

**South Dakota Synod, ELCA  
Synod Council Retreat  
Cherapa Place, Sioux Falls, SD  
August 19-20, 2022**

Present: Bishop Constanze Hagmaier, Dennis Thompson, Terry Johnson, the Rev Jonathan Vehar, Marlee Braun, the Rev. Jackie Braun, the Rev. Becky Senner, Bonny Hansen, Michael Miller, the Rev. Ramona Hayes, the Rev. David Lund, Stan Jung, Jim Iverson, Rhonda Hansen, Pam Seefeldt, Jeff Clark, Anne Rieck McFarland, Malcom Chapman, Emily Hiatt, Dave Poppens

Staff: Lois Borchardt, the Rev. Jonathan Steiner, the Rev. Renee Splichal Larson, Kathy McHenry, the Rev. Dan Johnson, the Rev. Dr. Aaron Matson, the Rev. Alan Blankenfeld

Thompson called the meeting to order at 9:04 am on Friday, August 19, 2022.

#### Land Acknowledgment

South Dakota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America recognizes that the Oceti Sakowin (the Seven Council Fires of the Lakota, Dakota, Nakota), the Arikara, the Ponca and the Cheyenne, are the historic inhabitants of South Dakota; and South Dakota is the current home of the Cheyenne River Tribe, Crow Creek Tribe, Flandreau Santee Tribe, Lower Brule Tribe, Oglala Tribe, Rosebud Tribe, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, Standing Rock Tribe, and Yankton Tribe.

We recognize that we are called to be in good relationship with our neighbors, that the tribes are sovereign nations, that there is a history of broken treaties and broken trust, and that there is lots of work to be done. And we also recognize that as Christians, we have faith in new life, in hope for mending what is broken, and in our calling through the Holy Spirit to do this work.

Thompson noted several celebrations. It's Kathy McHenry's birthday and Pam Seefeldt's 50th wedding anniversary. These occasions were celebrated with song and applause.

The Rev. Jackie Braun led in an open devotion with a reading from Derick Bonhoeffer, reflection, and prayer.

#### Roll call

The sheet of member names, addresses and contact information was passed around and available on Goggle Drive.

#### Introductions

Council members and staff introduced themselves and their roles on the synod council or synod staff.

#### Agenda

The agenda is in the Google Drive.

**MSC to approve the agenda in the order that the chair deems most appropriate.**

## **SC.2022.08.01**

Minutes from the June 4, 2022 meeting are available in Google Drive.

**MSC to approve the minutes of the June 4, 2022 meetings.**

## **SC.2022.08.02**

### Board Orientation

All documents are available in Google Drive. Please see Lois if you have any issues.

Confidentiality is important to the discernment of the Synod Council to allow for open and honest discussion. Draft minutes will be sent out and are confidential in draft form and are public documents once approved by the Synod Council, either by email or at a meeting.

Thompson reviewed some of the responsibilities of the Synod Council. A list of responsibilities is listed in Chapter 10 of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the South Dakota Synod.

### Vision for the Synod

Bishop Hagmaier shared the Mission Statement, Journeying Together in Christ, and one of the videos produced to tell the story of the synod. The vision was developed through a series of listening sessions across the synod in the first year after Bishop Hagmaier's election. In those conversations, a common theme was of survival. That theme is even more prevalent after the pandemic. Another round of listening sessions is being planned for the Fall of 2022.

### ELCA Structure

The Rev. Secretary Jonathan Vehar offered an educational, entertaining, and inspiring review of the ELCA structure in three expressions. He also gave an impassioned presentation on the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the church and how they support our ministry.

### Companion Synod Report

A written report from the Rev. Dr. Aaron Matson is available in Google Drive.

One correction to his report, the Rev. Marie Besong, a pastor in Cameroon, will not be able to attend as planned as she was not able to get an interview for a visa.

Matson was nominated to serve on the planning team for Sudan Region Mission Centennial Celebration, he brings some great connections with how synods function.

The political landscape in Nicaragua is still tenuous. More normal rainfall is occurring this year, which has been an incredible blessing over the past few years of drought or flooding. Pastor Soliette is planning a visit to South Dakota; spots are still open in her schedule to visit congregations.

