

**Southern Ohio Synod – ELCA  
Synod Council Electronic Meeting  
September 11, 2021**

Call to Order:

Vice President Ellis called the Synod Council meeting to order a 9:05 AM and took a roll call vote in absences of Secretary Fischer and confirmed a quorum was present.

Roll Call:

Members present: Bishop Suzanne D. Dillahun, Ms. Marjorie Ellis, Ms. Jeni Gray, Rev. Stephen Kimm, Rev. Laura Leach-Shreffler, Ms. Abbie McCandlish, Mr. Kevin Pyle, Ms. Michelle Riesbeck, Ms. Laura Schmidt, Ms. Cindy Schrader, Rev. Cheryl Siegenthaler, Ms. Kathie Skamfer, Marcia Ward Rev. Dr. Kenneth R. Witt, Ms. Susan Wyckoff, Rev. Bonnie Gerber, Mr. David Davila, Rev. Matthew Byrd (late), Mr. Matthew Hazzard, Imanuel Lyatyuu (late), Mr. David Miser, and Mr. Ethan Roberts.

Members excused: Rev. Mark Combs, Mr. Dave Drumm, Ms. Holly Fischer, Mr. Roy Hart, Mr. Doug Ware

Members absent: None

Also present for some or all of the electronic meeting were staff members including but not limited to Rev. Katie Kerrigan, Kim Uemura, and Rev. Robert Abrams. Guests: Becky Witt, Finance Team Chair, and Larry Donner - Thrive! Campaign Coordinator.

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

Review and Approval of Agenda of the 09/11/2021 Meeting:

The Agenda for the day was reviewed.

**VOTED:**

**SC.21.09.11                    To approve the 09/11/2021 Agenda as submitted. (Riesbeck/Skamfer)  
APPROVED.**

Vice-President Ellis asked for volunteers for future devotions for Council Meetings and will ask again at the end of the meeting.

Kevin Pyle opened with devotions used in his congregation regarding Obeying God and living in joyful relations. Matthew 25:31-40. Reflection question, What has the Spirit spoke in your heart this week? Bishop Dillahun recommended a prayer book for Armed Services members. Only the 2nd time the church has produced this resource. Bishop offered prayers from it in memory of 9/11.

New Member introduction:

Dave Miser - Harmony Lutheran Church, resides in Pleasant City, Nurse  
Rick Davila - Our Savior Lutheran in Dayton, resides in Dayton, Physicist  
Marcia Ward - Messiah Evangelical Lutheran, resides in Urbana, Former Teacher now Board  
Member for Habitat for Humanity  
Bonnie Gerber - All Saints Worthington, resides in Powell, Pastor  
Ethan Roberts - St. Peter's Lancaster, College Student at Capital in Political Science and Spanish  
Matthew Hazzard - Christ Lutheran in Bexley, resides in Columbus, Preschool Teacher

All other members introduced themselves to the new members.

Review and Approval of Minutes of the April 24, 2021 Meeting:

The Minutes of the above Council meeting were reviewed.

**VOTED:**

**SC.21.09.11                      To approve the Minutes of the 04/24/2021 meeting as submitted.  
(Schrader/Witt) APPROVED .**

Reports of the Officers and Executive Committee:

Vice President

Vice President Ellis discussed Matthew Hazzard and Ethan Roberts to be named as council members as replacements and official council members and be able to participate in votes.

**VOTED:**

**SC.21.09.11                      To approve Matthew Hazzard and Ethan Roberts as replacement  
council members the Minutes of the 04/24/2021 meeting as submitted.  
(Kimm/Skamfer) APPROVED .**

Bill Horn passed away suddenly, he was Vice President to ELCA Council. ELCA appointment Carlos Pena from TX to fill in until the election in August 2022.

Secretary

Secretary Fischer submitted no written report but had a attachment. Vice President Ellis reviewed "Who is Responsible". Bishop pointed out she cannot tell congregations what to do. Councils and Pastors need to work together through these congregational issues.

Vice President Ellis called for a short break 9:52am re-adjoined at 9:57am

## Treasurer

Bishop explained documents in front of us a general fund budget comparison report third column is most important percent to budget. Showing expenses to income. Joy Hacker prepares that for us.

Treasurer Pyle submitted a Mission Support Contribution Summary in advance of the meeting.

