

Minutes for the  
**2021 CENTRAL STATES SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

**June 4-5, 2021**

Held via Zoom

with Kaw Prairie Community Church serving as the host

*June 4, 2021*

**OPENING WORSHIP & PLENARY SESSION 1**

Bishop Susan Candeia opened the assembly at 6:30pm and we moved directly into worship.

Ms. Judith Roberts offered a keynote address about racial justice.

The assembly wrapped up for the evening at 9:00pm.

*June 5, 2021*

**PLENARY SESSION 2**

The assembly reconvened at 9:00am and began with morning prayer led by the staff of Camp Tomah Shinga.

**Bishop's Report to the Synod**

Bishop Susan Candeia presented a written report to the assembly. Verbal highlights include:

- As a synod, we have been listening to God and others from around the synod to discern a new mission statement:

*United with Christ in baptism*

*Traveling the way of Jesus*

*Joining God's reign of justice and radical love in the world.*

- She spent some time unpacking and explaining each part of this new mission, including highlighting a couple new line items in the budget (Kansas Interfaith & Missouri Voices for Faith) and new synod-wide teams (Racial Justice Team & Earth Charter Team) that support this renewed emphasis on justice.

**Vice President's Report**

Synod Vice President Nancy Nagel offered her report, with the following highlights:

- She explained the role & duties of the Synod Council.
- She talked about the challenges we have all faced this past year regarding COVID-19 and offered thanks to God for the continuing work of our Bishop and Synod Staff during this time.
- She asked for continued prayers for our Synod.

**Credentials Update**

Bishop Candeia offered a brief credentials report. For this year's assembly, we have:

- 304 Voting members, of which 64% are lay and 36% rostered.

**Nominations Report**

Pat Bjuland gave a report from the Nominations Committee. She presented the following nominations:

- Synod Council Members (3-year terms)
  - Western Kansas Lay Male: NONE (John Dumler withdrew his name at the last minute)

- Osage Clergy Male: Rev. David Frerichs
- Eastern Missouri: Rev. Janice Hawley and Rev. Carrie McElfresh
- At Large Male POC: Terrance Freeman
- At Large Female Youth: NONE
- At Large Female: Chelsea Deines
- Consultation Committee (6-year terms)
  - Lay Female: NONE
  - Lay Male: Dan Glamann
- Discipline Committee (6-year terms)
  - Lay Male: NONE
  - Lay Female: Rhonda Templing
  - Clergy: Rev. Ann Rundquist
  - Clergy: NONE
- Churchwide Voting Member (August 8-12, 2022, Columbus, OH)
  - Bishop (Clergy Female): Rev. Susan Candea
  - Vice President (Lay Female): Nancy Nagel
  - Eastern Missouri (Clergy Female): Rev. Melissa Woeppel
  - Osage (Lay Male): Stewart Jacobs, Dyke Kiel, Wayne Sharp, and David Stock
  - Border (Clergy Male): Rev. Michael Kern and Rev. Zac Sturm
  - Central Kansas: Rev. Chris Deines (replacing Rev. Phil Hett, who died recently)
  - Western Kansas: NONE (John Dumler withdrew his name at the last minute)
  - At Large Male POC: Donovan Lucas
  - At Large Lay Youth/Young Adult: Joanie Saltzman
  - At Large Lay Male Youth/Young Adult: NONE
  - At Large Lay Female POC: Linda Lockhart
  - At Large Lay Female: Becky Kiel

The nominations were closed.

### **Constitutional Amendments**

The proposed amendments to the constitution have been approved by the Synod Council and have been posted on the synod website since December 2020, making them properly before the assembly.

The proposed amendments are in Chapters 7, 9, 10 of the constitution.

