

MINUTES
INDIANA-KENTUCKY SYNOD COUNCIL
MEETING

Friday, April 12, 2024: Meeting – 7:00-9:30pm EDT/6:00-8:30 CDT
Saturday, April 13, 2024: Meeting – 9:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. EDT/8:30am-2:00pm CDT

The Indiana-Kentucky Synod Council met in-person in the Conference Room of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod Office, Suite 200, 911 E 86th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46240.

Members present: Bishop Bill Gafkjen, Vice President Ted Miller, Secretary Julie Slavens, Treasurer Chris Walda, Pastor Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar, Pastor Ryan Bailey, Pastor Emmanuel Penumaka, Pastor Tim Graham, Pastor Jane Rothman, Deacon Jody Winter, Mike Hoover, Debbie Zehr (Saturday), Dee Ann Daniels, Dianna Hunsinger, Elizabeth Kirk, Noah Smith (Young Adult Representative)(Saturday). Present via Zoom: Pastor Vicki Garber, Pastor Bimen Limbong, Pastor Ladona Webb. Staff Members Present: Pastor Dan Forehand. Absent: Nicole Lee, Ella Engela (Youth Representative), Tina Smith (WELCA Representative).

Meeting Chaplains are Pr. Jane Rothman and DeeAnn Daniels.
Mission Monitor is Pr. Vicki Garber.

Friday, April 12:

Ted Miller called the meeting to order at 7 pm. The meeting began with a Gathering Prayer lead by the Meeting Chaplains.

Ted Miller then led the group in a getting (re)acquainted with one another asking each person present to provide thoughts on the following question:
Where have you sought or seen resurrection or new life recently?

Action: SC 2024/16: The Synod Council approved the January meeting minutes. Mike Hoover made the motion to approve and Tim Graham second.

Vice President's Report – Ted Miller

Ted Miller provided a summary of his report that was previously submitted to the council members.

Bishop Election: Ted reported he received 34 names from the conferences of which 32 were eligible for the Office of Bishop. These 32 persons were sent the bio forms and he received 9 forms by the deadline for inclusion in the Bulletin of Reports. Ted reported the Executive Committee decided not to share the names with the committee nor the Synod Council so that everyone will receive the information at the same time through the Bulletin of Reports.

Ted provided a brief summary of the synod vice presidents conference. The vice presidents heard

updates on various ministries and activities of the ELCA. It was a productive and informative meeting. Ted also reported he was asked to be on a task force that would be looking into best practices for election of Synod officers and Bishops. The task force will be reporting out at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

Appointment of Bishop Election Task Force: Ted provided the names of the Bishop Election Task Force that Chair Mike Anderson recommended for approval by Synod Council. Their names are Vicky Carron, Becky Daum, Al Davis, Cory Dold, Deacon Barb Limbach, Don MacMillan, Paul Trickle, Linda Wray, and Dave Zehr. Ted pointed out most of these people have served on Synod Council in the past and represent the geographical areas of the synod. ELCA recommends 8 member and we have 10 members.

Action: SC 2024/17: The Synod Council approved the recommended members of the Bishop Election Task Force. Chris Walda made the motion and Betsy Kirk second.

Secretary's Report – Julie Slavens

Executive Committee: Julie reported there were a few items the committee took action on that the Synod Council needs to ratify. Some of these ratification on later on the agenda. The first item is to ratify EC2024/01, which places New Hope Lutheran Church in Reynolds under Synod Administration. This is for a six-month period and is needed due to the sudden death of the leader of the church who had all the information with respect to paying bills, payroll, and other financial information. The congregation asked to be placed under Synod Administration per the synod constitution. This is a recommendation from the Executive Committee.

Action: SC 2024/18: The Synod Council ratified the action of the Executive Committee to place New Hope, Reynolds under Synod Administration (EC2024/01).

The executive committee appointed the board of trustees that would be overseeing New Hope while under Synod Administration. The board of trustees includes Bob Hickman, member of New Hope, Candice Hinkle, pastor of New Hope, Cathy Raderstorf, member of New Hope, Dee Ann Daniels, lay member and Synod Council representative, Pastor Mike Crawford, Dean of Lafayette Conference, Julie Walda, synod accountant, and Pastor Nancy Nyland, staff representative. The executive committee recommends the council appoint of these members to the board of trustees for New Hope Lutheran Church.

Action: SC 2024/19: The Synod Council approved the members of the Board of Trustees for New Hope, Reynolds while under Synod Administration.

Nominations Committee: Julie reported on the candidates that were slated for the synod council, churchwide assembly, and various committees. The persons brought forth from the conferences are not up for nominations from the floor but those brought forth from the nominating committee are subject to nominations from the floor at Synod Assembly.

Treasurer Report – Treasurer Chris Walda

Annual Audit Report: Chris Walda presented a summary of the Audit report and the process. We are up to date with respect to the audit once the 2023 audit is completed. He also briefly went over the other financial reports as previously distributed, including income and endowments and other dedicated funds or restricted funds such as grants and gifts.

