

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN
AMERICA**

Church Council

MINUTES

June 24, 2020

**Prepared by the
Office of the Secretary**

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
CHURCH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES
June 24, 2020
Conference Call**

The 101st meeting of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was convened by conference call at 1:00 p.m. Central Daylight Time (CDT).

ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

The following people were present for all or part of the meeting:

Voting members

Officers:

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop
Mr. William B. Horne II, vice president
Deacon Sue E. Rothmeyer, secretary
Ms. Lori S. Fedyk, treasurer

Chair of the Conference of Bishops:

The Rev. Tracie L. Bartholomew, bishop of the New Jersey Synod

Church Council:

Mr. Kevin Anderson	Mr. James J.F. Jennings
Ms. Tracey A. Beasley	Ms. Patricia Kluetz
The Rev. Marcus A. Bigott	Mr. David M. Lenz
The Rev. Nicholas M. Billardello III	The Rev. Tara R. Lynn
Ms. Susan Boxberger	Mr. Keoni Newman
Ms. Lisa Burk (<i>excused</i>)	Mr. Joseph T. Nolte
The Rev. William H. Callister	Mr. Gary A. Pederson
The Rev. Karn S. Carroll	Mr. William D. Rice
Ms. Cheryl T. Chatman	The Rev. Ricardo Rivera
Mr. Ismael E. Danforth	Mr. Noah F. Roux (<i>excused</i>)
Ms. Divine	Ms. Valerie J. Shaw
The Rev. Joanne E. Engquist	Mr. Loren A. Solberg
The Rev. Dena M. Gable	The Rev. Kjersten L. Sullivan
The Rev. Emily C. Hartner	Ms. Loni Taylor
The Rev. Pamela J. Hoh	Ms. Emma K. Wagner
Ms. Cherrish Holland	Ms. Sonja Wolfe
The Rev. Chad M. Huebner (<i>excused</i>)	Ms. Merritt G. Zesinger

Representatives of the Conference of Bishops

Bp. Jon V. Anderson, Region 3	Bp. Donald M. Kreiss, Region 6 (<i>excused</i>)
Bp. Sue J. Briner, Region 4 (<i>excused</i>)	Bp. John S. Macholz, Region 7
Bp. H. Jeffrey A. Clements, Region 5	Bp. Pedro M. Suárez, Region 9 (<i>excused</i>)
Bp. Barbara J. Collins, Region 8 (<i>excused</i>)	Bp. Shelley R. Wickstrom, Region 1
Bp. R. Guy Erwin, Region 2 (<i>excused</i>)	

Resource People

Office of the Presiding Bishop:

The Rev. M. Wyvetta Bullock, assistant to the presiding bishop and executive for administration
Ms. Deborah Coe, executive for planning, research, and evaluation
Ms. Rhondean Johnson, executive for human resources
Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre, assistant to the presiding bishop and executive for ecumenical and inter-religious relations and theological discernment

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The Rev. Walter S. May, assistant to the presiding bishop and executive for synod relations
Ms. Judith Roberts, program director for racial justice ministries
The Rev. Carmelo Santos, director for theological diversity and ecumenical and inter-religious relations
Deacon Mary Ann Schwabe, natural systems coordinator
Ms. Jodi L. Slattery, assistant to the presiding bishop for governance
Deacon John E. Weit, assistant to the presiding bishop and executive for worship
The Rev. Roger A. Willer, director for theological ethics

Office of the Secretary:

Mr. Thomas A. Cunniff, general counsel
Ms. Aja Favors, associate general counsel
The Rev. N. Keith Fry, assistant to the secretary and executive for Office of the Secretary administration
Ms. Marit E. Johnson, manager for official documentation

Unit Staff:

Ms. Jocelyn Fuller, senior director for strategic communications
Mr. Nick Kiger, associate director for Mission Support
The Rev. Philip C. Hirsch, executive director for the Domestic Mission unit
The Rev. Rafael Malpica-Padilla, executive director for the Global Mission unit

Separately Incorporated Ministries:

