

**Northwest Washington Synod  
Synod Council Meeting Minutes 20 September 2025  
Synod Office, Seattle**

**Present:** Andrew Arnold, Kay Edgerton, Paul Eldred, Sara Funkhouser, Netsie Griffith, Shane Lambing, Sam Martinez, Sherianne Molzahn Caldwell, Cindy Shultz, Dan Squires,

**Staff:** Judy Brennan and Tabetha Myatt

**Present via Zoom:** Luke Allgeyer and Elly Stitt

**Absent:** Shelley Bryan Wee, Salvador Cossio, Dan Clements, David Kinner, and Sam Sseba

**Call to Order and Land Acknowledgment**

Vice President Kay called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and shared the following land acknowledgment:

- We acknowledge the original inhabitants of this area, the Coast Salish people. Since time immemorial, they have hunted, fished, gathered, and taken care of these lands. We respect their sovereignty, their right to self-determination, and honor their sacred spiritual connection with the land and water. We will strive to be honest about our past mistakes and bring about a future that includes their people, stories, and voices to form a more just and equitable society.

**Opening Prayer**

Kay shared an opening prayer. Sara Funkhouser was welcomed as a new Synod Council member, and members introduced themselves to her.

**Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda**

**The Meeting Agenda was approved by acclamation.**

**Moved, Seconded and Carried (MSC)**

**SC2025.09.20.01      to approve the consent agenda consisting of:**

- Approval of the minutes of the May 15, 2025 Synod Council Meeting
- Approval of the minutes of the July 19, 2025 Synod Council Short Meeting
- Receipt of the following written staff reports as presented, including any addendums:
  - Report of Bishop – Shelley Bryan Wee
  - Report of the Assistant to the Bishop – Andy Yee
  - Report of the Treasurer – Dan Clements
  - Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission – Judy Brennan
  - Report of the Director of Formation and Learning – David Hahn
  - Report of the Director of Properties – Jay Edgerton
  - Final Report of the Bishop Call Process Task Force – Gail Rautmann
- Approval of the following roster actions:
  - Extended Synod Calls to:
    - Rev. Jade Yi as Interim Transition Pastor, Pointe of Grace
    - Rev. Rachel Ringlaben as Senior Specialist in Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Leadership and Partnerships, General Commission on Religion and Race for the United Methodist Church
    - Rev. Kathryn GrayBuck as Home Hospice Chaplain, Kline Galland- Benaroya Community Services
    - Rev. Abigail D’Ambruso as Priest in Charge, St. David’s Episcopal, Friday Harbor
- Receipt of the following notifications of roster changes (Spreadsheet in Teams):
  - Death:
    - Rev. Marjorie Lorant

- Rev. Dick Wendt
- Rev. Robert Roiko
- Rev. Neal Snider
- Dcn. Sherry Kiefel
- Rev. Don Maier
- Sr. Elizabeth Steele
- Rev. Carol Jensen
- Disability:
  - Rev. Pam Miles
- Retired:
  - Rev. Beth Eden
- Called
  - Rev. Doug Andersen (Prince of Peace, Shoreline)
- Approved the following invitation to extended service:
  - Muriel Otto (United Church of Christ) to Christ the Servant, Bellingham.
- Approved the list of active NWWA Synod Coaches as presented (see Teams)
- Designated the composition and names of the conferences of the NWWA Synod
- Approved \$1500 Gloria Dei sabbatical grant to Rev. Kathryn GrayBuck (see Teams for supporting documents)

### **Approval of the Minutes of the 2025 Synod Assembly**

#### **MSC**

**SC2025.09.20.02      to approve the SA Minutes as corrected.**

### **REPORTS**

No reports were removed from the Consent Agenda, but VP Kay reminded people that our new Treasurer, Dan Clements, had asked for feedback on the new format for the Treasurer's report.

