

Minutes from the  
**SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING**  
**March 10-11, 2023**  
Via Zoom

*Present on Friday: Bishop Susan Candea, Nancy Nagel (Vice President), Scott Schulte (Treasurer), Rev. Chad Langdon (Secretary), Terrance Freeman, Rev. Janice Hawley, Susan Boxberger, Rev. David Strommen, Tullia Hamilton, Chelsea Deines, Joanie Saltzman, Ben Bennight, Rev. David Frerichs*

*Absent: Dallas Rakestraw, Ben Bennight, Mindy Tillberg*

*Also present: Rev. Donna Simon (Director of Evangelical Mission), Rev. Aimée Appell (Director of Evangelical Mission)*

**CALL TO ORDER**

Nancy called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

- Aimée acknowledged that we are meeting on the traditional, ancestral lands of the Osage, Kickapoo, and Kaskaskia Nations.
- Bishop Candea led us in a devotion based on the book, "From Guilt and Powerlessness" by George Johnson. The devotion was called "From Silence to Speech."

**UPDATES ON CONGREGATIONS**

Bishop Candea gave us some updates on some of the more difficult situations around the synod.

- Bethany Lutheran (Webster Groves, MO) said that they would appeal to the 2023 Synod Assembly our decision to close their congregation. We have heard nothing from them since they stated this desire. Consequently, we will do nothing with this property until after the Synod Assembly. In addition, the recent lawsuit against us and the property was not served properly, so the legal questions around it are unanswered and still out there. In the meantime, we are maintaining the property until we can take action on it.
- Friends Home Lutheran (Savonburg, KS) did take the 2<sup>nd</sup> successful vote to disaffiliate. They have not joined another denomination and have thus become an independent Lutheran church.
- Zion Lutheran (Wakeeney, KS) voted to leave their Prairie Faith Shared Parish partnership. (That parish is now down to three congregations.) Zion will soon be taking their first vote to disaffiliate with the ELCA. Bishop Candea will be traveling out there to worship with them before that vote.

**RESURRECTION LUTHERAN IN ST. LOUIS**

Resurrection Lutheran in St. Louis closed in early 2022 and their property was transferred to the Central States Synod on February 23, 2022. Throughout this past year, we have tried some different ministry experiments in this location, including opening the building to local nonprofits. Most recently the space is being used by Kingdom Destiny Fellowship DBA Kingdom Correction 21. They are holding weekly worship services and have regular outreach activities at the building. This ministry is headed by Derrick Robinson. After conversation with Derrick and some local ELCA pastors in St. Louis, Aimee offered a

proposal to gift the building to Kingdom Destiny Fellowship. Discussion from the Synod Council included:

- Chad spoke in favor of giving the building as a gift to this ministry. He was encouraged that Derrick is interested in continuing a relationship with the ELCA ministry folks.
- David F. spoke in favor of giving the building as a gift to this ministry. He was not in favor of doing a lease agreement because that puts us in the position of being landlord.
- Janice would love for us to figure out ways to still be involved in ministry in the city. Are there ways for us to maintain a connection to this ministry?
- Tullia was uncomfortable with the idea, but admittedly struggled with why she felt uneasy about it.
- Terrance pointed out that the building is currently being used in positive service to the community. He liked the idea of continuing and building relationships with St. Philips, which is about 3 miles away.
- Susan B. was in favor of what Aimee presented. She did ask about other options if we don't do this.
  - We have been approached by a local funeral home that is interested in purchasing the building. They would likely close the ministry and convert it to a business.
- Donna S. spoke in favor of gifting the building.
- Chelsea spoke in favor of gifting the building.
- Joanie talked about the next faithful move. Ze pointed out 3 options:
  - Sell it to the funeral home.
  - Become landlords & lease it.
  - Gift it.Ze felt like the next faithful move was to gift the building.
- Scott is in favor of gifting the building to this ministry, especially if we can stay engaged and support this ministry.
- David S. agreed with Joanie & Scott, that we should gift the building.
- **SC 23.03.10.A18 It was MSC (Joanie, Terrance) that we intend to gift the building of the former Resurrection Lutheran Church (4112 W. Florissant, St. Louis) to Kingdom Destiny Fellowship, DBA Kingdom Correction 21, and we direct the synod staff to work with the synod attorney to draft the transfer of deed.**
  - We all agreed that we intend to cover the costs of this transfer of deed.