Chris presented the proposed 2025-2026 Budget. It includes salaries for Bishop, two Assistant Bishops, support staff and the current part-time positions. The council discussed it and will vote on it on Saturday. The budget as presented has a deficit of less than \$700.

The Friday session ended with a Closing Prayer led by the Meeting Chaplains.

Saturday, April 13

The Saturday session began with Morning Prayer led by the Meeting Chaplains.

Synod Assembly Updates and Decisions

Rules of Assembly – Bishop Bill went over the Rules and the changes made since the last meeting in January. The changes include on-site Bishop Election process. After the second ballot the top seven plus ties will address the assembly before the third ballot by answering one question. It will be a timed answer of five minutes. This will not allow for breakout sessions but will allow for “Lunch and Learn” over box lunches on Saturday. Nancy Nyland is putting together these sessions. This was a suggestion by the deans and the executive committee decided to change the rules now rather than go through the rule change process at the Synod Assembly to save time. Other changes included the opening and closing of registration before each ballot and the timing for withdrawing from the ballot and submitting bio forms. The rule changes are a recommendation from the executive committee.

Action: SC 2024/20: The Synod Council approved the Executive Committee’s recommended changes to the rules of the Synod Assembly and the amended rules as presented.

Proposed Synod Assembly Agenda: Bishop Bill presented the proposed Synod Assembly Agenda and such agenda reflects the changes made to the rules. The executive committee recommends the proposed Synod Assembly as presented by adopted by the Synod Council.

Action: SC 2024/21: The Synod Council the Executive Committee’s recommendation of the changes in the Synod Assembly agenda and the amended agenda as presented.

Synod Assembly Committee Appointments: The council needed to appoint members to the various committees for the Synod Assembly. Volunteers were solicited by Ted Miller for the following committees:

Minutes: Julie Slavens as secretary, Ted Miller, Dee Ann Daniels, Betsy Kirk, and Noah Smith.
Reference and Counsel: Pastor Eric Allen, Josh Tatum, and Pastor Vicki Garber
General Elections: Julie Slavens, Mike Hoover (Chair)

Action: SC 2024/22: The Synod Council approved the members to the Minutes Committee, the Reference and Council Committee, and the General Elections Committee for the Synod Assembly. Jody Winter made the motion for appointment of the committees and Ryan Bailey second.

Proposed 2025-2026 Synod Budget: The council discussed the Finance Committee's recommendation of the proposed budget that will be presented to Synod Assembly for approval.

Action: SC 2024/23: The Synod Council approved the Finance Committee's recommended budget as presented.

Proposed 2024-2025 Compensation Standards: Dan Forehand presented the recommended compensation guidelines which include a 3% increase in salary and a new housing adjustment standard. The standards include both rostered and Word and Service employees.

Action: SC 2024/24: The Synod Council approved the Compensation Committee's recommend Compensation Schedules as presented.

Other Items: Bishop Bill shared the videos about a day in the life of a bishop continue and a 6th video has been added. The chair of the Conference of Bishops will be doing one on the role of the Conference of Bishops.

Congregational Concerns – Bill Gafkjen

Grace, Syracuse, IN – 1st vote to disaffiliate (March 17): 95.3% (22 people voted). They want to be independent from a national church in order to grow locally. Will continue to be Lutheran in worship and practice. A second vote cannot take place for 90 days the first vote. Bill explained what will happen when the second vote takes place that will involve Synod Council action, which includes approval of disaffiliation and potential of keeping the property.

Christ Lutheran Chapel, Elizabethtown KY – Bishop Bill recommended the annual renewal standing as a Synod Authorized Worshipping Community (SAWC).

Action: SC 2024/25: The Synod Council approved the renewal of Christ Lutheran Chapel in Elizabethtown, KY as Synod Authorized Worshipping Community (SAWC) per the Bishop recommendation.

Bishop Bill reported for information on the following items:

- Faith, Jeffersonville IN – exploring options around selling or leasing their building.
- Come2Go, Fort Wayne IN – exploring selling their building and moving in with Faith, Fort Wayne
- Mara Evangelical Lutheran Church Indianapolis (MECI) – working on formally organizing as a congregation in hope of being approved by Synod Council during June 7 meeting and received by the Synod during the assembly. Pastor of the congregation wants Bishop Bill to ordain him and the plan is to ordain him on August 31, providing he is approved for ordination and called by the congregation after ordination.

Roster Concerns – Bill Gafkjen

Pastor Emmanuel Penumaka: Bishop Bill provided an update on his source of call to serve Trinity, Lebanon IN – it has been determined that the ELCA and the US Immigration Service requires Trinity to call Pastor Penumaka. The situation has been explained to the congregation and its council. The call vote has been set for July 14 and will be in conjunction with Pastor Penumaka's ordination anniversary.

Retired Status: Pastor Sharon Walker (6/1/24); Pastor Sue Socha (7/1/24). Bishop Bill recommended approval of moving these pastors to Retired Status.

Action: SC 2024/26: The Synod Council approved the status of Retired for Pastor Sharon Walker effective June 1, 2024, and Pastor Sue Socha effective July 1, 2024, as recommended by the Bishop.