Board Orientation, continued –  
Partner & Supported Ministries

Pastor Steiner overviewed the Neighbor in Solidarity. The South Dakota Synod has a great variety of partner ministries not present in every synod. A full listing of these ministries is on the synod website.

Pastor Splichal Larson review the council responsibilities for the Roster.

#### Treasurer's Report

Mr. Terry Johnson overviewed the financial statements of the synod. Sample reports with embedded explanations are available in the Google Drive. Year-to-date Mission Support from Congregations is at 48.6% of the budget. This is two percentage points below the five-year average. Operating reserves are still within the normal range.

#### Bishop's Report

##### Luther House of Study

Bishop Hagmaier reviewed the formation and history of the Luther House of Study's Kairos program as a partnership of the South Dakota Synod, Sioux Falls Seminary, and Augustana University. The original need arose out of training pastors to serve rural congregations. While it initially successfully identified rural candidates in South Dakota, the Kairos program now includes hundreds of students from around the country, many not ELCA affiliated and few planning to serve rural congregations. The partners have been working on separating as Luther House of Study forms its own 501(c)3 organization. The Bishop shared a draft press release written by LHoS and reviewed by partners.

#### Churchwide Assembly

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly was held August 8-12, 2022. As the ELCA's highest legislative body, the assembly conducts the work of the church by adopting the budget, resolutions, and memorials from synods. A sheet of key items is available in the Google Drive. Highlights of the assembly include the election of Mr. Imran Siddiqui as vice-president, daily worship, and memorials calling for a commission to consider a new structure for the denomination and changes to the ELCA Social Study on Human Sexuality.

A memorial regarding returning land to Native American communities was highly debated and revised to encourage members, congregations, and synods to become better educated about Indigenous peoples.

Council members who attended the assembly were invited to share their experiences.

#### The Rev. Greg Johnson

Pastor Johnson joined the council meeting to give updates on Beaver Valley Lutheran Church and his sabbatical project. In early summer, Beaver Valley Lutheran was struck by a tornado that destroyed the office and education wing of the building. It also left the rest of the church unusable until repairs could be made. The congregation has rallied together for cleanup and to salvage items from the debris. Rebuilding will take some time.

Pastor Johnson continues to work on developing a video resource for congregations or small groups. The first 7-week series is complete. He is also working on revamping a confirmation curriculum that would be particularly useful for rural congregations.

## Executive Committee Elections

The Executive Committee consists of the four officers, and four members elected annually by the Synod Council: a vice-chair, and three members at large. At least one-half of the Executive Committee must be laypersons.

Nominations were opened for vice-chair.

**Malcom Chapman was nominated as vice-chair. There being no other nominations, Mr. Chapman was elected by unanimous consent to a one-year term.**

Nominations were opened for Members-at-large.

**Dave Poppens, the Rev. Jackie Braun, and Bonny Hansen were all nominated. There being the same number of nominations as open positions, Mr. Poppens, the Rev. Jackie Braun, and Ms. Hansen were elected by unanimous consent to a one-year term.**

## Open Space

Mr. Chapman led the council in an open-space discussion with four questions.

### *What's Going Well?*

First Call care, disaster response, innovation in rural ministry, Neighbors in Solidarity, respectful meetings around Covid, communication, Pastor Renee's work, listening, broadening the voices, supporting change in transition, Synod Assembly, Rural Liaison, hard conversation/issues, transparency between congregations and synod, shared leadership.

### *What Can We Do?*

Trust God, center in God, back to scripture, prayer, listen before reacting/listen to understand, open heart, and be okay to agree to disagree.

### *Conversations:*

Tell our story, disconnect between the three expressions, role relationship (churchwide/congregations), diversity, creating spaces with allies in the room, witnessing/invitation, imagination about the future church, telling, asking, relating, education of laity, welcoming young adults.

### *Challenges:*

Traditions, exhaustion, clarity/focus, adapt/change, "all are welcome," polarization, listening, lack of compromise, absolutes, fear of the unknown, scarcity mindset.

## Old Business

### Synod Incorporation

When the ELCA was formed, each synod was incorporated in the state of the regional office. This means that the South Dakota Synod is incorporated in the State of Minnesota. At times, this makes work more difficult for our work, as our congregations abide by the laws of the State of South Dakota. A request has been made to the ELCA Church Council to approve the request of the Synod Council to move the incorporation to the State of South Dakota. It is on the agenda for the August meeting of the ELCA Church Council.

