–Churchwide Relations

This committee serves to assist churchwide units and related organizations in securing review, advice, consultation, and recommendations from the Conference of Bishops on policies, programs, and major directions. Bp. James F. Mauney serves as chair.

Committee for Liaison to the Church Council

One synodical bishop from each of the nine regions of this church serves as an advisor to the Church Council and provides

counsel to the conference on concerns related to the Church Council. Bp. E. Roy Riley serves as chair.

Committee on Ministry Among Persons in Poverty

This committee works to address and implement this church's emphasis on Ministry Among Persons in Poverty. Bp. Ralph W. Dunkin serves as chair.

Shared Risk Committee

This committee oversees the synodical self-insurance program for costly disciplinary proceedings. Bp. Robert D. Berg serves as chair.

Meetings

At each regular semiannual meeting of the Conference of Bishops, time is devoted to worship, theological reflection, synodical bishops' concerns, consultation regarding churchwide programs and emphases, and reports from the officers and committees. Since the 2003 Churchwide Assembly, the regular meetings have been held as follows:

- October 26, 2003, at Chicago, Ill.
- March 4-10, 2004, at Woodland Hills, Calif.
- September 30-October 4, 2004, at Chicago, Ill.
- March 3-7, 2005, at Dallas, Texas

Academy for Bishops

The theme for the 2004 Academy for Bishops was "Synodically Authorized or Licensed Ministries." In 2005 the members of the Academy met jointly with teaching theologians of this church around the theme "Christian Discipleship and Witness in the 21st Century."

Major Areas of Work

Since the 2003 Churchwide Assembly, the following have been major areas of study, consultation, and pastoral concern receiving attention by the Conference of Bishops.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

At its October 2003 meeting, the conference elected the Rev. E. Roy Riley Jr., bishop of the New Jersey Synod, to a four-year term as conference chair, and the Rev. Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl, bishop of the South Dakota Synod, to a four-year term as vice chair.

Public Statements and Actions

During the biennium the conference made the following public statements and took the following actions:

- Issued a brief public statement affirming the process of deliberation and ongoing work of the task force for the ELCA Studies on Sexuality and voiced commitment to the unity Christ gives this church.
- Asked the Division for Ministry to conduct a study of the present policies and guidelines related to authorized lay ministry in the 65 synods of this church.
- Asked the Division for Ministry to develop an approach for including the wider church in discussions related to preparation of standards for ordained ministry in light of present, emerging, and changing contexts for mission, including multicultural contexts.
- Responded to a Lutheran World Federation document, "The Episcopal Ministry within the Apostolicity of the Church."
- Agreed to encourage each of the church's synods to maintain or increase their current percentage of mission support

funds to the churchwide organization for fiscal years 2004 and 2005.

- Asked its Synodical-Churchwide Relations Committee to initiate a process to possibly bring together all of the professional leaders of the ELCA in one place for worship and building of collegial relationships.
- Adopted a policy to permit, under some circumstances, advertising for pastoral vacancies by congregations in *The Lutheran*, the magazine of the ELCA.

Other Areas of Study, Policy Review, and Bishops' Concerns

In many areas, the Conference of Bishops is regularly called upon for advice and counsel to churchwide units and the Church Council. During the biennium, the Conference of Bishops:

- Learned of communication plans for the ELCA Studies on Sexuality.
- Spent a day of study on evangelical outreach, exploring how this church can be effective in implementing the evangelism strategy adopted by the 2003 Churchwide Assembly.
- Discussed a draft message, "Living in a Time of Terrorism."
- Discussed the ELCA's role as a public church, its role in deepening and extending global, ecumenical, and interfaith relationships, and its role in developing professional leaders.
- Heard from the assistant to the ELCA presiding bishop for federal chaplaincy ministries about the impact of large numbers of National Guard and Military Reserve Chaplains being called to active duty and concerns about re-entry of military chaplains into parish ministry.
- Reviewed proposed revisions to the ELCA candidacy manual.
- Reviewed and discussed pending proposals for redesign and governance of the ELCA churchwide organization.
- Heard thanks from the Rev. Edward Benoway, bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod, for their generous support and financial gifts during the four hurricanes of fall 2004.
- Heard a presentation from and entered into dialogue with Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, in recognition of the 5th anniversary of the signing of the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification."

A Concluding Word of Appreciation

On behalf of the Conference of Bishops, we express appreciation to the Church Council for a strong partnership and openness to receive bishops' advice and counsel; to the officers and churchwide staff who participate in and provide support for meetings of the Conference of Bishops; to staff of the Department for Synodical Relations, including the Rev. Judith Spindt who concluded her service as deployed staff and regional coordinator for Region 7 during this biennium; to Thrivent Financial for Lutherans for various forms of support that enhance conference meetings; and to the many persons throughout this church who offer their support and prayers.

CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS

E. Roy Riley, *chair*

DEPARTMENT FOR SYNODICAL RELATIONS

Kathie Bender Schwich, *director*