

# MINUTES

**Nebraska Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Synod Council Minutes  
March 19, 2022  
APPROVED**

**Voting Members present:**

Tanny Akerson	Pr. Miriam Blair	Pr. Sarah Cordray	Gwen Edwards
Dan Friedlund	Nancy Hinrichs	Pr. Donald Hunzeker	Pr. Cara Jensen
Leann Kersten	Pr. Lori Kitzing	Bp. Brian Maas	Elysia McGill
Pr. Nathan Metzger	Gary Overfield	Pr. Travis Panning	Hannah Ruch
R LaDene Rutt	Pr. Ellen Stelzle	Dara Troutman	

**Staff and Organizational Presidents present:**

Bill Biggs	Pr. Juliet Focken	Diane Harpster	Lisa Kramme
Stephanie Lusienksi	Pr. Jon Mapa	Pr. Megan Morrow	Dn. Sunni Richardson
Dn. Timothy Siburg			

**Also Present** (briefly for committee report):

Ramona Edwards

**Absent:**

Sharon Bohling	Juan Castro	Pr. Carol Mapa	Dn. Connie Stover
Morgan Tranmer	Pr. Kristen Van Stee		

Vice President Dara Troutman called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. and welcomed everyone.

The roll was called and a quorum was present.

MOVED and SECONDED to approve the agenda as presented. APPROVED.

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

Lisa Kramme led everyone in a spiritual practice.

### **Bishop Election Committee Report**

Ms. Ramona Edwards reviewed the committee members, the process, the election, and the committee's accomplishments. Forty names were received from the cluster meetings, ten names agreed to stand for election at Synod Assembly. The current stage the committee is at is collection of biographical information.

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

Bishop Brian highlighted items from his report including a comparison of congregations in transition from March 2013 vs March 2022.

### **SC22.03.01: 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>
Russell Lambert	2/1/2022
Ernesto Medina	3/7/2022

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

Carmala Aderman	effective 12/1/2021
Olaf Roynesdal	effective 12/12/2021
Kathryn Montira	effective 1/1/2022
Alan Hanson	effective 1/1/2022
Mark Grorud	effective 1/1/2022
Steven Billington	effective 2/1/2022

**RECOMMENDED:** That the synod council call be extended to the following rostered persons:

The Rev. Cara Jensen, to serve as transitional/interim minister, three-year renewable. She will serve as Interim Pastor, 1-year Intentional, at Luther Memorial Lutheran, Omaha, effective March 14, 2022.

The Rev. Heather Grell, to serve as transitional/interim minister, three-year renewable. She will serve as Transitional/Interim Pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran, Omaha, effective March 1, 2022.

The Rev. Duane Miller, to serve as transitional/interim minister, three-year renewable. He will serve as Transitional/Interim Pastor at First, Lutheran, Fremont, effective March 21, 2022.

The Rev. Kimberly Belken, to serve as Hospice Chaplain, Tabitha, Omaha, effective April 11, 2022

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

Deacon Susan Richardson as Director for Leadership Development of the Nebraska Synod, effective May 1, 2022. The call was originally extended as a 2-year call, effective May 1, 2020, through April 20, 2022.

**RECOMMENDED:** To accept the resignation from the roster as requested by Danette Johns, effective February 15, 2022.

To affirm the following Motions approved by the Executive Committee at their January 25, 2022, meeting.

**RECOMMENDED:** That a synod council call be extended to the following rostered persons:

Andrew Kitzing, to serve as transitional/interim minister, three-year renewable. He will serve as Pastor at St. Paul's, Omaha, effective 12/20/21.

LuRae Hallstrom, to serve as Pastor at Immanuel Grand Lodge, Lincoln, effective January 3, 2022.

David Mayen to serve as Mission Developer for the Sudanese Messiah Worshipping Community, Omaha, effective as of his ordination date.

Rev. Glenn Palmer to serve Episcopal Church of the Holy Comforter, Martinez, Georgia, as Interim Rector. effective February 7, 2022. This is a full-time call, with a one-year initial agreement.

