

Minutes from the
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
of the Central States Synod
August 25, 2023
via Zoom

Present: Bishop Susan Candeia, Nancy Nagel (Vice President), Scott Schulte (Treasurer), Rev. Chad Langdon (Secretary), Rev. Janice Hawley, Chelsea Deines, Terrance Freeman

Absent: none

CALL TO ORDER

Nancy called the meeting to order at 1:05pm. She acknowledged that we are meeting on the traditional, ancestral lands of the Osage, Kickapoo, and Kaskaskia Nations. Bishop Candeia shared a short devotion on the importance of having faith in the Living God and then led us in prayer. Nancy led us in a short time of sharing what is going on in each of our lives.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Chad presented the minutes from the Synod Council meeting on June 2, 2023, the 2023 Synod Assembly, and the July 11, 2023 Executive Committee meeting.

- **SEC 23.08.25.47** **It was MSC (Susan, Chelsea) to approve the minutes from the June 2, 2023 Synod Council Meeting, the 2023 Synod Assembly, and the July 11 Executive Committee meeting.**

TREASURER'S REPORT

Scott presented a written treasurer's report:

Financial Status as of 7/31/2023, after 6 months of the fiscal year, ending January 31, 2024.

Income from congregations

- \$629,308 received
- The amount received is \$145,692 less than what was anticipated in our revised spending budget, a -23.2% variance
- The amount received is also \$113,715 less than received last year, a -18.1% variance

ELCA Churchwide Contribution

- \$314,654 contributed to Churchwide
- This is \$72,846 less than anticipated in the revised spending budget, a -23.2% variance
- The amount contributed is \$55,858 less than last year, a -17.8% variance

Synod Expenditures

- \$409,152 spent
- The amount spent is \$27,240 less than budgeted, a -6.7% variance
- This is also \$34,427 less than spent last year, a -8.4% variance

Total Support & Revenue vs. Total Expenditures

- \$684,852 received in Total Support & Revenue, \$139,040 less than anticipated and \$115,550 less than last year
- \$723,806 in Total Expenditures, \$100,086 less than anticipated, and \$90,285 less than last year

- Net deficit of \$38,954 as compared to a \$13,689 deficit last year

Analysis of Financial Status

- Clearly the headline for this year continues to be the dramatic decrease in giving from the congregations. Contributions are down by 18% from last year for the same period. As you can see in the attached graph, three of the first six months of the year have been underwhelming. May was the worst month of contributions that I have seen, coming in at just \$77,000 for the month. Being \$145,692 lower than the anticipated giving for the year-to-date is troubling. If this doesn't improve, we should identify some additional budget reductions to implement as a contingency plan.
- Synod expenditures are lower than budgeted. We intentionally held off on paying out our Q2 grants to our ministry partners and agencies and institutions, in the hope that the situation may improve. Congregational giving in June and July provides some hope for that, so we will proceed with making those payments now. The bishop has already put into action some reductions that we identified in June that will start to impact our spending in the second half of the year.
- Our Total Support & Revenue amount is significantly less than anticipated due primarily to the decrease in congregation support. To partially compensate for that our Total Expenditures are about \$100,000 lower as well. The net deficit we have now is manageable, but keep in mind that we have delayed approximately \$15,000 in grant payments that would add to the deficit.

Additional discussion included:

- The Synod Office has been working hard to keep expenses down. They have created a spreadsheet to help identify congregations' giving levels and where things have changed recently.
- There are some letters going out to congregations to alert them of our need.
- We are making phone calls to congregations who have previously been generous and have stopped giving.

BISHOP'S REPORT

Bishop Candea offered a written report. She is staying very busy. She highlighted that institutions throughout the church are struggling financially. She has started some new initiatives to help support our SAMs and PMAs. She expressed how difficult it has been lately to do this ministry. There have been a lot of difficult, frustrating conversations recently.

- **SEC 23.08.25.48** **It was MSC (Chad, Terrance) to grant Bishop Candea the month of December off as extended vacation.**

BISHOP TRANSITION PROCESS

In 2025 we will be having an election for bishop. Conversations have started about this coming process. Rev. Dave Whetter has reached out to our transition pastors and they offered some good suggestions. The responsibility for this coming process rests with the Synod Council and we had a discussion about what that means. We are going to recommend two things to the Synod Council:

- That a qualified representative from Churchwide conduct the election, and
- That the Synod Council forms 2 independent teams:

- A team to create & manage the pre-assembly process so that we are ready to have a bishop's election.
- A team to manage and conduct the actual election, which will likely be made up of local "election workers".

