

# Minutes - **DRAFT**

Montana Synod Council  
12 March 2022 – ZOOM Electronic Meeting

Present: Bishop Laurie Jungling, Vice President Dick Deschamps, Secretary Amanda Liggett, Treasurer David Scholten, Allen Hansen, Rev. Peter Erickson, Robin Matthews, John Sheppard, Rev. Doris Tollefson, Celeste Pogachar, Rev. Wendy McAlpine, Rev. Scott Hedegaard, Mary Hutchinson, Associate to the Bishop Jason Asselstine, and DEM Peggy Paugh Leuzinger.

Guests: none

Absent: Kevin Johnson, Rev. Gretchen Wagner, and Lana Buerkle

*Bishop Laurie Jungling welcomed the council and led a brief devotion.*

## **WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Deschamps called the Montana Synod Council to order at 1:00pm.

## **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Motion

Second: Adopt the agenda with the privilege of the chair to revise.

### **SC22.03.01**

**VOTE: ADOPT THE AGENDA WITH THE PRIVILEGE OF THE CHAIR TO REVISE.**

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion

Second: Approve the minutes of the February 2022 meeting.

### **SC21.11.02**

**VOTE: APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 2022 MEETING.**

## **RULES OF THE ASSEMBLY**

Bishop Laurie Jungling presented the rules of the assembly with this addendum:

All voting delegates and visitors will be expected to be fully vaccinated (except for medical reasons) as defined by CDC guidelines at the time of the Synod Assembly. Alternatively, a negative test the day before arrival will be acceptable. Monitoring will be done on the honor system, and each attendee will be trusted to make their own decisions in the spirit of Christ's ongoing call to us to love our neighbor and seek their health and well-being.

Masks will be optional unless circumstances arise that will again require us to wear masks while gathering. The Yellowstone County Health Department and the CDC guidelines will be consulted for recommendations one week before the date of the assembly and a final determination regarding mask use will be made then.

Motion

Second: Approve the 2022 Rules of the Assembly, with addendum, to be submitted to the assembly for approval.

**SC22.03.03**

**VOTE: APPROVE THE 2022 RULES OF THE ASSEMBLY, WITH ADDENDUM, TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE ASSEMBLY FOR APPROVAL.**

#### **SELECTION OF ACTING SECRETARY FOR THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

Rev. Doris Tollefson will be filling in.

#### **FINANCIAL ACTIONS**

Treasurer Scholten proposed several budget changes, including increasing compensation for the director of technology and communication position. He also tweaked the budget to fix having a deficit in the range of \$5000. The surplus money from the 2021 budget will be spread over the next three years to supplement ministry. With some small changes to gift expectations, we have a balanced budget to present to the assembly.

Motion

Second: Approve the changes to the 2022 budget as submitted.

**SC22.03.04**

**VOTE: APPROVE THE CHANGES TO THE 2022 BUDGET AS SUBMITTED.**

Motion

Second: Approve the changes to the 2023 budget as submitted.

**SC22.03.05**

**VOTE: APPROVE THE CHANGES TO THE 2023 BUDGET AS SUBMITTED.**

#### **CARE FOR CREATION TASK FORCE**

Rev. Eric Huseth and Patrick Miller joined the meeting to give a report on the Care for Creation Task Force. He read two bullet points from the resolution that created the task force. The task force has been trying to connect with the youth of the synod through youth directors.

They are excited about an opportunity to partner with the Western Sustainability Exchange (WSE). This group has been around a long time, working with ranchers to promote conservation in Montana. The task force asks for approval from the council to pursue this opportunity.

Mr. Miller explained how the relationship would look with WSE. The cultural diversity of Montana presents a challenge for the task force, with many church members depending on ranching, farming, tourism, and/or fossil fuel production for their livelihood. Naturally, opinions about *how* to care for creation vary greatly. WSE is particularly sensitive about what to propose and where to propose it. They don't want to start fights or create controversy. WSE is a small nonprofit located in Livingston. It was founded in 1994, growing recently from five staff members to eight. [www.westernsustainabilityexchange.org](http://www.westernsustainabilityexchange.org) is their website. Their five main interests are: vibrant soil biology, locally grown foods, diverse fish and wildlife, clean water, and ranch resiliency and profitability. They promote regenerative agriculture through rotational grazing. The goal of the task force would be to help them get more small ranchers involved in this process by encouraging support from local congregations.

The benefits for the church would be to show that we are listening carefully and hoping to

support local agriculture. Though there is no detailed plan for what this partnership would look like, WSE seems interested in our involvement. Today, the task force asks permission to go and work out those details, eventually bringing back a hard proposal.

Motion

Second: Support the creation care task force in pursuing what a partnership with WSE might look like.

**SC22.03.06**

**VOTE: SUPPORT THE CREATION CARE TASK FORCE IN PURSUING WHAT A PARTNERSHIP WITH WSE MIGHT LOOK LIKE.**

### **RACIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE REPORT**

Rev. Stacie Heggem and Rev. Melanie Martin-Dent presented their proposal, which was sent to the council in detail ahead of the meeting. It was concluded that further work needs to be done by the council to determine whether we should pursue a partnership with IAF-NW. The council is asked to read the proposal again carefully, as well as to explore the website.

### **MONTANA JEWISH PROJECT**

It was determined that we should raise money through the synod to present a gift in whole as a synod.

Motion

Second: Support the Montana Jewish Project with focused fundraising to purchase the Montana Synagogue in Helena.

**SC22.03.04**

**VOTE: SUPPORT THE MONTANA JEWISH PROJECT WITH FOCUSED FUNDRAISING TO PURCHASE THE MONTANA SYNAGOGUE IN HELENA.**

### **ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS**

Bishop Jungling expressed the importance of our relationship with the Jewish community in Montana. She then invited the council to consider all three of these groups/proposals in general terms (Creation Care, Racial Justice and MT Jewish Project). What ought these partnerships with groups outside the synod look like in the future?

Points made: This is important work. All three of these have connections to one another. We need to also be establishing grassroots collaborations. One concern was raised that IAF-NW does not focus particularly on racial justice, so might it be outside the scope of our task force? Over and over, people emphasized the importance of relationships.

Big question: do we want to commit any funding to the racial justice task force to have a trial year with IAF-NW?. They have thus far been funded by gifts and donations given directly to the racial justice task force, as well as some funding from the synod. They would like us to commit to a yearly budget item.

Churchwide: The conference of bishops discussed at length a difficult issue in the Sierra Pacific Synod. One of the candidates for Bishop, Pastor Nelson, was accused of psychological abuse and was not elected. He was eventually removed from the position of pastor at a mission congregation. Bishop Megan Rohrer was elected and an investigation uncovered 10-12 more individuals who claimed to have been abused by Pastor Nelson. Many people have voiced

concern over the way he was removed, specifically due to the timing, which was deemed very culturally insensitive. Bishop Eaton has created a listening committee to assess the situation and make recommendations.

*Bishop Jungling led the council in a closing prayer.*

VP Deschamps adjourned the meeting at 3:40pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Rev. Amanda Liggett  
Secretary, Montana Synod

**Upcoming Meetings**

**Synod Council Meetings**

- June 2, 2022, Billings
- September 23-24, 2022, Great Falls

**Assembly**

- June 3-4, 2022, Billings