Mr. Tim Blevins, president and CEO, 1517 Media
Ms. Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director, Women of the ELCA
The Rev. Martin A. Seltz, vice president for publishing and executive director for ELCA relations, 1517 Media
The Rev. Jeffrey D. Thiemann, president, Portico Benefit Services

Ethnic-Specific Ministry Associations:

The Rev. Joan Conroy, president, American Indian and Alaska Native Lutheran Association (*excused*)
Ms. Jennifer DeLeon, president, Latino Ministries Association of the ELCA
The Rev. Khader N. El-Yateem, representative, Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage (*excused*)
The Rev. Russell Meyer, president, European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice
The Rev. Moses Penumaka, representative, Asian and Pacific Islander Lutheran Association (*excused*)
The Rev. Lamont A. Wells, president, African Descent Lutheran Association

Media:

Ms. Candice Hill Buchbinder, Mission Advancement unit

CALL TO ORDER AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

(Agenda I.A.)

Background:

Agenda items were distributed electronically.

Church Council action:

Mr. William B. Horne II, vice president of the ELCA and chair of the Church Council, called the Church Council meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. (CDT).

Vice President Horne asked the Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the ELCA, to open the meeting with prayer.

A motion was made to adopt the agenda.

There being no discussion, the chair called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC20.06.15 To adopt the agenda and to permit the chair to call for consideration of agenda items in the order the chair deems most appropriate.

CHURCH COUNCIL ELECTION

(Agenda II.)

The nominating committee nominated Mr. William “Bill” Rice of Norway, Michigan to fill the vacancy of Mr. Philip Wirtanen [Northern Great Lakes Synod], who died in a car accident on Feb. 1, 2020.

There being no discussion, the chair led the vote.

VOTED:

CC20.06.16 To elect Mr. William “Bill” Rice, Norway, MI [5G], to the Church Council for a term ending 2022.

PROPOSED SOCIAL MESSAGE ON GOVERNMENT AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

(Agenda III.)

Background:

The proposed social message on government and civic engagement was written at the request of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly [CA19.05.29] and authorized by the Church Council [CC19.11.47w].

At its June 19 meeting, the Program and Services Committee reviewed and approved the amendments to the proposed social message on government and civic engagement and recommended its adoption.

Church Council action:

Ms. Emma K. Wagner, chair of the Program and Services Committee, noted that the committee unanimously recommended the social message to the Church Council for approval. The Rev. Roger A. Willer, director for theological ethics, highlighted the differences between a social statement and a social message and reviewed the development process. The proposed social message was developed over seven months, with a process that included a comment period with an online survey and four virtual hearings. The recommended text included revisions from the comment period. A red-lined version with further revisions submitted by council members was presented for this meeting.

Vice President Horne asked Pastor Willer to comment on items from a letter submitted by the ethnic-specific ministry association presidents. The letter had raised three points of concern regarding the proposed document. Pastor Willer noted that the letter’s request to refer the social message for another review period to take into account the disruption to communities of color with the COVID-19 pandemic and racial protests in the United States would extend the timeline of publication for the social message. Pastor Willer explained that this would conflict with the 2019 Churchwide Assembly’s request to have a document ready for use for engaging conversations concerning the 2020 general election. He also worried about staff capacity that would further affect the timeline. He did note that the social statement could better incorporate ethnic voices in a review process, especially with the staff capacity provided by Pastor Willer, Ms. Heather Dean, program coordinator for theological discernment, Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre, assistant

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to the presiding bishop and executive for ecumenical and inter-religious relations and theological discernment, and the Rev. Carmelo Santos, director for theological diversity and ecumenical and inter-religious relations. Pastor Willer welcomed the suggestions the presidents suggested for the social statement process.

Secretary Rothmeyer read the motion.

Moved;

Seconded: To adopt “Government and Civic Engagement in the United States: Discipleship in a Democracy” as a social message of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The chair called for discussion of the motion.

The Rev. Tracie L. Bartholomew, bishop of the New Jersey Synod and chair of the Conference of Bishops, asked whether, if the social message were delayed, it would affect the timeline of the social statement. Pastor Willer responded that it was possible. The timeline for the social statement on church and state included a draft for feedback from this church in 2023, with the proposed social statement to be brought to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly for action.

