

Minutes from the
SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING
October 21, 2023

Central States Synod Office
420 W 14th St, Unit 101
Kansas City, MO 64105
(some joined via Zoom)

Present: Bishop Susan Candea, Nancy Nagel (Vice President), Scott Schulte (Treasurer), Rev. Chad Langdon (Secretary), Rev. Janice Hawley, Tullia Hamilton, Chelsea Deines, Rev. David Frerichs, Rev. Zac Sturm, Julie Barstow, Terrance Freeman, Mindy Tillberg

Absent: Dallas Rakestraw, Lua Bennight, Joanie Saltzman

The Synod Council had gathered on Friday, October 20, at Atonement Lutheran in Overland Park, KS. They shared a meal and conversation, but no official business was conducted.

CALL TO ORDER

Nancy called the meeting to order at 8:30am.

- Chad acknowledged that we are meeting on the traditional, ancestral lands of the Osage, Kickapoo, and Kaskaskia Nations.
- Nancy led us in a prayer for peace in Israel and Palestine written by Rose Marie Berger.

BISHOP TRANSITION

Nancy led a discussion and offered updates about the upcoming bishop transition. She put together and shared a report outlining the process. Highlights include:

- We really want an ELCA Churchwide representative to actually run the election.
- Should there be a pre-nomination, pre-identification process? We did this last time and it seemed to work well. There was a consensus that we should do something along these lines.
- We talked about the process of doing the pre-identification of candidates and how that should happen. We want to involve as many people and congregations as possible in the discernment process, giving people multiple ways to engage, including:
 - Possible surveys
 - Synod Assembly discussions & breakouts
 - Conference Gatherings
 - Maybe a video introduction to the conversation from the Synod Officers
- The transition process will begin at the 2024 Synod Assembly. We will have two committees to help with this process:
 - Pre-Assembly/Discernment Committee to do all the pre-work and invite the rest of the Synod into the discernment process.
 - We need to have this committee formed by the January Executive Committee meeting.
 - The Synod Council needs to identify people to serve on this Committee and will be asking clergy at the upcoming Conference Gatherings for some names.

- Assembly Bishop Election Committee to do the technical work of the election at the Assembly.
- There are three phases in the Bishop Transition Process:
 - Phase 1: Pre-Election Discernment
 - From now until 2024 Synod Assembly
 - 2024 Synod Assembly, June 6-8, 2024
 - From 2024 Synod Assembly until 2025 Synod Assembly
 - Phase 2: Bishop Election
 - 2025 Synod Assembly, June 5-7, 2025
 - Phase 3: Post-Election
 - June 7, 2025 – September 1, 2025
 - September 1, 2025 – August 31, 2031 (The New Bishop’s Term)

BISHOP’S REPORT

Bishop Canda gave a written report. Verbal highlights included:

- The Synod Staff came up with an idea called “Ministry Lab” as a way to equip congregations, pastors and laity. Most of the classes/resources will be offered online and via Zoom.
- The Bishop will be taking the month of December off.

VICE PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Nancy offered a brief verbal report, sharing that she has been undergoing training to become a coach through the ELCA. She has also taken some classes through the Lutheran School of Theology – St. Louis. She has attended several meetings on behalf of the Synod.

SECRETARY’S REPORT

Chad presented the minutes from the Synod Executive Committee meeting on August 25, 2023.

- **SC 23.10.21.A63 It was MSC (Scott, Janice) to approve the minutes from the August 25, 2023 Synod Executive Committee meeting.**
- **SC 23.10.21.A64 It was MSC (David, Scott) to appoint Chelsea Deines, Terrance Freeman, and Janice Hawley to the 2023-24 Synod Executive Committee.**

TREASURER’S REPORT

Scott presented a written treasurer’s report:

Financial Status as of 8/31/2023, after 7 months of the fiscal year, ending January 31, 2024.

