**African Descent Lutheran Association (ADLA) – Los Angeles**

**Meeting Minutes – June 26, 2021 @ 9A**

*Present:* Pr. Peg Shultz-Akerson, Andrea Barnes Clarke, Debra Bowie, Paul Chatman, Marquita Curry, Gavin Curry, Kathleen Chillison, Robert Chillison, Carolyn Foster, Randall Foster, Mary Ann Harrison, Pr. Roderick Hines, Gwendolyn Jackson, Brenda Johnson, Pheobus Lee, Rita Lee, Zetta Robinson, Valerie Shaw & Pr. Tracy Williams

*Excused*: Katherine Ellis, Paula Foster, Preston Foster, Willa Glover, Pr. Marsha Harris,

Pr. Charlene Limenih, Mary Shipp, Alfred Schoepke, Judith Tutt-Starr & Dale Washington

Meeting was called to order at 9:05A, followed by a brief introductory welcome from President C. Foster who subsequently called upon Phoebus Lee to offer the morning devotions.

*Devotions:* P. Lee shared a recent encounter with a close friend who was undergoing cancer treatment and whose prognosis had diminished. She conveyed to him that she was not giving-in but relying on God’s Grace for her deliverance. Phoebus also mentioned, that he too was to undergo knee surgery next Thursday. Psalm 103… *bless the Lord all my soul…* was provided as the scriptural reference for his comments in which he concluded that “with God, all things are possible.” A prayer of healing followed.

*Approval of the Agenda* - The meeting agenda was reviewed and approved, as written.

*Treasurer’s Report - The Treasurer’s written report,* in the absence of Mr. McKee, was presented by President Foster. The April 21st beginning balance represented $8,362.91 while the ending balance as of June 21st was $6,798.23. There were four checks written in the amount of $2,102.16 ($1,735 was attributed to ADLA National dues). The debit card was used to transact several purchases, all to various Dollar Tree locations acquiring hygiene supplies for the Pentecost trip to Skid Row, Los Angeles, totaling in the amount of $622.52. The report was received and accepted.

*Region II Report* - The Region II presentation was offered by Deacon Gwen Jackson, who shared aspects of the meeting she attended with all of the ADLA Regional Representatives as led by the National President, Rev. Lamont Wells. In summary, the meeting consisted of the following expressed highlights:

1. *Annual Dues* - The National ADLA Executive Committee has proposed a rate hike in annual dues. The revised seniors’ rate of $30 would become $60 under this new payment schedule. President Foster indicated that she broached this matter with the ADLA National Secretary, attempting to determine when such a revision was placed before the ADLA National Assembly. It was not done in 2019 but may be on the proposed agenda for 2022. ADLA – Los Angeles, being the largest of the chapters would be the most affected by the change and by its size would also have the most members of senior age “taxed” adversely. ADLA–Los Angeles intends to take issue with the proposed change.
2. *Annual Goals* - The National Goals were reviewed and the Los Angeles Chapter was recognized as having accomplished its annual goals by the greatest degree, inclusive of its work with: A. *Health & Homelessness*– hygiene kits to the un-housed - use of St. John’s Medical Team @ Ascension in the administration of Covid-19 vaccines – Recycle of eyeglass wear to those less fortunate. B. *Collaborative Relationships* – program encounters with the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles & The Union of Black Episcopalians, The Presbytery (Knox), as well as African Methodist Episcopal Church (Ward). C. *Youth* – emerging youth and young adults in the service of others through social justice initiatives.
3. Questions regarding the essay contest involving contestants from around the country surfaced in the discussion. Much of the concern related to the apparent absence of Black young people participating. ADLA-LA and the Synod Office sent e-notices regarding the essay contest and the opportunity to participate. The subject matter of the essays had to do with the *1921 Massacre in Tulsa, Oklahoma* (which is just now receiving national attention as evidenced by several TV portrayals and other documentaries of late.) ADLA’s President was among those asked to review and rank the essay submissions, of which she noted that she reviewed 11 and identified 3 as being the best, which was confirmed in the final rankings by ADLA National as they extended the individual awards to each of the recipients. The essay titles of the top three were: “*A Church in Every Corner”, “Tulsa Riots and Racism, 100 Years Later”, and “Forgive Us Our Deadly Metaphor”.*
4. ADLA National also lifted up several topics of concern that they would like the local chapters to indulge in conversation and subsequent action. The matrix that follows identifies those concerns:

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| ***Topic*** | ***Issue*** |
| **Diversity** | The ELCA Churchwide office has lost three prominent African Americans (AA) (The Rev. Linda Norman, The Rev. Wyvetta Bullock, and The Rev. Walter May), all of whom served in executive capacities. None were replaced with people of color. Mr. William Horne, ELCA VP, remains the only AA among the executive cabinet. |
|  | Sierra Pacific and SWCA Synods both had AAs running for Bishop. A total of four were applicants, none were elected. Bishops Davenport and Curry remains the only AA Bishops among the 65 ELCA synodical representatives. |
| **Reorganization** | The revision in dues (as reported above) serves as the basis for any proposed reorganization that might be contemplated. ADLA National is trying to find ways to elevate the presence and performance of local chapters. This will most likely be a topic of considerable conversation at the 2022 National Assembly. ADLA-LA members are invited to attend. |
| **National Goals & Objectives** | The National goals were reviewed and ADLA-LA has advanced each with its agency attention and documented specifics. Representative Gwen indicated her pleasure in being able to make such a comprehensive report and to be acknowledged by others that ADLA-LA continues to serve as a chapter example. |
| **PPE Loans** | Chapters were asked to work with their congregations to ensure that those who wish are taking full advantage of the governmental PPE loans designed to address the effects of the pandemic. |

*President’s Special Announcements:* The President provided additional insights as to her involvement with regard to the desire by ADLA National to increase the annual dues along with her feelings about the required process for securing chapter agreement. Conversation ensued and a follow-up with ADLA National is expected.

*Synod Vice-President’s Report:* R. Foster shared his written report, highlighting key elements of its content (congregational integration, collaboration, mutual resource sharing and ultimately property consolidation and resource maximization). He thanked ADLA-LA for the support received over the seven years for which he has served as Synod Vice President and for the prayers felt along the way. Each congregation for his services and his faithfulness extended words of thanks. He thanked everyone for his or her outpouring of gratitude.

Synod council colleague, Valerie Shaw, extending the Chapter’s appreciation, presented a resolution.

*Old Business*

1. **Synod Elections** – ample time was given to the membership to voice their opinions regarding the recent Synod Elections. While many were dismayed and expressed their disillusionment with the process that seemed to permeate the election procedures using e-electioneering, all were willing to commit to working with the Bishop-elect and to find common ground in which to do so. Pr. Peg reminded everyone that while our hearts were sadden at the outcome and a sense of perplexity existed, we are not without hope for Christ is our hope in times of trouble and despair. A meeting with ADLA–LA’s Executive Committee has been scheduled for July 15th @ 6P with the Bishop-Elect. An agenda reflecting who ADLA is, why it exists, how it interacts with the Synod and how it relates to the other chapters nationwide will be prepared. We were reminded that a synod questionnaire had been developed and submitted to the voting members to ascertain how they felt about the assembly’s virtual context, the elections, its programming and the overall effectiveness of the two-day e-event.
2. **Synod Juneteenth Worship Service** – Everyone was encouraged to view the worship service on YouTube, if they hadn’t already done so. Congratulations were extended to Pr. Tracy and others who facilitated the Juneteenth service.
3. **Rev. Dr. Nelson W. Trout Chapel** – A portrait picture of Dr. Trout and the plague bearing his name will be installed soon. No activity was planned prior to the Synod Elections to allow for the incoming Bishop to be properly briefed on the rationale for the dedication (e.g., purchase of the chapel naming rights, prior synod approval, planned dedication service in February 2022 and the accompanying worship service at Community Lutheran with the Rev. Al Starr, Jr., presiding and preaching.
4. **Webpage Design** – It has taken more time than anticipated but the webpage is virtually finished and will be subject to review in the coming two weeks. Final edits are occurring as we speak. Members will be asked to share their impressions of this newly constructed communications’ instrument.
5. **Pentecost Sunday** – Hygiene Distribution, May 23rd. Three hundred backpacks were distributed using a Unisex format in which all of the packets were identically pre-arranged. Supplemental items for women were included at the site as ladies presented themselves. M. Curry mentioned that the packaging day was equally as significant as it afforded members from HTELC to attend and get involved. They expressed great gratitude for the opportunity it afforded.
6. **Eyeglass recycling** - ongoing. About 68 such glasses were turned in to HTELC on Sunday. HTELC serves as the repository for this outreach initiative with Lions International, Inglewood.
7. **Ronald McDonald pull-tabs** – ongoing. Another 2.5 lbs. of pull-tabs shall be delivered to the Long Beach office, constituting approximately 72 lbs. collected and submitted thus far. It takes 1,128 pull-tabs to make one pound.
8. **Reopening of congregations post Covid-19** – The following grid represents the status of ADLA Congregations as they prepare to re-open:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Congregation*** | ***Reopening Date*** | ***Public Health Protocols*** | ***Parking Lot or Patio*** | ***Communion*** | ***Hybrid*** | ***Use of social media*** |
| Ascension & Another Level | August |  X | X | Sealed cups | X | X |
| Central  | July | X | X |  | X |  |
| Chapel of Peace | September | X | X | Sealed cups |  |  |
| Christ the Shepherd | July | X | X |  |  | X |
| Community | June | X |  | Sealed cups |  | X |
| First, Carson | July | X | X |  |  | X |
| Holy Redeemer | August | X | X |  |  |  |
| Holy Trinity | May | X |  | Sealed cups | X | X |
| Lutheran Church of the Master | June | X |  | Individually acquired bread |  | X |
| Messiah  | August | X |  |  | X | X |
| Olivet | August | X | X | Sealed cups |  | X |

