

**Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada  
Minutes of the National Church Council Meeting  
March 1-3, 2024 | ELCIC National Office, Winnipeg, MB (In Person Meeting)**

**Present:**

**Officers:** National Bishop Susan Johnson  
Gene Blishen, Treasurer  
Bruce Cook, Vice-Chair

**Council:** Rev. Chris Bishopp  
Bill Gastmeier  
Sarah Harrington  
Stephen Holmes  
Rev. Dr. Kimber McNabb  
John Nilson  
Rev. Dr. Kevin Powell  
Heidi Van Schaik  
Rev. Katrina Vigen  
Dorothy Patterson, CoGS Rep to NCC

**Synod Bishops:** Bishop Kathy Martin, BC Synod  
Bishop Larry Kochendorfer, ABT Synod (*Friday & Saturday morning*)  
Bishop Sid Haugen, SK Synod  
Bishop Jason Zinko, MNO Synod  
Bishop Michael Pryse, Eastern Synod

**Staff:** Peace Anthony-Idoko, Director of Finance and Administration  
Trina Gallop Blank, Assistant to the Bishop, Communications and Resource Generation  
Rev. Paul Gehrs, Assistant to the Bishop, Justice and Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations  
Deacon Gretchen Peterson, Assistant to the Bishop, Youth & Leadership  
Carmen Ramirez, Assistant to the Bishop, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion  
Desiree Mendoza, Office Manager, Meetings and Communications Coordinator

**Online:** Linda Grainger, Secretary  
Rev. Dr. Marc Jerry  
Kathleen Jensen

**Co-Facilitator:** Alcris Limongi (*Saturday, March 2*)

**Regrets:** The Very Rev. Peter Wall, Assistant to the Bishop for Worship

**FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 2024, 6:30 P.M.- 9:00 P.M.**

**Recognition of Territory**

Rev. Katrina Vigen (Co-Chaplain) shared the Recognition of Territory.

**Opening Worship**

Meeting co-chaplains Rev. Katrina Vigen and Heidi Van Schaik led the Opening Worship.

**Business Session One:**

Vice-Chair Bruce Cook called the meeting to order.

**Recognition of Territory / Welcome**

Vice-Chair Bruce Cook cited the Land Acknowledgement at the beginning of the meeting.

*Today, we gather on Treaty 1 territory here in Winnipeg. Kathleen joins us virtually from Treaty 7 territory in Brooks, Alberta; Marc joins us virtually from Treaty 4 lands with a presence in Treaty 6 territory; and Linda joins us virtually from Cession 118 and 173 territory in Davenport, Florida. A Cession in the United States is the transfer of sovereignty over a territory by means of a treaty.*

*Canada recognizes 70 historic treaties that were signed between 1701 and 1923. While Treaty 1 wasn't the first treaty signed in Canada, it was the first that was signed after the 1867 formation of the modern Canadian government.*

*We gather on Treaty 1 territory today in historic times. On October 3rd 2023, Manitobans elected the first provincial premier of First Nations descent and Manitoba's first Indigenous premier since Métis premier John Norquay in 1887. On October 18th, 2023, Wabanakwut "Wab" Kinew was sworn in as the 25th premier of Manitoba.*

*Kinew took his oath of office while wearing a ceremonial First Nations headdress in a ceremony at The Leaf in Winnipeg's Assiniboine Park. After taking his oath, Kinew greeted the crowd in the languages of seven different Manitoba Indigenous nations, and said it was the start of a new era.*

*The ceremony began with the lighting of the quilliq, a traditional Inuit oil lamp, and later featured traditional drumming and singing by Sioux Valley's Dakota Hotain Singers and the Red River jig performed by Norman Chief Memorial Dancers, a Métis music and dance group. It also included remarks from First Nations leaders such as Murray Sinclair, a former judge and senator who chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. "Kinew's election as premier is Manitoba's "true act of reconciliation." said Sinclair. "I want you to think of it that way. I want you to think of the fact that we are now entering a new phase," he said.*

*So today we acknowledge this sacred land – we acknowledge the Indigenous peoples who have lovingly cared for this land since time immemorial. We acknowledge the ongoing work of truth and reconciliation we have before us as we commit to doing better for Mother Earth and its peoples.*

*May our words become action, thoughts become deeds, and may love be our guide.*

Bruce welcomed Dorothy Patterson, Council of General Synod's (CoGS) representative to the National Church Council (NCC) as well as Peace Anthony-Idoko, ELCIC's Director of Finance and Administration, who is participating for the first time in the NCC meeting. Bruce also acknowledged that this will be the last NCC meeting for Bishops Sid Haugen, Larry Kochendorfer, and Michael Pryse. He also welcomed our NCC members Linda Grainger, Rev. Dr. Marc Jerry, and Kathleen Jensen who were participating online. Bruce also acknowledged Heidi Van Schaik for the grief that she and her family were going through in the passing away of a beloved family member (Heidi's brother-in-law).

