



The Eastern Synod Lutheran Leaders' Edition

May 2018



From Riitta's Desk

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A Church in Mission for Others

- * We will practice Spirit-ed Discipleship.
- * We will pursue Com-
passionate Justice.
- * We will strive to be a
Healthy Synod.
- * We will build Effective
Partnerships.

Inside this issue:

Dear Synod Treasurer	2
Deeming a Congrega- tion Defunct	3
Does Your Church Have a Will?	4
An Update On the New Employment Agreements and Letters of Call	5
Retiring the Holy Hardware	6
Final Reminder to File Your 2017 Chari- ty Information Re- turn	6
Grant Workshop	6

You are reading another copious issue of the Leaders' Edition. In this issue Keith Myra, Treasurer of the Synod, writes about digital options that might be useful for your congregation to increase giving in your congregation. He also offers some tips how to use QR codes creatively.

Pastor Douglas Reble, Assistant to the Bishop, gives an update on the new Employment Agreement and Letters of Call and Jeff Pym, Ministry Director for Stewardship and Resource Development/Planned Giv-

ing, asks if your church has a will.

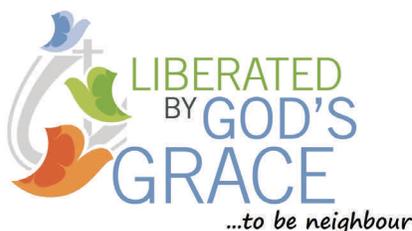
On the last page you will learn about another upcoming workshop which will give you information and tools to apply for grants from local, provincial and national foundations as well as government agencies for your congregations.

The Leaders' Edition is our effort to keep you posted on new or updated policies, important reminders, and upcoming leadership training opportunities. I encourage you to keep hard copies in one binder in

your office. It can be a part of an information package that you provide to new or prospective council members or other leaders in your congregation.

Please, note that the Leaders' Edition's previous issues can be found on our website. Here is the link. <http://www.easternsynod.org/content/leaders-edition>

Grateful for your partnership!



Assembly 2018

**Seventeenth Convention of the Eastern Synod of
the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada**

June 21 - 24, 2018

Delta Hotels by Marriott Toronto Airport & Conference Centre
(Formerly International Plaza Hotel)

Toronto, Ontario

Dear Synod Treasurer,



Keith Myra
Treasurer of the Synod

Question: We are noticing that some of our members and visitors are carrying less cash and writing fewer cheques than in times past, especially the younger generation, some of whom have never written a cheque. Are there any recent digital solutions that would provide an opportunity for these people to make a donation to our congregation?

Response: Some denominations in Canada and other countries have developed and made mobile phone apps available for download, allowing donors to transfer funds to their congregations. Both the Eastern Synod and the ELCIC have been monitoring developments in this area and will continue to do so. In the meantime, there are a couple of options that are relatively easy and inexpensive to implement that you might consider in your congregation.

Many congregations are offering the PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance) program administered by the Department of Stewardship Services of the United Church of Canada to their members. If you have automatic debits

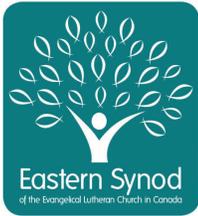
from your bank account to pay for insurance, cable TV, taxes, utilities, or a mortgage, then you understand the PAR principle. PAR ensures regular offerings throughout the year, even when donors are unable to attend worship and is a convenient way to make financial contributions in support of the ministries of both congregations and the wider church. Once a month, all PAR gifts are debited from donors' accounts and then the total, less a small service fee, is electronically transferred to your congregation's bank account. For more information, refer to the following link: [PAR Pre-Authorized Remittance Program](#). Although highly recommended when making regular, ongoing contributions, PAR isn't designed for one-time or ad hoc donations. In these cases there are several additional possibilities that you may wish to consider.

If you don't currently make it possible for your donors to give on-line, consider adding a "Donate" button to your website. An easy way to do this is to set up an account with [CandaHelps.org](#) and use their

by Keith Myra

capabilities (refer to [Compare Account Types to register and set up an account](#)).

Once a "Donate" button has been set up it's relatively easy to take advantage of mobile phone "QR code" technology. Simply stated, this technology allows tech-savvy donors (the very ones that often don't carry cash or cheques) to use an app on their smart phone that scans a code (known as a "QR code") that is unique to your congregation, providing them with a shortcut to the "donate page" on your website. This is a much simpler method than trying to direct a potential donor to the URL for your "donate page" because many URL's tend to be lengthy, complex and cumbersome, characteristics that are very unfriendly to donors! For a demonstration, google the phrase "QR code reader" and select one of the many QR scanner apps that are presented to you. After downloading to your mobile device, use the scanner app to scan the square black and white QR code image in the upper right corner on the first page of this Leaders' Edition publication.



(Although we'll happily accept your donation, you are free to exit the demo at this point!)