Mr. Joseph T. Nolte offered an amendment that incorporated a suggestion from the ethnic association presidents’ letter.

There being no discussion on the amendment, the chair called for a vote.

Moved;

Seconded;

Carried: To amend line 236 by adding “Native Peoples” after the words “Asian Americans” and adding the footnote to line 239: “There are several issues for reservations but, for instance, some people living in some reservations are denied voter registration because the US Postal Service does not assign street addresses on their reservation.”

Ms. Cheryl Chatman moved to amend by adding “Latinx” to line 236.

Moved;

Seconded: To amend line 236 by adding “Latinx” before “Native Peoples.”

There being no further discussion on the amendment, the vice president called for the vote.

Moved;

Seconded;

Carried: To amend line 236 by adding “Latinx” before “Native Peoples.”

The council proceeded to vote on the social message as amended.

VOTED:

CC20.06.17 To adopt “Government and Civic Engagement in the United States: Discipleship in a Democracy” as a social message of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

EN BLOC APPROVAL OF CERTAIN ITEMS

(Agenda IV.)

Background:

An *en bloc* resolution was presented to the Church Council of routine or noncontroversial actions. Opportunity had been provided to Church Council members to request removal of items from *en bloc*, but there had been no requests to remove items.

Church Council action:

A motion was made to take *en bloc* action on the remaining recommendations on the consent calendars. As the items were voted *en bloc*, there was no discussion; the vice president called for the vote.

VOTED:

CC20.06.18 To take action *en bloc* on the items listed in *En Bloc* Items.

A. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the March 2020, April 8, 2020, May 6, 2020, and May 13, 2020, meetings of the Church Council were provided to council members electronically on My.ELCA.org. Minutes for meetings held in executive session were added to the protocol file in the Office of the Secretary.

The minutes of the council's Executive Committee meetings on March 5, 2020, April 6, 2020, April 14, 2020, and May 21, 2020 were provided electronically on My.ELCA.org to members. Minutes for meetings held in executive session were added to the protocol file in the Office of the Secretary.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

**CC20.06.18a To approve the minutes of the March 2020, April 8, 2020, May 6, 2020, and May 13, 2020 meetings of the Church Council; and
To ratify actions of the council's Executive Committee as indicated in the minutes of the March 5, 2020, April 6, 2020, April 14, 2020, and May 21, 2020 meetings.**

B. Election to Committee on Appeals

Secretary Rothmeyer declared a vacancy on the Committee on Appeals. Ms. Lana Obie was presented for election to fill the vacancy.

VOTED:

EN BLOC

**CC20.06.18b To elect to the Committee on Appeals to fill a vacancy with a term ending in 2025:
Ms. Lana Obie; and
To authorize the Executive Committee to elect members to fill vacancies on the
Committee on Appeals.**

C. Synod Constitution Amendments

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, many synods were considering the possibility of holding synod assemblies by means of remote communication. The ability to do so depended to a large extent upon the state law of the state in which the synod is incorporated.

The synods of Region Three are incorporated in Minnesota. Minnesota law allows remote meetings of members where authorized by the corporation's governing documents (MN STAT 317A.450.). Unfortunately, the governing documents of the synods of Region Three do not include this authorization.

Pursuant to MN STAT 317A.447, the Eastern North Dakota Synod sought and received written consent from its members (i.e., the voting members from the last synod assembly, who serve until the next synod assembly; see S7.21.01) to authorize its synod council to amend the synod's Articles of Incorporation to permit remote meetings of the synod assembly.

Other synods in Region Three, as well as synods in other regions, are considering similar action. Accordingly, they requested that the Church Council approve substantially identical revisions to their articles in advance. (Note: Many states authorize remote meetings without requiring provisions in the corporation's governing documents, so most synods do not need to go through this process.)

