

INDIANA-KENTUCKY SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING
Minutes

Saturday August 3, 2024: 9:30am – 11:35am EDT

Via Zoom

Present: Bishop Bill Gafkjen, Grace Pardun, Debbie Zehr, Mike Hoover, Chris Walda, Laura Nicholson, LaDona Webb, Noah Smith, Dee Ann Daniels, Emmanuel Penumaka, Vicki Garber, Nicole Lee, Tim Graham, Ted Miller, Jody Winter, Dianna Hunsinger, Julie Slavens, Greg Platt, Nancy Bennett, and Tina Smith, Representative Women of the ELCA

Absent: Ella Engela, Ryan Bailey, Evangeline R. Anderson, Bimen Limbong, Larry Ahlersmeyer

Staff Present: Nancy Nyland, Karl Biermann, Region 6 ELCA Foundation Representative

Guests: Josh Tatum, Synod Attorney; Harry Albers, Treasurer-Elect

Ted Miller called the meeting to order at 9:30 am and welcomed everyone to the meeting and declared we had a quorum.

Opening Prayer led by Bishop Bill, including devotions on Psalm 78 with a devotion on Bread from Heaven and asked the question How will God feed us?

Ted Miller introduced the new Synod Council members who were present and asked everyone to introduce themselves and the conference they represented. Two vacancies have been filled since the Synod Assembly, Larry Ahlersmeyer from the East Central Indiana Conference and Nancy Bennett from the North Central Indiana Conference. Ted asked for a motion to approve Larry and Nancy to fill the vacancy until the next Synod Assembly.

SC 2024/40: Vicki Garber made the motion to appoint Larry Ahlersmeyer and Nancy Bennett to fill the vacancies on the Synod Council until the next Synod Assembly. LaDona Webb seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Ted Miller then asked the members to review the June 2024 minutes of Synod Council. If there were no changes, he asked for a motion to accept the minutes as submitted.

SC2024/41: Ted Miller asked for a motion to approve the minutes from June Synod Council meeting: DeeAnn Daniels made the motion and Chris Walda seconded. The motion was approved by the Synod Council.

Vice President Report:

Ted Miller stated his report was in Dropbox. He noted there would be a vacancy on the Synod Council and the Executive Committee on September 1, with the retirement of Bishop Bill and the ascension to the Office of Bishop by Tim Graham. He asked for consensus from the Synod Council to make those appointments at the September meeting so that we have time to solicit interest in the Synod Council vacancy which would be a rostered person. The Council members present agreed. He stated he would work with Julie Slavens on timing and notices to the rostered personnel. Bishop Bill shared he would be meeting with the Deans in a few days and would relay that information to them to share and Ted said he was willing to be a part of the meeting as well.

Ted continues to Zoom with the other synod Vice Presidents on a monthly basis. The topics lately have been on the election of Bishops in the various Synods and looking at best practices for the synod officers and Bishops.

Secretary Report:

Julie Slavens reported the minutes of the 2024 IK Synod Assembly were completed and being reviewed by the minutes committee. The minutes for the June meeting are in the Dropbox. No action is required by the Synod Council. Julie also gave an update on the nominating committee as all members are eligible for another term and she will contact them to determine who would like to continue on the committee. She also noted the Executive Committee met in July.

Treasurer Report:

Chris Walda stated the Audits were up to date and the Synod was in good shape on that front. He also stated revenues for July 2024 were higher than in past years for July. He was encouraged by this trend and stated the Synod was in good financial shape to date.

Bishop Report:

Bishop Bill began by thanking Chris Walda for his 8 years of service as the Treasurer. He brought the Synod through some challenging times and put it on solid footing with the help of the finance committee. He stated he is now in transition mode with respect to his life and office. He is beginning to pack and is determining what he will take with him. He stated Nancy Nyland and Carol Webb will be leaving September 1. Bill also reported there would be a reunion of current and former staff members on August 7 in the Synod office.

Synod Calls:

Pastor Matthew Becker submitted his resignation from his IK Synod Call at Valparaiso University to take a congregation call in Iowa. Bill recommended to the Council to accept his resignation. The letter is in the Dropbox.

SC 2024/42: Bishop Bill recommends accepting Pastor Matthew Becker's resignation from Synod Call effective September 30, 2024. The Synod Council unanimously approved the recommendation.

Bishop Bill stated that due to the timing of his retirement, the next Synod Council meeting, and retirement benefits, the Council needed to vote to put him on retired status before its next meeting and before September 1, 2024.

