

## MINUTES

**Nebraska Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Synod Council Minutes  
March 20, 2021  
DRAFT**

**Voting Members present:**

Bp. Brian Maas	Dara Troutman	Dan Friedlund	Linda Miller
Pr. Greg Berger	Dennis Byars	Sr. Anne Hall	Nancy Hinrichs
Pr. Don Hunzeker	Pr. Cara Jensen	Leann Kersten	Pr. Lori Kitzing
Elysia McGill	Pr. Nathan Metzger	Gary Overfield	Pr. Ellen Stelzle

Pr. Jon Mapa joined by 9:30

**Staff and Organizational Presidents present:**

Pr. Juliet Focken	Diane Harpster	Lisa Kramme	Stephanie Lusienksi
Pr. Steve Meysing	Pr. Megan Morrow	Dn. Sunni Richardson	Dn. Timothy Siburg
Dn. Connie Stover	Bill Biggs		

**Absent:**

Bol Ngok	Pr. Sarah Ruch	Francisco Salazar	Isaiah Spruth-Janssen
Brenda Rivas	Pr. Kristen Van Stee	Sandy Terry (NSWO)	Joel Pedersen

Vice President Dara Troutman called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. and welcomed everyone. The roll was called and a quorum was present.

The agenda was set as printed. MOVED and SECONDED to approve the agenda as presented. APPROVED.

MOVED and SECONDED to approve the minutes of November 21, 2020. APPROVED. Deacon Connie Stover, Director, Seeking the Spirit Within, provided a Spiritual Practice on prayer, which involved breath prayer, God sighting and body prayer. Connie left the meeting at 9:30 a.m.

**Bishop's Report:** A written report was available.

Bishop Brian spoke to the high level of fatigue present in ministry leaders as people all over are becoming tired of pandemic living. Synod staff try to remain as supportive as possible and are helping out by leading worship for those who need to be away. He thanked **Dan Friedlund** and **Stephanie Lusienksi** for their work keeping the budget "in line". **Tyler Darnell** moved to Illinois with his spouse and his former position of Synod Evangelist will not be filled, which will allow for some flexibility in staffing. **Timothy Siburg** is the Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM) designee with a new title of Director for Mission Imagination & Stewardship.

The bishop thanked **Sunni Richardson** for preparing for VIC, the Vitality Initiative for Congregations and believes VIC is a very exciting time for the synod. Congregations should check the synod website to see if they (the congregation) are ready to participate in this initiative. Coaches are being trained through the ELCA. He is being trained also, which he anticipates will be beneficial to his work as bishop. The ELCA has been a part of this since 2002.

The Nebraska Synod website is undergoing significant renewal for the next few months. This is the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nebraska Synod. There will be celebrations this year, primarily between September 2021 and the 2022 Synod Assembly. The Conference of Bishops recently held a two-day online gathering and hope the October 2021 gathering can be in person. The Conference has a weekly one-hour meeting and is giving attention to concerns with racism in the world and in the church. Members of the R.A.R.E. Team will join the Synod Council meeting to present the Proposed Anti-Racism Initiatives for 2021-2022.

The Mission Share five-year experiment of withholding some income from Churchwide has ended and MS gifts have not increased. The Nebraska Synod will continue doing what it has been doing. A Churchwide document, Definitions & Guidelines for Discipline, defines the conduct of rostered members, lay members and congregations and the consequences of violating those standards of conduct. The ELCA Church Council will act on this document in April. The Human Sexuality social statement was adopted twelve years ago. Churchwide's reorganization has resulted in a 5% reduction in staff. Bishop Brian expressed his thanks to synod staff and leaders for their support of him in this work.