To implement QR code technology, create a unique QR code for your congregation by googling "QR code generator" and selecting one of the free options that are available. When setting up your QR code, simply link it to the URL for the "donate page" on your church website. Once you have established your QR code, be sure to display it in as many visible locations as possible.

For sure you will want to include it in each Sunday bulletin and newsletter. But you can also post it in places such as your church pews, hymnals and bulletin board. If you use screens during your worship, perhaps you even want to project your QR code on the screen prior to worship, during the offering or at the close of service. You never know who might see your QR code and decide to make a donation that you might otherwise not have received!

If you have a question related to regulations or other congregational financial issues, feel free to email me (kmyra@elcic.ca). In addition to responding to you individually, I will publish (anonymously) the most common questions/answers in future issues of Leaders' Edition.

Deeming a Congregation Defunct

The Eastern Synod Council recently approved a policy on deeming a congregation defunct. At its April meeting the Synod Council heard a presentation from Bishop Pryse that explained why such a policy was necessary and how it would be implemented.

For many years our constitutional documents have included provision for dealing with a congregation "which has ceased to exist or whose membership has so diminished in numbers as to render it impossible or impractical for the congregation to function according to its constitution and bylaws".

Unfortunately the constitutions gave no further guidance on when and how the Synod should ex-

ercise its responsibilities. To the best of anyone's knowledge the constitutional provision has never been exercised, so there are no precedents. There was a need for clarity on the part of both congregations and synod.

The Eastern Synod has no desire to close congregations. The new policy makes it clear that the rationale for the policy is risk management. As the membership of a congregation diminishes so can its capacity to manage risks to its governance processes, financial situation and reputation. There is the unfortunate possibility that such risks can create serious consequences for the Synod, and by extension, for all other congregations that share in its well-being.

The policy gathers wording from the Model Constitution for Congregations in explaining what it means for a congregation to be unable to function according to its constitution and bylaws. It goes on to set out procedures for consulting with the congregation, gathering information and compiling recommendations prior to a decision by Synod Council.

The full text of the policy will be distributed to congregations prior to the upcoming Synod Assembly and will be part of the Synod Council's Assembly report.

You can find the full text of the policy, along with a *Frequently Asked Questions* document, [here](#).

Does Your Church Have a Will?

by Jeff Pym



Much of my work with Lutheran Planned Giving involves encouraging ELCIC members to remember the church in their will. As I travel to congregations across the country, the most common question is: “If I were to leave my church some money, and later on the congregation were to close, what would happen to my gift?”

While some ELCIC congregations are thriving, others are experiencing worrisome problems. In many of our churches, membership and worship attendance are declining. Offering income is not keeping pace with increases in expenses, and church buildings are in urgent need of long-postponed repairs. Few congregations have actually closed their doors, but many are struggling to stay open.

How widespread is this problem? Accurate statistics are hard to come by, but membership is one indicator of a congregation’s vitality. More than one-third of ELCIC congregations report fewer than 50 households in membership. Certainly some churches of that size are engaged in vibrant ministry. But among the more than two hundred below that threshold, undoubtedly many are wondering how long they can keep going.

It takes a certain number of members to support a fully-functioning congregation. The number may vary from place to place, but too few members in a congregation means that ministry is reduced to a level that is affordable, but not desirable. Budget cuts may initiate a continuing downward

spiral. If the annual budget is regularly in deficit, leaders may feel they have no choice but to liquidate assets to fund the shortfall.

Several years ago an Eastern synod congregation, after a long decline in membership, came to the difficult decision that it was time to disband. Many of the church’s furnishings were donated to nearby Lutheran congregations. Pastor Susan Johnson (then assistant to the bishop in the Eastern Synod, now our national bishop) presided at the final service. One member of the congregational council came to her and said, “It’s too bad that we waited so long to make the decision to close, because we used up most of our assets and don’t have as much to pass on.”

In 1997 our god-son suffered a fatal brain stem injury in a car accident. Trevor’s parents made the decision to authorize the retrieval of his organs for purposes of transplant. Their consent led to seven organ transplant recipients enjoying a renewed fullness of life. A day or so after his death they discovered that Trevor had signed the organ donor card attached to his driver’s license. Their hearts soared as they experienced affirmation of what they had chosen – new life for others resulting from their son’s death.

It seems to me that congregations might benefit from creating their own policy which combines elements of an organ donor card, a medical directive, and a last will and testament. Each policy would be as distinctive as the congregation that created it, but would attempt to address such issues as:

How will we know when we are no longer able to support a viable ministry? Medical science has recognized the concept of “brain death”. A lack of brain activity indicates the true death of the person even though the body can be kept in a state of minimal existence on life support. What are the analogous signs of “ministry death” in a congregation?

When we are no longer a viable congregation, what is our next step? Pursue a shared ministry or merger with another congregation? Disband? Carry on until the last member standing turns out the lights?

What will we do with the church’s remaining assets: property, buildings, furnishings, equipment, investments, etc.? Will we consume them in an attempt to remain open until a miracle occurs? Or will we voluntarily disperse our assets to another congregation or church organization so that it may experience reinvigoration?

