



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

Southeastern Minnesota Synod Council Meeting Minutes **November 22, 2025**

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod Council met on November 22, 2025, at United Redeemer Lutheran Church in Zumbrota, MN.

Members present: Rev. Jessica Bakken Busch, Rev. Shawn Brooks, Rev. Anna Ferro, David Holger, Matthew Huggenvik, Rev. Cheryl Indehar, Barbara Lake, Bradley Leathers, Jennifer Levison, Rev. Sam Mailleue, Sam Pollack, Roy Srp, Ed Taylor, Dr. Joyce Thompson, Secretary Rev. Josh Enderson, Vice President Lisa Dierks, and Bishop Regina Hassanally.

Absent: Treasurer Tammy Dahlvang,

WELCOME & OVERVIEW

- Vice President Lisa Dierks welcomed council members and gave an overview of the meeting.
- She then began with devotions.
- Following this, Vice President Dierks led a group activity called "Lucky Penny," which allowed for the group to introduce themselves to one another.

CALL TO ORDER & OVERVIEW OF AGENDA

- Vice President Dierks called the meeting to order at 9:43am.
- She then presented the agenda. The following items were added:
 - Appoint 2-3 synod council members to the spending plan task force.
- Barbara Lake motioned to approve the agenda as amended.

SC25.11.57 Motion to approve the agenda as amended.
Motion approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Minutes from September 13, 2025 Synod Council Meeting.
- Reports from Staff, Committees, and Tables
- Roy Srp motioned to approve the consent agenda.

SC25.11.58 Motion to approve the consent agenda.
Motion approved.

VICE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

- Vice President Dierks then gave the following comments to the council:
 - She noted that nominations are open for positions on synod council and other leadership positions within the synod.

BISHOP'S COMMENTS

- Bishop Regina Hassanally gave these comments to the council:
 - Synod Ministries
 - The synod recently hosted a "New to the Synod" event. This was held at St. Peters in Northfield.

- The Fall Theological Conference was held in October. Bishop Emeritus Leilah Ortiz was the speaker. She will be invited back to do a keynote at Synod Assembly in the spring.
- Rev. Matt Larson recently held a candidacy retreat.
- The Bishop recently installed Pastor Debora Lyanga at Good Shepherd in Wells.
- She was present at first call meetings and Power and Boundaries workshops this fall.
- Denominational Ministries
 - She was a part of the installation of the new presiding bishop Yehiel Curry. The Conference of Bishops held a meeting in Minneapolis at the same time, which she also attended.
 - The Bishop has been asked to serve on the Portico board and has participated in her first board meeting.
 - She was asked to speak at Metro Chicago Synod's Fall Theological Conference.
 - She is serving on the task force for interdependence and purpose and is the only synod bishop on this task force. This task force is to have its work done by 2027.
- Wider Church
 - The Bishop was invited to preach at the Episcopal Church in Minnesota's annual gathering, which was held in Rochester.
 - She continues to serve on the Minnesota Council of Church's board and executive committee.
 - The synod staff continues to work to understand the new Minnesota Paid Leave law, as well as the On Leave From Call changes that came out of the last Churchwide Assembly.

ELCA MISSION SUPPORT REPORT

- A report of the Synod's giving to ELCA Mission support was reviewed, with the following totals. This info was encouraged to be shared with congregations so that people understand where their mission support goes.
 - \$238,011 of the SEMN's Mission Support goes to fund work in the US.
 - \$153,138 funds the work of global Lutheran churches and issues around the world.
 - \$259,669 works to support the mission and ministry of the larger church.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

- Treasurer Tammy Dahlvang was unable to be at the meeting but sent a written update. The following items from the latest financial reports were highlighted.
 - She noted that the financial reports for the Nuer Community show stronger activity in 2025 than in 2024. Income has been steadier and the year-to-date position is improved.
 - The General Synod Financial Report shows a year-to-date loss of \$6,707. Despite this, the overall financial picture is steady. There is no change to long term trends. Much of the change between 2024 and 2025 numbers relates to the timing of income rather than a change to trends. She noted that five months of 2025 were stronger than 2024, showing that there is meaningful support for our shared ministry and optimism as we move forward.
- Jen Levison motioned to receive the financial reports.

SC25.11.59 Motion to receive the financial reports.

Motion approved.

STAFF HOUSING ALLOWANCES

- Bishop Hassanally presented staff housing allowances for 2026 for Bishop Regina Hassanally, Rev. Matt Larson, and Rev. Barb Streed at the following amounts:
 - Bishop Hassanally: \$47,000
 - Rev. Matt Larson: \$44,000
 - Rev. Barb Streed: \$19,200
- Bishop Regina Hassanally motioned to approve the housing allowances for Bishop Regina Hassanally at \$47,000, Rev. Matt Larson at \$44,000, and Rev. Barb Streed at \$19,200 for the calendar year 2026 and all future years unless otherwise provided.

SC25.11.60 Motion to approve the housing allowances for Bishop Regina Hassanally at \$47,000, Rev. Matt Larson at \$44,000, and Rev. Barb Streed at \$19,200 for the calendar year 2026 and all future years unless otherwise provided.

Motion approved.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO SPENDING PLAN TASK FORCE

- Each year, members are appointed to help put together the spending plan for approval at the upcoming synod assembly.
- Council members were asked to volunteer for this position. The following members put their names forward to be on this task force: Jen Levison, Dave Holger, Rev. Cheryl Indehar, Barbra Lake

SC25.11.61 Motion to appoint Jen Levison, Dave Holger, Rev. Cheryl Indehar, and Barbra Lake

to the spending plan task force.

