

**Southern Ohio Synod – ELCA
Synod Council Hybrid/In Person and Electronic Meeting
April 29, 2023**

Call to Order:

Vice President Ellis called the Synod Council meeting to order at 9:30 am. Secretary Fischer took a roll call vote and confirmed a quorum was present.

Roll Call:

Members present: Rev. Matt Byrd, Rev. Mark Combs, Mr. Rick Davila, Bishop Suzanne D. Dillahun, Mr. David Drumm, Ms. Marjorie Ellis, Ms. Holly Fischer, Rev. Bonnie Gerber, Ms. Jeni Gray, Mr. Roy Hart, Mr. Matthew Hazzard, Rev. Stephen Kimm, Rev. Laura Leach-Shreffler, Mr. Imanuel Lyatuu, Ms. Abbie McCandlish, Mr. David Miser, Mr. Kevin Pyle, Ms. Michelle Riesbeck, Mr. Ethan Roberts, Ms. Laura Schmidt, Ms. Cindy Schrader, Rev. Cheryl Siegenthaler, Ms. Kathie Skamfer, Mr. Doug Ware, Rev. Dr. Kenneth R. Witt.

Members excused: Ms. Robin Kaelin, Ms. Marcia Ward.

Members absent:

Also present for some or all of the meeting were: Rev. Robert Abrams, Rev. Karl Beirmann, Mr. Josh Brodbeck, Rev. Rebecca Grate, Rev. Katie Kerrigan, Ms. Kim Uemura, Ms. Rebecca Witt.

Vice-President Ellis asked that participants identify themselves before speaking.

Mr. David Drumm opened with devotions.

Review and Approval of Agenda of the 04/29/2023 Meeting:

The Agenda for the day was reviewed.

VOTED:

SC.23.04.01 To approve the 04/29/2023 Agenda. (Schmidt/Pyle) APPROVED.

Review and Approval of Minutes of the January 28, 2023 Meeting:

The Minutes of the above Council meeting were reviewed.

VOTED:

**SC.23.04.02 To approve the Minutes of the 01/28/2023 meeting as submitted.
(Hazzard/Drumm) APPROVED.**

Reports of the Officers and Executive Committee:

Vice President

Vice President Ellis provided a verbal report. She shared information from the last ELCA Vice-Presidents' meeting. Ms. Ellis indicated the group is still working on resolutions from the Churchwide Assembly and are working on developing the team for a commission on how we can change the Church for the future, with the first meeting scheduled for July 13 -15, 2023. Ms. Ellis and the Bishop asked for prayers for this work. Ms. Ellis shared that this is her last meeting as Vice-President and expressed her appreciation for the work of the Council and Southern Ohio Synod. The Bishop thanked Ms. Ellis for her many years of service.

Secretary

Ms. Fischer reported that the Region 6 Archivist position is still vacant. Ms. Fischer reported that the Executive Committee met on April 24, 2023, and is recommending that Council approve the 2022 Audit Report, as follows:

SC.23.04.03

To receive and accept the 2022 Audit Report as recommended by the Executive Committee, and to pass this on to Synod Assembly for review and acceptance. (Fischer)

Discussion: the Bishop referred to the Audit Report (evaluating the financial position of the Synod as of January 31, 2023 and 2022) in the Council materials. Treasurer Pyle indicated that to summarize, the Report demonstrates that the Synod is doing well and there are no issues identified. Ms. Witt highlighted some changes from 2022 to 2023. For example, some funds in liquid cash/cash equivalents were moved to investments (e.g., money market accounts and certificates of deposit) in order to earn interest income. Total assets were slightly higher in 2023 than 2022. In 2023, the lease expense is now reflected as a liability reflecting a change in accounting standards in this regard, and the leasehold right is also recorded as an asset. The Bishop reminded the Council that the Audit Report can be accepted by, but cannot be revised by the Synod Assembly or Synod Council.

APPROVED.

Treasurer

Treasurer Pyle indicated that the Executive Committee is recommending, based on the Finance Team's recommendation, that a Restricted Fund for Paraclete Post be established. Mr. Hazzard provided information regarding this program, which is intended to accept donations and fund activities of the Paraclete Post project, which provides faith-based books to families with children. An initial pilot was conducted with thirty families and

subsequently the program applied for a grant to help build family faith-based activities. Another pilot was conducted with fifty families during Holy Week. Mr. Hazzard shared that ecumenical support has been provided and the program now has an office location. If this grant, which is for 5 years, is received our goal is to have five hundred families by the end of the year and to add 30% per year. Pastor Kerrigan thanked Mr. Hazzard for the intentional approach he has taken and for his hard work on this initiative.

VOTED:
SC.23.04.04

To recommend that Synod Council establish, as recommended by the Finance Team and the Executive Committee, a restricted fund entitled Paraclete Post which is intended to accept donations and fund activities of the Paraclete Post project which provides faith-based books to families with children.

(Pyle) APPROVED.

