

**MINUTES**  
**Nebraska Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
**Synod Council Minutes**  
**June 4, 2021**  
DRAFT

**Voting Members present:**

Bp. Brian Maas	Dara Troutman	Dan Friedlund	Linda Miller
Pr. Greg Berger	Dennis Byars	Leann Kersten	Pr. Lori Kitzing
Pr. Jon Mapa	Elysia McGill	Pr. Nathan Metzger	Gary Overfield
Pr. Sarah Ruch	Isaiah Spruth-Janssen	Pr. Ellen Stelzle	

**Staff and Organizational Presidents present:**

Bill Biggs	Pr. Juliet Focken	Diane Harpster	Lisa Kramme
Stephanie Lusienki	Pr. Steve Meysing	Pr. Megan Morrow	Dn. Sunni Richardson
Dn. Timothy Siburg	Pr. Kristen Van Stee	Sandy Terry (NSWO)	

**Absent:**

Nancy Hinrichs	Pr. Don Hunzeker	Pr. Cara Jensen	Bol Ngok
Francisco Salazar	Brenda Rivas	Dn. Connie Stover	

Vice President Dara Troutman called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone. The roll was called and a quorum was present. She noted that Pr. Don Hunzeker was called to Scottsbluff for a family emergency.

Dara announced a change to the agenda. MOTION 7 regarding the Matthews Estate case has been added. MOVED and SECONDED to approve the agenda as presented and revised. APPROVED.

MOVED and SECONDED to approve the minutes of March 20, 2021. APPROVED.

Pr. Brad Meyer, Certified Spiritual Director, led a contemplative spiritual practice that involved silence, prayer, self-examination, gratitude and thankfulness. He closed with prayer.

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

Bishop Brian said the Synod Assembly has come together well with online practice sessions at UNO. He announced that Tom Smith, PMA, will be working part-time in the areas of mobility and pastoral care in the Panhandle. He is encouraged by the fact that more people are entering the candidacy process than are currently graduating. The Synod lost its case in the Matthews Estate. More information will be presented when Motion 7 is before the Council. Synod staff are out more, doing more as normal office operations are beginning to resume.

**SC21.06.01: 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>
Alma Gast Buco	2/11/21
Chris Alexander	1/1/21
Charlie Smith	7/1/19, 2020 2 <sup>nd</sup> yr, 2021 3 <sup>rd</sup> yr
Rich Sheridan	8/1/19 (study leave-6yrs, 2020 2 <sup>nd</sup> yr, 2021 3 <sup>rd</sup> yr)

**RECOMMENDED:** That the following rostered persons be approved for transfer to the retired roster:

John Gosswein	May 1, 2021
Anne Hall	June 1, 2021
David Hall	June 1, 2021
Carol Mapa	June 1, 2021

**RECOMMENDED:** That the following Synod Council calls be approved for renewal:

Sadi Vila, Mission Developer at San Andres, three-year renewable call, effective 9/1/21.

Pr. Kristine Hileman, (Presbyterian), to serve as Pastor at St. John Lutheran, Daykin, and St. Paul Lutheran, Gilead, effective 7/1/21. This call was issued 7/1/19 and requires annual renewal at the request of the congregation council.

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

Renaë Koehler, United Church of Christ pastor, Letter of Invitation to Extended Service as Senior Pastor at St. John Lutheran, Beatrice.

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

**SC21.06.02: EN BLOC** (Item #3 was added by email 6/2/21)

1. CONGREGATIONS

**RECOMMENDED:** That the constitution for Messiah, North Platte, be approved.  
*(Corrects error of listing as **First**, North Platte, in March 2021 en bloc)*

**RECOMMENDED:** That the constitution for Grace, Wahoo, be approved.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the constitution for Grace, Lincoln, be approved.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the constitution for Zion, Sutton, be approved.