### **SC21.03.01: ADDITIONS TO BISHOP'S REPORT**

**RECOMMENDED:** That the following rostered persons be approved for On Leave From Call status for one year:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
Breen Sipes	12/1/20
Samantha Nichols	12/19/20
Bogart Nomad	1/1/21
Susan Claire Meyer	1/15/21
Rob Garton	2/15/21
David Buco	3/1/21

**RECOMMENDED:** That the following Synod Council call be approved:

Inba Inbarasu, called to serve as Pastor at Immanuel Pathways Southwest Iowa, effective January 7, 2021

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

**The following actions of the Executive Committee of 12/21/20 were communicated to the Synod Council 12/23/20**

**RECOMMENDED:** That extension of On Leave From Call status be approved for the following rostered person:

Erin Dunlavy 10/1/18, 2019 2<sup>nd</sup> yr, 2020 3<sup>rd</sup> yr, 2021 4<sup>th</sup> yr  
Extensions are granted by the Conference of Bishops, and her extension was approved at the Spring 2021 meeting of the COB, to be effective to 9/30/23.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the following rostered person be approved for transfer to the disability

Executive roster:  
Randall Herman effective 12/21/20 (date of action of the  
Committee)

**SC21.03.02: EN BLOC**

1. **SYNOD ASSEMBLY ITEMS**

A. Agenda for the Synod Assembly – June 5, 2021

*(Proposed Agenda for 2021 Synod Assembly, pp. 113-115)*

**RECOMMENDED:** That the proposed Synod Assembly agenda be adopted as the order for business for the 2021 Synod Assembly being held online June 5 and that the proposed agenda be presented to the Assembly for adoption.

B. Agencies and Causes:

**RECOMMENDED:** That the following agencies and causes be authorized to present their needs to the congregations of the Nebraska Synod and that congregations be encouraged to receive special offerings for them in 2022:

Immanuel	Lutheran Family Services
Midland University	Mosaic
Nebraska Lutheran Campus Ministries	
Nebraska Lutheran Outdoor Ministries	
Oaks Indian Mission	Tabitha
Blue Valley Lutheran Homes	

and that this recommendation be presented to the Synod Assembly.

C. Committees:

**RECOMMENDED:** That the following committee members be ratified by the Synod Council:

**Minutes**

Tom Garvey – St. Michael’s, Omaha – Chair  
Linda Miller, Synod Council Secretary  
Pr. Kathee Forrest, Holy Cross, Beatrice  
Pr. Doug Hjelmstad, Zion, Haigler  
Diane Harpster – Staff Liaison

**Resolutions, Reference & Counsel Committee**

Pr. William Shaner, First, Lincoln – Chair  
Janet Byars, St. John’s, Beatrice

Ron Gunderson, St. Pauls, Grand Island  
Bill Koeber, Our Savior, Wayne  
Bill Biggs, Synod Council Liaison  
Pr. Glenda Pearson, Bethany, Ord/Trinity, Wolbach  
Pr. Sheri Lodel, Calvary, Grand Island/Our Saviour's, Dannebrog  
Kathy Salts, PMA, Our Saviour, Broken Bow  
Pr. Steve Meysing – Synod Staff Liaison

RECOMMENDED: That Pr. Cara Jensen be appointed as chair of the Nominating Committee.

RECOMMENDED: That Tom Garvey be appointed as chair of the Registration Committee.

D. Auditor's Report:

RECOMMENDED: That the Synod Council recommend to the Nebraska Synod in Assembly that the auditor's report for 2020 be accepted once the report is received, conditional upon such report being a clean opinion.

E. Synod Authorized Worshiping Communities:

*(Criteria for Synod Authorized Worshiping Communities p. 116)*

RECOMMENDED: Whereas the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Church Council

April 2007, Exhibit G part 2, it is required that all Synod Authorized Worshiping Communities be approved annually by the Synod Council and Synod Assembly. Motion: that the following assemblies be reauthorized as Synod Authorized Worshiping Communities:

Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Way, Lincoln  
Followers of Christ Prison Ministry, Lincoln  
Iglesia Luterana San Andres, Omaha  
Lakota Lutheran Chapel, Scottsbluff  
Nile Lutheran Chapel, Omaha  
Sudanese Messiah Worshiping Community, Ralston  
and that this recommendation be presented to the Synod Assembly.

