



Southeastern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 God's work. Our hands.

Southeastern Minnesota Synod Council
Meeting Minutes
September 23, 2023

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod Council met on September 23, 2023, at St. John's Lutheran Church in Owatonna, MN.

Members present: Joellen Barak, Rev. Shelley Cunningham, Hanna Herfindahl-Quint, Karen Myers, Sam Pollack, Rev. Marla Rotman, Deacon Amanda Sabelko, Brian Scott, Mona Skare, Ed Taylor, Rev. Dr. Kristen Venne, Rev. John Weisenburger, Treasurer Jeff Chestnut, Secretary Rev. Josh Enderson, Vice President Lisa Dierks, and Bishop Regina Hassanally.

Absent: Matthew Huggenvik, Marshall Laidlaw, and Carolyn Solberg.

Staff: Rev. Emily Carson, Rev. Barb Streed, Ashley Corbett, and Kathy Chatelaine.

GENERATIVE WORK

WELCOME & DEVOTIONS

- Vice President Lisa Dierks began the meeting by welcoming the council and by going over the gathering space.

INTRODUCTIONS

- Following the welcome, council members introduced themselves to one another.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST & CONFIDENTIALITY FORMS

- Vice President Dierks discussed the Conflict of Interest & Confidentiality forms and asked members of council to read through these forms, fill them out and sign them, and return them to the synod office.

DWELLING IN THE WORD

- Bishop Regina Hassanally then led a Dwelling in the Word session on Acts 15:1-20.
- One question the group reflected on together was "where is the Spirit nudging us as a church towards renewal?"
- Some responses from the large group:
 - Is the Spirit calling the church back to being a "grace-centered church"

rather than centered on the things that divide us?

- The text encourages us to ease into changes for those who might be struggling with change.
- It was noted that there needs to be discussion and dissention. Not one voice gets to make decisions but there is a need to hear from marginalized voices too.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE COMMISSION FOR A RENEWED LUTHERAN CHURCH

- Bishop Hassanally then turned the council's attention to the 2022 Churchwide Assembly's action which created the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church.
- She then invited the council to reflect on the "Statement of Purpose" sections from the constitution of the ELCA and the Models for Synods and Congregations. These areas are being reviewed by the Commission. The council was invited, in small groups, to think about how this section helps or hinders the work of the synod.
- Following small group discussions, the council discussed this topic as a large group.

FINANCIAL WORKSHOP

- Director of Evangelical Mission (DEM) Rev. Emily Carson then led a discussion on how the finances of the synod function.
- Rev. Carson walked through who has financial responsibility and management within the synod, noting that we as council are called to steward the money that is entrusted to us.
- She discussed those who deal with the synod finances daily within the synod office: accountant, staff members, treasurer, auditors, etc.
- Rev. Carson noted where the funds come from, discussing the 5 channels of generosity: ELCA ministries, Mission support, Annual Fund, Global Synod Partners, Planned Giving.
- She discussed several of the financial documents that council members will see prior to each meeting, so that they will know what to expect.
- She noted the process and timeline for the creation of the Spending Plan.

FIDUCIARY WORK

CALL TO ORDER & OVERVIEW OF AGENDA

- At 11:31am, Vice President Dierks called the meeting to order.
- She then presented the agenda for the council business. The following items were added:
 - Roster changes
 - Confirmation of Benefits for Rostered Synod Staff
- Deacon Amanda Sabelko motioned to approve the agenda with additions.

SC23.09.26 Motion to approve the agenda with additions.

Motion approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

- April 15, 2023 Synod Council Meeting Minutes
- May 6, 2023 Synod Assembly Minutes
- Reports
 - Bishop & Staff
 - Tables & Committees
- Rev. Marla Rotman motioned to approve the consent agenda.

SC23.09.27 Motion to approve the consent agenda.

Motion approved.

BISHOP'S COMMENTS

- Bishop Regina Hassanally then gave the following comments:
 - She has been invited to be on the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, which has met twice over zoom.
 - She attended the Rostered Ministers Gathering over the summer in Phoenix.
 - She was invited to preach at the New England Synod Assembly, which is our domestic synod partner.
 - There have been two ordinations since our last council meeting.
 - The synod has hosted a gathering for retired rostered leaders and spouses, and has hosted a gathering for new-to-the-synod leaders.