On Leave from Call: Pastor Kelly Nelson (4/15/24); Extensions granted by Conference of Bishops for Pastor Carolyn Lesmeister and Pastor Aaron Stamper. Bishop Bill recommended to the council to place Pastor Nelson to On Leave From Call status and to extend the On Leave From Call status to Pastor Lesmeister and Pastor Stamper.

Action: SC 2024/27: The Synod Council approved the On Leave From Call status to Pastor Kelly Nelson effective April 15, 2024, and to extend the On Leave From Call status as approved by the Conference of Bishops to Pastor Carolyn Lesmeister and to Pastor Aaron Stamper for the first of three years as recommended by the Bishop.

Bishop Bill also reported the executive committee had approved Pastor Karyn Kost to be a Hospice Chaplain at VNA Hospice NWI. This entity is a non-profit and its business philosophy fits Pastor Kost better than her current position. Bishop Bill asked the council to ratify the executive committee action (EC2024/04).

Action: SC 2024/28: The Synod Council ratified the action of the Executive Committee to extend a Synod Call to Pastor Karyn Kost to be a Hospice chaplain at VNA Hospice NWI.

Bishop's Report – Bill Gafkjen

Bishop Bill recommended the appointment of Conference Ministerium Deans. These will be 3-year terms, beginning at the conclusion of the 2024 Synod Assembly.

- SouthEast IN: Pastor Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar, St. Paul, Olean, IN
- NorthWest IN: Pastor Erika Gibson-Even, Christ, Valparaiso, IN
- EastCentral IN: Pastor Chip Belanga, First English, Richmond, IN
- Evansville IN: Pastor Colleen Winkler, St. Matthew by the Lake, Benton, KY

Action: SC 2024/29: The Synod Council approved the appointment of Conference Deans as recommended and presented by the Bishop.

“State of the Synod” and Other Reflections

Bishop Bill reported he had included his Bishop’s report in the materials for this meeting for the council to read and reflect on before the Synod Assembly. He reported that he generally talks about where the Synod has been and where it is going but he decided that was not appropriate for this report. He instead based it on the theme of “for what has been, thanks; and for what will be, Yes.” He said the theme is mostly “thank you” and especially for the synod council members present and past. He included the report in the materials for this meeting to say thank you to the synod council.

Bishop Bill also reported he is working with people from the ELCA on having a Zoom meeting on the upcoming social statement on Civic Life. He also reported there is money for Wellness Grants for rostered leaders to apply. To date 42 grants of up to \$500 each have been provided.

Bishop Bill provided an update on the work of the Disaster Response Coordinator, Jayme Beneker, who joined the meeting via Zoom. Bishop Bill introduced her and gave a summary of her work so far. Jayme also provided an update on the relief work going on in the communities who just experienced loss due to tornado damage. She started in February and has been networking with other disaster relief agencies in the two states of Indiana and Kentucky. She is also looking for opportunities to do new things in her area. In addition, she is building teams in various areas of the Synod to help in local disaster relief efforts.

Other Synod Staff Reports

Pastor Dan Forehand provided his staff report stating he was involved in many things. He is helping synod staff to get data on congregations and other synod ministries as to how it is changing. Part of the data shows 100/167 calls in the Synod are part-time. He stated the compensation and candidacy committees were in need of lay persons and asked for any suggestions the council may have. He is also the Region 6 representative for the task force that is looking into the information provided for the Rostered and Word and Service ministry.

Ted Miller relayed his thanks to the council members for their work during the past year in preparation for a Bishop election and the transition to the new Bishop. He also thanked Bishop Bill for his many years of service to the Synod. Other members of council also expressed their gratitude for Bishop Bill’s service.

Committees, Task Forces, and Tables

Constitution Task Force – Julie Slavens reported the committee met in January and approved four constitutions and letters of approval have been sent. The committee is scheduled to meet at the end of April to review and approve a few more constitutions.

Endowment Fund Task Force – Ted Miller reported the task force is not completely full yet but Karl, Ted, and Barb Limbaugh have agreed to be on the Task Force there will be one person from Cross and Crown that is yet to be named but Julie will be the placeholder until such time. There may also be someone from Bloomington that Karl will be contacting.

Action SC2024/30: Council approved the creation of the Endowment Task Force. Mike Hoover

made the motion to create the task force and Noah Smith second.

Mission Monitor Report:

Pastor Vicki reported the meeting was positive and productive. Everyone took the opportunity to speak appropriately. Being on Zoom gave her a different perspective on the dynamics of the meeting and interaction with people at the meeting.

Future Meetings

- Friday, June 7 – 9:00am – Noon, Crowne Plaza, Louisville KY (Jody Winter will be the secretary for the meeting as Julie Slavens will not be at the meeting due to a work obligation.)
- September 13-14 – Lutheran Hills Camp, Morgantown IN

The meeting ended with the Sending Prayer as led by the Meeting Chaplains at approximately 12:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie M. Slavens
IK Synod Secretary