



**Metropolitan Chicago  
Synod Council Meeting**  
Saturday – January 29, 2022  
Zoom Call

Meeting Minutes

Synod Council Officers

Curry, Rev. Yehiel – (Southwest) - (Bishop) ['25]  
Henderson, Mr. Terry – (Southwest) - (Vice President) ['25]  
NewberryWhite, Ms. Yvette – (South) - (Treasurer) ['23]  
Clausen, Rev. Erin – (Near West) - (Secretary) ['25]

Synod Council Members

Adamczewski, Ms. Kristina (Near West) ['25]  
Aimonette, Rev. Amy O. (West) ['23] .....[excused]  
Arnesen, Ms. Nancy (West) ['25]  
Christensen, Rev. Erik Christensen C. (Northeast) ['23]  
DeLeon, Ms. Jennifer, Chicago (Central) ['23]  
Glombicki, Rev. Jason (Central) ['23]  
Jones, Mr. Rodger L. – Bethel (West), Chicago (Central) ['23]  
Katschke-Goss, Deacon Tracy (North) ['23]  
Langlois, Mr. Robert (Northwest) ['25]  
Linstrom, Rev. Timothy (North) ['23]  
Lohafer, Rev. Joel (Northwest) ['25] .....[excused]  
Pérez, Mr. Iván – (Central) ['25]  
Post, Rev. JoAnn (Northeast) ['23]  
Rojas-Banda, Rev. Maria (Near West) ['25]  
White, Rev. Lester (South) ['25]  
Willett Jr., Mr. Charles – (Southwest) ['23]  
Willey, Mr. Paul S. (Northwest) ['23]  
Worringer, Rev. Eric R. (Northeast) ['23]  
Yucha, Rev. Joseph P. (West) ['23] .....[excused]

Synod Staff Members

Rev. Robert E. Biekman (*Director of Evangelical Mission*)  
Rev. Wyvetta Bullock (*Associate to the Bishop – Southwest Conference*)  
Rev. Anna Ernst (*Youth Ministry part-time*) - excused  
Rev. Sunitha Mortha (*Associate to the Bishop – West and Central Conferences*)  
Rev. Kyle Severson (*Associate to the Bishop – North and Nearwest Conferences*)  
Rev. Kathy Nolte (*Associate to the Bishop – Northwest Conference*)  
Rev. Josh Ebener (*Latinx Strategy Coordinator part-time*)  
Mr. Tom Anderson (*Business Manager*)  
Rev. Josh Evans (*Director of Communications*)

**Ms. Heather Haynes (Executive Assistant to the Bishop)**  
**Ms. Nancy “Gaby” Valladolid (Receptionist/Photographer) - excused**

**Guests**

No guests were present at this meeting.

**Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council Meeting Minutes**

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**Opening Devotion .....Deacon Tracy Katschke-Goss**

Deacon Tracy Katschke-Goss opened the meeting with devotions. Vice President Terry Henderson then called the meeting to order at 9:06am.

**Staff Reports**

- Rev. Robert E. Biekman (Director of Evangelical Mission)*
- Rev. Wyvetta Bullock (Associate to the Bishop – Southwest Conference)*
- Rev. Anna Ernst (Youth Ministry part-time)*
- Rev. Sunitha Mortha (Associate to the Bishop – West and Central Conferences)*
- Rev. Kyle Severson (Associate to the Bishop – North and Nearwest Conferences)*
- Rev. Kathy Nolte (Associate to the Bishop – Northwest Conference)*
- Rev. Josh Ebener (Latinx Strategy Coordinator part-time)*
- Mr. Tom Anderson (Business Manager)*
- Rev. Josh Evans (Director of Communications)*
- Ms. Heather Haynes (Executive Assistant to the Bishop)*
- Ms. Nancy “Gaby” Valladolid (Receptionist/Photographer)*

Written reports were posted to google groups. Each staff member briefly introduced themselves and shared any highlights from their written reports.

**Consent Agenda ..... Bishop Curry**

**Secretary Clausen moved and Iván Pérez seconded:**  
**MOTION: The Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council adopt the consent agenda as amended.**  
**VOTE: Motion as presented.**  
**S.C.22.01.01 ADOPTED**

**Report of the Treasurer ..... Treasurer NewberryWhite**

Treasurer NewberryWhite began her comments with gratefulness for the members and congregations who have continued to be such faithful stewards in giving mission support to the synod. There have been few changes in our financial status since the last report. At present, the synod has taken in about 11% less than hoped for at this point in the fiscal year in congregational benevolence. Still, benevolence is only about \$150,000 less that it was at this point last year. Expenses coming in at or under budget. The synod is continuing our mission support to the ELCA and partner support. Overall, we are doing well.

