



## **Southeastern Minnesota Synod Council Meeting Minutes September 13, 2025**

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod Council met on September 13, 2025, at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Mankato, MN.

Members present:

Rev. Jessica Bakken Busch, Rev. Shawn Brooks, Rev. Anna Ferro, David Holger, Matthew Huggenvik, Rev. Cheryl Indehar, Barbara Lake, Bradley Leathers, Sam Pollack, Roy Srp, Dr. Joyce Thompsen, Treasurer Tammy Dahlvang, Secretary Rev. Josh Enderson, Vice President Lisa Dierks, and Bishop Regina Hassanally.

Absent: Jennifer Levison, Rev. Sam Mailleue, and Ed Taylor.

Staff: Rev. Emily Carson, Rev. Barb Streed, Rev. Matt Larson, Kathy Chatelaine.

### **GENERATIVE MEETING**

- Vice President Lisa Dierks welcomed council members and gave an overview of the meeting.
- Following this, the council began with devotions.
- She noted that Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality forms will be distributed to council members via email soon.
- Council members got to know one another better with a concentric circles activity.
- Following this, the roles of a council member and the synod council were explained, and then individual staff members introduced themselves and their role on staff.
- DEM Rev. Emily Carson and Treasurer Tammy Dahlvang then walked the council through the basics of the synod's finances. They discussed the giving process and channels of giving, as well as walked through the financial documents that are sent to council members prior to each meeting and how to navigate them.
- Following this, those members who attended the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly gave some reflections.

### **CALL TO ORDER & OVERVIEW OF AGENDA**

- Vice President Dierks called the meeting to order at 12:32pm.
- She presented the agenda.
- Roy Srp motioned to approve the agenda.

#### **SC25.09.42 Motion to approve the agenda.**

**Motion approved.**

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

- Minutes from July 15, 2025 Meeting.
- Roy Srp motioned to approve the consent agenda.

#### **SC25.09.43 Motion to approve the consent agenda.**

**Motion approved.**

### **VICE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS**

- Vice President Dierks then gave the following comments:
  - She gave an update on the 2026 Minimum Compensation and Benefits Guidelines document and the work of the task force that prepared it.

- Rev. Barb Streed was available to give updates from the Minimum Compensation and Benefits Guidelines Task Force. The task force met and worked on the document September 2-5. The document is currently in the public review and comment period, which will last for 10 days (September 5-15). So far, one comment on clarification has come through. Others have just been comments of thanks.
- Dr. Joyce Thompsen motioned to approve the 2026 Minimum Compensation and Benefits Guidelines document, to be published on the SEMN Synod website and emailed directly to rostered ministers and council presidents, on September 15, 2025.
  - Treasurer Tammy Dahlvang abstained from the vote.

**SC25.09.44 Motion to approve the 2026 Minimum Compensation and Benefits Guidelines document, to be published on the SEMN Synod website and emailed directly to rostered ministers and council presidents, on September 15, 2025.**

**Motion approved.**

- Dr. Joyce Thompsen gave a commendation to the committee for their work on this document.

**BISHOP'S COMMENTS**

- Bishop Regina Hassanally then gave the following comments to the council:
  - She intends to host listening sessions around the synod. A focusing question for these gatherings will be: "What do we do together that matters?" These will be primarily geared towards lay people. It will be a time to get the pulse of the synod and of the lay people of this synod. What are we doing for the people that we serve, and does the budget align with that?
  - She noted that the New to the Synod Event is coming up.
  - A Churchwide Assembly Town Hall will be held on September 25. This will allow for CWA voting members to share their experiences with those who would like more information on actions that were taken, the event, etc.
  - The retired rostered leaders event is moving back to the spring this year.
  - A visit to our global partner synod in the Central Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania is coming up in January.
  - The Bishop will be going to South Sudan in October to do some on-the-ground strategizing with this South Sudan advisory team and our global partners in S. Sudan.
  - She noted that, as seminary is basically tuition free at most ELCA seminaries, our Seminary Fund in designated giving is currently underutilized. One donor has asked to redesignate his gift to future leader development, but not towards seminary tuition. Rev. Carson and the Bishop are going to explore ways to redesignate this in a more beneficial way.
  - She lifted up the board work that she is currently doing: MN Council of Churches; Lutheran Social Services Board; Augsburg Board of Regents; and Conference of Bishops (she has been asked to serve on the Portico board as the advisory bishop, and also as the chair of the Good Sam fund).