### **SYNOD VITALITY GRANT**

Rev. Donna Simon presented about the Synod Vitality Grant that we applied for last year. She started by making a distinction between congregation vitality and synod vitality. The Synod Vitality Grant is supposed to support ministries that will impact the entire synod. So far we have used this grant money for:

- Scrappy Congregations of less than 50 people
- Anti-Racism training
- Lutheran Link to reach college students on various campuses
- Racial Justice Team
- Hearts Across the Heartland, a justice team for LGBTQIA+ community

This Synod Vitality Grant has been renewed for another 2 years under the ELCA's "Future Church" initiative to continue the ministries listed above, and also work on:

- Focusing on education and repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery, per a Churchwide directive from 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

### **LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES**

Each year Lutheran Social Services gives about \$12,000 - \$15,000 for the Central States Synod to distribute for social ministries. In the past, this money has been distributed without any applications or follow-up. We have \$14,568 to distribute this year. The synod staff is suggesting that we ask congregations & ministries to apply for small grants (\$500 - \$1,500), with the condition that the recipients send back a story so that we know how it was used. The Endowment Committee would be the group that decides who gets the grants. The Synod Council was in agreement that this is a good way to distribute these funds.

- **SC 23.03.10.A19**            **It was MSC (Scott, Susan B.) to direct the Endowment Committee to administer the distribution of these social ministry grants that come from the Lutheran Social Services.**

*Nancy closed us by showing a video of the Bethel College Choir singing "Benediction" at The Bridge in St. Charles. We adjourned for the evening at 8:30pm.*

### **Saturday, March 11, 2023**

*Present on Saturday: Bishop Susan Candea, Nancy Nagel (Vice President), Scott Schulte (Treasurer), Rev. Chad Langdon (Secretary), Terrance Freeman, Rev. Janice Hawley, Susan Boxberger, Rev. David Frerichs, Dallas Rakestraw, Chelsea Deines, Mindy Tillberg, Joanie Saltzman, Rev. David Strommen, Ben Bennight*

*Absent: Ben Bennight, Dallas Rakestraw  
(Rev. Donna Simon & Rev. Aimée Appell were no longer present.)*

*Also present: Rev. Dan Baldwin (Lutheran Campus Ministry – KU), Rev. Kevin Clark (Lutheran Campus Ministry – K-State), Rev. Tina Reyes (LuMuin – St. Louis)*

*We reconvened at 8:30am on Saturday, March 11, 2023 and Nancy called us to order.*

Nancy led us in an opening prayer and we did brief introductions.

## **CONVERSATION WITH CAMPUS MINISTERS**

Verbal highlights included:

- LuMin – St. Louis
  - They are soon taking their first immersion trip to Puerto Rico.
  - The campus house is coming back to life after COVID and that is a great joy.
  - It is helpful to be within an hour's drive of most of the congregations in the Eastern Missouri Conference for funding and relational purposes.
  - Board Issues – Their board has 3-year terms, but many board members have been serving longer because they enjoy it. As board members leave, they have been trying to recruit new members from their own congregations. They have also had two board members resign recently due to health reasons. They do have a Methodist member on the board. Pastor Tina has been recruiting new board members as she visits area congregations. This seems to be a season for recruiting new board members. They currently have 7 board members, but would like to have more.
  - Finances – After the synod grant, they still need to raise \$50-75,000/year.
- K-State
  - This is the first year without COVID restrictions and the ministry is growing as students are re-learning how to be together again.
  - They completed their building in 2020, and were finally able to do a dedication service recently.
  - They have a variety of weekly programming, including evening worship, book studies, and game nights.
  - They are working with the Episcopal Campus Ministries.
  - They recently had their annual disc golf tournament fundraiser.
  - Board Issues – The constitution is a bit out of date, but calls for a specific number of board members from 2 local ELCA churches. This has been limiting because it is getting harder to find folks to serve on the board. Having board meetings on Zoom has opened the possibilities for board membership up a little bit, as they now have 2 board members who live out-of-state. They have 6 local board members, but would like to have more. They have about 12 congregations within an hour's drive, but most of them are smaller and struggling to find pastors.
  - Finances – The synod grant covers about 40% of expenses, so they must raise about 60% of their expenses, which amounts to about \$100,000/year.
- KU
  - They have an active food pantry for students and appreciate support from local congregations.
  - They work closely with the United Methodist Campus Ministry.
  - Weekly activities include a Wednesday worship & meal, and Pizza with the Pastors.
  - Students seem to struggle to commit to regular events, so they are trying more one-off, pop-up events. They've had a game night, service night, etc.
  - Board Issues – They just reworked their constitution. All but 2 of their board members are ELCA members. It has been difficult to recruit new board members. They've lost 7 board members and had 4 people join in the last 15 months. They currently only have 5 board members. This has led to some fundraising difficulties.