The question was raised – if there is a deficit, do we have funds to cover it? The industry standard includes drawing money from an endowment to cover operating expenses. We have budgeted to draw money from our endowment for a couple years, but we have never actually done so because of lack of need. Still, in the event of a deficit, that would be a place to draw from. Following each year’s audit, investment dollars also roll into income figures. These funds often also cover a cash deficit. Finally, in the event that neither of these covered an income deficit, we have equity in various funds of around \$750,000 that would be utilized to cover an operating deficit.

**Report of the Secretary ..... Secretary Clausen**

Secretary Clausen reported briefly on the status of the constitutional updates, voted on by the council in the October 2021 meeting, for presentation to the Synod Assembly in 2022.

- Minutes – October 23, 2021

**Secretary Clausen moved and Dcn. Tracy Katschke-Goss seconded:  
MOTION: The Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council adopt the minutes of the October 23, 2021 meeting as presented.  
VOTE: Motion as presented.  
S.C.22.01.02 ADOPTED**

**Report of the Vice President ..... Vice President Henderson**

Vice president Henderson reported that the vice presidents of the ELCA meet once a month via Zoom call. Often, representatives of the ELCA are invited to present.

Vice president Henderson asked for a volunteer to lead devotions for the April meeting; Jennifer DeLeon volunteered.

Vice president Henderson also asked the council to please keep holding our Bishop in prayer for his ministry and travel, as well as the synod’s leaders and lay leaders.

**Report of the Bishop ..... Bishop Curry**

- Synod Assembly 2022 planning update  
Bishop Curry and Rev. Sunitha Mortha (staff liaison to the planning committee) led a brief discussion about current recommendations for the 2022 assembly. Voting method has not yet been decided. Aligned with the experiences of other synods throughout the church, the assembly planning team recommends against a hybrid format. Instead, they recommend a 1 day in-person event. All participants must be vaccinated. We will accept resolutions at the 2022 assembly, to enable time for movers to present memorials to the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. Letters of invitation to congregations will go out in about a week. These letters are ready, and the registration system will be up and running.

- SAM Requests

Bishop Curry briefly explained the process and need for designating Synodically Authorized Ministries. Receiving the designation of Synodically Authorized Ministry does not remove the 'congregation' designation, if the ministry is a current congregation. Rather, in some cases, something going on in the congregation does not allow for a regular rostered leader to be there. In order for the bishop to appoint a Synodically Authorized Minister, the council must first make the designation of Synodically Authorized Ministry for the congregation or ministry. Synod staff work closely with the congregation in determining whether this designation might be appropriate, prior to the bishop bringing the request to the synod council. Typically, this designation is requested for hard place locations. Designating a church/ministry as a Synodically Authorized Ministry does not promise synod funding.

**Secretary Clausen moved and Dcn. Tracy Katschke-Goss seconded:**

**MOTION:** The Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council designate Lutheran Church of Martha and Mary in Mt. Prospect as a Synodically Authorized Ministry.

**VOTE:** Motion as presented.

**S.C.22.01.03 ADOPTED**

**Secretary Clausen moved and Mr. Iván Pérez seconded:**

**MOTION:** The Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council designate Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit in Chicago as a Synodically Authorized Ministry.

**VOTE:** Motion as presented.

**S.C.22.01.04 ADOPTED**

- First Immanuel Lutheran Church

First Immanuel is a former Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod congregation that we celebrated at the last synod assembly. About 5 years ago, as the congregation was in discernment, they became an independent Lutheran church. They could then call an ELCA pastor through the synod council. The congregation was not yet sure they wanted to join the ELCA. In 2019, the congregation voted to formally join the ELCA and the Metropolitan Chicago Synod (MCS). The synod assembly welcomed the congregation – but the synod assembly did not officially vote on accepting this congregation. Therefore, at the 2022 assembly, the Metropolitan Chicago Synod will officially vote to welcome the congregation into the ELCA and the synod. The pastor, Harry Therwanger, is on the MCS roster and continues to serve under synod council call.

- 2023 Budget Consideration

The synod council had previously raised a question about the way we choose partners for funding. In particular, the synod funds two schools but not every school in our territory. Concordia and Holy Family are funded. Bishop Curry understands that at the time these schools were added to the synod's budgeted partner support, they were added in order to spur innovation.

Bishop Curry suggests that in future budgets, we move this kind of funding to an open application process, similar to Fund for Mission or Ministry from the Margins. Funding rules

would include that a ministry that receives funding one year would not be eligible the following year. Also, we would want to focus on ensuring that those schools who have grant writers aren't prioritized over smaller ministries. We would also ask on the application how the schools are continuing to engage congregations.

Discussion continued with the idea that the synod council might want to focus on entities that need a lot more help than larger institutions. Bishop Curry concurred, indicating that he is not sure that the council just "choosing" an entity to go on the budget is an equitable process. Rather, by creating a more wholistic process via an application might enable other ministries to be considered. A council member stated that their understanding of what it means to be a part of the ELCA includes a really deep commitment to mission support and funding organizations outside of "ourselves." Therefore, every decision we make as this council needs to reflect our principles of justice.

