

Minutes from the
SYNOD ASSEMBLY / SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING
June 5-6, 2020
Via Zoom

Present: Bishop Susan Candea, Nancy Nagel (Vice President), Scott Schulte (Treasurer), Rev. Chad Langdon (Secretary), Terrance Freeman, Daniel Lilienkamp, Chelsea Deines, Rev. David Strommen, Linda Lockhart, Susan Boxberger, Dallas Rakestraw, Theo Keesee, Mindy Tillberg, Lorna Paulus, Joanie Saltzman, Rev. Kristen Koch

DEVOTION

At 6:00pm Bishop Candea led us in a short service of “Prayer and Lament” because of recent events surrounding COVID-19 and social justice protests throughout our nation.

CALL TO ORDER

Nancy called the meeting to order.

POSTPONING THE 2020 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

- **SC 20.06.05.A1 It was MSC (Mindy, Susan B.) to postpone the 2020 Synod Assembly to June 2021.** (Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not currently safe to meet in large groups. Most communities have not yet released the restriction on groups of the Synod Assembly's size which made this unusual action necessary.)

BISHOP'S REPORT

Bishop Candea presented a written report. Verbal highlights included:

- The staff is back to working in the office.
- Congregations are starting to resume in-person worship. Expectedly, this has caused some tension in various congregations.
- The “Let’s Talk About Race” workshops for continuing education have been going well.
- It has become clear through the recent pandemic that the system of allowing lay presidency at Communion needs a little more structure. The Bishop is mobilizing some people for this work.
- Congregations who do not have a regular called pastor and who are operating under the Bishop’s authorization (PMAs, interim pastors) are being required to present a plan to the Bishop before being allowed to resume in-person worship.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Nancy Nagel presented a written report. She read portions of it to the Council. Verbal highlights included:

- Based on our recent conversation on core values, she was able to consolidate the notes & conversation, identifying 4 general themes that rose to the top:
 - Community
 - Love of neighbor
 - Worship
 - Giving / Generosity

TREASURER'S REPORT

Scott Schulte presented a written report for the FYE 2020. He also presented a written report on the current year's finances (FYE 2021). Verbal highlights on the current year's financial situation through April 30, 2020 included:

- We have received \$367,406 from congregations. This is \$20,094 less than anticipated and \$6,431 less than we received last year at this point.
- We have contributed \$183,828 to Churchwide, which is \$11,172 less than anticipated, and \$3,893 less than last year at this point.
- We have spent \$177,849, which is \$32,639 less than budgeted and \$48,131 less than we spent last year at this point.
- We have received \$384,511 in Total Support and Revenue, which is \$20,977 less than anticipated and \$11,319 less than last year. We have spent \$361,677 in Total Expenditures, which is \$43,811 less than anticipated and \$52,024 less than last year.
- This gives us a net surplus of \$22,834, as compared to a \$17,872 deficit last year. This surplus is due to some decreased expenses from staff changes and by deferring some expenses because of the pandemic.
- Our giving and income has been unexpectedly normal given the situation of the pandemic.
- We did apply for and receive a Paycheck Protection Loan through the CARES Act. We will be tracking our expenses carefully so that we can receive forgiveness for this loan.

We had a discussion about taking this opportunity to do some intentional fundraising in order to grow some ministries. Sometimes crisis moments like we are in can be good times to ask people for money.

BUDGET PROPOSALS

Scott presented a Revised Budget for 2020 (FYE 2021), which accounted for an estimated \$75,000 decrease in congregational support. Much of the decrease in expenses was reflected in the Synod Salaries & Benefit line because of a restructuring of the synod staff. With a few other changes, the Revised Budget for 2020 was balanced at \$1,621,951.00.

Scott presented a Proposed Budget for 2021 (FYE 2022). It closely reflected the Revised Budget for 2020. It allows for an increase in Synod Salaries & Benefits so that the synod staff can get a 2% raise. There is also a decrease in Campus Ministry Salaries & Benefits line to reflect a projected decrease in expenses due to staffing changes in the campus ministries.

- **SC 20.06.05. A2 It MSC (Linda, Terrance) to approve the Proposed Budget for 2021 (FYE 2022).**

ELECTIONS

There are 3 openings on the Synod Council. The Nominating Committee nominated Rev. David Strommen (incumbent) to represent the Central Kansas Conference and Susan Boxberger (incumbent) to represent the Border Conference. They did not offer a nominee for the At Large – Clergy Male position.