F. Voting Privileges:

RECOMMENDED: That in accordance with Synod Constitution provision S7.26. (This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit representatives of congregations under development and authorized worshiping communities of the synod, under ELCA bylaw 10.02.03., to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with \*S7.21.) the following persons be granted voting privileges at the 2021 Synod Assembly:

Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Way, Lincoln

Two lay members (to be identified)  
Iglesia Luterana San Andres, Omaha  
Two lay members (to be identified)  
Lakota Lutheran Chapel and Center, Scottsbluff  
Two lay members (to be identified)  
Nile Lutheran Chapel, Omaha  
Two lay members (to be identified)  
Sudanese Messiah Worshiping Community, Ralston  
Two lay members (to be identified)

RECOMMENDED: By continuing resolutions of the Nebraska Synod Council adopted March 13, 2020, in accordance with S.7.21.c of the Nebraska Synod Constitution, persons serving as ministers of Nebraska Synod congregations by Authorization of the Bishop of the Synod are granted voice and vote in the Assembly, as are ministers of Word and Sacrament of Full Communion partners serving Nebraska Synod congregations, in accordance with 8.62.12 of the Constitution of the ELCA.

G. Assembly Offering:

RECOMMENDED: That the 2021 Synod Assembly offerings be designated to support the  
the  
synod ministries of Mission Field Nebraska.

2. **2022 COMPENSATION FOR ROSTERED PERSONS** – including parsonage guidelines  
*(Proposed Compensation Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Word and Service for 2022, pp. 98-111)*

RECOMMENDED: That the 2022 Compensation Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Word and Service be approved and presented to the 2021 Synod Assembly.

3. **SYNOD EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK** - *(Nebraska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America)*

RECOMMENDED: To approve the update of the Nebraska Synod ELCA Employee Handbook

4. **CONGREGATIONS:**

RECOMMENDED: That the constitution for Messiah, Aurora, be approved

RECOMMENDED: That the constitution for Sheridan, Lincoln, be approved

RECOMMENDED: That the constitution for Salem, Dakota City, be approved

RECOMMENDED: That the constitution for Christ, Louisville, be approved

RECOMMENDED: That the constitution for St. John's, Randolph, be approved

RECOMMENDED: That the constitution for Christ, Pierce, be approved

RECOMMENDED: That the constitution for American, Fairbury, be approved

RECOMMENDED: That the constitution for Calvary, Scottsbluff, be approved  
RECOMMENDED: That the constitution for Grace, Lexington, be approved  
RECOMMENDED: That the constitution for **First**, North Platte, be approved.

##### **5. AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS:**

RECOMMENDED: That the following request from Nebraska Lutheran Campus Ministry

be approved:

To appoint Mercy Ndos-Shoo to fulfill a first three-year term commencing April 1, 2021 through May 31, 2022. She would complete the remainder of Kim Sucha's term. Mercy is a member of St. Michael Lutheran Church, Omaha.

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

**Staff Reports:** Written reports were available.

**Bill Biggs** said that Salem, St. Edward is closing and is being guided by Juliet, he is working on constitutions with Steve and Diane, and commented on Dialogue Works, a means of assisting struggling rural and small town churches. Dara noted that St. John's, Auburn will be closing in April. **Steve Meysing** highlighted that there will be a minimum wage increase for PMAs. He is in conversation with Presbyterian and Episcopalian counterparts to explore joint ministry as the number of pastors and supply preachers is diminishing. **Sunni Richardson** has a written report and added she is a part of Dialogue Works. **Megan Morrow** has a written report. **Juliet Focken** mentioned that April 18, 2021 will be the final service for Salem, St. Edward. Members are transferring to other congregations, three congregations have a joint council and Salem's building will be used for weddings and funerals. Other denominations are starting authorized ministry programs. **Lisa Kramme** pointed out the questions at the beginning of her written report and said the Sow the Seeds team and some synod staff are working to find Synod Ambassadors within congregations. She commented on The Generosity Project and said the Growing God's Generous Generations (4G) Network has been adapted for synod use. **Diane Harpster** had no report. **Stephanie Lusinski** said some staff are involved in the Synod Ambassador program. **Timothy Siburg** has a written report.