#### *Changes to the proposed amendments:*

- Mark Scharff moved to change one of the proposed amendments and it was seconded. The change Mark proposed removes the language of male and female to read:
  - S7.21.03a to “No more than 50 percent of the voting members from a congregation shall be of the same gender.”, and**
  - 03.b to “no more than 50 percent of the lay members of the assembly shall be of the same gender.”**
- Discussion:
  - Ed Wunderlich spoke in favor of the changes to the amendment.
  - Tom Mertz had a question.
- **The assembly voted and the changes to the proposed amendments passed:**
  - 75% in favor

- 21% against
  - 4% abstain
- **The proposed amendments to the constitution need a 2/3 vote to pass. The assembly voted and amendments were passed:**
  - 87% in favor
  - 9% against
  - 4% abstain

### **Report from Directors of Evangelical Mission**

Rev. Donna Simon & Rev. Kendra Nolde addressed the assembly to talk about two new opportunities for synodical congregations to participate in:

- Congregational Vitality process
- Faithful Innovation process

*The assembly saw videos from Portico and Bethany College during a brief break from 10:20-10:35am.*

### **Report from ELCA Churchwide**

Bishop Eaton was featured in a video from ELCA Churchwide.

Judith Roberts presented a report from Churchwide. She is the Director for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Highlights include:

- The ELCA has a new Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity.
- Our mission support is being used in many ways, including planting new churches, responding to the COVID-19 crisis, and supporting ministries in Kansas and Missouri.
- There continues to be large support offered throughout the world through ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response.
- This year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> year for the ELCA Fund for Leaders. Currently they are supporting Eric Jensen from our synod.
- The ELCA Youth Gathering will be held in Minneapolis, MN next summer from July 24-28, 2022.

### **Compensation Guidelines**

The Compensation Guidelines were presented to the assembly by the committee.

- **The assembly voted and the guidelines were passed:**
  - 94% in favor
  - 2% against
  - 4% abstain

### **Treasurer's Report**

Scott Schulte presented a written Treasurer's Report for 2020. He talked about the difficulty of financial planning during the pandemic and so we planned for worst. Fortunately, we actually had a really good year financially. Verbal highlights included:

- Total Support & Revenue vs. Total Expenditures
  - In 2020, we received \$1,692,771 in Total Support & Revenue, which is \$70,820 more than anticipated and \$35,817 more than last year.

- In 2020, we spent \$1,549,289 in Total Expenditures, which was \$72,662 less than anticipated, and \$59,909 less than last year.
- This led to a net surplus of \$143,482 as compared to a \$47,756 surplus last year.
- Not knowing how things would go, we did apply for and receive a Paycheck Protection Program loan. This loan has already been forgiven, which puts us in an even better financial position and increased our surplus.
- We ended the year with a fund appeal, and that was also the best end-of-year appeal we've ever had.
- He ended his report by saying "Wow" and "Thank you very much!"

### **Proposed Budget for 2022 (FYE 2023)**

Scott Schulte presented both a line-item budget and a narrative budget for the proposed budget for FYE 2023. Verbal highlights included:

- He talked about the various ways that our common ministry is funded.
- He highlighted different things that we are planning to spend money on, including:
  - Churchwide contribution
  - Ministry Entrusted to the Synod (camps, advocacy, leadership development, etc.)
  - Ministry of Oversight and Pastoral Care (salary, campus ministry, call process, continuing education, etc.)
  - Ministry of ELCA Partnership (seminaries, Bethany College, Planned Giving, etc.)
  - Ministry of Place and Property (office rent & operations)
  - Ministry of Leadership and Outreach (Synod Council & deans' meetings, bishop's transition fund, technical enhancements for outreach, communications & evangelism)
- **The assembly voted and the Proposed Budget for 2022 (FYE 2023) was approved:**
  - 98% In Favor
  - 1% Against
  - 2% Abstain

### **Mission Endowment Fund**

Scott Schulte gave a brief report from the Synod Mission Endowment Fund, which distributed \$71,000 in grants to a variety of ministries. Most of these grants contribute to Leadership Development (including retirement of seminary debt & seminary scholarships) and Outreach within the synod.