### Storm recovery grants

The Executive Committee approved \$25,000 in emergency grant funding to support congregations recovering from storms in the Fall. The synod also applied for \$25,000 in matching funds from the ELCA. In addition, \$22,000 was received from the ELCA for the tornado that struck Beaver Valley Lutheran.

### Associate Reports

Pastor Renee Splichal Larson reviewed the written report available on the Google Drive.

Pastor Jonathan Steiner's written report is in the Google Drive. Of special note is that the partnership of the Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center (PRRC) and the Preysbertain Church is not currently functional. The PRRC is transitioning key ministry areas to other properties so that essential ministries and services may continue.

### Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center

The Job Corp is working on forming its own 501(c)3. This will help to give more local control over this ministry and expand the program's capacity, which currently has limitations as the synod can't have more than 20 employees without changing the synod's Medicaid primary designation.

The Evangelical Outreach Committee (EOC) will do initial work on guidelines and policies for synod ministries (doing business under the synod's EIN) applying for grants and for improvements on buildings owned by the synod.

### Pine Ridge Housing Grant

The 2022 Churchwide Assembly budget approved \$2,000,000 for a Pine Ridge Reservation initiative. The initiative is a partnership between ELCA Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations, ELCA World Hunger, and the Oglala Sioux Tribe. It will address homelessness, housing, education, cultural preservation, livelihood opportunities, Two Spirit support and more. Of some concern is that the ministry partners of the South Dakota Synod were not aware of this grant.

### 2022 Synod Assembly

The financial report for the 2022 synod assembly is in the Google Drive. Each year a portion of the Synod Assembly net income is transferred to the Bishop Election/Transition Fund to offset the costs associated with a Bishop election and transition.

**MSC to transfer \$20,000 from the Synod Assembly Fund to the Bishop Election/Transition Fund.**

**SC.2022.08.03**

### 2023 Synod Assembly

The Bishop recommends designating the offering from the 2023 Synod Assembly to the Rural Ministry Fund.

**MSC to designate the offering of the 2023 Synod Assembly to the Rural Ministry Fund.**

**SC.2022.08.04**

## Woyatan Lutheran

*Lease.* A lease agreement was signed with Woyatan Lutheran Church and the synod for the use of the Woyatan property. The land and building is currently owed by the synod. This is a significant moment and gives more autonomy to the congregation for their ministry. To demonstrate the importance of this step, the whole congregation present signed the lease agreement.

*Transfer.* The council discussed the steps needed to transfer the property to Woyatan Lutheran. The legal transfer is a simple process and can be approved by the Synod Council. Final approval would need to happen by the March meeting to celebrate at the 2023 Synod Assembly.

*Improvements.* Some repairs to the church building and property will need to be done. Currently, this is the responsibility of the synod as the property owners. These updates will need to be done before the transfer is complete.

## Recess

Thompson called the meeting to order at 9:00 am on Friday, August 20, 2022.

The Rev. Alan Blankenfeld was invited to share his report. Since beginning his call, he has visited 15 churches and eight communities serving in two-week segments. He's immersed himself into the congregation's ministry, conducting baptisms, funerals, worship, visitation, and cultivating lay leaders.

The Farm to Table dinner will help to support and expand this ministry. Kathy McHenry listed the auction items available for purchase at the dinner.

## Medicaid Expansion

The 2021 Synod Assembly adopted a resolution to direct the Bishop to write a letter in support of Medicaid Expansion to the governor and legislature and share resources with congregations. While there is a ballot initiative coming in November to approve Medicaid Expansion, the Bishop is not planning additional advocacy as it was not directed by the Synod Assembly. A recent news story highlighted the action of the 2021 Synod Assembly.

## Synod Authorized Worship Community Voting Members

The Rev. Secretary Vehar will prepare Continuing Resolutions to be brought before the October meeting of the Synod Council.

## Matching Funds

An ELCA Disaster Response matching grant was awarded to Beaver Valley Lutheran. It comes with the stipulation of being a matching grant.

