MINUTES

The Regional Synod of Albany

Reformed Church in America

Special Session
Herkimer Reformed Church
Herkimer, New York

September 15, 2012
Minutes

THE REGIONAL SYNOD OF ALBANY

The special meeting of the Regional Synod of Albany convened on September 15, 2012 at the Herkimer Reformed Church in Herkimer, New York. Mr. Richard C. Doyle, Jr., president, presided.

I. GATHERING

President Richard Doyle called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and introduced Rev. Mark Andersen, pastor of the Herkimer Reformed Church who welcomed the delegates and guests and led in the opening litany.

II. FORMATION OF SYNOD

Twenty-three ministers and twenty elders, including the president signed in as delegates, making a total of forty-three voting delegates and officers in attendance.

DELEGATE ROSTER

Minister Delegates

ALBANY CLASSIS

James Hart Brumm
Roger Krutz
Abby Norton Levering
Tim VanHeest

COLUMBIA GREENE CLASSIS

Bill Appleyard-Pekich
Rudy Visser
David Tipple
Edward Van Kampen

MONTGOMERY CLASSIS

Mark Andersen
Miriam Barnes
Lucille Perkins
Nancy Ryan

Elder Delegates

Ginny Fissette
Richard Vanderbilt
Pauline Williman
Andrea DiPace
Norman Mueller
Nancy Rasweiler
Martha Andrews
Betsy Westman
Diane Reynolds
REV. SUZANNE HODGES, Elders Bonnie Banahan, Joan Stanton and Marjorie Gentile were unable to attend the meeting.

The following staff, board and committee members and guests were welcomed and granted the privilege of the floor:

- Board and Board and Committee members: Rev. Bruce Cornwell, Past President; Ian Leet, Classis Ministries Board; Nancy Landrigan, Fowler Ministries Board; Larry DeLaMater, Personnel Committee chairperson; Jim Pettis, Finance Committee chairperson; and Gary Smith, Executive Committee.
- Guests welcomed were: Karl Cooper; Stacy Dorland and Annie Reilly.

**III. THE AGENDA**

9:30 a.m. Delegate gathering and refreshments  
10:00 a.m. Call to Order  
Gathering Litany  
Delegate Introductions  
Welcome of Guests and Privilege of the Floor  
Agenda Review and Approval  

10:20 a.m. Synod Executive Committee’s Report  
11:00 a.m. Overtures and Judicial Business Committee  
12:00 p.m. Lunch provided by the Herkimer Reformed Church  
12:45 p.m. 2013 Financial Reports (Budget and Assessments)  
1:30 p.m. Other Business  
2:00 p.m. Adjournment
MOTION: To approve the agenda as distributed in the synod call to meeting workbook. (CARRIED)

IV. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

President Richard Doyle summarized the history of and conversations held in the past year as the Albany Synod has been discerning the best ways and structure to assist in ministering with the classes of the synod and supporting them in their ministries. Richard noted that there are several recommendations coming before the delegates that will guide the synod into the future.

Recommendation

R-1. The Albany Synod Executive Committee to the synod assembly the following reconfiguration of the synod’s staff positions:

a. A part-time Synod Administrator, responsible for oversight of the synod office and operations, working with Personnel, Finance, and OJB committees, and ASEC, where appropriate.

b. A full-time Synod Ministries Coordinator, responsible for coordinating the various synod ministries and program activities, working with CMB, and ASEC, where appropriate, as well as attending classis meetings, synod meetings, various ecumenical and denominational meetings, and any other pertinent responsibilities.

Discussion:

• The executive committee should be commended for the courage to make such a difficult and important step.

• In the position description summary for the Synod Ministries Coordinator there is a reference to “resource staff.” Who are they and what do they do?
  o The resource staff are those individuals with specific gifts and skills with whom the synod can contract for a limited amount of time.

• What does the Synod Administrator do?
  o He/ She will oversee the finances of the synod, manage the synod office and all the contracts held in and for the office. The administrator will also staff the committees of the synod.

• What are these positions replacing?
  o Richard summarized the January ASEC retreat and the March meeting with classis executive committees where a thorough review of each of the current staff positions was done. The recommendation takes the program pieces from the current Coordinator for Revitalization, the Coordinator for Discipleship and Communication and the Synod Executive and blends them into the Synod Ministries Coordinator’s
position. Then the administrative responsibilities of the Synod Executive and shifted to the Synod Administrative.

- The position descriptions are vague and need to be tightened up.
  - Richard noted that the descriptions are only the summary statements of each position. The specific responsibilities are being finalized by Personnel Committee and will be reviewed by the executive committee before being advertised.

- Some of the descriptions used in the summary statements sound like they are more out of the corporate world than the church. What is “competent support” and “efficient and effective”? Aren’t there better words that we can use?
  - Once again, Richard indicated that the summary descriptions are still being worked on and the Personnel Committee representatives here today can bring this information to the committee when they meet.