- **SC 20.06.05.A3 It was MSC (Kristen, Dan) to approve the election of Rev. David Strommen & Susan Boxberger to the Synod Council.** Each was elected to a 3-year term.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution SA 20.01 A Season of Global Awareness

This resolution reads:

Be it resolved that the Epiphany Season be designated as a “Season of Global Awareness” for all congregations within the Central States Synod and that congregations intentionally lift up the church around the world through prayer, song, publicity and in any way appropriate to the context of the congregation.

Be it also resolved that the congregations of the Central States Synod designate at least one Sunday during the Epiphany Season as a “Sunday of Celebration for the Global Church.” This Sunday would focus not only on our Companion Synods in Papua New Guinea and Russia, but also 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 4th, 2020 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 18th, 2021 be designated as a Sunday of solidarity with, and prayer for our Companion District, the Kotte District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea (ELCPNG). This date is chosen because it is Easter 3 and we read the account of Jesus appearing to his disciples who were in hiding. His final words to them are, “Thus it is written that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

- **SC 20.06.05.A4 It was MSC (Dan, Kristen) to approve Resolution SA 20.01.**

Resolution SA 20.02 Celebration of Mothers and Community

This resolution reads:

Be it Resolved, all congregations of the Central States Synod will use the provided bulletin inserts and suggested prayer on the weekend of Mother’s Day, May 8 & 9, 2021 as a way of strengthening our communities one child and one family at a time.

- **SC 20.06.05.A5 Resolution SA 20.02 was defeated by a majority vote.**

Resolution SA 20.03 50th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women

This resolution reads:

Be it resolved that congregations of the Central States Synod are encouraged to commemorate 50 years of ordained women in the church using the resources found at www.elca.org/50yearsofordainedwomen

And be it resolved that congregations of the Central States Synod designate the weekend of July 18 & 19, 2020 (The Festival of Mary Magdalene, the Apostle is July 22) as a time to recognize and celebrate the ministry of women, women of color, and LGBTQIA+ individuals.

- **SC 20.06.05.A6 It was MSC (Terrance, Dan) to approve Resolution SA 20.03.**

DISCUSSION

The Synod Council ended the evening by talking about race and the church.

Linda Lockhart closed us in prayer at 8:30pm, and we recessed for the evening.

Nancy called us to order and we reconvened at 9:00am on Saturday, June 6. Lorna led us prayer. Everyone was present again. Rev. Dave Whetter and Rev. Dr. Mari Larson were also present.

APPOINTMENTS

Chelsea Deines has recently moved and is now no longer living in the Osage Conference, which she was representing. This vacates the Synod Council position from the Osage Conference. According to our Constitution S.10.06 and by-law S10.07.09.c, we took the following action:

- **SC 20.06.06.A7 It was MSC to appoint Chelsea Deines to an at-large position on the Synod Council and to appoint Rev. David Frerichs from St. Andrew's Lutheran in Columbia, MO as the Synod Council representative from the Osage Conference.**

COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

Rev. Mari Larson and Rev. David Whetter presented the new Compensation Guidelines. The new structure encourages conversation between the call committees, councils, candidates and pastors. It also encourages making adjustments for cost of living differences throughout the synod. These new Compensation Guidelines contain both a narrative portion and a worksheet.

- **SC 20.06.06.A8 It was MSC (David, Dan) to accept the new Compensation Guidelines.**

Dave Whetter & Mari Larson left the meeting at this point.

ROSTER REPORT

Bishop Candea presented a written roster report.

Rev. Rich Wolf retired from Good Shepherd Lutheran, Manchester, MO, on May 31, 2020.

- **SC 20.06.06.A9 It was MSC to grant Rev. Rich Wolf retirement status, effective June 1, 2020.**

Rev. Shawn Norris, currently under Synod Council call to specialized ministry serving at Lutheran Campus Ministry at KU, is retiring on July 31, 2020.

- **SC 20.06.06.A10** **It was MSC to grant Rev. Shawn Norris retirement status, effective August 1, 2020.**

Rev. Christyn Koschmann is working as a chaplain at St. Luke's East Hospital on a part-time basis.