2. COMMITTEES

**RECOMMENDED:** That the following appointments to the PMA Steering Committee be affirmed, effective May 2021:

Joyce Kolbo, student, third one-year term

Tim Stadem, second three-year term  
Karen King, second three-year term

RECOMMENDED: That the following request of the Budget and Finance Committee be approved:

To appoint Kevin Karas as Committee Chair

### 3. AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS

RECOMMENDED: To affirm the Bishop's appointment of the following members to the Seeking the Spirit Within Board for three-year terms, beginning September 1, 2021:

Emily Wageman  
Pr. Carol Mapa  
Lisa Kramme  
Greg Schuerman

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

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

**Bill Biggs, Diane Harpster, Sunni Richardson, Kristen Van Stee, Timothy Siburg, Lisa Kramme, Megan Morrow, Steve Meysing, Stephanie Lusinski and Juliet Focken** indicated no need for verbal reports. Elysia McGill thanked staff for their work in making pastoral transitions as smooth as possible. Sandy Terry also offered her thanks to staff and specifically to Pr. Steve Meysing in regard to his work with the PMA program. Pr. Sarah Ruch posed a question to Sunni Richardson in regard to LGBTQIA+ work and Sunni provided a brief history of making "All Are Welcome" a reality. Bill Biggs said he and Joel Pedersen have hit their stride as attorneys for the Synod and appreciate working together.

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

**Vice President's Report:** No report.

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

**Treasurer's Report:** Dan Friedlund commented on the written report. He highlighted that at this point operations reflect only a (\$9,000) deficit, mission share looks positive at \$476,000, which is only slightly under budget, Leadership Ministries have had grant funds, Salaries & Operations look favorable and restricted fund balances are basically doing well as people have responded well with their financial gifts. The treasurer's report was accepted as presented.

**Nebraska Synod Women's Organization:** A written report was available. Sandy Terry commented that she is nearing the end of serving six years by the time the annual convention is held in early October.

**SC21.06.03 RECOMMENDED:** That the following individuals be appointed as the initial members of the 2022 Synod Assembly Planning Team:

Jon Fredricks – St. Michael's, Omaha

Ric Miller, PMA – Morning Star, Omaha  
Ron Lofgren, PMA – St. John's, Leigh/Zion, Platte Center  
Joe Johndreau – Immanuel, Chadron

They join those appointed at the March 2021 meeting:

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

SPONSOR: Bishop Brian Maas

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

**SC21.06.04 RECOMMENDED:** To set the housing/parsonage allowance of the Rev. Ricardo Riqueza, serving as pastor at St. John's, Marquette/Trinity, Polk, at \$5,000 annually, effective immediately, until changed by future action of the Synod Council.

SPONSOR: Dara Troutman

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

**SC21.06.05 RECOMMENDED:** That the recommendation of the PMA Steering Committee that Jody Bures-Helton (Holy Cross, Beatrice) be certified as a Parish Ministry Associate be approved.

SPONSOR: Bishop Brian Maas, on behalf of the PMA Steering Committee

MOVED - SECONDED – APPROVED

**SC21.06.06 RECOMMENDED:** Approve compensation and benefits provided to Bishop Brian Maas by increasing salary, housing allowance, and SECA for 2021 by 2% over 2020 base compensation, retroactive to February 1, 2021.

SPONSOR: Dara Troutman, Vice President, on behalf of the Executive Committee

MOVED by Executive Committee – APPROVED

**SC21.06.07 RECOMMENDED:** To reappoint Dan Friedlund as Synod Treasurer for a three-year term ending in 2024 or until his successor assumes office.

SPONSOR: Bishop Brian Maas and Dara Troutman

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED. Dan Friedlund abstained.