## Approval of Agenda

M/S That NCC approves the meeting agenda. **CARRIED.**

## Code of Conduct

The Complaint Handling Committee (CHC) for this meeting consisted of Sarah Harrington and Rev. Dr. Kevin Powell.

## NCC Covenant

## Declaration of Conflict of Interest

## Approval of September 7–9, 2023 NCC Meeting Minutes

M/S That NCC approves the September 7-9, 2023 NCC meeting minutes. **CARRIED.**

## Approval of E-vote Minutes

M/S That NCC approves the November 3 and 29, 2023 e-vote minutes *en bloc*.

**CC-2024-01** “That NCC approves an appeal to the ELCIC to raise funds in support to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) in response to implications they are facing from the Israel-Hamas War, setting a goal of \$263,000.00 and donating \$100,000 from the Special Projects Funds.” **CARRIED.**

**CC-2024-02** "That NCC rescinds the motion 'M/S That NCC approves to hold its March 2024 meeting online. CARRIED.' in order to have an in person meeting" and “that the meeting be held on March 1 to 3.” **CARRIED.**

**CARRIED.**

## Report of the National Bishop

Bishop Susan presented her report to NCC. In addition to her written report, she asked NCC to appoint a task force who would look into the process of electing a national bishop. She also further explained the pamphlet “Spiritual Discernment for a Group Process” distributed to NCC.

Bishop Susan shared her visit to the Holy Land in January of this year to NCC. She was reminded of the true meaning of being in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who experience imminent danger daily. She also shared on the plight of the dwellers in East Jerusalem and in the West Bank. She stressed that we should give time for the money to come, referring to the ongoing Emergency Appeal for ELCJHL that the whole church is mobilizing, so that ELCIC can fully help by meeting its goal.

## **Task Force for Election Process for the National Bishop**

Secretary Linda Grainger and Stephen Holmes have volunteered to work in the task force responsible in looking at the election process for a national bishop. They will be reporting back to NCC at its next meeting in the fall (September 2024).

**CC-2024-03** That NCC approves to remove Form 1.g *Statement from Physician* from the *ELCIC Candidacy Manual* Forms: [https://elcic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022-05\\_1g-Statement-from-Physician.pdf](https://elcic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022-05_1g-Statement-from-Physician.pdf) **CARRIED.**

## **Report of the Officers**

The ELCIC National Officers individually gave an oral report to NCC.

## **CoGS Report**

Dorothy Patterson gave an oral report to NCC.

## **Appointments**

Rev. Paul Gehrs shared with NCC the recent news of the passing away of Richard Kotowich who participated in the task force on Racism, White Supremacy, and issues of Racial Injustice.

**CC-2024-04** That NCC makes the following appointments *en bloc*:

To appoint Victoria Featherston, Rev. Nadine Schroeder-Kranz, Rev. Sarah Mowat, Donald Storch and a member of the Anglican Church of Canada (invited to appoint a member) to the Task Force Addressing Ableism for a term that runs until July 2025.

To appoint Kate McCulloch, Joyce Davison, Rev. Jennifer Wilson and a member of the Anglican Church of Canada (invited to appoint a member); and to reappoint Ronald Flamand on the Task Force Addressing Racism, White Supremacy, and issues of Racial Injustice for a term that runs until July 2025.

To appoint Rev. Tyler Gingrich, Allison Hungle and a member of the Anglican Church of Canada (invited to appoint a member), and to reappoint Rev. Lindsey Jorgensen-Skakum, Margot Reiners, Haiden Werboweski, and Rev. Steve Hoffard to the Task Force Addressing Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia for a term that runs until July 2025.

To appoint Dr. Mary (Joy) Philip, PhD; Tim Schaner; Andrea Wilhelm, PhD; and a member of the Anglican Church of Canada (invited to appoint a member); and to reappoint Rev. Jeremy Langner to the Task Force on Carbon Neutrality for a term that runs until July 2025.