- It will be important and necessary for the right person with the right skill sets to fill these positions and engage others to come along side and help guide the ministry. This is a new, bold and courageous approach. The past approach expected the synod staff to do the planning and offering of services.

- The Synod Administrator’s position seems to have a lot tied to the building (the synod office at 1790 Grand Blvd). Do we need the building and all the ties and requirements associated with it?
  - At present there is no consideration of selling the building, but that is not to say that it may not be something considered in the future.

- What is the relationship of the Fowler Executive Director to these position descriptions? Is the FED considered one of the resource staff?
  - The Fowler Executive Director is now under the employment and supervision of the Fowler Board of Trustees. This action was taken by the Albany Synod at the May 2012 meeting.
  - The Fowler Executive Director and the Fowler Board of Trustees are still part of the Albany Synod and report to the Albany Synod.

- How will the two new positions interface with one another?
  - Both the Synod Ministries Coordinator and the Synod Administrator are under the supervision of the Executive Committee and report to the Executive Committee. One is not the supervisor of the other.

- What will be the process for the finalization of the position descriptions and the appointment of a search committee?
  - The Personnel Committee will take the information from this meeting and make necessary and appropriate changes to the descriptions and present them to the Executive Committee. Once the ASEC approves them a search committee will be appointed and the positions will be announced.
MOTION: To approve Recommendation 1 on the Albany Synod staff configuration. CARRIED.

Betsy Westman, of the Resolutions Committee, led the synod in prayers of blessing for the new staff configuration.

V. OVERTURES AND JUDICIAL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Rev. Stacey Midge, chairperson of the OJB Committee, reported that there are several By Laws changes being recommended by the committee in response to the actions of the Albany Synod.

Recommendation

To approve changing all references in the Albany Synod By Laws to the Synod Executive to the Synod Ministries Coordinator and or the Synod Administrator where applicable.

VOTED: To approve the recommendation related to position title changes.

Recommendation

To approve changes in the Albany Synod By Laws and the By Laws of the Board of Trustees, Lewis M. Fowler Camp and Retreat Center to constitute the changing of the Fowler Ministries Board to become the Fowler Board of Trustees.

MOTION: To amend sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Fowler Board of Trustees By Laws to make the vice chairpersons of the Personnel and Finance Committees non voting members of the Fowler Board of Trustees.

Discussion: This recommended amendment will eliminate the vice chairpersons of the Finance and Personnel Committees as voting members and thereby reducing the membership by two. The reason for this change is to allow the vice chairpersons to be non voting member.

VOTED: To approve the proposed amendment.

MOTION: To amend section 3 of the Fowler Board of Trustees By Laws by replacing Synod Ministries Coordinator with Synod Administrator.
Discussion: This recommended amendment provides for the financial staff person of the Albany Synod to be present with the Fowler Board of Trustees instead of the program staff person.

**VOTED:** To approve the proposed amendment.

General discussion on the By Laws changes related to the Fowler Ministries Board:

- These changes allow for even greater independence of Fowler from the Synod, is this a concern for the synod?
  - It was noted that the composition of the Fowler Board of Trustees is made up of individuals nominated by their classes and approved by the synod. This ensures an ongoing connection to the synod.
  - In addition, this change came about in response to the Restructure Review Task Force report and interview with the Fowler Ministries Board/Board of Trustees and the Synod Executive Committee.
- The recommended change actually affirms what has been happening since the restructure where the Fowler Program Committee has been doing program things and the Fowler Ministries Board has been functioning as a Board of Trustees.

**VOTED:** To approve the amended changes recommended to the Fowler Ministries Board.

**Recommendation**

To approve changes in the Albany Synod By Laws related to the Classis Ministries Board that would change the name to Synod Ministries Board and would reduce the size of the board from three classis representatives to two representatives.

Discussion

- Representatives from the Classis Ministries Board shared that the CMB recommended these changes to the Executive Committee.
- It was also noted that the membership changes were discussed at the May 7 meeting of the Albany Synod who then instructed the OJB Committee to make the changes.
- The change in name from Classis to Synod seeks to eliminate confusion that might occur with the new Synod Ministries Coordinator working with the Classis Ministries Board.
VOTED: To approve the recommended Albany Synod By Laws changes related to the Classis Ministries Board.

Recommendation

To add Article 1, section 4 to the Albany Synod By Laws allowing for the members of the Executive Committee to be corresponding delegates to the annual Synod Assembly.

Discussion

• It was noted that this recommendation would be similar to what the RCA does with the General Synod Council attending General Synod meetings.
• It is also a benefit for the members of the Executive Committee to attend the synod meeting to hear the delegates and their desires and needs.

MOTION: To amend the recommendation by changing “annual Synod Assembly” to “the Albany Synod assembly.” CARRIED

VOTED: To approve the amended recommendation allowing members of the ASEC to be corresponding delegates to the Albany Synod assembly.

VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements were offered prior to the lunch break:

1. Information about the October 20 Discipleship Event which will be held at the First Reformed Church of Scotia. This event will also include a service project to package 20,000 meals for “Stop Hunger Now.”

