

Minutes from the
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
of the Central States Synod
May 5, 2023
via Zoom

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

Absent: none

CALL TO ORDER

Nancy called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

- Nancy acknowledged that we are meeting on the traditional, ancestral lands of the Osage, Kickapoo, and Kaskaskia Nations.
- Bishop Candeia led us in a devotion on the recently released Truth & Healing Movement from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. Bishop Candeia connected it the confession in 1 John 1.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Chad presented the minutes from the Synod Council meeting on March 10-11, 2023.

- **SEC 23.05.05.A32** It was MSC to approve the minutes from the Synod Council meeting on March 10-11, 2023.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Scott presented a written treasurer's report:

Financial Status as of 3/31/2023, after 2 months of the fiscal year, ending January 31, 2024.

Income from congregations

- \$181,408 received
- The amount received is \$76,925 less than what was anticipated in our revised spending budget, a -42.4% variance
- The amount received is also \$74,928 less than received last year, a -41.3% variance

ELCA Churchwide Contribution

- \$90,704 contributed to Churchwide
- This is \$38,463 less than anticipated in the revised spending budget, a -42.4% variance
- The amount contributed is \$37,464 less than last year, a -41.3% variance

Synod Expenditures

- \$138,412 spent
- The amount spent is \$7,052 less than budgeted, a -5.1% variance
- This is also \$188 more than spent last year, a 0.1% variance

Total Support & Revenue vs. Total Expenditures

- \$196,213 received in Total Support & Revenue, \$78,418 less than anticipated and \$89,736 less than last year
- \$229,116 in Total Expenditures, \$45,515 less than anticipated, and \$37,276 less than last year
- Net deficit of \$32,903 as compared to a \$19,557 surplus last year

Analysis of Financial Status

- Clearly the headline for this report is the dramatic decrease in giving from the congregations. Contributions are down by 41.3% from last year for the same period. 41.3%! Last September, our contribution amount was \$89,000. This was the lowest monthly giving that I had ever seen. So far this year, we have received \$90,868 for February and \$90,540 for March. These are just barely better than our worst month last year and we seen it for two months in a row. This is an alarming start for the year.
- Synod expenditures are a little bit lower than budgeted. This is just a timing issue for our quarterly expenses. We have intentionally held off on paying out most of our grants to our ministry partners and agencies and institutions. This will even out when we get to the end of the quarter. We did much the same thing last year which is why the expenses are almost the same.
- Our Total Support & Revenue amount is significantly less than anticipated due primarily to the decrease in congregation support. We also have not received the grant from Churchwide for Campus Ministry, but we will. The reimbursement for travel is much less than last year, because we are no longer administering the LDR position that we were for the first part of last year. The deficit we have now is totally due to the decrease in congregation support that is buffered by the corresponding decrease in our Churchwide contribution.

Verbal highlights from the discussion include:

- We do still have some cash reserves, but this is not sustainable. Even just based on these first couple months, we will probably need to implement some contingency plans soon.
- The Budget Team probably needs to get together later in May so we can present some ideas to the full Synod Council & Assembly in June.
- Based on the parochial reports, it looks like most congregations are planning to reduce their giving over the next year.
- Regarding the audits, the company was not quite ready to present in early May. Scott is proposing that we have an additional meeting in June (after Assembly) to review them.

BISHOP'S REPORT

Bishop Canda presented a written report. Verbal highlights include:

- She has been traveling & preaching nearly every weekend.
- She has also met with a couple of congregations regarding disaffiliations. This has been very discouraging.
- There are lots of good things (and not so good things) going on throughout the synod.
- It is a joy to read the roster reports, but there continue to be a lot of pastors/leaders who do not submit them.
- We had a discussion about the seeming increase in disaffiliations and dissatisfaction with the ELCA, and how difficult the current environment is for ministry.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Nancy gave a verbal report from the Endowment Committee to celebrate some of the mission that is going on around the synod and the distribution of grants. There were 29 applications from around the synod and the Endowment Committee was able to give grants of \$1,250 to 13 different congregations. She shared what her own congregation plans to do with one of these grants. Chad shared a little about what his congregation is also doing with one of these grants.

MISSION SUPPORT PLANS

Bishop Candeia and the synod staff have developed a plan to be more intentional about advocating for mission support – both in giving feedback to congregations and reporting where our synod is financially. She presented this plan to the Executive Committee. It includes:

- Quarterly letters and financial statements
- Monthly column in the e-newsletter regarding mission support
- Staff & Synod Council visits
- Conference Gatherings with an online webinar
- A gathering for rostered ministers & SAMs in the fall

Other suggestions included:

- Doing video spots, announcements or stories from the bishop or other pastors
- Connecting struggling congregations with an ELCA stewardship coach.

FORMER CONGREGATIONS UPDATES

We received reports and updates on the situations regarding these former congregations.