##### **Reports of Officers and Organizations**

**Vice President's Report:** For transparency, Dara shared the Executive Committee's motion which approved the appropriations of the Immanuel Vision Foundation for 2020 and 2021 totaling \$65,000. For informational purposes, Dara spoke about the resource document, "The Synod Vice President Role: Living Into Your Leadership Calling", which is in the packet. She pointed out the two categories of duties: 1) those outlined by Synod constitutions and deemed essential and 2) those characterized by the unique needs of each Synod. Dara shared that she has two years left of her 2<sup>nd</sup> four-year term and will not seek re-election.

**Secretary's Report** was accepted as presented.

**R.A.R.E. Team Presentation** Dara welcomed members of the Racial Awareness, Reconciliation and Engagement Team who introduced themselves: Brad Johnson, Michelle

DeRusha, Miriam Blair, Jon Gathje, Colette Knight, Heidi Price and Julie McKinney. They walked through the **Proposed Anti-Racism Initiatives for 2021-2022**. 1) Redesign Synod Council/committee nominating and recruiting process to eliminate bias and barriers to POC and youth/young adult participation. They said cluster nomination processes are problematic. 2) Create and launch coordinated Call for Nominations communications campaign in January 2022. They will create a promotional video. 3) Establish a Diversity and Inclusivity Committee to increase accountability regarding progress toward reaching Synod's diversity and inclusivity goals. 4) Establish mandatory diversity and inclusivity training for rostered ministers and church staff. Discussion followed each point. It was pointed out that constitutionally training can be strongly encouraged but not mandatory.

Questions that arose: How to incorporate congregations west of Grand Island? How to pull from very rural congregations? Steve Meysing offered to work with the R.A.R.E. Team. It was mentioned that the LGBTQA+ group is raising similar questions. Is there a possibility of working together? Travel distances within the synod were brought up.

Dara said there is not a formal motion. She asked if there were objections on the part of the Synod Council in accepting these four recommendations from R.A.R.E.? Hearing none, **the consensus of the Synod Council is to accept the R.A.R.E. recommendations.**

Dara thanked the Team members for their passion, interest, and willingness to help us be better. Additional comments: Need people from outstate to serve on the committee. Council members are invited to look at the R.A.R.E. presentations, which are online and to attend future ones. Cara Jensen closed this session with prayer and the Team left the meeting.

Discussion within the council continued. Comments: Getting people involved in local congregations, forming a new committee between LGBTQA+ and R.A.R.E., don't assume one will be the spokesperson for the other, form a new group that focuses fully on inclusivity of all with a broader charge and base, maintain interest once everyone returns home, ask R.A.R.E. how they see themselves as part of a larger group.

**Send suggestions to Bp. Brian or the Synod office.**

**Treasurer's Report:** Dan Friedlund commented on the written report. He noted that the October 2020 estate gift of \$1.1 million impacted the Total Net Assets and is in the Hunger and Disaster Endowment Fund. Mission Share is down 5% and income is down \$200,000+. The PPP loan had a huge impact and allowed the Synod to break even from an operating perspective. The special campaign provided \$15,000, which supported operations. Stephanie expressed appreciation for the Mission Share received.

The budget for 2022 will be taken to the Synod Assembly in June. It is on p. 21 with the narrative on pp. 22-23. There is a projected deficit of \$72,000 for FY2021 (ending 1/31/22) with a projected deficit of \$97,000 for FY2022 (ending 1/31/23) as expenses may be returning closer to normal. He expects a reduction of Mission Share income. The \$150,00 operating surplus in

FY2020 (due to the CARES ACT PPP Loan) will help support activities going into FY2021. The Contingency Fund will then have \$436,000, which helps with sustainability for two years. The treasurer's report was accepted as presented.