VOTED:

EN BLOC

CC20.06.18c1 To ratify the following amendment to the Articles of Incorporation of the Eastern North Dakota Synod Constitution:

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Article XV As determined by the Synod Council, a meeting of the voting members of this corporation identified in Article VIII may, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 317A.450, be held solely by one or more means of remote communication.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC20.06.18c2 To ratify, in advance, pursuant to 10.11 of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*, substantially equivalent amendments to the Articles of Incorporation or constitutions of any other synods to permit remote meetings, that are properly adopted pursuant to applicable law.

D. Committee Chair Elections

The chairs of the Church Council's Budget and Finance, Legal and Constitutional Review, Planning and Evaluation, and Program and Services committees serve on the council's Executive Committee. Due to the pending resignations of the Rev. Chad Huebner, chair of Planning and Evaluation Committee, and Ms. Emma Wagner, chair of Program and Services Committee, the committees will hold elections to elect new chairs.

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC20.06.18d To declare that the newly elected chairs of the Planning and Evaluation Committee and the Program and Services Committee shall be members of the Executive Committee of the Church Council.

E. Appointment to ELCA Task Force on Government and Civic Engagement

The 2019 Churchwide Assembly authorized the development of a social statement on the topic of "government, civic engagement and the relationship of church and state." (CA19.05.29) One of the first steps in the process was to identify a task force. At its May 21 meeting, the Executive Committee appointed a number of individuals to serve on the task force. [EC20.05.18]

VOTED: *EN BLOC*
CC20.06.18e To appoint the following individual to serve on the ELCA Task Force on Church, State and Civic Participation: Ms. Isabell Retamoza.

NOVEMBER 2020 CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

(Agenda V.)

Vice President Horne led the council in discussion concerning whether the November 2020 Church Council meeting should be held in-person or virtually. The presiding bishop noted that the Conference of Bishops would be conducting its fall 2020 meeting virtually. Bishop Bartholomew further detailed that the conference had decided to postpone its Bishops' Academy, originally scheduled for January 2020, to January 2021. Many council members expressed a preference for holding a virtual meeting due to the evolving "hot spots" of the COVID-19 virus in the United States. A few members expressed interest in conducting a hybrid meeting with some individuals attending the Lutheran Center in-person and others attending virtually.

UPDATES FROM OFFICERS

PRESIDING BISHOP

(Agenda VI.A.)

Presiding Bishop Eaton reflected on the work both for the churchwide organization and the ELCA of deciphering how to position ministry during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. She expressed her hope that this church might be adaptable to change. She spoke of examining the governance needs of the ELCA, considering how to address this church's commitment to become younger and more diverse and to develop leaders from diverse communities. She also expressed hope that updated governance would aid this church in more effectively working together as one church across the three expressions.

SECRETARY

(Agenda VI.B.)

Deacon Sue E. Rothmeyer, secretary of the ELCA, provided an update on the Committee on Appeals and its work in revising *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*. Following the close of an information-gathering process, a drafting team was identified with a goal of submitting a draft to the fall Conference of Bishops meeting. A revised draft that would incorporate the bishops' feedback could be presented to the Church Council at its November 2020 meeting. A final version could be acted on in spring 2021.

Synods have continued making adjustments to their synod assembly plans during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Western North Dakota Synod Assembly would be the first to elect a bishop at its assembly in July.

TREASURER

(Agenda VI.C.)

Ms. Lorie S. Fedyk, treasurer of the ELCA, shared that the churchwide organization's financial position remained strong. Mission Support was higher than expected which led to a strong revenue position. Market performance of investments continued to improve. This had helped decrease the shortfall of investment income to a \$300,000 gap. The focus for fundraising had shifted to the ongoing COVID-19 appeal, which had raised \$1.5 million to date with distributions to more than 55 synods.

The Office of the Treasurer has continued to monitor shifting guidelines from the Small Business Administration regarding the Paycheck Protection Program loan forgiveness policy. The loan funds have not yet been reflected in financial statements; however, that will be adjusted as guidelines become clearer on the audit process and the forgiveness process.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting of the Church Council adjourned at 2:15 p.m. on Wednesday, May 24, 2020.