

INDIANA-KENTUCKY SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING

Minutes

January 11, 2025, 9:30 am ET/8:30 am CT – 12:30 pm ET/11:30 am CT
(via Zoom)

Present: Bishop Tim Graham; Vice President Ted Miller; Secretary Julie Slavens; Treasurer Harry Albers; Pastor Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar; Pastor Ryan Bailey; Pastor Emmanuel Penumaka; Pastor Vicki Garber; Pastor Bimen Limbong; Pastor Grace Pardun; Pastor LaDona Webb; Pastor Kristin Rice; Deacon Jody Winter; Larry Ahlersmeyer; Debbie Zehr; Greg Platt; Dee Ann Daniels; Nicole Lee; Dianna Hunsinger; Laura Nicholson; Noah Smith. WELCA Representative Tina Smith

Absent: Chris Walda; Mike Hoover; Nancy Bennett; Ella Engela
Staff Present: Dan Forehand; Priscilla Geerdes; Karl Biermann; Synod Attorney Josh Tatum

Guests: Marjorie McDaniel, Racial Justice Task Force Member

9:33 am Bishop Tim opened the meeting with a welcome, a reading and meditation on 1 Cor. 13 and a prayer.

Julie Slavens presented an amended version of the previously approved meeting of the September meeting. Explaining additions were made on appointments to Synod committees.

SC 2025/1: The amended minutes of the September 2024 Synod Council meeting were approved. Vicki Garber made a motion to approve the minutes as presented and Dee Ann Daniels seconded the motion.

Julie Slavens then presented the meeting minutes of the November 2024 Synod Council Meeting. No amendments were offered for these meeting minutes.

SC 2025/2: The minutes of the November 2024 meeting of the Synod Council were approved. Greg Platt made a motion to accept the minutes as presented and Harry Albers seconded the motion.

Vice President – Ted Miller

Ted Miller summarized his report, which was in the meeting Dropbox. He stated the Vice President term of office would begin September 1, 2025. He will be available to train and help out the person who is elected at the Synod Assembly in June. He also stated there are three rostered openings on the Council along with the youth representative who must be under 18 years old and the young adult representative who must be under 30 years old. He also went over the vacancies on the various Synod Committees.

Secretary – Julie Slavens

Julie Slavens reported the executive committee has not met since the November

meeting. She also reported she will be in contact with the Nominating Committee to set up a meeting to fill the positions as set out in the Vice President's Report.

Treasurer – Harry Albers

Harry presented the treasurer's report and stated the Synod was in good shape with the revenues and expenses tracking per usual for this time of year. He reported that through December 2024 \$400,000 was needed to make the budget but with the trends of giving he and the committee felt the budget would be met.

Karl Biermann reported the Gafkjen Fund has collected \$54,000 and this is enough to endow the fund. Harry reported the Finance Committee did vote via email to recommend to the Council to endow the fund. Karl will oversee the use of the fund with the fund committee's guidance.

SC 2025/3: The Finance Committee recommended to endow the Gafkjen Leadership Fund. The Synod Council unanimously approved the recommendation.

Bishop -- Report

Bishop Tim reported on the update for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. Voting Membership of the Synod would be invited and encouraged to attend a Region 6 CWA Registration Orientation Session scheduled for **March 31, 7:00 pm Eastern Time**. Information would be sent out to all voting members closer to the meeting date.

Bishop Tim also reported an update on the 2025 Synod Assembly. The theme is Faith, Hope, and Love based on 1 Cor 13.13.

Bishop Tim asked the Council for input on the registration fees due to the cost of the Assembly. He and the staff were suggesting not providing a discount for retired pastors to attend. Most council members were in agreement with this as it would provide increased revenue but not affect many people and attendance. Bishop Tim also stated the staff was looking at other changes in the fees but were not ready to propose any at this time. Ted Miller suggested the executive committee could meet to do that as the Council would not be meeting before the deadline to mail out the Call to Assembly in February.

Bishop Tim reported the staff is still working on the Agenda, which he shared a draft of with the Council. He also stated to save money, there would be no dinner on Friday evening. This would give an opportunity for attendees to go to dinner in downtown Indy. In addition, there will be no livestreaming of the Assembly but may be of the worship services due to expenses of equipment and wi-fi rental through the hotel. He suggested we not do an in-person Assembly in 2026.

Bishop Tim asked for Offering designations for the two worship services. There were a few suggestions but the council settled on the Synod Disaster Relief endowment

fund and the ELCA disaster relief funds for global disaster as suggestions for the staff to consider.

Roster Concerns – Bishop Tim reported on the following items.

Rostered Clergy Candidate Marc Cohen has been approved for call by the Synod Candidacy Committee. His paperwork will be submitted to the ELCA for approval in February and hopefully he will be assigned to the IK Synod.

Pastor Josh Burkholder has requested the status of On Leave from Call for another year which would be his second extension beginning in February for two years. Synod Council will have to approve each year of the extension. Bishop Tim recommended the Council approve his request for an extension of On Leave from Call and for Bishop Tim to request approval for the Council of Bishops to approve. Bishop Tim indicated Josh will be interested in serving in a congregation or ministry setting in the future.