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

### **SC22.03.02: EN BLOC**

#### **1. SYNOD ASSEMBLY ITEMS**

##### **A. Agenda for the Synod Assembly – June 2-4, 2022**

**RECOMMENDED:** That the proposed Synod Assembly agenda be adopted as the order for business for the 2022 Synod Assembly being held June 2-4 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 2023:

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

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**

Ron Lofgren, St. John's, Norfolk  
Gwen Edwards, Synod Council Secretary  
Pr. Doug Hjelmstad, American, Gothenburg  
Pr. Day Hefner, St. John's, Schuyler  
Diane Harpster - Staff Liaison

**Resolutions, Reference & Counsel Committee**

Pr. William Shaner, First, Lincoln  
Steve Meysing, Episcopal Church of Our Savior, North Platte - Chair  
Ron Gunderson, St. Pauls, Grand Island  
Bill Koeber, Our Savior, Wayne  
Bill Biggs, Synod Council Liaison  
Pr. Sheri Lodel, Calvary, Grand Island/Our Saviour's, Dannebrog  
Pr. Juliet Focken - Synod Staff Liaison

RECOMMENDED: That Ric Miller 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 2021 be accepted once the report is received conditional upon such report being a clean opinion.

E. Synod Authorized Worshiping Communities:

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:

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:

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 Ralston 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: That the 2022 Synod Assembly offerings be designated to support the Nebraska Synod 150th Anniversary Campaign, to be split among its designated recipients.

2. 2023 COMPENSATIONS FOR ROSTERED PERSONS – including parsonage guidelines (Proposed Compensation Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Word and Service for 2023, pp. 71-85).

RECOMMENDED: That the 2023 Compensation Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Word and Service be approved and presented to the 2022 Synod Assembly.

3. CONGREGATIONS:

RECOMMENDED: That the constitution for First, Lincoln, be approved.

RECOMMENDED: That the constitution for Salem, Wakefield, be approved.

4. COMMITTEES:

RECOMMENDED: To appoint Tanny Akerson as Synod Council representative to the Nominating Committee.

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

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

**Diane Harpster, Stephanie Lusinski, Pr. Jon Mapa, Pr. Megan Morrow and Sunni Richardson** indicated they had no additional information to be add beyond their verbal reports. **Lisa Kramme** reported there were alternative options for the youth due to the ELCA National Youth Gathering being canceled, she also shared information regarding the book, *Growing Young*. **Bill Biggs** shared it is sad when he receives a call regarding a congregation closing, he doesn't mind the call when he hears a congregation is merging. **Pr. Juliet Focken** shared the steps to the mobility process.

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

**Vice President's Report:** She has been busy with the Bishop Election Committee. The Synod VPs are meeting now, they meet monthly online.

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

**Treasurer's Report:** Dan Friedlund shared the 2021 fiscal year ended with \$72,000+ in the surplus. The staff is doing more with few people, he commends them for their efforts. The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Offering appeal will conclude at Synod Assembly and the Synod Assembly offering is going towards the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Offering, as of March 18, \$100,533 has been received.

**Nebraska Synod Women’s Organization:** Elysia McGill reported they are navigating the COVID waters, we have had two Spring Gatherings canceled due to cases in their area. The women continue to work with Human Trafficking. Please encourage your churches, your women, to participate in our events. Let’s help each other be the Church together.

**Nominating Committee Report:** Tanny Akerson reviewed the written report. The Audit Committee list needs updating to include Pr. Travis Panning and Robin Matthes, both elected at the November 2021 Synod Council meeting. A discussion was held.

**SC22.03.03 RECOMMENDED:** to authorize the following as **Mission Field Nebraska** ministries through March 2023:

**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 Worshipping Community, Ralston

**Mission Field Nebraska Affiliates**

Barnabas Community, Lincoln  
Bridges to Hope, Lincoln  
Lutheran Service Corp, Omaha  
Serving Hands of Hope Foundation, Omaha

SPONSOR: Bishop Brian Mass

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

**SC22.03.04 RECOMMENDED:** That the following Rules of Procedure for the 2022 Nebraska Synod Assembly be recommended to the Synod Assembly.

**2022 NEBRASKA SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

**Proposed Rules**

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 1:15 p.m. Friday, June 3, to the chair, who shall immediately refer it 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 the 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 to the Resolutions, Reference and Counsel Committee by 1:15 p.m. Friday, June 3. 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 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, except by the consent of the Assembly.

8. The ELCA churchwide representative to the Assembly will chair all portions of the business sessions that are related to the Bishop's election.

SPONSOR: Bishop Brian Mass, on behalf of the Synod Assembly Planning Team

SECONDED – APPROVED

**SC22.03.05 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. Andrew Kitzing to be available for a call as a Pastor at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Omaha, 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 (one abstain)



**SC22.03.06 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. Cara Jensen to be available for a call as a Pastor at Luther Memorial Lutheran Church in Omaha, Nebraska, should the congregation seek to consider him for a call following the conclusion of her term as Interim/Transitional Pastor there.