**MSC to match the ELCA Disaster Response Grant at \$10,000 from the synod's disaster response funds previously designated by the Executive Committee 2022**

**Storm Disaster assistance.  
SC.2022.08.05**

2023 Synod Assembly

The theme for the 2023 assembly will be around rural ministry. The keynote speakers will be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

First Lutheran African Ministry (FLAM)

FLAM is a Synod Authorized Worshipping Committee that worships in Sioux Falls. They are an immigrant congregation, mostly from Liberia. They have a synod authorized minister, Abraham Gayetaye. While Mr. Gayetaye was on an R1 visa, he was required to be sponsored and paid by the churchwide organization as a religious worker. When he received his Green Card and subsequent US citizenship, these restrictions were no longer in place. Peace Lutheran, Sioux Falls, serves as the fiscal agent. While FLAM has struggled through most of the year to pay his support, recent support from several congregations ensured that Mr. Gayetaye may continue to serve the congregation.

Synod Youth Coordinator

There may be a possible collaboration with Lutherans Outdoors for a Synod Youth Gathering Coordinator.

Roster Matters

Inform Only

Fred Bartelt – Transferred to South Carolina Synod effective 7/15/2022

Bruce Iverson – Transferred into SD Synod from La Crosse Area Synod effective 8/03/2022

Sami Johnson – Transferred to North Carolina Synod effective 8/16/2022

Tera Kossow – Transferred to Northern Great Lakes Synod effective 8/01/2022

Steven Lindley – Transferred into SD Synod from Nebraska Synod effective 8/02/2022

Koren Lindley – Transferred into SD Synod from Nebraska Synod effective 8/22/2022

Mark Galbraith – transfer to Pacifica Synod was listed under inform only on the June 4 agenda, his call was still pending so he remains on the roster of the South Dakota Synod.

Action Needed

The Rev. Jeff Eisele is requesting Requesting Retirement effective 9/01/2022.

**MSC to grant Retirement roster status for the Rev. Jeff Eisele effective 9/01/2022.  
SC.2022.08.06**

The Rev. Mark Galbraith is requesting Retirement effective 7/14/2022

**MSC to grant Retirement roster status for the Rev. Mark Galbraith effective  
7/14/2022.  
SC.2022.08.07**

Bishop Hagmaier is requesting a synod call for the Rev. Aaron Matson to serve as 3/4-time Communications Director & 1/4-time Companion Synod Coordinator for the SD Synod effective 9/01/2022

**MSC to issue a Letter of Call to the Rev. Aaron Matson to serve as ¾ time Communications Director and ¼ time Companion Synod Coordinator for the South Dakota Synod.  
SC.2022.08.08**

The Rev. April Peterson is requesting Retirement effective 10/01/2022.

**MSC to grant Retirement roster status to the Rev. April Peterson effective 10/01/2022.  
SC.2022.08.09**

The Rev. Becky Senner will be the Mission Developer/Pastor at Spirit of Hope Lutheran, Scotland, and is requesting a Synod Letter of Call.

**MSC to issue a Letter of Call to the Rev. Becky Senner as Mission Developer and Pastor of Spirit of Hope, Scotland, SD, effective 9/04/2022.  
SC.2022.08.10**

The Rev. Lars Olson is requesting On-Leave-From-Call effective 7/01/2022

**MSC to grant On-Leave-From-Call status to the Rev. Lars Olson effective 7/01/2022.  
SC.2022.08.11**

Congregational Matters

Our Redeemer, Bryant/Bethlehem, Vienna/Grace, Willow Lake (Prairie Star Parish), took the first vote to disaffiliate from the ELCA on 6/5/2022.

Vice president Thompson asked two questions:

What will you share?

How/where you share it?

Future Meetings

A. Farm to Table Dinner: August 21, 2022, 4:00 – 7:30 pm, Messiah Lutheran, Flandreau

B. Executive Committee: Thursday, October 20, 6:00 pm central

C. Synod Council: Friday, October 21, 8:30 am central (end about 4:30 pm central)

D. Executive Committee: >>>>>>>February 2023

E. Executive Committee: >>>>>>>March 2023

F. Synod Council: >>>>>>>>>>>March 2023

G. Synod Assembly: June 2-3, 2023: Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls

H. Synod Council: June 3 after close of the assembly

The Bishop closed the meeting in prayer and Holy Communion.

Adjourned

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Jonathan Vehar, Secretary