Nancy is going to work with Scott and Chad to start guiding this process as we give it to the Synod Council.

2023 SYNOD ASSEMBLY FOLLOW-UP

Bishop Candeia presented a chart with the actions from the most recent Synod Assembly. She has identified the people responsible for carrying out each of the resolutions and there isn't really any follow-up needed from the Synod Council.

There was a problem with updating the constitution at the Assembly. One of the amendments we passed at the Assembly was out of order. (The pre-Assembly materials contained an error, asking us to make changes to a required provision. We cannot make any changes to required provisions, and this mistake was not caught in time and the Assembly passed it anyways.) After conversation with Churchwide about how to correct this mistake, they suggested that the Synod Council pass a continuing resolution with the correct desired language. We will address this at the October Synod Council meeting.

BETHANY LUTHERAN

There is currently a lien on the property (related to the sewer bill) so we cannot quite sell any of the property yet. We are in the process of paying that bill, which will allow us to settle the lawsuit for the small strip of disputed land. After all of that, we should be able to sell the entire property. The Eastern Missouri Conference will soon be taking part in a property clean-up.

ROSTER REPORT

Bishop Candeia presented a written roster report.

- On Leave From Call
 - **SEC 23.08.25.49** **It was MSC to grant Rev. Bethany Ann Rutten Kempes On Leave From Call status, effective September 10, 2023.** This will be her fourth year of OLFC status.
- Retirements
 - **SEC 23.08.25.50** **It was MSC to grant Rev. Richard Mueller retirement status, effective August 1, 2023.**
 - **SEC 23.08.25.51** **It was MSC to grant Rev. Cynthia Schnaath retirement status, effective August 1, 2023.** She has been serving as Interim Pastor at St. James Lutheran in Kansas City, MO. This retirement will now allow her to serve under covenant with them for the next year.
 - **SEC 23.08.25.52** **It was MSC to grant Cherri Jestmore, deacon, retirement status, effective September 1, 2023.**
- Synod Council Calls
 - **SEC 23.08.25.53** **It was MSC to grant Rev. Ashley Masoni a Synod Council call to serve in specialized ministry, chaplaincy, and institutional ministry (7.44.A19.b.5.1),**

effective August 14, 2023. She has taken a new position with Advent Healthcare and will be serving as the Regional Director of Clinical Mission Integration.

- **SEC 23.08.25.54** **It was MSC to grant Rev. Ethan Feistner a Synod Council call to serve in specialized ministry in outdoor ministry (7.44.A19.b.7.1), effective September 5, 2023.** He will be serving as the Executive Director of Camp Tomah Shinga.
- **SEC 23.08.25.55** **It was MSC to grant Joanne Hickey, approved deacon, a Synod Council call to serve in specialized ministry as a chaplain for institutional ministry (7.71.A21.b.5.1).** She will be ordained as a deacon on October 21, 2023, and starting on August 28, 2023, will be serving as a hospice chaplain with Home Health and Hospice of Kansas in Wichita.
- **SEC 23.08.25.56** **It was MSC to grant Rev. Kimberly Knowle-Zeller a non-stipendiary Synod Council call, effective October 1, 2023, contingent upon approval by the Conference of Bishops at their meeting from September 26-30, 2023.**
- Synod Authorized Worshipping Community
 - **SEC 23.08.25.57** **It was MSC to close El Nino Divino in Garden City, KS, effective September 1, 2023.** They have not been meeting since the pandemic began and this request came from their pastor, Rev. Odir Flores.
- Congregations
 - **SEC 23.08.25.58** **It was MSC to approve the disaffiliation from the ELCA of Zion Lutheran in Beloit, KS, contingent upon the passage of a 2/3 majority vote on August 27, 2023, which will be their 2nd vote.**

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE

- **SEC 23.08.25.59** **It was MSC to appoint Rev. Kim Frederking to the Endowment Committee.**

CONGREGATION CONSTITUTIONS

- **SEC 23.08.25.60** **It was MSC to approve the constitutional changes for First Lutheran in Manhattan, KS.**
- **SEC 23.08.25.61** **It was MSC to approve the constitutional changes for Hope Lutheran in St. Charles, MO contingent that they correct the provisions they are missing.**
- **SEC 23.08.25.62** **It was MSC to approve the constitutional changes for Emanuel Lutheran in Hutchinson, KS contingent that they correct the provisions they are missing.**

ADJOURNMENT

Nancy closed by praying for each of us. We adjourned at 3:45pm.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Synod Council Fri-Sat October 20-21, 2023 in Kansas City

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Chad Langdon
Central States Synod Secretary