Income from congregations

- \$713,892 received
- The amount received is \$131,941 less than what was anticipated in our revised spending budget, a -18.5% variance
- The amount received is also \$140,928 less than received last year, a -19.7% variance

ELCA Churchwide Contribution

- \$356,946 contributed to Churchwide
- This is \$65,971 less than anticipated in the revised spending budget, a -18.5% variance
- The amount contributed is \$69,464 less than last year, a -19.5% variance

Synod Expenditures

- \$476,119 spent
- The amount spent is \$6,120 less than budgeted, a -1.3% variance
- This is also \$36,523 less than spent last year, a -7.7% variance

Total Support & Revenue vs. Total Expenditures

- \$769,791 received in Total Support & Revenue, \$143,242 less than anticipated and \$166,785 less than last year
- \$833,065 in Total Expenditures, \$72,090 less than anticipated, and \$105,987 less than last year
- Net deficit of \$63,274 as compared to a \$2,476 deficit last year

Analysis of Financial Status

- The glaring statistics from the numbers above is that we are \$132,000 (18.5%) behind in congregational giving compared to the revised budget and 19.7% lower compared to last year. Those are historically large decreases. The graphs on the following page includes the giving for September as well. The graph for this year highlights that in the first eight months we have had some extremely disappointing months for giving and aside from September, the other four months have not been able to compensate. The graph also shows that we began the year very poorly and have never been able to catch up.
- Synod expenditures are lower than budgeted as compared to the revised budget we approved in June. We have begun to realize the cost savings resulting from the staff reduction and the termination of the Planned Giving Partnership grant in the second half of the year. Spending is also lower for Candidacy and we will begin to see a decrease in spending for Campus Ministry resulting from the vacancy at KU.
- 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 \$73,000 lower as well, primarily due to the decrease in the amount shared with Churchwide. The net deficit we have now would be manageable (\$13,000), if we keep in mind that we had planned to release \$50,000 in temporarily restricted funds for the year, which we have not done yet.

Verbal highlights from the discussion included:

- Are there additional reductions we can or should make? What are some possible solutions? The challenge is that we are now being forced to think about staff salaries and positions, including lay ministry coordination, bookkeeping, and campus ministry. It is getting to be time to make some difficult decisions.

REPORTS FROM SYNOD STAFF, TEAMS & COMMITTEES

It was highlighted how much ministry is actually being done across the Synod. Written reports were received from:

- Rev. Dave Whetter, Bishop's Associate
- Rev. Adam Wutka, Director of Lay Ministry
- Rev. Donna Simon, Congregational Vitality
- The Candidacy Committee
- Mission Endowment Committee

- Bethany College
- Bethany Village
- Camp Tomah Shinga
- Companion Synod Team
- Hearts Across the Heartland
- LuMin St. Louis Ecumenical Campus Ministry
- Lutheran Campus Ministry at Kansas State University
- Lutheran Campus Ministry at the University of Kansas
- Lutheran School of Theology – St. Louis
- Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
- Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table
- Once We Were Refugees
- Racial Justice Team
- Wartburg Theological Seminary
- Women of the ELCA – Central States
- Hollis Renewal Center

SYNOD AUTHORIZED WORSHIPPING COMMUNITIES

We will address the Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities at a future meeting because the reports were not completed in time for this meeting or for us to make any decisions.

ROSTER REPORT

Bishop Candea presented a written roster report.

- Retirements
 - **SC 23.10.21.A65** **It was MSC to grant Rev. Mike Malone retirement status, effective November 1, 2023.**
 - **SC 23.10.21.A66** **It was MSC to grant Rev. Linda Bollenbach retirement status, effective October 1, 2023.**
- Synod Council Calls
 - Mission Developers – Because the yearly reviews of the mission developers are not yet complete, we will address their Synod Council calls at our next meeting.
 - Interim Ministry
 - **SC 23.10.21.A67** **It was MSC to grant a one year term Synod Council call to interim ministry to Rev. Peter Rehwaldt, currently serving St. John Parish, Lancaster & Bendeda, KS. This call is effective January 1, 2024.**
 - **SC 23.10.21.A68** **It was MSC to grant a one year term Synod Council call to interim ministry to Rev. Dean Apel, currently serving Assaria Lutheran, Assaria, KS. This call is effective January 1, 2024.**
 - **SC 23.10.21.A69** **It was MSC to grant a one year term Synod Council call to interim ministry to Rev. Merle Brockhoff, currently serving Our Savior’s Lutheran, Topeka, KS. This call is effective January 1, 2024.**
 - **SC 23.10.21.A70** **It was MSC to grant a one year term Synod Council call to interim ministry to Rev. Brenda Ulrich, currently serving Grace Lutheran, Osage City, KS. This call is effective January 1, 2024.**

- **SC 23.10.21.A71** It was MSC to grant a one year term Synod Council call to interim ministry to Rev. Jealaine Marple, currently serving First Lutheran, Mission Hills, KS. This call includes the possibility for the congregation to issue her a call. This call is effective January 1, 2024.