### **UPDATES SINCE THE LAST MEETING**

#### **Treasurer Appointment**

The Executive Committee appointed Dan Clements as our new Treasurer at their August meeting.

#### **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Work with the Organizing for Mission Network (OFMN)**

There was a Kick-Off Training with approximately 12 people present, although time conflicts resulted in some being absent.

- Part of the training involved an inspirational, powerful study of the book of Ruth (according to participants).
- Trainees left with a list of people to contact for one-on-one conversations.
- Through listening they hope to build relationships and identify where actions can take place.
- They have a 120-day plan and look forward to making an initial report/update after that.

#### **Sale of Property in Concrete**

This sale is still in process. The buyer asked for a 30-day extension of the mid-August closing date in exchange for \$15,000 of non-refundable earnest money. On September 18<sup>th</sup>, the buyer asked for another 30-day extension in exchange for an additional \$5000 in non-refundable earnest money and a \$10,000 increase in the price of the property. Thus, the bishop, our VP and our Director of Properties agreed to this most recent extension.

\$150,000 from the sale of this property has been allocated by the Executive Committee to place \$50,000 in the Property Management Account (02-341-04982) and \$100,000 in the Columbia City Build Out fund (02-341-04712).

In lieu of making a motion, it is the intent of the Synod Council to use the remaining proceeds from the sale of the Concrete Property for both the new and Strategic Ministry Fund and possible, unforeseen emergency property issues.

It was also suggested that it would be helpful to appoint a team from Synod Council that can address all property/money issues.

#### **OLD/ONGOING BUSINESS**

##### **From the Policy Review Committee**

**MC**

**SC2025.09.20.03** to replace the former policy “Call Process for Pastors in a Specialized Ministry” with a re-written policy titled “Northwest Washington Synod Process for Synod Calls.”

In discussion, it was noted that *the requirement of the rostered minister being “a member in good standing of an ELCA congregation” could also be fulfilled by a rostered minister being a member of a Synodically Authorized Worshiping Community (SAWC).*

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### **Compensation Guideline Approval**

It was noted that both Fred and Andy from Personnel Committee (PC) were unavailable to speak to the 2026 Guidelines, but Dan Squires is our Council representative to the PC. The most significant changes to the document from last year are 1) the cost-of-living increase, and 2) how experience is calculated. The variables on calculating experience provide an opportunity for congregations to be adaptable.

During discussion it was pointed out that the cost-of-living adjustment related to housing cost does not work as intended. If housing prices go down in one’s community, it wipes out one’s increase in salary.

**MC**

**SC2025.09.20.04** to amend the NWWA Synod Ministry Site 2026 Compensation Guidelines under the section “Influences on Compensation,” (p. 4) to change the last word in the third bullet from ‘increase’ to ‘change’ and to add a bullet which reads, “Recognizing that housing costs sometimes decrease, it is recommended that congregations never lower a previous salary by decreasing the cost-of-living based on a decrease in housing prices;” and, further, to amend the Compensation Worksheet regarding the content of box B, specifically to state in B14, “If the calculated ‘Median Home Price,’ based on the previous year’s calculation for your pastor/deacon is different, use the highest of the two figures for determining the cost-of-living adjustment.”

##### **Synod Lease Renewal with St. John United**

**MSC**

**SC2025.09.20.05** to approve the Lease Renewal between the Synod Office and St. John United Lutheran Church which extends from October 2025-2028.

##### **Finance Committee Recommendation**

**MC**

**SC2025.09.20.0** to close the Council Designated Restricted Fund account 02-341-10042 and merge the balance of \$166,386.81 with the General Fund.

##### **Referred from Synod Assembly**

The memorial about inclusive/expansive language for God which was refused to be brought to the floor by the Synod Assembly was discussed. While Synod Council cannot change the action of the Synod Assembly, it was proposed that we, as a Council, might provide the makers of the memorial an opportunity to discuss their

concerns about this issue with us. Thus, **Kay proposed we invite the makers of the memorial to come to the January meeting of the Synod Council.**

#### Resolution #3 pertaining to ministries vulnerable to anti-immigrant action

This resolution was referred to us by the Synod Assembly Reference and Counsel Committee, as it was not presented on the floor of the assembly.