- **SC 20.06.06.A11** **It was MSC to grant a Synod Council call to specialized ministry (7.44.A19b5.1) to Rev. Christyn Koschmann, effective June 15, 2020**

Rev. John Kotovsky resigned his Synod Council call to specialized ministry as the CEO of Lutheran Senior Services, effective June 30, 2020. He has accepted a new position to serve as the Chief Mission Officer of Lutheran Senior Services, effective July 1, 2020.

- **SC 20.06.06.A12** **It was MSC to grant a Synod Council call to specialized ministry (7.44.A19b5.1) to Rev. John Kotovsky, effective July 1, 2020.**

DISCIPLINE

Zion Evangelical Lutheran in Hutchinson, KS has been without a called pastor for some time and so, per constitutional guidelines, has been operating under the Bishop's authority. This included the authorization to celebrate Holy Communion. Due to the pandemic, the Bishop required that all congregations under her authority not resume in-person worship or the celebration of Holy Communion without first presenting the synod office with a plan for how to do that safely. It is unclear whether Zion ever ceased in-person worship because of the pandemic, but they have been celebrating Holy Communion without authorization. Per her authority, the Bishop wrote a letter telling them to stop celebrating Holy Communion until their plan is completed and in place. They are refusing and responded with a letter of their own. The next step with Zion is to schedule an in-person consultation with the Bishop. This led to a Synod Council discussion about accountability, authority, discipline, and Holy Communion.

We took a 5 minute break at 10:30am.

ELCA YOUTH GATHERING

Mindy Tillberg is the Synod Coordinator for the 2021 ELCA Youth Gathering to be held in Minneapolis, MN. There will be some changes to the Gathering next year due to the pandemic, but we are not yet sure what that will entail. The Central States is part of piloting a new program to distribute scholarship/financial assistance.

STATEMENT ON RACISM

We had a lengthy discussion to create a statement on racism and recent events in our nation.

- **SC 20.06.06.A13** **It was MSC unanimously (Linda, Mindy) to adopt the following statement from the Synod Council:**

The recent murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Dreasjon (Sean) Reed, and George Floyd have jolted many to action. For more than a week, individuals around the world have taken to the streets to express their pain, anger, and frustration over the dehumanization being experienced by black and brown people due to individual/systemic racism. The anguish endured

by people of color in this country because of the actions or inactions of other citizens is real, and it cannot be ignored.

Racism and racist notions have no place in Christianity. They are antithetical to our core beliefs. We believe God made all of humanity in God's image (Gen. 1:27). We believe Jesus Christ lives in each one of us (1 John 4:13) and tears down the dividing wall of hostility between us (Eph. 2:14). And we believe we are all members of the Body of Christ; hence, "if one member suffers, we all suffer with it" (1 Cor. 12:26).

Despite our relationship with God, we are sinners. We consciously and unconsciously sin against God and each other in thought, word, and deed. We love neither God nor our neighbor with our whole heart. Instead, we give in to temptation and seek to satisfy our own desires.

The Synod Council of the Central States Synod encourages its congregations and their members to use this time of national self-examination as an opportunity to engage in courageous dialogue to tackle the sinful issue of racism. We invite our faith communities to listen to the experiences and perspectives of those who have endured racism and aggression at the hands of individuals and institutions, including our own ELCA. We also ask members to reflect on what actions they have taken or missed to reduce racism and lift up the dignity of all people.

The Council understands that discussions about race are difficult. Some participants may feel uncomfortable and even vulnerable. But what is hard should not stop us from doing what is right.

The Synod has tools available to facilitate positive, courageous dialogue. Therefore, we encourage congregations and members to be brave and examine their own attitudes and conduct. Each person, regardless of background or age, can help to advance the eradication of racism, disrupt systemic inequality and inequity, build a more inclusive community, and live out Christ's teaching to love our neighbor.

ADJOURNMENT

- **SC 20.06.06.A14 It was MSC to adjourn and meet again soon to finish the rest of the business on the agenda.**

We closed with a short service of "Farewell and Thanksgiving for Kristen Koch" and the "Installation of Synod Council Members." We adjourned at 12:10pm.

UPCOMING DATES

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| • Synod Council | Saturday, June 13 | 9:00am – 11:00am | via Zoom |
| • Officers Meeting | Thursday, July 9 | 6:00pm | via Zoom |
| • Executive Committee | Friday, August 14 | 1:00pm – 5:00pm | via Zoom |
| • Synod Council | Friday – Saturday, Oct 23-24 | | in Kansas City |

*Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Chad Langdon
Central States Synod Secretary*