



**Southeastern Minnesota Synod Council
 Meeting Minutes
 February 25, 2023**

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod Council met on February 25, 2023, via Zoom.

Members present: Rev. Jenna Couch, Rev. Shelley Cunningham, Marshall Laidlaw, Karen Myers, Gary Schindler, Ramona Skare, Carolyn Solberg, Rev. Dr. Kristen Venne, Dr. Mary Veiseth, Rev. John Weisenburger, Treasurer Jeff Chestnut, Secretary Rev. Josh Enderson, Vice President Lisa Dierks, and Bishop Regina Hassanally.

Absent: Rev. Collette Broady-Grund, Rev. Kris Ferkin, Hannah Herfindahl-Quint, Matthew Huggenvik, and Deacon Amanda Sabelko.

WELCOME & DEVOTIONS

- Vice President Lisa Dierks welcomed all council members to the meeting. Following this, Karen Myers led the group in devotions.

CALL TO ORDER & OVERVIEW OF AGENDA

- Vice President Dierks called the meeting to order at 9:05am.
- She then presented the agenda. The following items were added:
 - Appointment of the Credentials Committee for Synod Assembly during the synod assembly update.
- Mona Skare motioned to approve the agenda as amended.

SC23.02.01 Motion to approve the agenda as amended.

Motion approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Minutes from the November 12, 2022 Synod Council Meeting
- Reports of Staff, Committees, & Tables
- Approval of Congregational Constitutions
 - Cedar Valley, Winona
 - Council Action: to thank Cedar Valley Lutheran Church in Winona, for the work done on the constitution and bylaws; to

express appreciation for the way the congregation bylaws have been codified in the document as a model for other congregations in the synod; and to accept the constitution approved by the congregation on January 15, 2023 as consistent with the 2022 Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Southeastern Minnesota Synod.

- Central Freeborn, Albert Lea
 - Council Action: to thank Central Freeborn Lutheran Church in Albert Lea, for the work done on the constitution and bylaws; to express appreciation for the way the congregation bylaws have been codified in the document as a model for other congregations in the synod; and to accept the constitution approved by the congregation on January 22, 2023 as consistent with the 2022 Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Southeastern Minnesota Synod.
- East Freeborn, Albert Lea
 - Council Action: to thank East Freeborn Lutheran Church in Albert Lea, for the work done on the constitution and bylaws; to express appreciation for the way the congregation bylaws have been codified in the document as a model for other congregations in the synod; and to accept the constitution approved by the congregation on January

- 29, 2023 as consistent with the 2022 Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Southeastern Minnesota Synod.
- First English, Cannon Falls
 - Council Action: to thank First English Lutheran Church in Cannon Falls, for the work done on the constitution and bylaws; to express appreciation for the way the congregation bylaws have been codified in the document as a model for other congregations in the synod; and to accept the constitution approved by the congregation on January 22, 2023 as consistent with the 2022 Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Southeastern Minnesota Synod.
 - First English, Faribault
 - Council Action: to thank First English Lutheran Church of Faribault, for the work done on the constitution and bylaws; to express appreciation for the way the congregation bylaws have been codified in the document as a model for other congregations in the synod; and to accept the constitution approved by the congregation on January 29, 2023 as consistent with the 2022 Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Southeastern Minnesota Synod.
 - Grace Lutheran, Waseca
 - Council Action: to thank Grace Lutheran Church of Waseca, for the work done on the constitution and bylaws; to express appreciation for the way the congregation bylaws have been codified in the document as a model for other congregations in the synod; and to accept the constitution approved by the congregation on February 22, 2022 as consistent with the 2022 Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Southeastern Minnesota Synod.
 - Our Savior's, Austin
 - Council Action: to thank Our Savior's Lutheran Church of Austin, for the work done on the constitution and bylaws; to express appreciation for the way the congregation bylaws have been codified in the document as a model for other congregations in the synod; and to accept the constitution approved by the congregation on February 12, 2023 as consistent with the 2022 Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Southeastern Minnesota Synod.
 - People of Hope, Rochester
 - Council Action: to thank People of Hope Lutheran Church in America and the constitutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Southeastern Minnesota Synod.

Church in Rochester, for the work done on the constitution and bylaws; to express appreciation for the way the congregation bylaws have been codified in the document as a model for other congregations in the synod; and to accept the constitution approved by the congregation on February 8, 2023 as consistent with the 2022 Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Southeastern Minnesota Synod.

- Mary Veiseth motioned to approve the consent agenda.

SC23.02.02 Motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Motion approved.

VICE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

- Vice President Dierks gave the following comments to the council:
 - Nominating Committee: Info on positions to fill had gone out early this year. She is requesting that those who are eligible and would like to serve a second term on Synod Council need to fill out a nominations form.

BISHOP'S COMMENTS

- Bishop Regina Hassanally then updated the council on the following items:
 - During two weeks in January, the Bishop and other bishops of the ELCA were hosted by Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) in the Holy Land. She noted that she saw holy land sites but was primarily there for advocacy and to see the work that they are doing there. She was there for the ordination of the first woman ordained within the ELCJHL. During this visit, she, along with others, met with regional dignitaries to hear about the needs and concerns of

the region. The Bishop witnessed the power and ministry of a small church that is doing big and important things.