This will come back before the council in the April meeting, to affect future budgets.

- Grace, Westchester

Grace Lutheran in Westchester was scheduled to close in 2019; this process happened in 2020. There had been tension with the synod from long ago. Grace sold the building and shared with Bishop Curry that they did not intend to share any of the proceeds with the synod. Synod staff maintained a supportive and loving presence through the closure process. Following this, the congregation sent four checks totaling \$240,000: \$75,000 for seminarian support, \$100,000 to new mission \$50,000 to Latinx, and \$15,000 to campus ministry. Bishop Curry suspects that the congregation made this investment in the synod's ministries both because of the staff maintaining a relationship and also likely directly aligned with the last synod assembly's focus on #GoodStew and all the good ministry lifted up there.

Salem Lutheran Church reached out to the synod office because they are financially struggling. Rev. Wyvetta Bullock went to be present with them, because Rev. Biekman was on vacation at that time. Rev. Biekman is currently working with the congregation. The utilities had been turned off for the church and the parsonage; there was an outstanding utility bill of about \$20,000. At this point, the bill for the parsonage has been paid and the utilities turned back on. The congregation is still raising funds for the utilities for the building itself. It is the synod's intention to be a full partner in the finances, because "if the pipes go, the building goes." The synod needs assistance from Salem to ensure that this building can be maintained.

### **Executive session**

**Secretary Clausen moved and Mr. Iván Pérez seconded:**

**MOTION: The Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council rescind our letter of invitation to Mark Carlsson effective April 1, 2022.**

Pastor Mark Carlsson is from the Lutheran Church of Sweden. In 2019, he was the primary pastoral candidate for Good Shepherd, Naperville. Good Shepherd asked Bishop Miller for the letter of invitation so that they could extend a contract to Pastor Carlsson for him to serve as

their pastor, in keeping with the governing documents of this church. At this point, Good Shepherd’s church council has let Bishop Curry know that they do not intend to extend the contract. Therefore, the synod is requested to rescind the letter of invitation. Bishop Curry had a conversation with Pastor Carlsson to let him know that the church’s council would not be extending the contract, therefore the synod council would be rescinding the letter of invitation.

**Secretary Clausen moved and Tracy Katschke-Goss seconded:**  
**MOTION: The Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council amend the prior motion to read:  
The Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council rescind our letter of invitation to  
Mark Carlsson effective upon the termination of his contract with Good  
Shepherd Lutheran Church in Naperville.**  
**VOTE: Motion as amended**  
**S.C.22.01.05 ADOPTED**

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding what a Letter of Invitation means and what the council’s role is in this process. A Letter of Invitation indicates that the pastor will serve at the pleasure of the bishop. Because the congregation has decided not to continue the contract, Bishop Curry no longer recommends that the council continue the letter of invitation. This process is addressed in 7.31.09. of the Constitution of the ELCA: *Invitation to Service. In accord with bylaw 8.63.01. and following, a minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established by the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may serve contractually in a ministry setting of this church under a “Letter of Invitation to Service” upon the authorization of the bishop of the synod in which such service occurs.*

**Rev. Eric Worringer moved and Rev. Jason Glombicki seconded:**  
**MOTION: The Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council move into executive session.**  
**VOTE: Motion as amended**  
**S.C.22.01.06 ADOPTED**

Following executive session, the council voted on the motion before them:

**Secretary Clausen moved and Tracy Katschke-Goss seconded:**  
**MOTION: The Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council rescind our letter of invitation to  
Mark Carlsson effective upon the termination of his contract with Good  
Shepherd Lutheran Church in Naperville.**  
**VOTE: Motion as amended**  
**S.C.22.01.07 ADOPTED**

**Other Business.....**  
No other business was brought forward.

**Closing Prayer.....**

Vice President Henderson closed the meeting at 11:08am, and Bishop Curry ended the meeting with prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Erin E Clausen  
Secretary, Metropolitan Chicago Synod

**Summary of Synod Council Actions: January 29, 2022**

- S.C.22.01.01** Vote for Synod Council to adopt the consent agenda as amended.
- S.C.22.01.02** Vote for Synod Council to adopt the minutes of the October 23, 2021, meeting as presented.
- S.C.22.01.03** Vote for Synod Council to designate Lutheran Church of Martha and Mary in Mt. Prospect as a Synodically Authorized Ministry.
- S.C.22.01.04** Vote for Synod Council to designate Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit in Chicago as a Synodically Authorized Ministry.
- Motion for Synod Council rescinds our letter of invitation to Mark Carlsson effective April 1, 2022.
- S.C.22.01.05** Vote for Synod Council to amend the prior motion to read: The Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council rescinds our letter of invitation to Mark Carlsson effective upon the termination of his contract with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Naperville.
- S.C.22.01.06** Vote for Synod Council to move into executive session.
- S.C.22.01.07** Vote for Synod Council to rescind our letter of invitation to Mark Carlsson effective upon the termination of his contract with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Naperville.