Treasurer Pyle indicated that the Executive Committee is also recommending that Apple Growth Partners be utilized for the 2023 audit. He clarified that although this would be the same firm, the actual auditors conducting the audit would be different to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest.

VOTED:
SC.23.04.05

To recommend that Synod Council appoint Apple Growth Partners to conduct the 2023 Audit, as recommended by the Finance Team, and refer this to Synod Assembly.

(Pyle) APPROVED.

Treasurer Pyle shared that this is his last official Synod Council meeting. He expressed his appreciation for working with Council members. The Synod is in a strong financial position and state of organization compared to eight years ago when he first undertook this office. He shared some ideas that are planned for the future including the establishment of a new interest-bearing account. The Bishop noted that the Treasurer position is an appointed, not an elected position in order to ensure the individual has experience in financial matters. Bishop noted her appreciation for Treasurer Pyle's outstanding service, indicating that he has served two terms and will be acknowledged for his service at the Synod Assembly.

VOTED:
SC.23.04.06

To recommend that Synod Council appoint Ms. Rebecca Witt as Southern Ohio Synod Treasurer for a 4 year term, beginning June 3, 2023 to 2027.

(Fischer/ Schmidt)

Ms. Witt shared information regarding her background in accounting and finance. She is currently the CFO for South Central Power which covers the Cincinnati-Wheeling WV geographic territory. She has also been the treasurer for several congregations and is currently a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Lancaster. Ms. Witt thanked Treasurer Pyle for his excellent work.

APPROVED.

The Council congratulated Ms. Witt.

Ms. Ellis called for a recess at 10:38 am.
The meeting resumed at 10:47 am.

Bishop

The Bishop's Report is attached to these minutes for review. In addition to her written report, the Bishop provided information, and invited staff members to provide verbal reports as discussed below.

1. The Bishop provided information regarding the Synod Assembly agenda, nominations slate, and rules of procedure. The theme of this Assembly is "Hope in Believing" based on Romans 15:13. She thanked Peace Lutheran Church in Beavercreek for hosting the Assembly. This will be a one-day event which is new for the Synod. She thanked the Assembly planning team, including Michelle Riesbeck, for their work. We will be working with paper ballots and utilizing a consent agenda for some items. On May 9 and May 23, 2023, we will host pre-Assembly information meetings to discuss agenda items including required Constitutional changes. The Bishop noted that for some positions on the nomination slate, Council has no recommended candidates. If there are no candidates from the floor at Assembly, following Assembly the Council would appoint individuals to the position(s) according to the Synod's Constitution.

The Bishop shared for future planning we will be reviewing our governance structure and Constitution, so these are aligned to a focus on mission work. The Bishop thanked Mr. Roy Hart for his work in chairing the Synod Constitution Review Committee.

VOTED:

SC.23.04.07 To approve the Synod Assembly Agenda as amended to reflect the address for the Assembly location, and to recommend this be approved at Assembly. (Kimm/Pyle)

APPROVED

Vice-President Ellis reviewed the members of Council who will be leaving their positions and thanked them for their service.

VOTED:

SC.23.04.08 To approve the 2023 Nomination Slate recommended by the Nominations Committee and recommend this be approved at Assembly. (Witt)

APPROVED

VOTED:

SC.23.04.09 To approve the 2023 Rules of Procedure, as amended, and recommend this be approved at Assembly. (Pyle/Witt)

APPROVED

2. The Bishop provided an update on Thrive! We have received over \$ 1 million. She expressed gratefulness for the generosity especially from the small to medium size congregations who have contributed significantly. She noted that Pastor Donner, who extended his time for an additional year to ensure we had a campaign manager, will conclude his work on June 30, 2023.
3. The Bishop recognized and thanked Pastor Karl Biermann and asked him to speak on his work.
4. The Bishop asked Pastor Rebecca Grate to provide an update on MomenToUs. Pastor Grate noted this ministry launched on Easter Sunday. She shared graphics and noted a larger number of social media podcast downloads than expected.
5. The Bishop provided background information regarding Pastors Timothy and Constance Mentzer. Pastor Tim has served at a congregation in Pennsylvania for the past 18 years. He has been working with our Outside the Box team for the past 18 months. He has a passion for discipleship and helping people share their faith stories, which aligns with the Synod's "Clarifying" vision. Council will vote today on extending a call to Pastor Tim as a full-time Assistant to the Bishop for Discipleship Engagement. The Council

will also vote on extending a part-time call to Pastor Connie Mentzer as an Assistant to the Bishop for Discipleship Leadership Engagement. Pastor Connie would be working with the lay ministry recruitment, working with the Lay Ministry Academy and Candidacy Committee. She has been at Advent Lutheran Church in York Pennsylvania for past 15 years as a Senior Pastor. She has worked on the Candidacy Committee in her Synod. She also has experience as a grant writer, enabling the SOS to be better situated to apply for and receive available grant monies. The expected start date for the Mentzers would be July 1, 2023.

6. The Bishop provided an updated on the SOS Vision and provided a “Clarifying our Strategic Vision” graphic developed by Chris Clothier.