2. Information about the Ridder Leadership Event scheduled on November 9-10 in Hunter, New York. This event will provide insight and training for congregational leaders in areas of Leadership, Discipleship, Transformation and Personal Growth.

3. Becky Town gave an update on the Restoration of Prattsville. Their community celebrated the progress made in rebuilding not only the community but also the collegiality shared within.

4. Rich Scheenstra was asked to offer information about “Kids Hope USA” a ministry in the Bellevue Reformed Church and other churches in the Albany Synod. It is a mentoring program for children in local school systems and each mentor has a congregational prayer partner. It is a great way to reach out into the community.
Becky Town offered prayers for Lunch which was provided by the Herkimer Reformed Church.

**VII. FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**

Jim Pettis, Jr. reported on two items that were tabled at the May 7, 2012 meeting.

1. The 2013 Proposed Budget

**MOTION:** To remove the approval of the 2013 proposed budget from the table. **CARRIED**

**MOTION:** To approve a revised 2013 budget in the amount of $304,257.

Discussion:
- Jim noted that most of the changes in the revised budget are reductions in staff salaries because of the approved staff reconfiguration.
- It was noted that the revised budget is balanced in that no funds will be needed from reserve funds to support it.

**VOTED:** To approve the revised 2013 budget in the amount of $304,257.

2. The 2013 Proposed Assessment

**MOTION:** To remove the approval of the 2013 assessment from the table. **CARRIED**

The recommended assessment for 2013 is $29.00 per active confirmed member. This is an increase of $.85 from the 2012 assessed amount of $28.15. The increase is related to the reduction of active confirmed members in the Albany Synod. Concerns were raised that many congregations are already being stretched financially and this increase will create even more difficulty. It was noted that if synod does not increase the assessment the funds to make up the difference would need to come from the reserve funds.

**VOTED:** To approve the proposed 2013 assessment of $29.00 per active confirmed member in support of the 2013 budget.
VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Grant Program

**MOTION:** To remove from the table the recommendation that instructs the Classis Ministries Board to devise and implement a grant program to strengthen synod congregations using the funds from the former Church Development Fund. **CARRIED**

**MOTION:** To instruct the Classis Ministries Board to devise and implement a grant program to strengthen synod congregations using the funds from the former Church Development Fund.

**Discussion:**
- Richard reminded that part of the reason that this recommendation was tabled was because it would require the synod to tap further into the reserve funds to support the grant program.
- It was also noted that with the transfer of all the synod’s reserve funds into one account the former Church Development Fund is not easy to identify.

**SUBSTITUTE MOTION:** To instruct the Synod Ministries Board to develop a program to support and strengthen synod congregations through financial grants, and to make any necessary recommendations for the implementation of the program to the 2013 Regional Synod assembly.

**VOTED:** To allow the substitute motion in place of the original motion.

The Substitute Motion was **APPROVED.**

2. Celebration of Phyllis Palsma’s Ministry in the Albany Synod.

The Resolutions Committee presented the following resolution celebrating Phyllis’ ministry within the Albany Synod.

**RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS** the Rev. Phyllis Palsma became employed as a part time staff member of the Regional Synod of Albany in 1994 and then became full time in 2000; and…

**WHEREAS** Phyllis has consistently and generously offered her gifts of leadership to various councils, commissions and boards of the Regional Synod of Albany, including the Synod Mission Council, the Congregational Service
Commission, the Leadership Development Commission, the Classis Ministries Board, and other task forces and committees, and…

WHEREAS Phyllis introduced valued ministries to the classes and congregations of the Albany Synod, such as Natural Church Development, Appreciative Inquiry, Asset Mapping, Clergy Coached Networks, and…

WHEREAS Phyllis assisted individuals and congregations through ministries such as Beginning and Beyond, Ephesus Two, Living Stones, Conflict Mediation, Consistory training and enrichment, Missional Church, Revitalization, and…

WHEREAS Phyllis has graciously and willingly served as a resource person to Congregations, Classes, General Synod Commissions, the Capital Region Theological Center, the Formula of Agreement Leadership Enrichment, and other Albany Synod groups, and offered valuable support in post flood care, and…

WHEREAS Phyllis has patiently engaged in countless individual conversations crossing many thousands of miles throughout the Regional Synod as a colleague and friend, a pastor and mentor and…

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Regional Synod of Albany, meeting in special session on this 15th day of September, 2012 does hereby GIVE PRAISE AND GLORY TO GOD AND DEEP LOVING APPRECIATION FOR THE MINISTRY, DEVOTION, SERVICE AND FAITHFUL WITNESS OF THE REV. PHYLLIS PALSMA AND PRAY GOD’S RICH BLESSING FOR HER NEW MINISTRY ENDEAVORS.

In addition to presenting Phyllis with the resolution the synod gave a remembrance gift.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting with prayer.

Becky Town, from the Resolutions Committee, closed the meeting with prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

____________________   _________________________
Robert Hoffman       Richard C. Doyle, Jr.
Stated Clerk         President
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