**Nebraska Synod Women's Organization:** Dara noted that there is a written report from Sandy Terry.

**SC21.03.03 RECOMMENDED:** To authorize the following as **Mission Field Nebraska** ministries

through March 2022:

**Mission Field Nebraska**

Followers of Christ Prison Ministry, Lincoln  
Iglesia Luterana San Andres, Omaha  
Lakota Lutheran Center and Chapel, Scottsbluff  
Nile Lutheran Chapel, Omaha  
Seeking the Spirit Within, Statewide  
Sudanese Messiah Worshiping Community, Ralston

**Mission Field Nebraska Affiliates**

Barnabas Community, Lincoln  
Bridges to Hope, Lincoln  
Lutheran Service Corps, Omaha  
Serving Hands of Hope Foundation, Omaha  
Table Grace Ministries, Omaha

SPONSOR: Bishop Brian Maas

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

**SC21.03.04 RECOMMENDED:** That the following Rules of Procedure for the 2021 Nebraska Synod Assembly be recommended to the Synod Assembly:

1. Any voting member of the Synod Assembly who desires to add an item of new business to the agenda of the Synod Assembly shall present such item by 10:00 a.m. Friday, June 4, 2021 via email to [office@nebraskasynod.org](mailto:office@nebraskasynod.org) from which it will be forwarded immediately to the Resolutions, Reference and Counsel Committee.
2. A two-thirds vote of the Synod Assembly shall be required to add an item of new business to its agenda.
3. The Synod Assembly may consider and act on business agenda items en bloc, provided those business agenda items were recommended for such consideration by the Synod Council. En bloc business agenda items shall be acted upon without debate or amendment. Upon the request of a Synod Assembly voting member and a second by nine other voting members, any agenda item may be pulled from en bloc consideration and be considered and acted upon separately following action on the remainder of en bloc business agenda items.
4. Voting members desiring to present resolutions shall submit them via email to [office@nebraskasynod.org](mailto:office@nebraskasynod.org) by 10:00 a.m. Friday, June 4, 2021. Resolutions received by the deadline will be forwarded to the Resolutions, Reference and Counsel Committee. These resolutions (submitted after the 90-day deadline) will be brought to the Assembly and require a majority vote to be debated on the floor and a two-thirds majority vote for passage. Any resolution properly before the Assembly and recommended by the Resolutions, Reference and Counsel Committee, but not disposed of by the end of the



time allotted for action on resolutions will automatically be referred to the Synod Council for study and action at its next regular meeting.

5. The Synod Assembly may consider and act on resolutions en bloc, provided those resolutions were recommended for en bloc consideration and approval, either as submitted or amended, by both the Resolutions, Reference and Counsel Committee and the Synod Council. En bloc resolutions shall be acted upon without debate or amendment, except that the presiding officer may allow the introducer of each en bloc resolution to speak to his or her resolution once for no longer than two minutes. Upon the request of a Synod Assembly voting member and a second by nine other voting members, any resolution may be pulled from en bloc consideration and be considered and acted upon separately following action on the remainder of en bloc resolutions.
6. All speeches in debate shall be limited to two minutes.
7. No motion or parliamentary action, other than a motion to adjourn, shall be in order outside of the time scheduled on the Assembly agenda entitled Assembly Business Session.
8. In accordance with Nebraska Synod Constitution S.9.02, a majority of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. In the event a majority is not achieved in an election with more than two nominees for a position, the two nominees receiving the most ballots (plus ties) shall be placed upon the subsequent ballot for that position.
9. Nominations from the floor shall be submitted via e-mail to [office@nebraskasynod.org](mailto:office@nebraskasynod.org) by 10:00 a.m. Friday, June 4, 2021.

BACKGROUND: Each year, the rules governing procedure at the Synod Assembly are offered as a resolution by the Synod Council during the Assembly's first business session. The proposed set of rules in this motion would, upon approval by the Synod Council, become that proposed resolution.