CONGREGATION REPORT

Bishop Candeia gave an update on Trinity Lutheran Church in Otis, KS. They will be taking their 2nd vote to disaffiliate from the ELCA on December 3, 2023.

HOUSING ALLOWANCES

- **SC 23.10.21.A72** It was MSC to designate the following requested amounts of salary as Housing Allowances for 2024:
 - \$46,000 of Rev. Dave Whetter’s salary as Housing Allowance for 2024.
 - \$16,275 of Rev. Tina Reyes’ salary as Housing Allowance for 2024.
 - \$25,000 of Bishop Susan Candeia’s salary as Housing Allowance for 2024.
 - \$17,000 of Rev. Kevin Clark’s salary as Housing Allowance for 2024.
 - \$30,000 of Rev. Aimée Appell’s salary as Housing Allowance for 2024.

YEAR-END APPEAL

For a year-end appeal, Nancy will craft a letter and Scott will help her. Nancy has recently attended a fundraising conference. The appeal letter will go out to congregations right around Thanksgiving.

CONGREGATION CONSTITUTIONS

St. Mark’s Lutheran in Cape Girardeau, MO has recently updated their constitution.

- **SC 23.10.21.A73** It was MSC to approve the updated constitution of St. Mark’s Lutheran in Cape Girardeau, MO pending their ratification at their next meeting.

SYNOD CONSTITUTION UPDATE

- **SC 23.10.21.A74** It was MSC to add the following two continuing resolutions to the Central States Synod constitution:
 - Under section S14.12 (which describes the duties of rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament):
 - **S14.12.A23** This synod, in addition to the requirements of rostered ministers listed above, expects that each rostered minister will proclaim God’s love for the world.
 - Under section S14.32 (which describes the duties of rostered ministers of Word and Service):
 - **S14.32.A23** This synod, in addition to the requirements of rostered ministers listed above, expects that each rostered minister will proclaim God’s love for the world.

These continuing resolutions stem from an error that dates back to last year. At the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, the required provisions to synod constitutions were updated. In those updates, they deleted “proclaim God’s love for the world” as a duty of rostered ministers. The Central States Synod Council wanted to keep that language as a duty of our rostered ministers. The council passed a motion to that effect (**SC 22.10.08.A85**) and we sent the changes to

Churchwide for approval. Unfortunately, this motion was deemed out-of-order because it makes a change to a required provision, which is not allowed. This same error was also presented to the Synod Assembly in June 2023, being approved by the Assembly (**SA 23.06.03.A1**). Unfortunately, these constitutional amendments were again deemed out-of-order. In consultation with ELCA Churchwide, it was recommended we address our concerns through continuing resolutions, rather than amendments. These two continuing resolutions now allow us to legally keep the language we want in our constitution by not changing any of the required provisions.

APPOINTMENT

- **SC 23.10.21.A75** **It was MSC to ratify the appointment of Rev. Ann Rundquist to serve on the board of Wartburg Theological Seminary.**

QUALITY OF CALL

There is a special Synod Council meeting with some other Synod Councils on Saturday, November 4, 9:00-12:00, to discuss Quality of Call initiatives.

SYNOD COUNCIL POSITIONS

Lua Bennight has not attended a Synod Council meeting since March 2022 nor responded to any attempts at communication. Per the synod constitution, this seat can now be vacated.

- **SC 23.10.21.A76** **It was MSC (Scott, Zac) to declare as vacant the Synod Council position for the Western Kansas Conference.**

ADJOURNMENT

We prayed the Lord’s Prayer and Nancy adjourned the meeting at 12:30pm.

UPCOMING DATES

Special Quality of Call meeting	Saturday, November 4	9:00am-12:00pm	Zoom
Budget Committee	Thursday, January 25	Afternoon	in person
Exec Committee	Friday, January 26	1:00pm	Zoom & in-person
Synod Council	March 8 & 9	Evening & Morning	Zoom
Exec Committee	May 3	1:00pm	Zoom
Synod Council	June 6		in person
Synod Assembly	June 6-8		in person

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Chad Langdon
Central States Synod Secretary