SC2024/43: Noah Smith made the motion to place Bishop Bill Gafkjen on retirement status in the IK Synod effective September 1, 2024. LaDona Webb seconded the motion. The Synod Council unanimously passed the motion.

Bishop Bill recommended Pastor Emily Trubey-Weller be approved to be a pastor serving First United Methodist Church in South Bend, IN. This would be considered a Synod Call and she is recognized by and a member of the UMC Indiana conference, while remaining on the roster of the ELCA and IN-KY Synod.

SC2024/44: Bishop Bill recommended approval of Synod Call to Pastor Emily Truby-Weller to serve as pastor in the UMC of the Indiana Conference. The Synod Council unanimously approved the recommendation.

Bishop Bill recommended Pastor Michelle Freeman of the United Church of Christ (UCC) be placed as pastor of Grace and Peace Lutheran Church in Evansville. The area UCC governing body has agreed to this placement and the assignment would be contingent on the congregation calling Pastor Freeman.

SC 2024/45: Bishop Bill recommended the approval of Pastor Michelle Freeman as pastor at Grace and Peace Lutheran Church pending approval of call to serve by the congregation. The Synod Council unanimously approved the recommendation.

Bishop Bill reported that Grace Lutheran in Syracuse, IN had its second vote to disaffiliate with the ELCA and it passed. The Disaffiliation is official when the Synod Council approves it. Since the church is going to be independent and not join another Lutheran body, the Synod Council may choose to retain title to the property for local members who wish to remain in the ELCA. Bishop Bill recommends the Synod Council allow the church to keep the property.

SC2024/46: Bishop Bill recommends the Synod Council approve the disaffiliation of Grace Lutheran church, Syracuse, IN. The Synod Council unanimously approved the recommendation.

SC2024/47: Bishop Bill recommended to Synod Council allow Grace Lutheran Church in Syracuse, IN to keep title to the church property. The Synod Council unanimously approved the recommendation.

Bishop Bill reported for information purposes that Grace and Peace of Evansville, IN is selling the property of Grace Lutheran church as it will not be used by the merged congregation.

Bishop Bill also reported MECI cannot receive ELCA funds until the Synod Council designates them as a strategic ministry. The type of ministry designation is for those that serve minorities and people on the fringe of society. Bishop Bill recommended the MECI be designated as a strategic ministry.

SC2024/48: Bishop Bill recommended the MECI be designated as a strategic ministry. The Synod Council unanimously approved the recommendation.

Karl Biermann provided an update on the Gafkjen Endowment Fund. He stated the current balance is approximately \$25,000. He stated ways to give to the endowment will be in the weekly newsletter.

Before going into executive session, Bishop Bill provided some final thoughts as Bishop:

He felt the Synod Assembly was very inspiring and will continue to pray for the Synod and the new things it will do under Bishop Tim Graham. He thanked the members of Synod Council both current and former he had worked with over the last 22 years as Assistant to the Bishop and as Bishop. He felt all of them were wonderful witnesses to the Spirit of Christ and is profoundly grateful to all of them.

Executive Session: The Council went into executive session for half an hour and was briefed by Bishop Bill on confidential personnel matters. Some of these matters were shared with and discussed by the executive committee at its July meeting.

After the Executive Session, the Synod Council addressed two issues relating to Bishop Bill's retirement – his unused vacation of four weeks and the purchase of the Synod car he has been using. Discussion took place as to the timing of the payment of the vacation weeks per Indiana law and his status as an employee. In addition, discussion took place as to the car and Bill's purchase of it.

SC2024/49: Chris Walda made a motion to provide the four weeks of vacation pay over the two pay periods in August, specifically August 15 and August 31. Nicole Lee seconded the motion. The Synod Council unanimously passed the motion.

SC2024/50: Chris Walda made a motion to gift the car to Bishop Bill and Vicki Garber seconded the motion. The Synod Council unanimously approved the motion.

Ted Miller reviewed the meeting schedule for the rest of 2024. Mike Hoover volunteered to be the meeting monitor for the September meeting. And Ladona Webb will be the Chaplain for the September meeting. Vicki Garber and Laura Nicholson will be the November Chaplains. It was also reported that Dan Forehand will be staying on the Synod staff as will April Lynch and Julie Walda. There will be a new DEM as that position is appointed by the ELCA.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julie Slavens
IK Synod Secretary