- Bishop Hassanally discussed the upcoming Councils as Leaders event, which is happening on March 19 at First Lutheran in Albert Lea.
- Office Space Task Force: The Task Force has met and come up with a plan for this process, such as looking at staff needs. She noted that a lease for 2023 has been signed for our current space in Assisi Heights, but while signing it, she let them know that we are looking at various options for the future. This led to a conversation with Assisi leadership about what we need, if the cost can be lowered, etc. The goal is to be in a new space (either in a new building or within Assisi Heights at a lower rate) by 2024.
- A new office manager has been hired and will start soon. She noted that they had good candidates come forward.
 - This person will take on some of the process work within the office, hospitality work, and eventually database management, etc. This will take some of the extra workload off the current staff that has accumulated recently.

SYNOD ASSEMBLY UPDATE

- Vice President Dierks reminded council members that, if they are registered as a voting member through their congregations, then they attend assembly as a voting member of their congregation. If not, then the Synod will register them and pay for their fee through the synod.
- Change to late resolutions
 - As the synod has been moving to more frequent one-day synod assemblies, it was noticed that some of the rules within the constitution reflect a three-day assembly, and don't mention a one-day assembly. One of these rules involves late resolutions.

- Because of the time constraints at assembly, the plan is to set the rules of assembly to not accept late resolutions from the floor at assembly.
- Another change is that the Committee on Reference & Counsel is planning on having a caucus meeting prior to assembly to present and discuss resolutions that have been put forward, along with their authors. No amendments can be made during these caucuses, but people can attend and get a better understanding of resolutions prior to assembly.
- This will allow for people not to have to make snap decisions on the floor.
- **Budget Process Update**
 - To better facilitate the discussion around the budget, the budget process has been moved forward so that it can be presented earlier. This allows for feedback to be received before assembly so that budget amendments don't feel like quick decisions. An email account for the treasurer to receive suggestions and amendments has been set up.
 - A caucus meeting on the budget will also be held prior to assembly, so that people can attend and get a greater understanding of the budget.
- **Credentials Committee Appointment**
 - The following names were put forward for the Credentials Committee for the upcoming Synod Assembly.
 - Larry Iverson
 - Rev. Peg Morose
 - Burton Svendsen
 - Nancy Svendsen
- Jeff motioned to appoint Larry Iverson, Rev. Peg Morose, Burton Svendsen, and Nancy Svendsen to the Credentials Committee.

SC23.02.03 Motion to appoint Larry Iverson, Rev. Peg Morose, Burton Svendsen, and Nancy Svendsen to the Credentials Committee.

Motion approved.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

- Treasurer Jeff Chestnut gave an update on the current financials.

- Jeff noted that the 2022 year-end statement shows a \$170,000 deficit. However, Mission support was only \$1,600 off. The biggest reason for this deficit comes from a loss in investments in 2022. So far, the trends in January show a change in this pattern, with a gain on investments.
- Marshall Laidlaw motioned to receive the January financial report.

SC23.02.04 Motion to receive the January financial report.

Motion approved.

MINIMUM COMPENSATION GUIDELINES PROCESS UPDATE

- Bishop Hassanally reminded the council that the process for approving the Minimum Compensations Guidelines Task Force will shift to the fall, where they will be approved by the synod council. This is so that the guidelines better reflect the timing when they take effect. These do not need to be approved by the assembly.

PRELIMINARY 2024-2025 SPENDING PLAN REVIEW

- The Council then reviewed the preliminary 2024-2025 Spending Plan. The following items were lifted up:
 - Mission Support is currently set at \$1,575,000, but it should probably be lowered to \$1,525,000-1,550,000 based on incoming mission intents.
 - Synod Assembly: This is a cost-neutral item within the budget.
 - Personnel: Lowered by \$25,000 because of lowered benefits costs. The Bishop noted that this is a conservative decrease from earlier budget estimates.
 - New Ministry Initiatives: Set at \$15,000. This is lower than the last Spending Plan, but some of the funding for this comes from other funding streams within the budget.
 - Global Ministry: Lowered to \$5,000, as they receive a lot of undesignated funds from other sources.
 - The final total shows a deficit of \$10,258.
- Funding for Ministry Partners

- Following a general discussion of the preliminary Spending Plan, the council discussed spending to our ministry partners.
- Campus Ministry
 - Some of our ministry partners don't have a good feedback loop with the synod and synod council informing us how funds are being spent that we send them.
 - The council thought that a request for a financial statement about how funds were used when they send in a ministry report seemed appropriate.
 - Another idea was to have a representative from synod council sit on the boards of each campus ministry (perhaps with voice but no vote).
- Continuous Growth Pathways (CGP)
 - This program is largely funded by a Lilley Grant. It was written into the grant that SEMN and SWMN Synods would support this program financially at \$15,000 for 5 years.
 - About a year ago, CGP said they had enough funds for day-to-day operations, and wanted to use our yearly funds for starting an endowment, which the synod agreed to.
 - They are now asking for another Lilley grant, which would be a sustainability grant, and would be ask the synods to contribute \$15,000 and an additional \$10,000, for a total of \$25,000 yearly, for 5 more years

(one the first 5 year obligation is completed).