SPONSOR: Bishop Brian Maas

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED (one abstain)

**SC22.03.07 RECOMMENDED:** To approve the formation of the Partnership Agreement between Grace Lutheran Church, Lexington, and Adullam and Immanuel Lutheran Churches, Bertrand, to form Holy Trinity Parish.

SPONSOR: Bishop Brian Maas

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

**SC22.03.08 RECOMMENDED:** To acknowledge the closure of the Synod Authorized Worshiping Community, Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Way, Lincoln.

SPONSOR: Bishop Brian Maas

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

**SC22.03.09 RECOMMENDED:** That the Synod Council accept the FY2023 (year ending January 31, 2024) 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 – SECONDED – APPROVED (abstentions)

**SC22.03.10 RECOMMENDED:** To transfer the positive FY2021 (year ended January 31, 2022) net operating results, upon final determination, to the Synod Contingency Fund.

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

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

**SC22.03.11 RECOMMENDED:** To approve the transfer of funds to support various ministries and activities of the Synod for FY2021 (year ended January 31, 2022):

- To utilize \$15,446.42 from the Bethel Settlement Fund to reimburse legal fees incurred by the Operating Fund related to the Matthews Estate litigation,
- To transfer an additional \$10,000.00 from the DEM Fund to support Mission Field Nebraska ministries,
- To transfer an additional \$10,000.00 from the Fall Campaign Fund to support Mission Field Nebraska ministries, and
- To transfer an additional \$7,369.95 from the Equity in Synod Properties Fund to offset New Mission expenses.

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

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

**SC22.03.12 RECOMMENDED:** To approve the policy for determining the defined compensation and benefits for the new Bishop of the Nebraska Synod.

**POLICY:** Defined compensation shall include base salary, housing allowance (as determined by the Bishop and approved by the Synod Council) and Self Employment Compensation Act (SECA) payments. Defined compensation for the Bishop will be based on the highest of the following:

- Defined compensation of \$100,000 annually.
- Using the published “2022 Compensation Guidelines” table for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, defined compensation will be based on 115% of the sum of the “High” amounts presented in the table for the three components of defined compensation, based on the number of years of service, as defined.
- Defined compensation at the Bishop’s current call.

Annually, defined compensation will be adjusted to reflect a minimum increase of 2% or the product of the calculation in the second bullet above based on the updated Synod Compensation Guidelines for the applicable year.

Benefits for the Bishop will include 1) Portico Benefits in accordance with the Plan option selected by the Synod and the level of benefits elected by the Bishop, 2) a continuing education allowance of \$850 annually, 3) use of a Synod owned vehicle and mobile phone, 4) spousal travel and expenses for the ELCA Bishops’ Academy, 5) a sabbatical leave after four years as set forth in the Synod Employee Handbook, and 6) other applicable benefits set forth in the Synod Employee Handbook.

This policy may be amended from time-to-time by the Synod Council upon the recommendation of the Executive Committee.

SPONSOR: Executive Committee of the Synod Council: Bishop Brian Maas, VP Dara Troutman, Secretary Gwen Edwards, Treasurer Dan Friedlund, Don Hunzeker, and Elysia McGill  
MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED (one abstain)

**SC22.03.13 RECOMMENDED:** To establish a Leadership Development Fund in recognition of Bishop Brian Maas’ service to the Synod and to authorize the Synod to pursue gifts in his honor.

SPONSOR: Executive Committee of the Synod  
MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED (one abstain)

**SC22.03.14 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 at the March 19 meeting
- Close nominations and distribute the final election ballot via email from the synod office to officers and elected members of the Nebraska Synod Council on Friday, April
- 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
- Ballots are to be submitted by 5:00 PM Monday, April 11. The Vice President will report on election results

SPONSOR: Dara Troutman

MOVED – SECONDED – APPROVED

**Call For Nominations:**

Audit Committee – nominations closed

Budget and Finance – nominations closed

Nominating – Still seeking names for a couple of clusters

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:** None

**Open Comments/Feedback:**

- Seeking The Spirit Within: One applicant thus far for director
- Future New Business: Immanuel/Wymore took their first vote to leave, the first vote was invalid, however, the Synod Office decided to let it stand. The congregation will need Synod Council approval to leave. (Likely a topic for the September meeting)
- Next Synod Council meeting will be in-person, Thursday, June 2, time TBD, no earlier than 10AM

Pr. Travis Panning closed the meeting with prayer.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:42 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gwen Edwards  
Secretary