**CONFIRMATION OF PORTICO BENEFITS FOR SYNOD STAFF**

- Bishop Hassanally presented recommendations for Portico benefits for synod staff. She noted that Portico has made significant changes to its health plan options for 2026.
  - The council discussed these options, and which would be best for the staff of the synod.
- Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve the following Portico benefits selection for the synod staff for 2026: the Select HDHP 2000 plan (with synod contributing up to \$150/month to an HSA) with the option for a buyup to the Select Copay 2000 plan (with the synod covering the cost of the buyup).

**SC25.09.45 Motion to approve the following Portico benefits selection for the synod staff for 2026: the Select HDHP 2000 plan (with synod contributing up to \$150/month to an HSA) with the option for a buyup to the Select Copay 2000 plan (with the synod covering the cost of the buyup).**

**Motion approved.**

## FINANCIAL REPORTS

- Treasurer Tammy Dahlvang presented the financial reports.
  - She noted that we have -\$19,530 bottom line at this time. As much of our mission support comes in in the last quarter of the year, this is not something to be concerned about at this time.
- Dave Holdger motioned to receive the financial reports.

### **SC25.09.46 Motion to receive the financial reports. Motion approved.**

## ANNUAL FINANCIAL AUDIT

- Treasurer Dahlvang presented the results of the Annual Financial Audit for the year ending 01/31/2025.
- Treasurer Dhalvang walked through the results of the audit with the council and lifted up highlights from the document.
- Barbara Lake motioned to approve the Financial Audit for the year ending 01/31/2025.

### **SC25.09.47 Motion to approve the Financial Audit for the year ending 01/31/2025. Motion approved.**

## CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT UPDATES FROM 2025 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

- Secretary Rev. Josh Enderson discussed the required changes to the Synod's constitution and bylaws that were made following the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.
- He then lifted up some of the recommended amendments that will need to be approved by the synod assembly in 2026.
  - One in particular was discussed, a new amendment: S10.06: "No person related to a synod staff member shall be eligible for nomination to or membership on the Synod Council [or the following synod committees: \_\_\_\_\_]. For this purpose, a related individual is one who, with respect to the synod employee, is a spouse, parent, son, daughter, sibling, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, grandparent, grandchild, including corresponding members of blended families and in-laws (parent, son, daughter, or sibling of a spouse, spouse of a sibling, or the parent or sibling of the spouse of a sibling)."
  - The council discussed what committees might be included in this provision and felt that more time would be needed before action could be taken on this.
- Barbara Lake motioned to table until the November synod council meeting.

### **SC25.09.48 Motion to table until the November synod council meeting. Motion approved.**

## APPOINTMENT OF CROSSROADS CAMPUS MINISTRY BOARD MEMBERS

- The following names were put forward for appointment to the Crossroads Campus Ministry Board:
  - Mackenzie Otterson (MSU Alum from 2017)
  - Deacon Amanda Sabelko-Gloria Dei, Rochester
  - Rev. Scott Richards-Trinity, Gaylord
- Bishop Hassanally motioned to appoint Mackenzie Otterson, Deacon Amanda Sabelko, and Rev. Scott Richards to the Crossroads Campus Ministry board.