- She has been navigating conversations with congregations who are questioning their place in the ELCA. One has recently chosen to disaffiliate.
- Fall Theological Conference is coming up in October. It is being held earlier than usual and is in a new location.
- In November, a candidacy retreat is being planned.
- The Region 3 bishops and Assistants to the Bishop will gather in November.
- The Bishop has been invited to speak at several upcoming events around the greater ELCA this fall.
- MN Council of Churches: The board is currently involved in the search process for a new CEO. The Council for Churches will be hosting a truth-telling event in Rochester.
- Lutheran Social Services Board: Renewed energy around engaging ELCA congregations and being of service to congregations.
- She then invited Assistant to the Bishop Rev. Barb Streed to discuss several items:
 - *Minimum Compensation and Benefits Guidelines Task Force Update*: She discussed where the task force is on that process and the current timeline. They hope to have the document approved by council and out to congregations by November 1st.
 - *Synod Office Relocation*: The task force has been meeting with staff to figure out needs. They then put out an application to all rostered leaders and council presidents. Seven applications were returned. The task force met in September to create a rubric to rank them and have made site visits. They are currently in the process of deciding which meets the needs of the synod.

CONFIRMATION OF HEALTH BENEFITS SELECTION FOR ROSTERED SYNOD STAFF

- Bishop Hassanally motioned to enroll rostered staff at the Silver+ level, with an HSA contribution at level A, with the option of buying up to Gold+ at the synod's expense.

SC23.09.28 Motion to enroll rostered synod staff at the Silver+ level, with an HSA contribution at level A, with the option of buying up to Gold+ at the synod's expense.

Motion approved.

- At 12:09pm, the council broke for lunch.
- The council reconvened at 12:46pm.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

- Treasurer Jeff Chestnut and DEM Rev. Emily Carson presented the August financial report.
- Rev. Carson directed the council to the August Synod Financial Report and walked through this document.
- Karen Myers motioned to receive the August financial report.

SC23.09.29 Motion to receive the August financial report.

Motion approved.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL AUDIT

- The 01/31/2023 Audit was presented to the council.
- Joellen Barack motioned to approve the 01/31/2023 Audit Report.

SC23.09.30 Motion to approve the 01/31/2023 Audit Report.

Motion approved.

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE

- Vice President Dierks discussed the work of the Nominations Committee and the process in updating the Nominations workbook.
- She noted that the following positions will be on the ballot:
 - Treasurer
 - Synod council members
 - Synod Council youth and young adult members
 - Augsburg University Corporation Board
- She lifted up several positions that are available for synod council appointment, as they were not filled at the last synod assembly.

- One member, Sam Pollack, was elected at Synod assembly as a youth member to synod council but should have been elected as young adult. There is currently a vacancy for a young adult member on council, so she can be appointed by council to this position.
- Rev. Dr. Kristen Venne motioned to appoint Sam Pollack to the position of Synod Council-Young Adult for a 2-year term (2023-2025).

SC23.09.31 Motion to appoint Sam Pollack to the position of Synod Council-Young Adult for a 2-year term (2023-2025).

Motion approved.

- Hanna Herfindahl-Quint's name was put forward to fill the vacant youth position on synod council.
- Treasurer Jeff Chestnut motioned to appoint Hanna Herfindahl-Quint to the position of Synod Council Member-Youth (1 year term).

SC23.09.32 Motion to appoint Hanna Herfindahl-Quint to the position of Synod Council Member-Youth (1 year term, 2023-2024).

Motion approved.

ELECT AT-LARGE MEMBERS TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (1 LAY & 1 ROSTERED)

- At the start of each council year, two members of synod council (one lay and one rostered) are elected as at-large members of the executive council. These people will serve in this position for one year.
- The following names were nominated for each position:
 - Lay
 - Sam Pollack
 - Rostered
 - Rev. Marla Rotman
- Rev. Shelley Cunningham motioned to cease nominations for the position of at-large member to Executive Committee-Rostered.

SC23.09.33 Motion to cease nominations for the position of at-large member to Executive Committee-Rostered.

Motion approved.

- Treasurer Jeff Chestnut motioned to cease nominations for the position of at-large member to Executive Committee-Lay.

SC23.09.34 Motion to cease nominations for the position of at-large member to Executive Committee-Lay.

Motion approved.

- Following nominations, and as there was an equal number of nominees to positions open on the ballot, Vice President Dierks declared Sam Pollack elected to the Executive Committee At-Large Member (Lay) position and Rev. Marla Rotman elected to the Executive Committee At-Large (Rostered) position.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- Treasurer Jeff Chestnut motioned to enter executive session.

SC23.09.35 Motion to enter executive session.

Motion approved.

