

Minutes from the
CENTRAL STATES SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING
June 2, 2023
Via Zoom

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

Absent: Joanie Saltzman, Ben Bennight

CALL TO ORDER

Nancy called the meeting to order at 3:00pm and acknowledged that we are meeting on the traditional, ancestral lands of the Kaw/Kansa, Osage, Ocheti Sakowin, Sioux, and Kickapoo peoples. She led us in prayer.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Chad presented the minutes from the Synod Executive Committee meeting on May 5, 2023.

- **SC 23.06.02.A39** **It was MSC (Janice, Susan B.) to approve the minutes from the May 5, 2023 Synod Executive Committee meeting.**

TREASURER'S REPORT

Scott presented a written treasurer's report:

Financial Status as of 4/30/2023, after 3 months of the fiscal year, ending January 31, 2024.

Income from congregations

- \$301,127 received
- The amount received is \$86,373 less than what was anticipated in our revised spending budget, a -28.7% variance
- The amount received is also \$70,161 less than received last year, a -23.3% variance

ELCA Churchwide Contribution

- \$150,564 contributed to Churchwide
- This is \$43,186 less than anticipated in the revised spending budget, a -28.7% variance
- The amount contributed is \$34,812 less than last year, a -23.1% variance

Synod Expenditures

- \$214,616 spent
- The amount spent is \$3,579 less than budgeted, a -1.7% variance
- This is also \$6,335 more than spent last year, a 3.0% variance

Total Support & Revenue vs. Total Expenditures

- \$332,373 received in Total Support & Revenue, \$79,573 less than anticipated and \$71,688 less than last year
- \$365,180 in Total Expenditures, \$46,766 less than anticipated, and \$28,477 less than last year
- Net deficit of \$32,807 as compared to a \$10,404 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 23.3% from last year for the same period. Unfortunately, this represents an improvement after the first 2 months of the year. As you can see in the attached graph, the months of February and March were among the lowest contribution months of the past 20 years. This is an alarming start for the year.
- Synod expenditures are a little bit lower than budgeted. This is just a timing issue for some expenses. We intentionally held off on paying out most of our grants to our ministry partners and agencies and institutions, but we have caught up with most of those at this point. We did much the same thing last year which is why the expense amounts are similar.
- Our Total Support & Revenue amount is significantly less than anticipated due primarily to the decrease in congregation support. The reimbursement for travel is 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.

Given this alarming report, the Budget Team met earlier this week and made a 2nd revision to the FYE 1/31/2024 Revised Budget, changing the following lines to:

Support and Revenue

Congregations	\$1,450,000	from	\$1,550,000
Temp. Restricted Funds Released	\$50,000	from	\$32,583

Expenditures

Churchwide Giving	\$725,000	from	\$775,000
Missouri Voices of Faith	\$625	from	\$2,500
Candidacy	\$5,000	from	\$7,000
Parish Ministry Associates	\$0	from	\$500
Leadership Training	\$0	from	\$5,000
Synod Salaries & Benefits	\$492,036	from	\$498,036
Bishop's Fall Theological Conf	\$0	from	\$4,000
Travel (Synod Staff)	\$38,000	from	\$42,500
Call Process Ministries	\$0	from	\$1,000
Region IV	\$500	from	\$1,200
Bethany College	\$8,000	from	\$10,000
Seminaries	\$16,000	from	\$20,000
Planned Giving Partnership	\$11,312	from	\$22,625
Meetings	\$1,300	from	\$2,000
Deans' Meetings	\$0	from	\$2,500

This puts the Net Revenue at \$13,505, which gives us a little cushion if the current giving trends continue.

Verbal highlights and discussions included:

- These changes will eliminate our partnership with Lutheran Planned Giving going forward. While the Lutheran Planned Giving Partnership is included in the budget being proposed to the

Synod Assembly tomorrow, our intent is to eliminate that line when we go to revise that budget throughout the year making this change permanent.

- Do we know the cause of the decreased revenue? Congregations throughout the synod are struggling financially and many have drastically lowered the amounts they intend to give. This includes some of our larger congregations who have been large contributors in the past. We have also lost some congregations due to disaffiliation and dissatisfaction.
- **SC 23.06.02.A40** **It was MSC (Scott, Dallas) to approve the new revisions to FYE 1/31/2024 Revised Budget, as stated above.**

BETHANY LUTHERAN, WEBSTER GROVES, MO

A resolution was presented by Bishop Candeia to help us decide how to proceed with the Bethany Lutheran, Webster Groves property. Verbal highlights and discussion included:

- Robert Biggs has been recommended as a realtor.
- Are there any instructions we want to give the realtor as we sell the property?
 - Synod Council or the Executive Committee should have some kind of final approval.
 - It would probably be easiest to just grant the easement that is under dispute. We won't be able to sell the property until this issue is cleared up, so we should get it cleared up as soon as possible.
 - **SC 23.06.02.A41** **It was MSC (David S., Dallas) to allow the synod attorney to negotiate the sale of the strip of land under dispute in order to receive a fair price and complete the sale so that we can have a clear title.**
- If the realtor thinks we should separate the parsonage from the church building, we are ok with doing that as long as we can move them both.
- We are ok with selling the liturgical vestments as a fundraiser for Lutheran Campus Ministry.
- We are ok with having an Eastern Missouri Conference work day where people can come, keep what is salvageable, and dispose of what is not.
- Scott volunteered to lead a task force to determine what to do with the proceeds. Nancy Nagel, David Strommen, and Susan Boxberger volunteered to serve on that task force. We would also like to involve a couple people from the Eastern Missouri Conference.
- **SC 23.06.02.A42** **It was MSC (Mindy, Tullia) to approve the following:**