- Finances – In addition to the synod grant, they need to raise \$75-90,000/year. They are anticipating a \$35,000 deficit this year.
- Synod Campus Ministry Team
  - The campus pastors are working to re-form a Synod Campus Ministry Team. In years past, there was a team that served a supervisory and fiduciary function for all the campus ministries. This new team they are forming would not serve those functions, but rather advocate for campus ministry across the synod. The hope would be to raise visibility and connection throughout all synod congregations, along with broadening the skills/talents/gifts base among existing board members. It could also serve as a resource for developing new campus ministries in other locations. And it would also help complement the fundraising work done at each of the three existing campus ministry sites.
  - They are looking for at least one, hopefully two, Synod Council members to be part of this new team.

*(Rev. David Strommen left the meeting at this point due to a congregational commitment.)*

### **BISHOP'S REPORT**

Bishop Candea presented a written report. She highlighted:

- The recent clergy professional development events addressing LGBTQIA+ issues went really well.
- She missed the recent Conference of Bishops due to a brief hospitalization. Thankfully, she's doing much better now.

### **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Chad presented the minutes from the Synod Executive Committee meeting on January 13, 2023.

- **SC 23.03.11.A20            It was MSC (Joanie, Scott) to approve the minutes from the January 13, 2023 Synod Executive Committee meeting.**

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Scott presented a written treasurer's report:

**Financial Status as of 1/31/2023, after 12 months of the fiscal year, ending January 31, 2023.**

#### Income from congregations

- \$1,454,148 received
- The amount received is \$95,852 less than what was anticipated in our revised spending budget, an -6.6% variance
- The amount received is also \$99,658 less than received last year, a -6.9% variance

#### ELCA Churchwide Contribution

- \$727,074 contributed to Churchwide
- This is \$47,926 less than anticipated in the revised spending budget, an -6.6% variance
- The amount contributed is \$49,829 less than last year, a -6.9% variance

#### Synod Expenditures

- \$886,241 spent
- The amount spent is \$19,075 less than budgeted, a -2.2% variance
- This is also \$33,136 more than spent last year, a 3.7% variance

#### Total Support & Revenue vs. Total Expenditures

- \$1,613,315 received in Total Support & Revenue, \$67,000 less than anticipated and \$21,362 less than last year
- \$1,613,315 in Total Expenditures, \$67,000 less than anticipated, and \$16,693 less than last year
- Net deficit of \$0 as compared to a \$4,669 surplus last year (disregarding the PPP loan forgiveness)

#### Analysis of Financial Status

- Over the last 5 months of the fiscal year, we had some dramatic extremes in our monthly giving. This led to a dramatic increase in the giving shortfall compared to the budget and to last year. Our giving was below the budget by almost \$100,000. Contributions in September were so low (\$89,000) that I had to adjust the scale for the first graph on the next page. This amount of giving is the lowest I have ever seen for one month.
- Synod expenditures continue to be lower than budgeted in several areas, which is causing overall expenses to be lower. These areas are Leadership Training, Faith Innovations, Technology Enhancements and Enhanced Outreach & Evangelism. While expenses were lower than budgeted, they were higher than our expenses for the same period last year by \$33,000. This was primarily driven by the compensation arrangement for DEM Aimee Appell that was not part of the budget last year. That increase is offset by a Purchase of Services grant from churchwide.
- Our Total Support & Revenue amount is significantly less than anticipated due solely to the decrease in congregation support. We did release \$40,473 in temporarily restricted funds to balance out our expenses. We had budgeted to release \$65,116 in restricted funds, so that is a bit of good news.

#### Verbal highlights and discussion included:

- There was a question about patterns in congregational giving, and there appears to be no apparent pattern to when congregational giving comes in.
- There was also a question about a possible correlation between sending out regular giving statements and an echo response in giving. Last year we did not send out quarterly statements, so maybe this had an impact. Scott will look back to see if there was any correlation.