To appoint Deacon Faith Nostbakken and Bishop Kathy Martin; and to reappoint Rev. Susan Climo and Kathryn Smith to the Lutheran-Anglican-Moravian Full Communion Commission for a term that runs until July 2025.

To appoint Rev. Dr. Philip Karimpanamannil Mathai, and to reappoint Rev. Paul Gehrs to The Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) Governing Board for a term that runs from May 2024 until May 2027.

To appoint Silantoi Kioso as Director from MNO Synod to the Board of Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) for a term until September 2026.

**CARRIED.**

**New ELCIC Tagline**

Trina Gallop Blank, Director of Communications and Resource Generation explained the last step in ELCIC's rebranding process. She provided a background on how the committee worked in the past few years in which the language used in the vision statement was the result of years of work asking people in the church. She further explained the rationale of the new tagline, "Living Out God's Grace and Unconditional Love." The words used in the new tagline are at the heart of everything we do and allow us to be on a new journey.

**CC-2024-05** That NCC adopts the tagline "Living Out God's Grace and Unconditional Love" as presented. **CARRIED.**

**Closing Prayer**

Led by meeting co-chaplain Rev. Katrina Vigen.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 2, 2024, 9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.**

**Business Session Two:**

National Bishop Susan Johnson called the meeting to order.

**Opening Prayer**

Led by the meeting chaplains.

**Presentation from the Synod Bishops**

Bishop Susan reminded NCC that during the September 2023 meeting, NCC spent time to talk about or lament on the state of the church. The synod bishops continued the conversation and presented their respective SWOT Analysis. After their presentations, Bishop Susan hoped that these will stimulate some discussion among NCC members.

**Racial Justice Education Session 3: Capacity Building**

Carmen Ramirez, Assistant to the Bishop for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion introduced NCC to Session 3 of *Racial Justice Education: Capacity Building* along with co-facilitator Alcris Limongi who is an ordained minister at The United Church of Canada. Alcris works as a program staff at the Centre for Christian Studies in Winnipeg.

Co-facilitators Carmen and Alcris led the group through the session with time for small group discussions. This session was meant to “seek to learn the power of hospitality to build our capacity to sustain healthy intercultural relations within our faith context and in society,” and in this way help “to emphasize the importance of naming the spaces impacted by power relations in the ELCIC.” At the end of the workshop session, participants proposed ways to name visible, concrete and practical demonstration of racial justice in the church through an examination of the relationship between Jesus and Zacchaeus.

**(Lunch)**

### **Business Session Three – 1:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.**

Bishop Susan called the meeting to order.

NCC members were invited to ask Synod Bishops questions regarding their SWOT Analysis presentations.

### **Racial Justice Education Session 3: Capacity Building (continuation)**

#### **Budget Presentation**

Treasurer Gene Blishen presented the ELCIC budget to NCC.

#### **Committee Reports—**

##### **Audit**

Gene Blishen, Treasurer gave a brief update.

##### **Conference of Bishops**

Bishop Jason Zinko gave an oral report to NCC. He spoke highly of how all bishops worked together. They looked at a few policies on discipline (pertaining to disciplinary process) and with relation to management of discipline in congregations. They’ve also consulted with legal on the call process and missional work.

##### **Constitution**

Rev. Dr. Marc Jerry, Chair of this committee shared that the committee has some work in progress but no action required at this time.

##### **Governance**

Heidi Van Schaik, Chair of this committee shared that the committee has a few agenda items to be dealt with but no actions required at this time.

##### **ELCIC Mission Fund**

Bishop Susan Johnson shared with NCC that the committee for the ELCIC Mission Fund met last November 8th and came up with a proposal on rebates for the church. The committee will have a mission consultation coming up very soon. Representatives from synods will be present at the consultation and the board will also be meeting. There’s allocated money and a portion of

that will be a rebate to the synods. The ELCIC Mission Fund has also agreed to fund the Welcome Angels Ministry Program of Rhenish Church for the last three years.

**CC-2024-06** That NCC approves disbursements of a total of \$664,912.68 to synods, based on the formula below, after replenishing the reserve fund with \$200,000 and allocating \$60,000 to the Welcome Angels Program with the Rhenish Church.

