**INDIANA-KENTUCKY SYNOD COUNCIL**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Friday, November 3, 2023: Meeting – 7:00-9:00pm ET Saturday, November 4, 2023: Meeting – 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. ET**

**Benedict Inn, Indianapolis, IN**

Synod Council Members Present: Bishop Bill Gafkjen; Vice President Ted Miller, Secretary Julie Slavens, Treasurer Chris Walda, Pastor Ryan Bailey; Pastor Joshua Penumaka; Pastor Vicki Garber, Pastor Jane Rothman, Deacon Jody Winter; Mike Hoover, Dee Ann Daniels, Nicole Lee, Betsy Kirk, Ella Engelau (Saturday). Staff Members present: Susie Swanson and Cory Driver.

Synod Council Members Absent: Pastor Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar; Pastor Tim Graham, Pastor Bimen Limbong, Pastor Ladonna Webb, Debbie Zehr, Conrad Rapley, Dianna Hunsinger, Noah David Smith, and Tina Smith.

The Meeting Chaplains were Ryan Bailey and Betsy Kirk. Mission Monitor was pastor Jane Rothman.

**Friday,** **November** **3**

The meeting began at 7:00 pm with Pastor Ryan Bailey leading the group in worship vespers.

At approximately 7:15 Bishop Bill asked everyone to share when had God been at work in their everyday life. Everyone present shared when they have felt God at work in their lives.

For rest of Friday evening Bishop Bill provided information on the history of the conference structure in the synod. He stated that conferences are not required as part of the synod and many of the ELCA synods do not have conferences. The governing documents of the Synod require at least annual conference assemblies and only two of the ten IK conferences fully function as the Synod documents describe they should function. They are East Kentucky and Evansville. The congregations have a shared sense of ministry. Many conferences and congregations are learning how to function in a post-COVID world when things were done online but many congregations are in areas where there is poor Wi-Fi connections. Issues to consider are discipleship, energy to do things locally, diverse culture of congregations including politically, and consideration of ecumenical partners in the area.

Given the lack of inactivity of the conferences, Bishop Bill suggested we need to look at reconsidering the political and governance structure of the synod conferences. While the relationship of local congregations with the conferences and the conferences with the synod needs to continue, Bishop Bill suggested there need to be some flexibility in the conference structure. The council will look at this at a deeper level in April, Bishop Bill asked the members to begin to think about the question “what is the purpose of the conferences in our shared mission?” Some members of the council briefly shared their thoughts about how the conference could be restructured including looking a geographical clusters of the congregations in forming conference. Bishop Bill referenced materials on the conference structure of the synod and its impact on synod ministry, “Ind-KY collection of conference provisions.pdf” in Dropbox > New I-K Synod Council Folder > November 2023.

The meeting closed on Friday evening with Betsy Kirk sharing a prayer from the Lutheran Church in Australia.

**Saturday,** **November** **4**

The meeting resumed at approximately 10 am on Saturday morning after opening worship in the chapel. Officer Reports were given as follows:

Vice President – Ted Miller

Ted gave a Bishop Election update and information. He reported the return of the gifts and priorities surveys to the mission centers coming in at a steady pace and felt many of the mission centers would return their surveys by the December 1st deadline He also reported he was able to join the staff on a tour of the Assembly site and thought it would be adequate for the Assembly given the extra attendees since it is a Bishop election.

The next order of business was to form a Bishop Election Task Force. The task force is responsible for the ballot voting and processing at the Assembly. Prior to the Assembly, the vice president will gather information on potential candidates for Bishop that are collected before the Assembly. The names are provided via communications to the vice president by rostered persons or lay leaders. The vice president will contact these persons to see if they are interested in by considered. If so, they are asked to fill out a biographical form that will be available to the delegates prior to the first ballot for Bishop.

Chris Walda has decided to step down as Treasurer since his wife is the Synod bookkeeper as he feels this is a conflict of interest. Ted explained the Treasurer could be a lay person or a rostered person. Ted asked for volunteers to be on the Office of Treasurer Task Force. Jody Winter, Mike Hoover, and Betsy Kirk volunteered to do so

**SC 2023/36: Vicki Garber made the motion to appoint Jody Winter, Mike Hoover, and Betsy Kirk to the Office of Treasurer Task Force. Joshua Penumaka second. The motion was unanimously approved.**

Ted also reported Churchwide has sent the synod voting members and we will have 12 voting members. The nominating committee will meet to determine the representation of the synod at the 2025 churchwide assembly.

Secretary Report – Julie Slavens

Julie Slavens referred to the minutes in Dropbox from the September executive committee meeting and the synod council meeting. She asked if there were any corrections and none were made.

**SC 2023/37: Chris made a motion to accept the September meeting minutes as presented and Nicole second. The motion was approved unanimously.**

Julie then gave an Executive Committee report. The executive committee agreed to the recommendation of Bishop Bill to move forward with hiring a Disaster Response Coordinator as the grant money has been received and there is money in the Synod budget as well. The job will be posted the week following the meeting.