An abundance of caution is occurring among all congregations as they expressed concerned for the age of the congregants and the potential hesitancy they may have in resuming worship, as before. In all instances, some form of e-communications is likely to remain, allowing for continued contact with members who have moved away, sick and shut-in and those whose mobility is compromised. It was stated that some people have become quite accustom to staying at home and worshiping.

1. **God’s Work, Our Hands Sunday: September 12th** – A flyer will be prepared and sent to all ADLA congregations requesting $15 donations/person to help secure the needed hygiene supplies required to assemble at least another 300 backpacks that will again be unisex. Donations are requested to be submitted by July 31st in order to appropriately purchase the items needed in bulk. Hopefully, another 150 backpacks can be donated from Providence Health, as before, if not they will need to be procured. One hundred and fifty are already secured. It was mentioned that the backpacks were better than the one-gallon zip lock bags, previously used and that they have longer lasting utility. The flyer will also provide information as to where to mail the donations (e.g., 552 E. Carson Street, Suite 104, PMB #116, Carson, CA 90745).
2. **Congregations without Permanent Pastors** – There are 6 of the ADLA Congregations without permanent pastors, dating back almost 9 years. Those congregations have been working through either their Mission Interpretation (MIT) requirements or are contemplating their CALL process steps. Some have not started either prerequisite process at all for varying reasons. This is an issue for the new Synod Administration to assist in resolving. Candidates for ordination should be made aware of these vacancies while persons interested in pursuing seminary education should be sought. The pastoral pipeline is felt to be limited, especially for candidates seeking inner city CALLs.

It was also discussed that many of the ADLA congregations are worshiping 50 members or less and could conceivably conjoin with another congregation or more and pool the associated assets. Each congregation has a real estate value of at least $1.5 - $3.0M. Through reinvestment strategies, these congregations could reconstitute themselves using Chapter 20 of the ELCA Constitution creating a Parish Ministry or a 2-point parish. There appeared to be a willingness to “think this through”.

An inquiry was presented regarding the possibility of another trip to the Viejas Casino, which normally takes place in September. While the buses don’t appear to be “on the road” as yet, information as to when this might occur will be obtained and shared. President Foster will advise once the information is determined.

ADLA Biennial Assembly was discussed, marking the planned site for Columbus, Ohio, albeit, the National ADLA Executive Committee is in discussion with the Atlanta Chapter for a possible relocation to Georgia. The Columbus site was selected because it coincides with the planned ELCA Assembly there in 2022.

The meeting concluded at 10:54A with an offered prayer from Pr. Peg lifting-up those who are in need of healing: Zetta Robinson at the loss of her husband and sister, Pr. Tracy’s daughter-in-law, Nisha Williams, the loss of Gavin Curry’s Aunt Mae Nell Williams, Katherine Ellis undergoing Chemo treatment and Phoebus Lee who will be undergoing knee surgery.

Go in Peace and Service the Lord!

RSFoster, Recorder