Synod	Baptized Membership at 31-Dec-22	Percentage of Total	50% Baptized 332,456.34	50% Split Equally \$332,456.34	Total Allocation
ABT	6,215	15.47%	\$51,435.52	\$66,491.27	\$117,926.78
BC	3,857	9.60%	\$31,920.64	\$66,491.27	\$98,411.91
EASTERN	16,642	41.43%	\$137,729.66	\$66,491.27	\$204,220.93
MNO	5,658	14.08%	\$46,825.77	\$66,491.27	\$113,317.04
SASK	7,799	19.41%	\$64,544.75	\$66,491.27	\$131,036.01
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40,171</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>\$332,456.34</b>	<b>\$332,456.34</b>	<b>\$664,912.68</b>

**CARRIED.**

**Finance**

Treasurer Gene Blishen presented the Finance Report to NCC.

NCC members Stephen Holmes (Chair of the Charitus Board) and Bill Gastmeier (Charitus board member) declared conflicts of interest with respect to the motion regarding Charitus.

**CC-2024-07** That NCC holds a discussion on the need to define priorities of the Church and thereby allocate resources in line with those priorities. **CARRIED.**

**CC-2024-08** That NCC approves the 2024 Annual Budget as presented. **CARRIED.**

**CC-2024-09** That NCC approves the exploration of a partnership with GSI in the creation of a centralized payroll system available to ELCIC employees on an optional basis. **CARRIED.**

**CC-2024-10** That NCC approves the proposed registration fee of \$1300 for the 2025 National Convention. **CARRIED.**

**CC-2024-11** That NCC approves the transfer of 50% of investment funds held with TD Wealth to Charitus. **CARRIED.**

**Faith, Order, and Doctrine**

No report was provided at this time.

**Correspondence – SK Synod Letter**

Bishop Sid Haugen further explained on the letter presented to NCC. Bishop Susan will write back to the SK Synod and will include in her letter that we recognize the difficulty of the decision.

## **Closing Prayer**

Led by the meeting co-chaplains.

**(Supper)**

## **Business Session Four – 6:15 P.M. – 9:00 P.M.**

Bishop Susan called the meeting to order.

### **Opening Prayer**

Led by the meeting co-chaplains.

### **Conversation Around the Synod Bishops' Reports and Related Issues**

NCC had a discussion on the Synod Bishops' reports in groups.

### **Closing Prayer**

Led by the meeting co-chaplains.

## **SUNDAY, MARCH 3, 2024, 9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.**

### **Business Session Five:**

Vice-Chair Bruce Cook called the meeting to order.

### **Opening Prayer**

Led by the meeting co-chaplains.

### **Revised Policy on Addressing Social Issues**

Rev. Paul Gehrs, Assistant to the Bishop for Justice and Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, provided some background and further explanation on the document presented to NCC.

**M/S** That NCC adopts the *Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues* as presented.

Rev. Katrina Vigen provided suggestions for further revision on the document being presented.

**M/S** That NCC amends on page 2 of the *Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues* as follows: “we feel called to form relationship, communities, societies, and systems that generate justice and equity so all can thrive”. **CARRIED.**



**M/S** That NCC amends on page 2 of the *Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues* as follows: “(from which comes the word “diaconal”. ...Diakonia”. **CARRIED.**

**M/S** That NCC amends on page 3 under “Purpose of Public Statements” of the *Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues* as follows: 1) “To serve as teaching and learning opportunities for the people of God, and to encourage ongoing conversation, reflection, prayer, and action.” **CARRIED.**

**M/S** That NCC amends on page 4 of the *Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues* as follows: “Honest disagreement should not be seen as a sign of disunity, but as an opportunity for dialogue, discernment, and perhaps new insights for the ELCIC.” **CARRIED.**

**M/S** That NCC amends on page 4 of the *Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues* as follows: “After such debate, discussion, and prayerful deliberation.”. **CARRIED.**

**NCC-2024-12** That NCC adopts the amended *Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues*. **CARRIED.**

*(Appendix A: Amended “Draft Policy on How the Church Addresses Social Issues”)*

Members of NCC thanked all the Synod Bishops for their presentations.

Homework:

Bishop Susan encouraged NCC to take some time to read over the documents and reflect on how God is calling us to be a church. The group is also encouraged to look into those policies that are not being utilized and identify the barriers which could also turn into opportunities.

Bishop Susan said to put aside time before our next meeting and look into various areas where policies are involved such as sacramental practices, authorized lay ministry, reimagining the church, study guide, and alternate route to pastoral ministry. The homework until the next NCC meeting includes looking into priorities; budget work on strategic plan; and SWOT analysis.

Next meeting in September 2024 will be online.

## **Unfinished Business**

## **New Business**

## **Meeting Highlights**

*(Appendix B: Meeting Highlights)*

## **Meeting Evaluation**

## **Closing Prayer**

























