

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN  
AMERICA**

**Church Council**

**MINUTES**

**April 8, 2020**

**Prepared by the  
Office of the Secretary**

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
CHURCH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES  
April 8, 2020  
Conference Call**

The 98th meeting of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was convened on Wednesday, April 8, 2020, by conference call.

**ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING**

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

***Voting members***

**Officers:**

Pr. 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:**

Pr. Tracie L. Bartholomew, bishop of the New Jersey Synod (*excused*)

**Church Council:**

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

***Representatives of the Conference of Bishops***

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

***Resource People***

**Office of the Presiding Bishop:**

Pr. 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  
Pr. Walter S. May, assistant to the presiding bishop and executive for synodical relations  
Ms. Mikka McCracken, executive for innovation and director for the Innovation Lab  
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

**Office of the Secretary:**

Mr. Thomas A. Cunniff, general counsel  
Ms. Aja M. Favors, associate general counsel (*excused*)  
Pr. 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:**

Mr. Jonathan Beyer, executive for technology  
Ms. Kathy Freeman Summers, executive director for the Mission Advancement unit  
Ms. Jocelyn Fuller, director for strategic communications  
Pr. Philip C. Hirsch, executive director for the Domestic Mission unit  
Pr. Rafael Malpica-Padilla, executive director for the Global Mission unit  
Hassan Niaz, information technology service desk coordinator  
Ms. Evelyn B. Soto, director for operations and programs for the Domestic Mission unit  
Mr. Riz Syed, IT support technician  
Ms. Rachel Wind, executive for development

**Media:**

Ms. Candice Hill Buchbinder, Mission Advancement

## **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 the chair of the Church Council, called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

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:**

**CC20.04.07 To adopt the agenda and to permit the chair to call for consideration of agenda items in the order the chair deems most appropriate.**

Vice President Horne declared that the agenda was adopted.

## **VACANCIES FOR THE COMMITTEE ON APPEALS**

(Agenda I.B.)

*Background:*

ELCA bylaw 14.41.11.a. directs the Executive Committee to “perform those functions of the Church Council assigned to it by the Church Council.” Secretary Rothmeyer has declared a vacancy on the Committee on Appeals. A potential candidate has not yet been identified.

*Church Council action:*

Deacon Sue E. Rothmeyer, secretary of the ELCA, provided background information on the vacancies on the committee. She explained that the Committee on Appeals was working on a more substantive update of the document *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*.

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

**VOTED:**

**CC20.04.08 To authorize the Executive Committee to elect members to fill vacancies in the Committee on Appeals until the June 2020 Church Council meeting.**

## **CONSIDERATION OF COVID-19 RESPONSE APPEAL**

(Agenda I.C.)

*Background:*

Initial conversations seemed to align a COVID-19 appeal fundraising under Lutheran Disaster Response. Conversations shifted to allow a broader reach for funds to be used to support ELCA congregations, ministries, and synods. Such an appeal would need action by the Church Council in accordance with bylaw 11.41.06., which states “No churchwide appeal to congregations or individuals of this church for the raising of funds shall be conducted by the churchwide organization or churchwide units without the consent of the Churchwide Assembly or the Church Council, following consultation with the Conference of Bishops.” Presiding Bishop Eaton consulted with the Conference of Bishops about this appeal.

*Church Council Action:*

Presiding Bishop Eaton noted the concerns she and synod bishops have been hearing across the ELCA related to supporting the work of the three expressions of this church, all of which have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. She explained the churchwide organization’s three-pronged response plan.

- Daily Bread Grants: 200 grants of \$500 in matching funds for hunger ministries.

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- Here to Serve: An 800 number and instant-message feature that allows individuals to ask questions, obtain resources, or ask for a word of prayer.
- COVID-19 appeal

The presiding bishop explained that initially the organization thought a COVID-19 appeal could fit under Lutheran Disaster Response. After further consideration, churchwide organization leadership had concluded that this appeal needed Church Council approval. The appeal could be broad to assist congregations, synods, outdoor ministries, campus ministries, global companions, and other ministries. If the council approved the appeal, further planning could proceed the following week. Planning would include members from the Resource Development Committee, the Conference of Bishops, and churchwide organization leadership.

Ms. Kathy Freeman Summers, executive director for the Mission Advancement unit, explained that a new restricted fund would be created for COVID-19 appeal funds raised. This would position the ELCA to be flexible in order to serve this church's needs. A distribution plan was still being formed, but funds would be distributed across all three expressions of this church. If approved, the appeal would begin on Monday, April 13, 2020, with invitations sent out via social media, direct mailings, and email.

A council member asked if there would be an opportunity to support pastors through these funds, as some congregations might not be able to pay their pastors. The Rev. Philip C. Hirsch, executive director for the Domestic Mission unit, stated there was not enough data to understand the full implications of how congregations were affected by COVID-19. As themes emerge, he said, he hoped this church could act to address them.

Another council member gave thanks for the Daily Bread grants. His congregation had applied and received one for their shared food ministry with an Episcopalian congregation. He felt the matching funds model could be a good model to use for other fundraising initiatives.

Mr. Joseph T. Nolte, member of the Resource Development Committee, thanked Ms. Lori S. Fedyk, treasurer of the ELCA, and Ms. Freeman Summers for incorporating feedback and suggestions from the Resource Development Committee into the proposal. He affirmed that the COVID-19 appeal had been reviewed by both the Resource Development Committee and the Executive Committee of the Church Council before being forwarded for council consideration.

Another council member expressed hope that seminarians, both at Lutheran and non-Lutheran institutions, would be considered as possible recipients of funds from the COVID-19 appeal.

**VOTED:**

**CC20.04.09a To approve a special appeal in response to COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) as a fundraising effort of this church in order to support congregations, synods, relief and development, global mission, and affiliate ministries that have been negatively impacted by the pandemic;**

**To request that the relevant churchwide organization units and offices provide periodic reports on the appeal to the Executive Committee and to anticipate a recommendation for a timeline on the completion of the appeal; and**

**To give thanks to God who gives us strength to endure and peace to comfort us all.**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Church Council of the ELCA entered into executive session at 4:24 p.m. (CDT) on Wednesday, Apr. 8, 2020. Resource persons were excused, with the exception of the minutes team, members of the administrative team, Mr. Thomas Cunniff, general counsel for the ELCA, and Ms. Rhondean Johnson, executive for human resources.

The council returned to open session at 4:47 p.m. (CDT). Vice President Horne announced the action taken in the executive session.

**VOTED:**

**CC(ES)20.04.09b To authorize the churchwide organization of the ELCA to submit an application for a Paycheck Protection Program loan under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act;**

**To request that the Office of the Treasurer provide updates on the status, usage, and forgiveness of the loan to the Executive Committee during its monthly meetings;**

**To request that the Office of the Treasurer provide updates on compliance with the liquidity provisions to the Executive Committee during its monthly meetings; and**

**To give thanks to God who provides for all our needs.**

Presiding Bishop Eaton thanked council members for their work as the Church Council, with their congregations, and in their communities. Vice President Horne thanked council members and asked members to keep communities and healthcare workers in prayer during the COVID-19 pandemic. The presiding bishop ended the meeting by pointing out that, while the pandemic reminds us of death, Jesus' resurrection at Easter reminds us that life wins.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The April 2020 meeting of the Church Council adjourned at 4:51 p.m. on Wednesday, Apr. 8, 2020.