- Carole Solberg motioned to intend to include \$15,000 yearly toward Continuous Growth Pathways in the budget presented to the Synod Assembly for the years 2025-2029 with \$10,000 going towards the operating budget and \$5,000 towards their Endowment.

SC23.02.05 Motion to intend to include \$15,000 yearly toward Continuous Growth Pathways in the budget presented to the Synod Assembly for the years 2025-2029 with \$10,000 going towards the operating budget and \$5,000 towards their Endowment.

Motion approved.

COMMISSION FOR A RENEWED LUTHERAN CHURCH

- At the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, the assembly voted to create a commission to explore ways to "renew" the structure of the ELCA. Each synod council may nominate up to 2 candidates to be on this commission. People are also welcome to self-nominate. The final decision as to whom will sit on this commission will be made at Churchwide.
- Three people have put their names forward to be nominated by the synod council: Rev. Tim Bowman, Rev. Peg Morose, Rev. Mark Niethammer.
- John Weisenburger motioned to approve Rev. Peg Morose and Rev. Mark Niethammer as nominees for the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church.

SC23.02.06 Motion to approve Rev. Peg Morose and Rev. Mark Niethammer as nominees for the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church.

Motion approved.

PARTIAL REVIEW OF THE RETIREMENT ROSTER

- One-third of the names of those listed on the retirement roster was reviewed by the council (Last names beginning P-Z).

- After review, it was determined that no action on any names was needed.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF ALL CONGREGATIONAL CONSTITUTIONS STATUS

- A list of updated congregations was presented and reviewed, indicating updates that have been made since it was last reviewed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- The Synod Council then entered executive session at 11:32am to discuss and make changes to the roster.
- Mary Veiseth motioned to enter executive session.

SC23.02.07 Motion to enter executive session.

Motion approved.

- The following action items were made during this session.

ROSTER CHANGES

- Call to Interim Ministry/Bridge Ministry Through Synod Council (Needs Approval)
 - Rev. Dale Svendsen, Interim at Glenville Area Lutheran Parish to Interim at Deer Creek Valley, Glenville. Effective: 12/01/2022. Approved at synod council meeting 02/25/2023.
 - Rev. Michael Zaske, Interim at First English, Cannon Falls to Interim at First, Red Wing. Effective: 01/16/2023. Approved at synod council meeting 02/25/2023.
 - Rev. Gregory Schaefer, Sierra Pacific Synod to Bridge Interim at Faith, Winona. Effective: 02/01/2023. Approved at synod council meeting 02/25/2023.
 - Deacon Robert Tewes, On Leave from Call to Bridge Interim at Bear Creek, Grand Meadow. Effective: 01/02/2023. Approved at synod council meeting 02/25/2023.
- Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve Call to Interim Ministry/Bridge Ministry Through Synod Council roster changes.

SC(ES23.02.08)Motion to approve Call to Interim Ministry/Bridge

Ministry Through Synod Council roster changes.

Motion approved.

- Retirement Status (Needs Approval)
 - Rev. Arte Sharot. Effective: 01/01/2023. Approved at synod council meeting 02/25/2023.
 - Rev. Jeffrey Forbes. Effective: 02/01/2023. Approved at synod council meeting 02/25/2023.
- Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve Retirement Status roster changes.

SC(ES23.02.09)Motion to approve Retirement Status roster changes.

Motion approved.

- Death (Acknowledge Only)
 - Rev. Eldon Person, 12/16/2022.
 - Rev. Troy Nelson, 01/21/2023.
- On Leave From Call (New. Needs Approval)
 - Deacon Robert Tewes. 1st Request. Start Date: 12/01/2022. Approved at synod council meeting 02/25/2023.
 - Rev. Kristen Schlauderaff. 1st Request. Start Date: 12/18/2023. Approved at synod council meeting 02/25/2023.
- Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve On Leave from Call (New) roster changes.

SC(ES23.02.10)Motion to approve On Leave From Call (New) roster changes.

Motion approved.

- On Leave From Call (Yearly Renewal. Needs Approval)
 - Rev. Dean Smith. 3rd Request. Approved at synod council meeting 02/25/2023.
- Bishop Hassanally motioned to approved On Leave from Call (Yearly Renewal) roster changes.

SC(ES23.02.11)Motion to approve On Leave From Call (Yearly Renewal) roster changes.

Motion approved.

- Treasurer Jeff Chestnut motioned to leave executive session.

SC(ES23.02.12)Motion to leave executive session.

Motion approved.

- The Synod Council left executive session at 11:38am.

ADJOURNMENT

- Vice President Dierks declared the meeting adjourned at 11:39am.

The next meeting of the Synod Council will be held on April 15, 2023 via Zoom.

Submitted,
Rev. Josh Enderson
Synod Council Secretary

APPROVED 04/15/2023 JE