SPONSOR: Bishop Brian Maas, on behalf of the Synod Assembly Planning Team  
MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

**SC21.03.05 RECOMMENDED:** That the following individuals be appointed as the initial members of the 2022 Synod Assembly Planning Team:

Elizabeth Florian – Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Hastings  
Pr. Emily Johnson – Christ, Louisville  
Pr. Trudy Powell – St. John's, Randolph  
Pr. Heidi Wallace – Bethany, Lyons  
Nebraska Synod staff liaison, designated by the Bishop

Four additional members are to be appointed by the Executive Committee, with emphasis on lay representation.

SPONSOR: Bishop Brian Maas  
MOVED - SECONDED – APPROVED

**SC21.03.06 RECOMMENDED:** That the recommendation of the PMA Steering Committee that

Bob Ball (St. John's, Scribner), be certified as Parish Ministry Associate be approved.  
SPONSOR: Bishop Brian Maas, on behalf of the PMA Steering Committee

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

**SC21.03.07 RECOMMENDED:** That Seim Johnson be appointed auditors for the Year Ended January 31, 2021 (FY2020).

SPONSOR: Dan Friedlund on behalf of the Audit Committee

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

**SC21.03.08 RECOMMENDED:** That the Synod Council accept the FY2022 (year ending January

31, 2023) proposed budget, as presented by the Budget and Finance Committee, and recommend to the Synod Assembly for approval.

SPONSOR: Dan Friedlund on behalf of the Budget and Finance Committee.

MOVED by the Executive Committee – APPROVED

**SC21.03.09 RECOMMENDED:** To transfer the positive FY2020 (year ended January 31, 2021)

net operating revenue, which totaled \$150,595 to the Synod Contingency Fund.

**BACKGROUND:** This positive amount of \$150,595, which includes the CARES Act PPP Loan

forgiveness of \$147,800, would be transferred to the Synod Contingency Fund to provide funding during periods in which deficits or future operating shortfalls occur.

SPONSOR: Dan Friedlund on behalf of the Budget and Finance Committee

MOVED by the Executive Committee – APPROVED

**SC21.03.10 RECOMMENDED:** To approve the transfer of \$73,000 from the Fall Campaign Fund

to the following Funds or Ministries for FY2020 (year ended January 31, 2021):

Mission Field Nebraska	\$30,000
Seminarian Assistance Fund	20,000
New Mission Start	10,000

Operating Fund to cover cost of:

STSW	5,000
PMA	5,000
Candidacy	<u>3,000</u>
	\$73,000

SPONSOR: Dan Friedlund for the Budget and Finance Committee

MOVED by Executive Committee - APPROVED

**SC21.03.11 RECOMMENDED:** To approve the Nebraska Synod ELCA Hunger and Disaster Endowment Fund Objectives and Guidelines and Statement of Investment Policies

SPONSOR: Dan Friedlund for the Budget and Finance Committee

MOVED by Executive Committee – APPROVED

**SC21.03.12 RECOMMENDED:** Pursuant to Section \*C.9.07, the Synod Council of the Nebraska

Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America does hereby authorize Rev. Robert Garton to be available for a call as a Pastor at First Lutheran Church in York, Nebraska, should

the congregation seek to consider him for a call following the conclusion of his term as Interim/Transitional Pastor there.

SPONSOR: Bishop Brian Maas

MOVED – SECONDED - APPROVED

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:** Sr. Anne has resigned from the council effective April 1, 2021 due to retirement. Dara thanked her for her work.

**Final thoughts:** Dara thanked the council for conversation regarding the R.A.R.E. Initiatives. She also thanked Megan and Cara for their work with the nominating committee. Bill Biggs thanked Dara for her work as Vice President the past six years (with two more to go) and expressed his appreciation.

**Next meeting:** Friday, June 4, online 2-5 pm Synod Assembly is Saturday, June 5, online. Dara reminded council that a revised Synod Assembly agenda had been emailed prior to this meeting. She also reminded everyone to register as a voting member for the Synod Assembly if not already registered from your congregation.

Lori Kitzing closed with prayer. As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Miller  
Secretary Pro Tem