#### **FYE 1/31/24 REVISED BUDGET**

Scott presented the FYE 1/31/24 Revised Budget. Proposed changes from the Approved Budget include:

- Under *Support and Revenue*, we kept the congregation support the same. But we did adjust the following:
  - *Synod Salaries & Benefits – Synod* from \$505,454 to \$498,036.
    - Scott & Bishop Candea went through the Compensation Guidelines and realized that the salaries of the synod staff were not meeting the guidelines, so some adjustments were made to bring those salaries back into line.
    - There are also adjustments related to how Churchwide pays their part of the DEM salaries.
  - *Operations* from \$46,000 to \$52,422 in order to pay for multiple audits. We are behind on our audits (due to the pandemic and delays from our auditing firm). We expected to

catch up on our audits this past year, but the firm was not able to do that. After not spending the extra money last year, we increased this line item so we can pay for multiple audits this coming year.

- This gives us a balanced budget.
- **SC 23.03.11.A21**            **It was MSC (Scott, Susan B.) to approve the FYE 1/31/24 Revised Budget.**

### **FYE 1/31/25 PROPOSED BUDGET**

Scott presented the FYE 1/31/25 Proposed Budget. Changes from the previous year's budget include:

- Support and Revenue
  - *Congregations* – We decreased our expected income from congregations by \$100,000 (from \$1,550,000 to \$1,450,000) to acknowledge that our income has not been as robust lately and will likely continue in the trend we were facing before the pandemic changed things.
  - *Temp. Restricted Funds Released* – We increased this to \$40,000 from \$32,583 to help with the projected shortfall. (A majority of these temporarily restricted funds are from the surplus we received during the pandemic.)
- Expenditures
  - *ELCA Churchwide Ministry* – decreased to \$725,000 from \$775,000 to reflect our decrease in expected income, of which this is a percentage.
  - *Candidacy* – decreased to \$7000 from \$5000 because we expect our needs in this area to go down with the availability of electronic meetings and fewer candidates.
  - *Leadership Training* – eliminated to \$0 from \$5,000 because we didn't spend any of it in 2022.
  - *Synod Salaries & Benefits-Synod* – decreased to \$487,264 from \$498,036 to reflect changes in health insurance costs, while still giving small raises to the staff. It also includes an elimination of the Candidacy Manager position, as those duties can be filled by other staff members.
  - *Campus Ministry Salaries & Benefits* – decreased to \$138,000 from \$145,000, to equally reduce support to each of our three campus ministry sites.
  - *Travel (Synod Staff)* – decreased to \$38,000 from \$42,5000 to reflect more closely our actual expenses, in part because we now regularly use Zoom.
  - *Call Process Ministry* – eliminated to \$0 from \$1,000 because we haven't been doing much of this, so it feels like we can cut it.
  - *Region IV* – decreased to \$500 to \$1,200 to more closely reflect our actual expenses over the last few years.
  - *Operations-Total* – decreased to \$46,000 from \$52,422 with the expectation that we will have caught up on our audits in 2023 so will not have those extra audit expenses in 2024.
  - *Synod Council Meetings* – decreased to \$1,300 from \$2,0000 to reflect that we are now just doing one in-person meeting/year.
  - *Dean's Meetings* – eliminated to \$0 from \$2,500 to more closely reflect our actual expenses over the last few years.

- *Bishop Transition Set Aside* – decreased to \$7,000 from \$10,000 because we have been faithful through the years in saving up a good amount in this fund. This allows us to make this cut to help balance the budget.
- This leaves us with a balanced budget for the FYE 1/31/25 Proposed Budget.
- **SC 23.03.11.A22**      **It was MSC (Scott, Mindy) to recommend the FYE 1/31/25 Proposed Budget to the 2023 Synod Assembly for approval.**

### CONGREGATION CONSTITUTIONS

- Lord of Love (Belton, MO) has recently amended their constitution.
  - **SC 23.03.11.A23**      **It was MSC (Mindy, Joanie) to approve the amended constitution of Lord of Love (Belton, MO) with the note that we'd like them to update to the most current model constitution.**
- Lutheran Campus Ministry – KU has recently rewritten their constitution and presented it to the Synod Council for approval. They have in their constitution that the Synod Council should approve members of their board.
  - There was some discussion about whether or not we felt it was necessary for the Synod Council to approve board members. We eventually agreed that this was ok.
  - **SC 23.03.11.A24**      **It was MSC (Susan B., Joanie) to approve the amended constitution and bylaws for the Lutheran Campus Ministry – KU.**

### ROSTER REPORT

Bishop Candea presented a written roster report.