### **SC25.09.49 Motion to appoint Mackenzie Otterson, Deacon Amanda Sabelko, and Rev. Scott Richards to the Crossroads Campus Ministry board. Motion approved.**

## NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE

- Vice President Dierks then gave an update on the Nominations Committee.
  - She reviewed open positions for 2026 or positions that were available for synod council appointment.

- Two names were put forward for appointment to open positions on the Nominations Committee: Rev. Heath Queen (MN) and Katherine Holger (RR).
- Bishop Hassanally motioned to appoint Rev. Heath Queen (MN) and Katherine Holger (RR) to the synod nominating committee (2025-2028).
  - Dave Holger abstained from the vote.

**SC25.09.50 Motion to appoint Rev. Heath Queen (MN) and Katherine Holger (RR) to the synod nominating committee (2025-2028).**

**Motion approved.**

**ELECTION OF AT-LARGE MEMBERS TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

- One Lay and One Rostered member are elected by the council to be on the Executive Committee. These positions are one-year terms.
- Vice President Dierks called for nominations from the floor to fill these positions.
- The following names were put forward for each position:
  - Executive Committee-At-Large (Rostered): Rev. Shawn Brooks
  - Executive Committee-At-Large (Lay): Dr. Joyce Thompsen
- Dr. Joyce Thompsen motioned to cease nominations for Executive Committee-At Large (Rostered) and to cast a unanimous ballot for Rev. Shawn Brooks.

**SC25.09.51 Motion to cease nominations for Executive Committee-At Large (Rostered) and to cast a unanimous ballot for Rev. Shawn Brooks.**

**Motion approved.**

- Matt Huggenvik motioned to cease nominations for Executive Committee-At Large (Lay) and to cast a unanimous ballot for Dr. Joyce Thompsen.

**SC25.09.52 Motion to cease nominations for Executive Committee-At Large (Lay) and to cast a unanimous ballot for Dr. Joyce Thompsen.**

**Motion approved.**

- Rev. Shawn Brooks was declared elected to the Executive Committee-At Large (Rostered) position for a one-year term and Dr. Joyce Thompsen was declared elected to the Executive Committee-At Large (Lay) position for a one-year term.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- Rey Srp motioned to enter executive session.

**SC25.09.53 Motion to enter executive session.**

**Motion approved.**

- At 2:15pm, the synod council entered executive session to discuss changes to the roster.
- The following action items were taken during this time:
  - Call to Specialized Ministry Through Synod Council (Needs Approval)
    - Rev. Deborah Lyanga, Rostered Minister of the Central Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT-CD) to Letter of Invitation to Extended Service as Pastor at Good Shepherd of Wells. Effective: 09/21/2025. Approved at synod council meeting; 09/13/2025.
  - Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve a Call to Specialized Ministry Through Synod Council for Rev. Deborah Lyanga.

**ES(SC25.09.54) Motion to approve a Call to Specialized Ministry Through Synod Council for Rev. Deborah Lyanga.**

**Motion approved.**

- On Leave From Call (Needs Approval)
  - Rev. Elizabeth Shank. Start Date: 09/08/2025. Approved at synod council meeting; 09/13/2025.
  - Rev. Henry Burt. Start Date: 08/11/2025. Approved at synod council meeting; 09/13/2025.
- Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve On Leave from Call (New) Status for Rev. Elizabeth Shank and Rev. Henry Burt.

**ES(SC25.09.55) Motion to approve On Leave from Call (New) Status for Rev. Elizabeth Shank and Rev. Henry Burt.**

**Motion approved.**

- Matt Huggenvik motioned to adjourn executive session.

**ES(SC25.09.56) Motion to adjourn executive session.**

**Motion approved.**

- The council adjourned executive session at 2:23pm.

**ADJOURNMENT**

- Vice President Dierks declared the council meeting adjourned at 2:27pm.

The next meeting of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod Council is scheduled for November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025 in person at Zumbrota.

Submitted,  
Rev. Josh Enderson  
Synod Council Secretary

APPROVED 11/22/25 JE