Ms. Ellis called for a lunch recess at 11:53 am.

Mr. Kevin Pyle offered a luncheon prayer.

The meeting resumed at 12:32 pm

Mr. Davila commented on the SOS Vision. In reviewing the compensation guidelines for pastors, how do our guidelines change for pastors when worship is online, and hours are variable? How do we keep those standards in place? The Bishop indicated the guidelines apply to pastors whose worship communities are online. This could change as the church changes, but currently we are still looking at the traditional bricks and mortar with compensation; and although we encourage congregations to follow the guidelines, especially in first call, the guidelines are not mandatory.

Vice-President Ellis introduced Pastor Tim and Pastor Connie Mentzer and invited them to speak. After speaking, they left the meeting while consideration of their calls was discussed.

VOTED:
SC.23.04.10

To extend a synod council call to Rev. Constance Mentzer to serve as Assistant to the Bishop for Discipleship Leadership Engagement effective July 1, 2023. (Shreffler/Pyle)

APPROVED

**VOTED:
SC.23.04.11**

To extend a synod council call to Rev. Timothy Mentzer to serve as Assistant to the Bishop for Discipleship Leadership Engagement effective July 1, 2023. (Skamfer/Fischer)

APPROVED

Report of Auxiliaries

Mr. Drumm provided a written report from the Lutheran Men in Mission. Mr. Drumm shared highlights from the report. He shared that the group recently discussed the topic of which Bible translation is right for you?

Ms. Kaelin had a schedule conflict and was not able to attend the meeting to provide a report from WELCA.

The Reports of the Officers and the Lutheran Men in Mission were then received by the Synod Council.

The Bishop provided information concerning the legal and governance agenda items. Josh Brodbeck discussed the 2024-2025 proposed Rostered Ministers Compensation Guidelines and the work of the Compensation Taskforce. A cost increase of 6.5% is included, consistent with the Consumer Price Index. This increase may pose an issue for congregation budgets and could also discourage the use of the Guidelines, but ultimately the proposal is to move forward with this increase. Pastor Witt shared that another term that might be used is Compensation “Standards” rather than Guidelines.

**VOTED:
SC.23.04.12**

To change the nomenclature globally to Rostered Ministers Compensation “Standards” instead of “Guidelines.” (Witt/Pyle).

Discussion ensued. Mr. Brodbeck shared that the “Guidelines” are based in part on geographic regions, so the Chicago area would have higher compensation guidelines than areas with a lower cost of living. He noted that part of the rationale was that inflation is outpacing salaries in all sectors and the Taskforce did not want the Synod to get behind in keeping up with inflationary pressures. Pastor Abrams shared that in the call matching process candidates do review the compensation guidelines for synods as a factor in their decision-making. Mr. Lyatuu had a question as to how these “Guidelines” or “Standards” would apply to small congregations – is there a cap on compensation? Pastor Abrams shared that in the call process a call could be part-time or a 75% call if the standard of compensation could not

be paid. Ms. Ellis noted that the Pulpit Supply Rates are not recommended but are required rates.

APPROVED.

EN BLOC

VOTED:

SC.23.04.13 To approve the En Bloc Recommendations. (Fischer/Pyle)

APPROVED with Doug Ware abstaining.

Rostered Ministers Status

On Leave from Call

RECOMMENDATION:

- Rev. Catrina Hawkins-Bowles, 1st yr. (6/1/2023)
- Rev. Sally Padgett, 2nd yr. (6/12/2023)

Retired Status

RECOMMENDATION:

- Rev. Larry A. Bannick (5/1/2023)
- Rev. Mary J. Molnar (5/1/2023)
- Rev. Roger D. Quay (5/1/2023)
- Rev. Monte A. Stevens (6/1/2023)

Disability Status

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Extension of Call

RECOMMENDATION:

- See above actions regarding Pastors Timothy Mentzer and Pastor Constance Mentzer.

Affirmation and Renewal of Appointment of Synod Authorized Ministers

RECOMMENDATION:

- To appoint Ms. Sara Klein - SAM, to New Hope Lutheran Church, Adamsville OH.
- To appoint Mr. Doug Ware - SAM, to Covenant Lutheran Church, St. Paris OH.

Affirmation and Renewal of Synod Council Calls

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Removal/ Resignation from the ELCA Roster

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Legal and Governance

RECOMMENDATION:

- To approve 2024-25 Rostered Ministers Compensation Standards and Pulpit Supply rates.
- To approve congregation constitutions for:
 - Fellowship Lutheran Church, Columbus OH
 - Trinity Lutheran Church, Circleville OH

Information: N/A

Other Business

Mr. Drumm shared that the ELCA Hunger Grants are available, and this is a good time to make an application. Pastor Kerrigan indicated the full application can be submitted through Grant Maker in June.

Pastor Witt offered a closing prayer.

SC.23.04.14 To adjourn the meeting (Schmidt /Ware)

APPROVED.

The meeting was then adjourned at 1:43 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Holly R. Fischer
Synod Council Secretary