*The assembly watched a short video from Kansas Interfaith Action (KIFA).*

### **Resolutions**

Rev. Phil Vickers, chair of the Resolutions Committee, was welcomed before the assembly. These resolutions come properly before the assembly and have already been moved and seconded.

#### **SA 21.01 A Season of Global Awareness**

The resolution was opened for discussion.

- Rev. Gary Teske spoke in favor of this resolution.

#### **The final form of the resolution before the assembly reads:**

- Be it resolved that the Epiphany Season be designated as a "Season of Global Awareness" for congregations within the Central States Synod and that

congregations intentionally lift up the church around the world through prayer, song, educational events and in any way appropriate to the context of the congregation. The focus would include our Companion Synods in Papua New Guinea and Russia, and the Global Ministry we share in through the Global Mission Arm of the ELCA such as Missionary Sponsorship, Young Adults in Global Mission, and our support of Projects that promote the witness of the Gospel, works of compassion and Justice ministry around the world.

- Be it also resolved that Sunday, October 3rd, 2021 shall be designated as a Sunday of solidarity with and prayer for our Companion Synod in Russia, the “Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Urals, Siberia and Far East” (ELCUSFE) with a special focus on the Far Eastern Deanery. This date was chosen because the first Sunday in October is widely observed by the churches in Russia as a harvest Sunday when they give thanks and celebrate the completion of the fall harvest.
- Be it also resolved that Sunday, April 24th, 2022 be designated as a Sunday of solidarity with, and prayer for our Companion District, the Kote District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea (ELCPNG). We chose this Sunday because the Gospel lesson tells of the risen Christ revealing himself to the disciples and especially to “doubting Thomas.” This same risen Christ has continued to reveal himself to the people in “Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8b)
- The Central States Synod Companion Synod Team will provide resources for mission education and worship for the Epiphany Season, and additionally, prayer requests, recent news and communications from our Companion Churches prior to the two Companion Synod Sundays to help us “accompany one another” in our journey as followers, servants, and witnesses to Jesus Christ in our respective parts of God’s world.

**SA 21.01 was adopted by a vote of 97% - 2%.**

#### **SA 21.02      Embracing the Earth Charter**

The resolution was opened for discussion.

- Rev. Noni Strand spoke in favor of this resolution.

**The final form of the resolution before the assembly reads:**

- Therefore, be it resolved, that congregations and ministry sites throughout the Central States Synod
  - become acquainted with the Earth Charter and its principles
  - consider joining the Earth Charter implementation initiative in our Synod
  - prayerfully consider what actions to take to become better stewards of Creation
  - and be encouraged to partner and communicate with the CSS Earth Charter Leadership Team, CSS Earth Charter congregations and ministry sites, and Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table to implement actions on behalf of God’s Creation, and present and future generations.

**SA 21.02 was adopted by a vote of 87% – 9%.**

### **SA 21.03      Calling for a Social Statement on Child Protection**

The resolution was opened for discussion.

**The final form of the resolution before the assembly reads:**

- Therefore, be it resolved:
  - 1. The Central States Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America encourages its members to read and study the “Rationale for a Social Statement on Child Abuse and Child Protection” available for reference at: <http://currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/306/335>
  - 2. The Central States Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America join a churchwide, synod-wide, and congregation-wide process for developing effective and enforceable child protection and child maltreatment policies at every level;
  - 3. The Central States Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America encourages ELCA seminaries to provide education on recognizing and responding to child abuse, including appropriate spiritual care, and to provide continuing education on child maltreatment for pastors, deacons and other faith leaders in the field;
  - 4. The Central States Synod of the ELCA encourages its congregations to offer opportunities for dialogue and education on effective discipline of children including Bible studies on the Christian obligation to discipline children without the use of corporal punishment;
  - 5. The Central States Synod memorializes the ELCA to develop and adopt a social statement on Child Abuse and Child Protection.

**SA 21.03 was adopted by a vote of 96% - 2%.**

### **SA 21.04      Racial Justice Resolution for the Central States Synod**

The resolution was opened for discussion.