After much discussion, it was decided that the class action lawsuit in which we are participating partly addresses the concerns in this memorial. It was also believed that the resolve for the synod to establish a fund to aid those harmed by the actions of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was better addressed by entities more adequately equipped to respond to these issues, receive funds and provide help. We also discussed using the communication tools available to us to amplify and encourage support of other organizations already and more deeply engaged in these issues. Trying to duplicate work which others are better equipped to do and are already doing was not thought to be wise stewardship of our own resources. Thus, it was decided not to pass this resolution.

Netsie will contact Rev. Chelsea Globe, the maker of the memorial, to thank her for submitting the memorial and inform her of our discussion and decision.

#### **FOR DISCUSSION**

##### **Surfacing Nominees for Vice President, Secretary, Youth**

The Council leadership positions to be elected in 2026 were discussed.

- The Youth position is a two-year term, and the candidates for this position must be under the age of 18 when elected but may continue to fill out their term after turning 18.
- The candidates for the position of Vice President must be laypeople. This position used to be open to Ministers of Word and Service prior to them being granted 'ordination,' but because of their ordination, they are no longer eligible.
- Like the position of Vice President, the position of Secretary is a four-year term. Netsie is willing to stand for re-election, but this does not preclude the nomination of other candidates.

Council members were encouraged to give serious thought to these positions and to forward names of willing candidates to the Nomination Committee.

##### **Election Cycle Alignment**

Kay provided us the history of the Synod Assembly schedule and how we evolved into the schedule we are currently observing with alternating a One-Day Assembly with Synod Gatherings and a Two-Day Assembly during the year of a bishop's election. Because a business assembly has had to be aligned with voting on CWA voting members a year before Churchwide Assembly, it has caused problems with other elections leading to the situation we are in this year with needing to elect officers and a youth member in a 'Gathering Year.'

***This is something we need to discuss further with the bishop and Susan Berg based on their experience, drawing from their wisdom and discerning together a way forward.***

##### **Money, Ministry and Property**

Judy provided us a document elaborating on the following topics:

- Considerations for Discerning Sale of Congregational Property and Disposition of Proceeds
- Decision matrix for grant funds
- Whether or not the Synod can afford costs associated with current properties
- Property/ministry agreements for ministries residing in Synod-owned properties
- Budget cap for DEM for funds for grants to New and Strategic Ministries

Kay's suggestion is to form a task force to work with these issues; it needs more attention than we can give it once every other month during scheduled council meetings; it should consist of a combination of staff (namely the

bishop, Judy and Jay), council members (inclusive of Dan Clements as Treasurer), and qualified people outside of council. Judy then suggested “holding the conversation” until the bishop is able to participate.

### **Synod Organizational Chart and Acronym/Specialized Vocabulary List**

Kay, Susan and Tabetha are willing to work on an organizational chart; Netsie will work on an acronym vocabulary list.

### **ELCA Churchwide Assembly Actions**

Kay shared her experience of Churchwide Assembly (CWA), some of the actions of the Assembly and responded to questions. She thought she had uploaded to Teams a written summary of the CWA, but we couldn't find it, so she promised to do that after the meeting.

### **FUTURE MEETING DATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **Meeting Dates**

- Next Executive Committee meeting via Zoom, October 9, 4:30 pm
- Synod Council Retreat/Meeting at Camp Lutherwood, Bellingham, November 14-15
  - Friday night will primarily be social; Saturday will feature a facilitator helping us with building leadership; after lunch we will have a short SC meeting and plan to be done by mid-afternoon.

**MSC                    to adjourn the meeting at 2:10 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Netsie Griffith,  
Synod Council Secretary