Discussed the last column of the 2nd Quarter Financials, the percentage of annual budget used. Our fiscal year starts in February. Report shows through July. Any number at or below 50% is good. There are a few that are over. Those are out of our control like insurance and bank charges. His opinion is we are doing well. Over all the Synod is doing well. We typically see a spike in December in giving. Summer is a drop because of vacations.

Dedicated funds are marked by Synod Council and the other has donor restrictions. Council decides how the money in those funds are dispersed. Joy Hacker suggested an automobile replacement fund which was a great idea to ease the financial burden of our supplied automobiles. Becky and Mr. Pyle make recommendations on how different funds can be used, Council decides. Restricted funds like aid to Pastors Widows and Orphans, is approaching 100 years old. The spendable portion is made through interest on the endowment. Ministerial Pensions is restricted to just that. On restricted funds, only if the heirs of the gift giver gives the synod permission can we change how the money is spent.

Becky Witt, Chair of Finance Team, provided information on the proposal of the finance team regarding the building proceeds from the sale of the old office building. The sale of the building enables us to set up a budget deficit fund that is a council designated fund. Some of the proceeds have been used as per the submitted report such as transitional expenses. \$500k remains. 10% donated to Thrive!, Three months of the Mission and Ministry plan to be put aside, \$15K to website design, and remainder to be accessible for the Out of the Box team.

Treasurer Pyle explained where the old office building was. Synod received a nice offer for the building. He also explained the challenges the building and the location posed.

Rick Davila asked for an example on what types of things are spent by the Out of the Box team. Becky explained it is to expand digital ministries and obtain the capability for congregations and to continue worship. Through meetings and grants they help them establish a digital presence. Smaller congregations don't have the resources on their own. Bishop stated other projects are thinking differently and looking at how to help congregation resource ministries and having some cash will enable us to be proactive. Pastor Abrams received a call from a St. John in Miamisburg, they had

received funds through Out of the Box and they were so thankful for the help they received. Matt Hazzard asked how many cars does the synod own. Bishop answered three. He also asked about the Widows and Children fund does it include widowers? Bishop responded we have consulted our attorneys and it is very expensive to change that. It is used only every couple of years. It requires a probate case and order. Becky Witt mentioned restricted funds are utilized well by the Synod staff. Bishop mentioned we do not currently have a car payment for the first time! Becky Witt also mentioned with this bucket of money in budget deficit we would be able to cover what we might need to in the future. The funds are located as per the audit report from last year, in cash and investment funds for obtaining interest income. Bishop offered new members the audit report via Kim Uemura.

Treasurer Pyle explained the Bishop's vehicle use and the great amount of miles traveled to get out and visit our congregations and staying connected. The last few audits, we received an unqualified opinions which is great. The management of the finances have been given a clean bill of health. These funds are to help us with a cushion and flexibility in the event of a shortfall and we won't have to scramble.

**VOTED:  
SC.21.09.11**

**Motion from the Finance team to the Executive team to Council to be approved to proposal on the distribution of funds. APPROVED.**

Vice President Ellis asked if there were any other questions. Marcia Ward asked who purchased the old building. Bishop said it was a law firm so they could be closer to the court house. Marcia thanked the synod for their transparency.

Pastor Byrd joined the meeting at 10:27am  
Bishop offered thanks for the Finance teams ministry.

#### Bishop

Bishop Dillahunt noted that her written report was distributed to the members of the Synod Council. 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 called on Larry Donner Thrive! Campaign manager to share uplifting news. Eleven congregations completed Thrive

campaigns. We are seeing congregations exceed their target goals. Thrive goals are relatable and congregations get excited about supporting it and its leading to these staggeringly positive numbers. 21 congregations have given special gifts outside of campaigns totaling \$120,732. 61 individuals including Synod staff and council members have given \$180,185. Mr. Donner gave a shout out to various congregations for their success. As of August 31st, commitments total \$733,524! Received so far \$490,071. We are at 61% of our base goal! These funds will help us set up new congregations, attract new ministers, and relieve some of the educational debt of our pastors. The Thrive programs are making a significant difference in our Synod and congregations. Thrive's impact continues to grow exponentially. Mr. Donner invited new members to talk to Vice President Ellis on how to contribute. If your congregation is interested contact Mr. Donner.