Motion approved.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT UPDATED FROM CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

- This topic had been tabled from the September synod council meeting.
- The council was discussing the wording of recommended constitutional 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)."
- They had requested a current list of synod committees to make the proper recommendation for this amendment. This list was provided to the council at the meeting.
- There was discussion about which committees should be added to this provision, if any, with discussion particularly around the Committee on the Election of a bishop. It was felt that there were appropriate checks and balances for these committees and to keep the language simple.
- Dr. Joyce Thompson motioned to recommend putting forward S10.06.: "No person related to a synod staff member shall be eligible for nomination to or membership on the Synod Council. 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)." for approval by the 2026 SEMN Synod Assembly."

SC25.11.62 Motion to recommend putting forward S10.06.: “No person related to a synod staff member shall be eligible for nomination to or membership on the Synod Council. 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).” for approval by the 2026 SEMN Synod Assembly.

Motion approved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- Dave Holger motioned to enter executive session.

SC25.11.63 Motion to enter executive session.

Motion approved.

- The council entered executive session at 10:35am to discuss changes to the roster. The following action items were taken during this session:
- Call to Specialized Ministry Through Synod Council (Needs Approval)
 - Rev. Scott T. Westphal, Saint Paul Area Synod to Chaplain at the Minnesota Correctional Facility—Faribault—Effective: 09/24/2025. Approved at Synod Council Meeting: 11/22/2025.
- Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve Call to Specialized Ministry Through Synod Council Roster Change for Rev. Scott T. Westphal.

ES(SC25.11.64) Motion to approve Call to Specialized Ministry Through Synod Council Roster Change for Rev. Scott T. Westphal.

Motion approved.

- Retirement Status (Needs Approval)
 - Rev. Dr. Glenn Monson—Effective: 01/01/2026. Approved at Synod Council Meeting: 11/22/2025.
- Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve Retirement Status Roster Change for Rev. Dr. Glen Monson.

ES(SC25.11.65) Motion to approve Retirement Status Roster Change for Rev. Dr. Glen Monson.

Motion approved.

- On Leave From Call (New—Needs Approval)
 - Rev. Jolene Knudson-Hanse—Start Date: 09/30/2025. Approved at Synod Council Meeting: 11/22/2025.
- Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve On Leave From Call (New) Request for Rev. Jolene Knudson-Hanse.

ES(SC25.11.66) Motion to approve On Leave From Call (New) Request for Rev. Jolene Knudson-Hanse.

Motion approved.

- Rev. Katherine Fick—Start Date: 01/01/2026. Approved at Synod Council Meeting: 11/22/2025.
- Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve On Leave From Call (New) Request for Rev. Katherine Fick.

ES(SC25.11.67) Motion to approve On Leave From Call (New) Request for Rev. Katherine Fick.

Motion approved.

- On Leave From Call (Yearly Renewal—Needs Approval)
 - Deacon Cindy Cordes-Eversole—3rd and Final Request. Approved at Synod Council Meeting: 11/22/2025.
- Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve On Leave From Call (Yearly Renewal) Request for Deacon Cindy Cordes-Eversole.

ES(SC25.11.68) Motion to approve On Leave From Call (Yearly Renewal) Request for Deacon Cindy Cordes-Eversole.

Motion approved.

- On Leave From Call-Continuation (2-Year Renewal—Needs Approval)
 - Rev. Rebekah Timm Barnhart—2nd and Final Request. Approved at Synod Council Meeting: 11/22/2025.
- Bishop Hassanally motioned to approve On Leave From Call-Continuation (2 Year renewal) Request for Rev. Rebekah Timm Barnhart.

ES(SC25.11.69) Motion to approve On Leave From Call-Continuation (2 Year Renewal) Request for Rev. Rebekah Timm Barnhart.

Motion approved.

- Jen Levison motioned to adjourn executive session

ES(SC25.11.70) Motion to adjourn executive session.

Motion approved.

- The council adjourned executive session at 10:41am.

ADJOURNMENT

- Vice President Dierks declared the business meeting adjourned at 10:48am.

GENERATIVE WORK—REFERENCE AND COUNSEL

- Dave Holger, who serves on the Committee on Reference & Counsel, gave a presentation on this committee's work. He presented about the makeup of the committee, the responsibilities that it has, and the work that it does. Dave noted the process for submitting, editing, and bringing a resolution before the assembly and lifted up recent resolutions.
- Following this overview, the synod council discussed ways that resolutions and the work of this committee could be better presented to congregations and the synod at large. Some ideas that came from this discussion were:
 - Small vignettes of adopted resolutions could be put together to share with congregations, to spread the word of them and how congregations might institute them in their settings.

- It was felt that an all-encompassing archive should be set up for Reference & Counsel, so that adopted resolutions can be digitized and easily accessible. The full archive would be available for the committee, and more recent resolutions would be available on the synod website. Matt Huggenvik volunteered to go to the synod office to work with the staff to begin setting up this process. Ashley Corbett might also be asked to come to the February meeting if she would like more info about what to add to the website.
- Continued conversation is needed on informing churches about the resolution process, so that they can feel called to use it.
- Continue to announce previously adopted resolutions at synod assemblies.

Following this, the council broke for lunch at 12:15pm.

The next meeting of the synod council will be in February 2026 via Zoom.

Submitted,
Rev. Josh Enderson
Synod Council Secretary

APPROVED 02/21/2026 JE