SC 2025/4: Bishop Tim recommended the Council approve the extension of the On Leave of Call and allow Bishop Tim to present Pastor Joshua Burkholder's extension for approval. The Council approved the recommendation unanimously.

Pastor Elizabeth Lee has requested a year of On Leave from Call for family leave. This is her second year of the six-year leave. Bishop Tim recommended the Council approved the request.

SC 2025/5: Bishop Tim recommended the Council approve the second year of a six-year family leave for Pastor Elizabeth Lee. The recommendation was approved unanimously.

Congregational, Campus Ministry, and Other Concerns: Nancy Bennett, Zion in Bristol, IN has left her role at the church. So, her status as Rostered and as a member of Synod Council is being determined at this point in time. She was filling a vacancy on Council, so the conference or nomination committee will need to address this issue.

Bishop Tim reported that the Board of Directors for the UK Campus Ministry has not existed since COVID. Concerns from Lexington churches have indicated that a board is needed to help out the campus minister with the workload. The Synod staff will be working to reform the board and get the ministry functional in an effective manner.

Bishop Tim has recommended that Rev. John Bell be approved as the South Central Conference interim dean and the previous dean has taken a call to another state and synod.

SC 2025/6: Bishop Tim recommended the Council approve the appointment of Pastor John Bell as the interim dean for the South Central Conference.

The Council unanimously approved the recommendation.

Bishop Tim reported for information that Deacon Travis Woodfield was ordained in the IK Synod and served at Marian University. He was arrested in December 2024 on federal charges related to crimes related to minors. He was in New York at the time of the arrest. He is assigned to the NE Pennsylvania synod at this time. There is no evidence of such activity while he was in Indiana to this point in time. He was in this synod from 2019 to 2021.

Housing Allowance:

Bishop Tim reported on the housing allowance for the synod staff which must be approved by the council for IRS purposes. Bishop Tim presented to the Council for approval the Synod staff housing allowance designations for 2025:

Bishop Tim: \$65,000

Dan Forehand: \$35,000

Pricilla Geerdes: \$21,000

SC 2025/7:

WHEREAS the Indiana-Kentucky Synod is a religious non-profit institution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and, whereas the Synod employs Bishop Timothy Graham, Pastor Dan Forehand, and Pastor Pricilla Geerdes and whereas the Internal Revenue Service has advised the necessity of annual official action by the official body of the employing religious institution to exclude from the gross salary of clergy the estimated cost of renter payments for the purchase of a house, including down payment, mortgage principal, interest and taxes; garage rent; utilities; insurance; repairs and maintenance; furnishing; housing expenses as set forth; and

WHEREAS the following estimate of housing costs has been submitted to the Synod for the taxable year 2025 and included in the budget for the year 2024-25: Pastor Timothy Graham, \$65,000. Pastor Dan Forehand, \$35,000.00; and Pastor Pricilla Geerdes, \$21,000.00;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED by the Synod Council that the above amounts be designated as housing allowance, excludable from the gross salary paid for tax purposes, up to the extent they are used for said actual housing, and that any other allowance specifically designated and allocated by the Synod Council in this resolution may also be excluded for tax purposes up to the extent that any or all of them are actually used for such specific purpose.

The above stated housing allowances were passed unanimously by the Synod Council.

Pr. Dan Forehand submitted a written report, which is in Dropbox.

Pr. Priscilla Geerdes submitted a written report and referenced it. She also thanked Dan for his support and training. She has visited 6 of the 10 conferences and plans to visit the rest by the end of February.

Bishop Tim provided an update on the Director for Evangelical Mission. The ELCA accepted the job description and they are waiting for it to be posted on the ELCA webpage and then it can be posted by our Synod. After posting, applications will be accepted and interviews completed. No interim has been assigned yet by the ELCA.

WELCA: Meeting in the next week and setting goals for 2025. There will be a retreat in May at Lutherwald. More information to come. There will probably be a convention in the fall of 2025.

Constitution Committee: Committee met in December and approved a few congregational constitutions. Josh Tatum explained that the committee is here to help congregations update the constitutions. He also talked about updating constitutions with approved ELCA language and the process for approving constitutions by the congregations and the Synod.

Racial Justice Task Force: Majorie Mc Daniel reported on the work of the task force. There are 13 members who meet monthly. The task force had a breakout meeting at the Synod Assembly in 2024. They are meeting with the ELCA on a quarterly basis. They had a retreat in the fall and decided they needed to organize and have elected officers. They are also working on a mission statement. Reported on activity in Hamilton County with respect to KKK flyers. The task force helped churches address the situation. She also reported on the future activities the task force is planning to do. She submitted a written report which is in the Dropbox. The report includes the above information and additional information.

Next meeting: April 4-5, 2025 @ IN-KY Synod Office
Mission monitor: Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar
Chaplain: Grace Pardun, Kristin Rice, and Mike Hoover

Bishop Tim leading the Council in a Sending Prayer and in the Lord's Prayer.

The meeting adjourned at 12:24 pm.

Respectively Submitted,

Julie M. Slavens
IK Synod Secretary