- Rev. Aimee Appell spoke in favor of this resolution.
- Tom Mertz moved to amend the final part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet “to acknowledge and repair these histories” and change it to say, “to acknowledge these histories and redeem their ongoing negative consequences.”
  - It was seconded and properly before the assembly.
  - Tom Mertz spoke in favor of the amendment to the resolution.
  - The amendment was approved 84% – 11%.
- Allyn Lockner moved to amend the resolution by adding a further resolve to read, “Be it further resolved that we white people in the Central States Synod do racial justice to non-white people what we would have them do to us.”
  - It was seconded and properly before the assembly.
  - Allyn Lockner spoke in favor of the amendment to the resolution.
  - Dan Reazin spoke against the amendment.
  - Rev. Rick Raymer spoke against the amendment.
  - Rev. Adam Wutka spoke against the amendment.
  - Rev. Aimee Appell spoke against the amendment.

- Rev. Amy Oehlschlaeger called the question. It was seconded and passed by the assembly.
- This amendment to the resolution was defeated 6% - 92%

**The final form of the resolution before the assembly reads:**

- Be It Resolved, that we, the Central States Synod of the ELCA, commit to being communities of repentance and transformation, working for reconciliation and restoration for the harms of racism due to our church and society. We seek to do this at all levels of our church in our congregations, conferences, and synod.
- Be it Further Resolved, that we, following the actions of the Churchwide Assembly in CA16.05.22, provide resources for all rostered leaders and SAMs in the Central States Synod to receive anti-racism training every two years; identify and train leaders who will lead anti-racism training; and provide resources for all leaders and congregations Synod-wide to learn about racism and white supremacy;
- Be it Further Resolved, that we, consistent with the actions of the Church Council in 2019, recognize Juneteenth (June 19th, commemorating the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States in 1865) of each year as a time to lament the sin of racism and celebrate the diversity of God’s created order;
- Be it Further Resolved, that we endorse and empower the Racial Justice Team of the Synod. This team will take the following actions:
  - Lead a process of Spiritual Discernment across the Synod around the subject of racial justice;
  - Encourage and provide resources for congregations to incorporate representative artwork, music, and other environmental representations of Biblical personae to include in publications, worship spaces, and other public spaces of the Church.
  - Encourage and provide resources for individual congregations to establish Racial Justice teams; to educate our churches about tribal land acknowledgments and the Doctrine of Discovery; to understand the history of violence in our country experienced by people of color in our communities; and to acknowledge these histories and redeem their ongoing negative consequences.
  - Encourage and provide resources for congregations to develop practices that affirm and respect diversity and actively move toward equitable inclusion for all.
  - Help the congregations and ministries of this Synod connect with local, state, and national advocacy groups, publicizing opportunities for individuals to engage in advocacy work around racial justice issues. Central States Synod Racial Justice Team

**The amended SA 21.04 was adopted by a vote of 85% – 13%.**

**SA 21.05      Thanksgiving for Ministry**

The resolution was opened for discussion.

- Since the last assembly, the following rostered ministers, whom we remember with thanksgiving and reverence, have died: Rev. Don Conrad (6/4/20), Rev. Earl Meissner (9/27/20), Rev. Ronald MacLennan (2/13/21), and Rev. Phillip Hett (5/30/21)

- Since the last Central States Synod Assembly, the following persons who have served the Church faithfully, have now retired from active ministry on the roster of the Church: Rev. Richard Wolf, Rev. Shawn Norris, Rev. Randy Gibbs, Rev. Russ Glaser, Rev. Elizabeth Backus, Rev. John Backus, and Ms. Anne Chida (deacon).
- The following congregation disaffiliated from the ELCA, discerning that they were called to participate in God's mission through other denominations: Zion Lutheran Church, Hutchinson, KS (10/23/20).
- After many years of faithful ministry, the following congregation closed: Immanuel Lutheran Church, WaKeeney, KS (2/28/21). And The Bridge was closed as a synod authorized worshipping community (2/28/21).