2. Bishop updated on council on hosting the Church Wide Assembly 2022 8/8/2022-8/11/2022 in downtown Columbus. Next week is a meeting about our responsibilities and what we will need. We will need 250 volunteers for those days. Many spots are hospitality related. More information to come.
3. The new website is up. We continue to tweak. It is much easier to navigate.
4. The Community Sandbox is being populated with more resources. We are working with the provider of the website to keep it moving forward.
5. Congregations for Stewardship for all Seasons or Thrive! will receive an invite to the Generosity Center. It will look like the Community Sandbox but for fundraising. There are 100 seats. SOS will receive 10% from GSB (the provider) for populating our own sandbox for congregations that keep up their own subscription.
6. Deacon Dan Jacob has begun his work as Synod Storyteller and Media Ambassador. What's Happening Now email list, Facebook, Thrive, and other social media outlets are being updated and utilized. We are reactivating Twitter. Sign up for stuff.
7. Dr. Cory Driver, Head of our Lay Academy has left us. We have been sharing him with Kentucky. He will be a professor in Cairo Egypt for a 4 year commitment. We wish him well. Dr. Nakamura will be taking over the responsibilities.

8. Quick update on two St. Paul congregations. St. Paul, Pleasant City, they stated they could not function and SOS officially closed them. SOS received assets including the building. The insurance company dropped them in July. They are now fully insured under the SOS policy. The assets will be used to pay the insurance bill. St. Paul, St. Louisville, we had a service of Holy Closure. The nine congregation members will take a 2nd vote after the sale of the building for the office closing. SOS will receive the proceeds. Kevin Pyle asked if we were expecting a reimbursement for premium increases. Bishop responded assets from the congregation will be used.
9. There will be a short Executive session following this meeting
10. Pastor Abrams gave an update on mobility. We have one of the lowest vacancy rates. With 185 congregations, only 11 are looking 6 are part-time and 5 are full-time. Filling part-time calls is hard. Pastors don't relocate for part-time opportunities. It is difficult to recruit Pastors. Only three congregations are currently actively interviewing. We are very proactive in our search. In Indiana, the vacancy rate is 50% ours is 13%. We have done well in a difficult landscape. Mr. Kevin Pyle asked are part-time openings within commuting distance. Pr. Abrams said we are looking at those possibilities but the relationships are difficult between two congregations it is hard to navigate. Matt Hazzard asked if the calls are for Lead Pastor or Associate. Pr. Abrams said there are no Associate openings. We have two multi pastor staff Lead Pastor openings and three solo Pastor positions.
11. Pastor Kerrigan gave a report on Cultivate Team. She shared a PowerPoint. To date, we have been focused on nurture existing congregations. Our Collaborative program is about revitalization of congregations and concentrating on our lay leadership programs such as SAMs. Pastor explained Cultivate "Emerging Lutheran Communities". We are getting started on establish new worshiping communities. We have had to think and learn about new models of worship. We have a goal to launch two new congregations over the next three years. The outcome is to draw people into a relationship with Jesus. There is an SOS Cultivate Team and Pr. Kerrigan went through the members. Ben Morris, Chair, J.T. Burcham, Pr, Richard Frudenberg, Pr. Alice Connor, and Pr. Katie Kerrigan. All have extensive experience in engaging with non Lutherans and non-traditional worship. There is a standalone website cultivatesouthernohio.com, and Facebook group. Tikkun Farm, lead by Pr Mary Layman and Gather Cincinnati, lead by Lay Person Elizabeth Gilbert are our current

Cultivate communities. Cultivate is supporting both communities as they need. Upcoming events: 9/20 a Rostered Ministers Workshop and Cultivate Visioning Day on 11/6. This is an in-person event but we are watching COVID protocols and may have to reschedule. The Cultivate Recruitment Tour! is in the works and more information coming soon.

Activating our lay people is the key to the success of the Cultivate initiative. We have researched in other areas and denominations for how to best be successful. We are indebted to the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church for their support and insight and how freely they have given that information to us.

Our current focus is Equipping our Lay planters. The Lay Leadership Academy LOFT (Living Our Faith Together) goal for 6-12 months of instruction and then follow up support. Funding comes through Thrive! Grants of seed money for start-ups will be distributed through grant proposals and review. Together we will answer Jesus' call to create new disciples.