Death is never a happy event. Contemplating one’s own demise, either individual or corporate, is not a fun way to spend a couple of hours. But out of death comes resurrection. God’s mission on earth will outlive us and our organizational structures. Our job as stewards is to take good care of the resources entrusted to us so they can continue to be used for God’s mission.

These difficult and troubling questions have no easy answers. There is only one right time to address them: before it is too late.



An Update On The New Employment Agreements and Letters Of Call by Rev. Douglas Reble



As many of you know, but not all, the National Office of our Evangelical Lutheran Church In Canada mailed out a letter to all ELCIC congregations and rostered ministers in early November regarding the new Employment Agreements and Letter of Call which were approved by the National Church Council last fall. These came into effect on January 1, 2018. Since then Employment Agreements and Letters of Certification for rostered individuals serving in interim ministry have also been rolled out. Now that we are five months into using these new documents, I thought it would be a good time to give you an update on how things are going as we transition into this new way of doing things.

For the most part, the transition is going very well. Rostered ministers who have received new calls since January 1 and their calling congregations have signed on to the new documents. So have all rostered ministers who began their calls under a term of anywhere from two to five years. As their term ended, they are required to sign on to the new call documents ie.

Letter of Call and Employment Agreement. All have done so. Of course, with this change in our practice, term calls cease to exist.

As for rostered ministers who remain in existing calls, we have had only a small handful sign on. I suspect for many reasons ie. why change what is going well, transitions are hard, busyness, theological concerns, etc.

Personally, having just signed my own Employment Agreement, along with Bishop Pryse and Pastor Hepo-maki in synod office, and as the staff person assigned to answer questions regarding the new documents and the process to be followed, assisted by Cathy Caron, the Bishop's administrative assistant, I have learned that there is nothing to be concerned about in these new documents.

For those who are concerned that using an Employment Agreement takes away from the special ecclesiastical relationship between a congregation and the rostered individual, I would say not at all. The Letter of Call documents the sacred relationship as much as it ever did and the Employment Agreement documents the secular rela-

tionship. God is in both. Both documents enhance the quality of your vocational relationship and deepen the bond of mutual care and accountability between the rostered minister and the congregation or calling agency.

For those who think that the process of signing on to the new call documents is laborious or difficult it is not. Our office will supply you with the information you need to follow the step-by-step process. Reality is for those under an existing call, you don't even need congregational approval to change to these new documents. You are already under call. The Congregational Council can do it on behalf of the congregation. It is as simple as that.

Please do not hesitate to contact Cathy Caron or myself, at synod office, if you have any questions related to the new documents and the process to be followed. If you are wondering which Letter of Call and Employment Agreement refers to your situation, simply ask. This includes the Guide to the Employment Agreement. You can also go to [ELCIC website](#).

Thanks ever so much for taking the time to read this. May God continue to bless your ministry and our partnership in Christ.

Retiring the Holy Hardware

by Keith Myra

If your congregation is similar to most congregations, from time to time you've likely had to make the difficult decision to dispose of altarware, furniture or other chattels that are no longer required or suitable for your sanctuary or other areas of your building. Originally these items may have been donated by members or friends of the congregation, making decisions to relinquish them even more challenging.

Perhaps you wondered how these types of items can be disbursed in a dignified manner that is respectful of their many years of sacred use and original donors while adhering to Canada Revenue Agency regulations. If so, we encourage you to refer to the [Congregational Fixed Asset Distribution Policy](#) that has recently been developed and approved by the Eastern Synod for use within its congregations.

Final Reminder to File your 2017 Charity Information Return!

by Keith Myra

One of CRA's most important requirements for registered charities is that each charity complete and file its annual Registered Charity Information Return (T3010) within six months following the charity's fiscal year-end. If your congregation is similar to most congregations and has a December 31st fiscal year-end, this means that your T3010 for 2017 must be received by CRA no later than June 30th, 2018. Congregations failing to file by the deadline risk fines, possible loss of suspension of their tax-receipting privileges, or in more extreme situations, revocation of their charitable registration status.

Have you checked with your congregational chairperson or treasurer to determine the status of your 2017 return? For more information pertaining to the T3010, refer to the article on page 3 in the [June 2015 issue of Leaders' Edition](#).

Grant Workshop

Finding financial assistance for your congregation

Saturday, October 20, 2018 at Grace Lutheran Church, Oakville

Learn to find and apply for grants from local, provincial and national foundations as well as government agencies. Every participant receives a binder filled with grant program information. Sponsored by the Eastern Synod at no cost to participants.

Led by Lisa Di Veto, Stewardship, Legacy Giving & Fund Development Consultant for the Anglican Diocese of Niagara and Doug Flanders, retired Director of Planned Giving Major Gifts, United Church of Canada.

Please see more information here: [Eastern Synod Events](#)

Registration: <https://form.jotform.com/81213981258257>

We are on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). The monthly [newsletter](#) can be found on our website. Please forward it to your members and print copies to those who don't have access to internet.