**The final form of the resolution before the assembly reads:**

- Therefore, be it resolved that we recognize and give thanks for the ministry of these ministers and these congregations by requesting the assembly chaplain to offer a prayer of thanksgiving.

**SA 21.05 was adopted and chaplain Steven Zeller led the assembly in prayer.**

*The assembly watched a short video from Ben Perrin, director for Lutheran Disaster Response for our synod.*

**Elections**

People were instructed to vote in the election during lunch. The following people were elected:

- Synod Council Members (3-year terms)
  - Western Kansas Lay Male: NONE
  - Osage Clergy Male: Rev. David Frerichs
  - Eastern Missouri: Rev. Janice Hawley (by 58%-42%)
  - At Large Male POC: Terrance Freeman
  - At Large Female Youth: NONE
  - At Large Female: Chelsea Deines
- Consultation Committee (6-year terms)
  - Lay Female: NONE
  - Lay Male: Dan Glamann
- Discipline Committee (6-year terms)
  - Lay Male: NONE
  - Lay Female: Rhonda Templing
  - Clergy: Rev. Ann Rundquist
  - Clergy: NONE
- Churchwide Voting Member (August 8-12, 2022, Columbus, OH)
  - Bishop (Clergy Female): Rev. Susan Candea
  - Vice President (Lay Female): Nancy Nagel
  - Eastern Missouri (Clergy Female): Rev. Melissa Woeppel
  - Osage (Lay Male): David Stock (by 53%-47% over Wayne Sharp)
  - Border (Clergy Male): Rev. Zac Sturm (by 61%-39%)
  - Central Kansas: Rev. Chris Deines



- Western Kansas: NONE
- At Large Male POC: Donovan Lucas
- At Large Lay Youth/Young Adult: Joanie Saltzman
- At Large Lay Male Youth/Young Adult: NONE
- At Large Lay Female POC: Linda Lockhart
- At Large Lay Female: Becky Kiel

### **Issues of Conscience**

We heard one issue of conscience from someone in the assembly.

*The assembly watched a video from Lutheran Campus Ministries.*

### **Bethany Home Association**

The Synod Assembly recessed at 1:15pm to move into the Bethany Home Association meeting, led by Jim Ruble. They have recently changed their name to Bethany Village, which is more encompassing of the various levels of housing & care that they offer.

- In June 2020 (because of the pandemic), the Bethany Home Association appointed the following people to terms of office on their board:
  - Rev. Dean Apel to a 3-year term (1<sup>st</sup> term)
  - Ken Cummings to a 3-year term (1<sup>st</sup> term)
  - James Ruble to a 3-year term (1<sup>st</sup> term) as president
  - Judy Murphy to a 3-year term (1<sup>st</sup> term)
- In October 2020, Rev. Chris Deines was appointed to complete a 3-year term ending in 2022 (1<sup>st</sup> term)
- Now in June 2021, Bethany Home Association elected the following people to terms of office:
  - Debbie Jacobson to a 3-year term (2<sup>nd</sup> term)
  - Rev. Amy Truhe to a 3-year term (2<sup>nd</sup> term)
  - Rev. Tim Leaf to a 3-year term (2<sup>nd</sup> term)
- The Bethany Home Association meeting adjourned at 1:21pm.

### **Closing**

- Bishop Candea acknowledged and gave thanks to God for the ministry of DEM Rev. Kenda Nolde, who is retiring.
- Our 2022 Synod Assembly will be held June 9-11 in Olathe, KS, under the theme “United in Christ: All Creation Groans, All Creation Sings.”
- The assembly closed in worship led by the staff of Advent Lutheran in Olathe, KS.
- Bishop Candea closed the assembly in prayer and declared the 2021 Central States Synod Assembly closed at 1:40pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



*Rev. Chad Langdon*

*Central States Synod Secretary*