Whereas the Synod Council voted on August 1, 2022 to invoke S13.24 of the constitution - *The Synod Council itself or through trustees appointed by it, may take charge and control of the property of a congregation of this synod to hold, manage, and convey on behalf of this synod, if any of the following apply: (see above S13.24d)* and close the congregation of Bethany Lutheran Church in Webster Groves, MO effective October 1, 2022;

Whereas letters were sent to remaining members of the congregation, including the former pastor Stephen Starr, outlining the process to appeal the synod council's decision at the Synod Assembly on June 3, 2023 and there has been no response;

Whereas no one brought a motion to the Synod Assembly to appeal the Synod Council's decision;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Synod Council:

1. Proceed with selling the property using the services of Robert Biggs, Realtor to secure the best possible price for the property, with final approval by the Executive Committee,
2. Authorize the Executive Committee to accept a final offer and sign closing documents,
3. Work with local community members to find a home for the artwork, especially the mural on the wall over the altar,
4. Authorize Lutheran Campus Ministry in St. Louis to “auction” or sell any worship garments or items with all proceeds going to the campus ministry,
5. Ensure that the membership records and other items of historical value be collected for the synod archive,
6. Enlist volunteers from the Eastern MO Conference to clean out the church in order to recycle and donate any useable items,
7. Establish a task force, including members of the Synod Council and Eastern Missouri Conference, to make a recommendation to the Synod Council for their approval regarding the use of the funds from the sale of the property.

ROSTER REPORT

Bishop Candea presented a written roster report.

- On Leave From Call
 - Rev. Kimberly Knowle-Zeller has been On Leave From Call since January 1, 2016. She has been granted extensions (by the Synod Council and by the Conference of Bishops) for parental leave, but those extensions will expire on December 31, 2023. Bishop Candea will be requesting that the Conference of Bishops approve a non-stipendiary call because she is still actively involved in ministry through writing and leading workshops. This request also needs Synod Council approval.
 - **SC 23.06.02.A43 It was MSC (Chad, Terrance) to grant Rev. Kimberly Knowle-Zeller a non-stipendiary call, effective November 1, 2023.**
- Removal From Roster
 - Melaku Tizazu, the mission developer of the Oromo Community, which closed last June, was granted one year of On Leave From Call status effective July 1, 2022. He has since moved back to Ethiopia where he plans to reside. He has not applied for another year of On Leave From Call status, so this effectively removes him from the roster of the ELCA.

CONGREGATION UPDATES

Bishop Candea gave an update on two congregations.

- Zion, Wakeeney, KS took a first vote to disaffiliate on March 19, 2023. The vote was unanimous to leave the ELCA. They wanted permission to leave immediately, rather than waiting another 90 days for a second vote. The Executive Committee declined to approve this.

- They have not yet had their 2nd vote, yet they are now listed on LCMC website as a congregation of the LCMC. As a former LCA congregation, they also need Synod Council approval before terminating their relationship with the ELCA.
- We discussed the possibility of suing them because they are in violation of their constitution. This led to us wrestling with how we want to “allow” congregations to leave and if we are going to hold them accountable to their constitutions.
- These are some steps that we would like to them/us to take:
 - They should at least take a second vote.
 - Bishop Candea & Nancy will draft a letter calling them to follow their constitution.
 - Bishop Candea will contact other leaders in the ELCA to see if there are other avenues we can pursue, including calling the LCMC counterpart to let them know that Zion is in violation of their constitution and some of the possible consequences.
- Zion, Beloit, KS took their first to disaffiliate on April 30, 2023. It did pass, with 59 of 66 voting member voting in favor of disaffiliation. There is a small group that is very upset by this course of action.
- Cross of Glory, Derby, KS has decided to close and their last Sunday will be in October. They will be donating their building to the city of Derby to be used as a Senior Center.

COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

The Compensation Guidelines Committee did their regular work and due diligence and presented some recommended updates to the guidelines. This included recommending an 8.0% increase to the baseline figure, per the US Inflation Calculator. There was discussion about this at the Synod Executive Committee meeting on May 5, and per SEC 23.05.05.A34, it was “MSC to accept with appreciation all the changes to the Compensation Guidelines that the committee presented, except for Line 10, Baseline.” In that motion, the Synod Executive Committee changed the recommendation from 8.0% to 3.0%.

- The Synod Council further discussed these recommendations, and verbal highlights included:
 - At the hearing for the Compensation Guidelines, it was widely agreed by the people attending that hearing that it should remain at 8%.
 - **SC 23.06.02.A44 It was MSC (Chad, Mindy) to approve and recommend to the Synod Assembly the compensation guidelines as originally presented by the Compensation Guidelines Committee, including the 8.0% increase to Line 10, Baseline.**

ADJOURNMENT

David S. closed us in prayer, and Nancy adjourned us at 4:55pm.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

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

Respectfully submitted,
 Rev. Chad Langdon
 Central States Synod Secretary