**SC21.06.08 RECOMMENDED:** To suspend the Rules to conduct an election for members of various Synod Committees by electronic vote following the process described below:

- Develop an electronic initial ballot listing individuals whose names were forwarded by the Nominating Committee for each position to be elected
- Open each election for additional nominations from the floor
- Close nominations and distribute the final election ballot via email to elected members of the Nebraska Synod Council
- Offer a prayer before balloting

- Allow Nebraska Synod Council members to vote anonymously for each position
- Declare the persons receiving the highest number of votes cast elected regardless of whether they receive more than 50% of all votes cast, provided there is not a tie number of votes
- If there is a tie, then use a run-off election ballot to break the tie and then a third ballot and subsequent ballots as needed
- The Vice President will distribute the electronic ballot and report on election results

SPONSOR: Dara Troutman

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

### **Elections**

Dara provided instructions for the online election of Synod Committee members. The ballot was distributed via Survey Monkey. She opened nominations for each position. There were no additions to the slate and each nomination was closed. Pr. Ellen Stetzle provided prayer prior to voting. Voting ensued and when completed, Survey Monkey was closed and Dara announced the results of the elections.

1. Audit Committee – Lay Male  
Rob King, 14 votes
2. Budget & Finance Committee – Clergy Male  
Deacon Carl “Rick” Strong, 14 votes
3. Candidacy Committee – Clergy Male  
Rev. Miles Ruch, 9 votes  
Rev. Keith Brozek, 5 votes
4. Candidacy Committee – Clergy Male  
Rev. Greg Berger, 9 votes  
Rev. Steven Peeler, 5 votes  
Rev. Jon Gathje, 0 votes
5. Candidacy Committee – Lay Female  
Beth Meyer, 10 votes  
Sara Fegley, 4 votes
6. Candidacy Committee – Lay Male  
William (Bill) Huelle, 14 votes
7. Candidacy Committee – Lay Male  
Kevin Tranmer, 14 votes
8. Nominating Committee – Lay Female, Elkhorn Valley/Crossroads (Term ends 6/1/2023)  
Sara Fegley, 14 votes
9. Nominating Committee – Lay Female, Lewis & Clark (Term ends 6/1/2022)  
Mary Kruger, 14 votes
10. Nominating Committee – Clergy Male, Lincoln Area (Term ends 6/1/2023)  
Rev. Andrew Kitzing, 8 votes  
Rev. Eric Bostrom, 6 votes
11. Nominating Committee – Lay Male, Seed Planters & Two Rivers (Term ends 6/1/2022)  
No nominees, no election

12. Nominating Committee – Lay Female, Metro Urban  
Diana X. Fajardo, 9 votes  
Mary Beth Johnson, 4 votes
13. Nominating Committee – Lay Male, Northeast (Term ends 6/1/2023)  
Warren Hanson, 9 votes  
Byron Heier, 4 votes
14. Nominating Committee – Lay Female, Tumbleweed & Pony Express (Term ends 6/1/2023)  
Lonna Grabenstein, 13 votes

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:**

**SC21.06.09 RECOMMENDED:** To go forward with an appeal in the Matthews Estate case based on the decision of the judge.

Bp. Brian provided background information on the case, which the Nebraska Synod lost as defendants. Insurance covered the legal costs, but the Synod would be responsible for those costs if appealed. The Synod attorneys believe there is a strong case for appeal and both Bill Biggs and Dan Friedlund spoke in favor of one. It would be a non-budgeted expense but Dan indicated about \$45,000 is available from funds not used in a prior legal case. A different judge would hear the appeal.

MOVED by the Executive Committee – APPROVED

**Final thoughts:**

Dara recognized and thanked those members for whom this was their last Synod Council meeting: Isaiah Spruth-Janssen, Pr. Greg Berger, Dennis Byars, Pr. Jon Mapa, Pr. Sarah Ruch, Francisco Salazar, Bol Ngok and Linda Miller, and invited those present to say a few words.

Synod Assembly is tomorrow, Saturday, June 5, online.

New Synod Council members will join the council in September.

Greg Berger closed with prayer. As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Miller  
Secretary Pro Tem