Questions, Kevin Pyle asked if Thrive! asked other churches about what they are doing. Pr. Kerrigan said yes, 8 months of active listening to conversational partners to learn from them like Episcopalians, Catholic, Methodists and Presbyterians. Mr. Pyle stated his congregation worked with Moravians. The days of thinking of doing it by ourselves is no longer valid. Stronger and better together with all our siblings in Christ. Ethan Roberts stated he is encouraged, as a younger member, by the news of Cultivate and Thrive! and the path the church is on. Pr Kerrigan, stated we need the energy and passion of the younger members. Ken Witt commented that new start congregations are exciting because it is inclusive of different thinking and different styles. Pr. Kerrigan stated one of the guiding principles is Context Matters. What is Jesus doing or calling in this place? Community listening is an important part of this work.

Conclusion of the Bishops report.

Vice President Ellis called a 5 minute break at 11:25am to push through the remainder with no lunch. Resumed at 11:30am

Immanuel joined at 11:31am.

The Synod Council received a written report from the Lutheran Men in Mission.

The Council received a written report from the Women of the ELCA. Ms. Wyckoff thanked everyone who made the Synod Assembly such a success. WELCA's virtual convention was a challenge. Met at Christ the King in West Chester over three days. We elected Dr. Freddie Jordan to the Executive board of WELCA. The memorials drive our organization and we continue to work on them. Thursdays in Black is about bringing awareness to the practices that permit rape in our communities. You can find more information on all our initiatives at the [WELCA.org](http://WELCA.org)

Bishop explained the council's responsibility for managing the rostered Ministers with the Bishop by category.

#### **EN BLOC**

#### **VOTED:**

**SC.21.09.11 Motion to approve the En Bloc Recommendations. (Kimm/Byrd)**

#### **APPROVED**

#### **Rostered Ministers Status**

On Leave from Call

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- The Rev. Aly Mazzei Baker, 1st year (8/27/21)
- Deacon Mary Lasits, 4th yr (11/12/18)
- The Rev. Christina Scheuller, Family Leave, 5th yr (7/16/17)

Retired Status

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- The Rev. Steve Gellatly (6/1/2021)
- Deacon Timothy Guenther (10/1/2021)
- Deacon Heidi Stover (7/1/2021)

Disability Status

#### **RECOMMENDATION:** N/A

Extension of Call

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- To extend a Synod Council Call to Extended Service to Rev. Sally Cook to serve as Pastor, at St. Andrews Episcopal Church, in Pickerington OH, beginning September 13, 2021.

Affirmation and Renewal of Appointment of Synod Authorized Ministers



**RECOMMENDATION:** N/A

Affirmation and Renewal of Synod Council Calls

**RECOMMENDATION:** N/A

Removal from the ELCA Roster

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- Mr. Thomas Batterman (6/30/21)

**Legal and Governance**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- To appoint Mr. Pete Sharp as the Southern Ohio Synod representative, to Lutheran Outdoor Ministries in Ohio, for a 3-year term, beginning January 1, 2022 thru December 31, 2024.
- To approve the 2021 Synod Assembly Minutes. (A9)
- To approve congregation constitutions for:
  - St. Philip Lutheran Church, Columbus OH
  - Zion Lutheran Church, Middletown OH

Information:

Resignation of Ms. Morgan Walker from Synod Council.

Death of Synod Council member, Mr. Steve Goff

Bishop expects Constitutional changes to come out of Church wide Assembly i.e. Kentucky from State to Commonwealth.

Synod Council members are to review the council roster for accuracy and get with the Synod Office for any changes.

**Other Business:** None.

**SC.21.09.11 Motion to move to Executive Session (Pyle/Skamfer) APPROVED**

**Executive Session:** An executive session was held.

**SC.21.09.11 Motion to move out of Executive Session (Kimm/Schrader) APPROVED**

Next meeting is December 4th virtually. December 4th devotions will be done by Marcia Ward. January devotions will be presented by Ethan Roberts.

Bishop Dillahunt installed all council members of the Southern Ohio Synod.

Bishop Dillahunt led us in closing prayer.

**SC.21.09.11            Motion to adjourn the meeting (Hazzard/Leach-Shreffler)**  
**APPROVED.**

The meeting was then adjourned a 12:58PM.

Respectfully submitted in absence of Holly Fischer,

*Laura E. Schmidt*

Laura E. Schmidt  
Synod Council Member