- Resurrection Lutheran in St. Louis, MO
 - Our attorney is waiting to get the title transferred to him so that we can continue with the process that we decided on in March, ultimately transferring the property to Kingdom Destiny Fellowship, DBA Kingdom Correction 21.
- Bethany Lutheran in Webster Groves, MO
 - Our plan is to begin selling the property immediately after the Synod Assembly, assuming that the congregation members don't appeal our decision to close the congregation. This will include contacting a realtor/real estate broker to help facilitate the sale of this property. We will likely set up a task force to discern how the potential funds from this sale will be spent.

FOLLOW UP FROM 2022 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

Bishop Candeia presented a grid about how we have followed up from the actions taken at the 2022 Synod Assembly. We have taken action on each of the resolutions that were passed at the 2022 Synod Assembly, including:

- SA 22.04 Seasons of Global Awareness during Epiphany Season
 - Communication went out through synod communication channels encouraging congregations to remember and pray for companion synods.
- SA 22.05 Memorial Calling for the Just Transition from Greenhouse Gas Emissions
 - We sent a memorial to churchwide for consideration at the national assembly. We emphasized creation care throughout Lent, including providing worship resources. Bishop Candeia led a Bible study. Lutherans Restoring Creation led a retreat, and congregations are gathering in cohorts as “cool congregations.”
- SA 22.06 Developing LGBTQIA+ Education and Cultural Competency
 - Hearts Across the Heartland has been meeting with synod staff. Reconciling Works was brought in to host professional development days offered across the synod in February. There have been resources included on the synod website.

2023 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

Bishop Candeia presented some updates for the upcoming Synod Assembly.

- We are struggling to get a quorum, so we hope more congregations register over the next month.

- Nominating Committee – They submitted a report, including the following nominations:
 - Officers:
 - Vice President Nancy Nagel (incumbent)
 - Treasurer Scott Schulte (incumbent)
 - Secretary Rev. Chad Langdon (incumbent)
 - Synod Council:
 - Central Kansas Conference Julie Barstow
 - Border Conference Rev. Zac Sturm
 - At Large Male Youth nomination needed
 - Committees:
 - Consultation Committee (need 2) Rev. Kristen Koch & Ros Thorpe
 - Discipline Committee (need 4) Rev. Steven Cauley, Pat Bjuland, Dennis Kemper & Kathy Hohl
 - **SEC 23.05.05.A33 It was MSC to approve the Nominations Committee Report as presented.**
- Resolutions Committee – They submitted a report and have 5 resolutions that will come before the Synod Assembly:
 - SA 23.01 Partnership Support
 - SA 23.02 Season of Global Awareness
 - SA 23.03 Creation of Synod Campus Ministry Team
 - SA 23.04 Bethany Village Chaplaincy Endowment
 - SA 23.05 Thanksgiving for Ministry
- Compensation Guidelines – They presented some recommended updates to the guidelines. This included recommending an 8.0% increase to the baseline figure, per the US Inflation Calculator.
 - It was moved (Chad, Scott) to approve the changes to the Compensation Guidelines that the committee presented, except for Line 10, Baseline, which will remain the same from 2023 to 2024. This motion failed.
 - **SEC 23.05.05.A34 It was MSC (Bishop Candeia, Nancy) to accept with appreciation all the changes to the Compensation Guidelines that the committee presented, except for Line 10, Baseline, which will change from 8.0% to 3.0%**

ROSTER REPORT

Bishop Candeia presented a written roster report.

- On Leave From Call
 - **SEC 23.05.05.A35 It was MSC to grant Rev. Barb Jones another year of On Leave From Call status, effective May 1, 2023.** This is her 3rd year of OLFC.
 - **SEC 23.05.05.A36 It was MSC to grant Rev. Alfi Wyatt another year of On Leave From Call status, effective May 14, 2023.** This is their 2nd year of OLFC.

CONGREGATION UPDATES

Bishop Candeia gave an update on three congregations.

- Zion, Wakeeney, KS took a first vote to disaffiliate on March 19, 2023. The vote was unanimous to leave the ELCA. They would like permission to leave immediately, rather than waiting another 90 days for a second vote. The Executive Committee declined to approve this.
- Our Redeemer, Ness City, KS held their final worship service on April 30, 2023.
- Zion, Beloit, KS took their first to disaffiliate on April 30, 2023 and it passed.

CONSTITUTIONS

Bishop Candea presented two congregation constitutions that have recently been updated. Everything in these constitutions is in order.

- **SEC 23.05.05.A37** **It was MSC to approve the updated constitution for Gethsemane, St. Louis, MO.**
- **SEC 23.05.05.A38** **It was MSC to approve the updated constitution for St. Mark, Olathe, KS, with a few minor clarifications as noted.**

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Budget Team Wednesday May 31, 2023 at 4:00 via Zoom
- Synod Council Friday June 2, 2023 at 3:00 via Zoom
- CSS Synod Assembly Saturday June 3, 2023 all day via Zoom
- Exec Committee - Audit Review Tuesday, June 13 at 4:00pm via Zoom
- Exec Committee Friday, August 25 at 1:00pm
- Synod Council Fri-Sat October 20-21 in Kansas City

ADJOURNMENT

Nancy led us in prayer and we adjourned at 7:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Chad Langdon
Central States Synod Secretary