- At 1:32pm, the council entered executive session to discuss roster changes.
- Action items that were taken during executive session were as follows:

ROSTER CHANGES

- The following changes to the roster were made:
- Call to Interim Ministry/Bridge Ministry Through Synod Council (Needs Approval)
 - Rev. Joseph Smith, Interim at Good Shepherd, Wells to Interim at Christ, Faribault. Effective: 06/01/2023. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
 - Rev. Scott Olson, Interim at Christ, Preston to Interim, Our Savior's, Faribault. Effective: 08/16/2023. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
 - Rev. Kris Ferkin, Interim at Trinity & Wanamingo to Interim at First Evangelical, Kenyon. Effective: 09/01/2023. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
 - Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve the Call to Interim Ministry/

Bridge Ministry Through Synod Council Roster Changes.

SC(ES23.09.36) Motion to approve the Call to Interim Ministry/ Bridge Ministry Through Synod Council Roster Changes.

Motion approved.

- Call to Specialized Ministry Through Synod Council (Needs Approval)
 - Rev. Jenna Couch, On Leave from Call to Campus Pastor at Crossroads Lutheran Campus, Mankato. Effective: 10/01/2023. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
 - Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve the Call to Specialized Ministry Through Synod Council Roster Changes.

SC(ES23.09.37) Motion to approve the Call to Specialized Ministry Through Synod Council Roster Changes.

Motion approved.

- Retirement Status (Needs Approval)
 - Rev. David E. Fredrickson. Effective: 07/01/2023. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
 - Rev. Dr. Kristen Venne. Effective: 08/01/2023. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
 - Rev. John Omans. Effective: 09/01/2023. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
 - Rev. Julie Rogness. Effective: 09/01/2023. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
 - Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve the Retirement Status Roster Changes.

SC(ES23.09.38) Motion to approve the Retirement Status Roster Changes.

Motion approved.

- Death (Acknowledge Only)
 - Rev. Robert (Bob) Bergland. 05/04/2023.
 - Rev. David Bernhardt. 05/27/2023.
 - Rev. Ronald Jensen. 06/06/2023.

- On Leave From Call (New) (Needs Approval)
 - Deacon Cindy Cordes Eversole. Start Date: 11/01/2023. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
 - Rev. Jeffrey Sandgren. Start Date: 08/21/2023. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
 - Rev. Timothy McDermott. Start Date: 09/15/2023. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
 - Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve the on Leave From Call (New) Roster Changes.

SC(ES23.09.39)Motion to approve On Leave from Call (New) Roster Changes.

Motion approved.

- On Leave From Call (Yearly Renewal) (Needs Approval)
 - Rev. Peter Reuss, 3rd & Final Request. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
 - Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve the 3rd Request of On Leave from Call (Yearly Renewal) Roster Change status for Peter Reuss.

SC(ES23.09.40)Motion to approve the 3rd Request of On Leave from Call (Yearly Renewal) Roster Change status for Peter Reuss.

Motion approved.

- Rev. Cindy Fisher-Broin. 2nd Request. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
- Rev. Katherine Chatelaine-Samsen. 2nd Request. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
- Rev. Dean Aponte-Safe. 2nd Request. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
- Rev. Jenna Couch. 2nd Request. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
- Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve the On Leave from Call (Yearly Renewal) Roster Changes.

SC(ES23.09.41)Motion to approve On Leave from Call (Yearly Renewal) Roster Changes.

Motion approved.

- Study On Leave From Call (3 years) (Needs Approval)
 - Rev. Dean Smith, Requesting conversion of On Leave from Call to Study On Leave from Call for 3 years. 1st request. Approved at synod council meeting: 09/23/2023.
 - Bishop Hassanally motioned to convert On Leave from Call roster status to Study On Leave from Call Roster Change.

SC(ES23.09.42)Motion to approve the conversion of On Leave from Call Roster Change status to Study On Leave from Call Roster Change status for Rev. Dean Smith.

Motion approved.

- Treasurer Jeff Chestnut motioned to leave executive session.

SC(ES23.09.43)Motion to leave executive session.

Motion approved.

- The council left executive session at 1:46pm.

RETIRED ROSTER REVIEW

- The Review of one-third of the retirement roster was tabled until the next meeting.

ANNUAL RENEWAL OF SYNOD AUTHORIZED WORSHIPPING COMMUNITIES (SAWCs)

- This item was tabled until the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

- At 1:49pm, Vice President Dierks declared the meeting adjourned.

The next meeting of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod Council will be held on Saturday, November 18, 2023, 9-3pm.

Submitted,
Rev. Josh Enderson
Synod Council Secretary
APPROVED 11/18/2023 JE