**SC 2023/38: The council unanimously approved the action of the council of the recommendation of the Bishop to move forward with hiring for the Disaster Response Coordinator.**

Julie then reported as referenced in Ted’s report a Bishop Election Task Force will be formed but a Chair of the task force must be appointed by the council. The executive committee approved the recommendation of Ted to appoint Mike Anderson as the Chair. He has held this position previously and did a wonderful job and has agreed to do so again this time.

**SC 2023/39: the council unanimously agreed with the action of the executive committee to appoint Mike Anderson as the Chair of the Bishop Election Task Force.**

Treasurer Report – Treasurer Chris Walda

Chris Walda noted the Mission Support Audit will be taking place the week after the council meeting. This addresses the giving received from the congregations. This information will be shared with the council once the audit is completed.

Bishop Report -- Bill Gafkjen

Bishop Bill reported about beginning the process of saying good-byes to colleagues he has worked with over the past few years. He is committed to and concentrating on keeping the Synod moving forward in the next year and preparing for the new Bishop.

Bishop Bill also reported on staff members who could not be present for this meeting. Dan Forehand was scheduled to be in Houston on behalf of the Synod but had to return due to a family medical emergency. And Nancy Nyland was involved with training and meetings relating to e-Connect. Bishop Bill reported that Susie Swenson has submitted her resignation effective January 31st.

Bishop Bill went on to report that he would not be replacing Dan Fugate but hiring two part time people to do communications and administrative work. Each will work about 15 hours per week. This should help the current staff with tasks needed to be completed for Synod Assembly. They will be interim positions. The staff continues to discern future ministries of the Synod.

Chrism Liturgies Plan: Bishop Bill met with the Deans and it was their desire not to have lay people involved with the Chrism service for the rostered persons. So, during Lent there will be five Chrism services for the Deans and each Dean can have a separate service for laity in the evening or on a weekend.

Synod Assembly Update: Bishop Bill reported the theme for the Synod Assembly will be “Waiting, Watching, and Working Together in Christ” as decided upon by the staff. He reported the Region 6 bishops agreed to do videos on the duties of a bishop and each has chosen their topics. Keynote speakers have agreed to speak as well as Bishop Satterlee has agreed to preach at the Sunday morning service. There will be pre-Assembly devotions of one per month in March, April, and May but to be determined who will write them perhaps synod council members may volunteer to do so.

Roster Concerns:

Synod Council Call: Amy Bartleson Balcam – Bishop Bill reported the Conference of Bishops approved the congregational call requirements for Amy to be Chaplain at Riley Hospital.

**SC 2023/40: Bishop Bill recommended the council approve the call to be Chaplain for Riley Hospital of Amy Bartleson Balcam. The synod council unanimously approved the Bishop’s recommendation.**

Bishop Bill also reported that Gretchen Freese requested a Leave from Call for up to 2 years for family leave. Bishop Bill recommended to grant the Leave from Call.

**SC 2023/41: Upon Bishop Bill’s recommendation to grant Leave from Call to Gretchen Freese, the council unanimously approved his recommendation.**

Other Staff Concerns: Cory Driver reported he did not have any additional information to report outside of the information in his previously distributed report.

Susie Swenson took a few minutes to talk about her retirement and wanted to have time to say good-bye to staff members and others in the Synod she has worked with over the years. Council members wished her well but expressed she would be missed as the work she did for the Synod was important and needed and she did it very well.

Constitution Committee Report: Julie Slavens reported on the Constitution Committee report. She referenced the report in the Dropbox and specifically the Continuing Resolutions S7.27.A23, which reads as follows:

S7.27.A23.Ministers of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Church in America who have been authorized by the synod bishop to serve in a congregation of this church have the privilege of voice and vote as member of the Synod Assembly during the period of that minister’s service in a congregation of this church.

Julie stated the committee recommended this continuing resolution be added to the Synod Constitution.

**SC 2023/42: Ryan Bailey made a motion to amend the resolution to add “Lutheran” after “Evangelical” as that is the official name of the church. Jody Winter second. The amendment was approved unanimously. The Continuing Resolution as amended was approved unanimously.**

Mission Monitor reflections: Jane Rothman reported the council did well as it stayed on task and did so in good timing as the meeting ended earlier than scheduled.

Bishop Bill reminded the council of the future meetings:

1. Saturday January 20, 2024 (via Zoom) @ 9:30 am
2. April 12-13, 2024: Synod Office – The Chaplains will be Jane Rothman and Dee Ann Daniels and the Mission Monitor will be Vicki Garber
3. June 7, 2024 (9:00am – noon): Crown Plaza Airport Louisville, KY
4. **Synod Assembly: Friday, June 7 – Sunday, June 9, 2024**

The meeting ended with prayer lead by Ryan Bailey and Betsy Kirk.