- On Leave From Call
  - **SC 23.03.11.A25**      **It was MSC to grant Rev. Anita Strommen another year of On Leave From Call status, effective April 1, 2023.** This is her third year of OLFC status.
  - **SC 23.03.11.A26**      **It was MSC to grant Rev. Katherine Hayes-Wallenburg another year of On Leave From Call status, effective March 17, 2023.** This is her third year of OLFC status and is for parental leave. She is eligible for 6 years of OLFC for parental leave.
  - Rev. Jim Peters has recently resigned his call to Our Savior's Lutheran (Topeka, KS) due to a breach in trust with the congregation.
    - **SC 23.03.11.A27**      **It was MSC (Chad, Susan B.) to grant Rev. Jim Peters On Leave From Call status, effective February 19, 2023.** This is his first year of OLFC status.
  - Rev. Ed Hatcher was serving under call at Peace Lutheran (Sullivan, MO), which disaffiliated from the ELCA on December 11, 2022. Rev. Hatcher has chosen to continue to serve the congregation, which requires him to resign from the ELCA roster. He has not yet done so. He had 45 days to apply for On Leave From Call status and has not done that either. Rev. Hatcher has now been officially removed from the roster.

### CONGREGATION UPDATE

Friends Home Lutheran (Savonburg, KS) took their second successful vote to disaffiliate with the ELCA on February 19, 2023. They have not chosen another denomination to affiliate with. According to \*C7.04



in the model congregation constitution, the Synod Council must give approval for the property to remain with the majority members who voted to disaffiliate.

- **SC 23.03.11.A28**      **It was MSC (David F., Scott) to allow Friends Home Lutheran (Savonburg, KS) to keep their property after they have disaffiliated.**

### **SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

We had a discussion about the upcoming Synod Assembly.

- Regarding the offering that will be collected at the assembly:
  - **SC 23.03.11.A29**      **It was MSC (Susan B., Joanie) to designate the offering from the 2023 Synod Assembly to go towards campus ministry.**
- Voting Member Waivers:
  - **SC 23.03.11.A30**      **It was MSC to approve the voting member waivers for Emmanuel Lutheran (Stuttgart, KS), Hebron Lutheran (Burdick, KS), and St. Andrew's (Columbia, MO).**
- Nominating Committee does not have anything to report.

### **REPORTS FROM TASK FORCES & COMMITTEES**

We were presented with and reviewed written reports from:

- Companion Synod Ministry Team
- Eastern Missouri Conference
- Hunger Team
- Kansas Interfaith Action
- Lutheran Campus Ministry – KU
- LuMin St. Louis (Lutheran Campus Ministry in St. Louis)
- Lutheran Planned Giving
- Lutherans Restoring Creation
- Once We Were Refugees
- WELCA

Other verbal highlights & comments include:

- It was a joy reading these reports and to see what God has been doing across our synod.
- The Companion Synod Ministry report was heartbreaking as we read about some of issues that our siblings in Christ are facing in Papua New Guinea and in Russia.
- Nancy will be contacting Synod Council members to respond to some of these reports.

### **HOUSING ALLOWANCE**

Rev. Dan Baldwin has asked that we modify his 2023 housing allowance.

- **SC 23.03.11.A31**      **It was MSC to alter Dan Baldwin's 2023 salary to designate \$62,680 as Housing Allowance, and \$2,400 as a base salary. This is contingent upon it being legal with federal tax law.**

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Susan Boxberger shared a bit about her upcoming role in Wittenberg, Germany this summer. After six years of service, this will be her last official Synod Council meeting. She was thanked for her service.

**ADJOURNMENT**

We again played the “Benediction” video from Bethel College Choir because last night’s version didn’t work very well. Nancy adjourned the meeting at 11:40am.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS**

- Executive Committee    Friday            May 5, 2023            via Zoom
- Synod Council            Friday            June 2, 2023            via Zoom
- CSS Synod Assembly    Saturday        June 3, 2023            via Zoom

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Chad Langdon  
Central States Synod Secretary