

Minutes for the  
**SYNOD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
**July 19, 2022**  
Via Zoom

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

Also present: Rev. Kristen Koch, as co-dean of the Eastern Missouri Conference

**CALL TO ORDER**

At 7:00pm Nancy opened the meeting with prayer.

**BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH**

This was a special called meeting to discuss the issue of Bethany Lutheran in Webster Groves, MO. Prior to the meeting, Bishop Candea sent out a written summary of the events to date. Bethany Lutheran has not worshipped together in over 2 years. They have not paid their pastor, Rev. Stephen Starr, since February 2020. The bishop was alerted of this situation just after Easter and has been actively involved with them ever since.

Bishop Candea opened by recommending that we move forward with synodical administration of Bethany Lutheran given the situation.

Rev. Kristen Koch, as dean of the conference, has also met with the congregation and attended a recent congregational meeting. She gave her thoughts that they are disorganized and, while their own agency is important, it is hard to imagine how they could organize to do much of anything, even work through the process of closing.

We raised questions like, Are they a congregation? Do they feel like a congregation? Do they consider themselves a congregation? The first time they had gathered together since the pandemic started (in early 2020) was when the bishop asked to meet with them about their situation. Among the few that had gathered, there was more concern for the building than for any mission. There doesn't seem to be any connection or community among the parishioners.

The handwritten membership list has 11 people on it (including the pastor and his family).

There seems to be a real lack of leadership among the laity and with the pastor.

We discussed what synodical administration looks like from the Synod Council's point of view, including working with the city, a lawyer, the finances, and closing the congregation.

S13.24 of the synod constitution gives the Synod Council the authority to "take charge of and control the property of the congregation to hold, manage, and convey the same on behalf of the synod."

- **SEC 22.07.19.A63** It was MSC (Chad, Scott) to write a resolution to present to the Synod Council, which would recommend invoking S13.24 of the constitution for Bethany Lutheran in Webster Groves, MO.

If this resolution passes at the Synod Council, we will need to create a synod administration team, ideally consisting of someone local, someone on Synod staff, and someone from the Eastern Missouri Conference.

Thinking of the bigger picture, we also discussed that we need to create some kind of process/strategy to perhaps be more proactive in addressing struggling congregations to help them close better...almost like a church hospice. There have been discussions about this among the Synod staff as well.

Nancy closed the meeting at 8:10pm.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

Our next Synod Council meeting will be a specially called meeting to discuss Bethany Lutheran. This meeting will take place:

Monday, August 1  
at 7:00pm  
via Zoom

*Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Chad Langdon,  
Secretary of the Central States Synod*