



**Diocesan Council Meeting
April 11-12, 2025 – Fargo
Minutes**

Present:

Friday night: The Rev. Dn. Elsie Magnus, The Rev. John Floberg, The Rev. Dn. Beth Lipp, Donna Pettit, The Rev. Dn. John Anderson, Tyrrell Decoteau, Jael Mogga, George Abdilnour, The Rev. Robert Hoekstra, John Baird, The Rev. Lindsey Dwarf, Susan Lisok, Ashley Hubbard, Rafael Decoteau, Bishop Brian Thom, Dr. Jason Thom, Amy Phillips (Recorder)

Saturday: The Rev. Dn. Elsie Magnus, The Rev. John Floberg, The Rev. Dn. Beth Lipp, Donna Pettit, The Rev. Dn. John Anderson, Tyrrell Decoteau, Jael Mogga, George Abdilnour, The Rev. Robert Hoekstra, John Baird, The Rev. Lindsey Dwarf, Susan Lisok, Ashley Hubbard, Rafael Decoteau, Rachel Schmidt, Bishop Brian, Amy Phillips (Recorder)

Red items are included in / referencing the April Council Packet (page #s are in parentheses)

Assignments/action items highlighted in yellow. Motions highlighted in blue.

Friday, April 11th 6:30-8:30pm

6:00-7:15pm -- Stations of the Cross in St. Stephen's Sanctuary; Dinner provided by St. Stephen's & Presentation by Ross Keys of Interfaith Alliance of ND (ross@ndvoices.org)

I. Welcome and Opening Prayers (Bishop Brian)

II. Land Acknowledgment and Respectful Communication Guidelines (pp. 5 & 6)

III. Business Session

1. Review Action Items from previous meeting(s)

- a) *Find a new communication platform (other than Realm) and an online shareable file structure.* John Baird at the last meeting had encouraged a security review of Realm. Bishop noted that no one can get into Realm without a password. John Baird suggested also developing a separate data base for documents.
- b) *Create a Policy Manual for Council to use for reference.* Bishop said that a tab on the Diocesan website will be created with current policies. Jess will look at how other Dioceses display their policies.
- c) *Bishop to schedule a zoom meeting to explain financial to any interested DC members.* This has not yet happened but John Baird has agreed to facilitate this meeting.

- d) *Find a Treasurer for the Diocese* who will also serve on the Finance Committee. Bishop has asked someone and is waiting for a response and this person will be a part of the meeting mentioned in item c. above.
- e) *Create a Council policy regarding social issues for public endorsement.* Will be discussed later in this meeting.
- f) *Standing Committee will be creating a Transition Committee.* Will be discussed later in this meeting.
- g) *Finance Committee needs to develop a procedure for congregations to apply for grants through the Real Estate fund.* This has not happened because of lack of a Treasurer and an incomplete Finance Committee.
- h) *Bishop will send out an email request for two additional people to attend the Province VI Council meeting.* This event has been postponed.
- i) *Bishop will provide DC with a sample of a more detailed sabbatical policy.* Will be discussed later in this meeting.
- j) *Civic Spotlight section of The Prairie.* Bishop noted that this is now in the Prairie and any parishioner is welcome to submit something to Jess.

IV. State Department Decision on South Sudanese (p. 7) – Bishop brought this to the attention of the Council that the Trump Administration is rescinding the visas of South Sudanese passport holders. Everyone at St. John’s in Moorhead is safe at this point but St. John’s parishioners are concerned about other individuals they know. There is hope that this decision will be reversed. John Floberg recommended that any public statement from the Diocese about this issue be expanded to include individuals from other countries (such as Ukraine) who are also under threat of deportation.

V. Approval of February 2025 Council Minutes (pp. 8-13) – Robert Hoekstra moved to approve, Beth Lipp seconded, motion passed.

VI. Finance Report YTD 03-31-25 (pp. 14-19) – Finance Committee met this past Monday night – Bishop reviewed the Report.

1. Question--why are we paying taxes on church property? John Floberg noted that if it’s not being used for religious purposes, it gets taxed. Bishop noted that the Diocese pays assessments on 7 different properties. Jess called the counties in which the properties are located and got two of the assessments reversed. The Diocese will get reimbursements for past assessments on these two properties.
2. Line 3550 – The \$782 is payment for a seminarian’s ordination exam.
3. Beth Lipp moved to approve the quarterly report, Susan Lisok seconded, motion passed.
4. **Q1 Designated & Donor Restricted Funds 2025 (pp. 20-27)** – Bishop noted that the Council should be acquainted with these funds. Some may be too restrictive or should be spent or repurposed. The Finance Committee should at some point discuss these and bring recommendations to the Council. Leo Wilking and John Baird noted that neither the Real Estate Fund nor the Trust and Endowment Funds are listed in the packet and these should be included in the packet for the next DC meeting.
5. **Q1 Diocesan Stewardship Share (pp. 28-29)** – For review by Council; no action needed.

VII. New Letters of Agreement for Missioners (pgs. 30-36) – Bishop drew attention to these letters; no action needed.

VIII. Reports

1. **Diocesan Missioner (pgs. 37-38)** – Ashley Hubbard gave her report. She recommended that everyone attend the leadership meetings that take place on the first Tuesday of each month via zoom. Not everyone who should be invited is being invited so Bishop will ensure that all relevant Diocesan leaders are being invited.
2. Jason Thoms reported that the 1700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed is coming up. There will be a choir performance celebrating this on May 4 in Hague.
3. **Standing Committee (pg. 39)** – Jason Thom reported on the activity of the nominating committee. The deadline for bishop applications was extended twice. Currently there are 9 individuals who have submitted applications. The nominating committee will be evaluating candidate applications on the Saturday after Easter. Zoom interviews will be coming up in May.
 - a. A Transition Committee needs to be established.
 - b. Need to get all dates set related to bishop selection process from the Nominating Committee. Consecration of the new Bishop will take place March 14, 2026.
4. Other reports.
 - a. Bishop asked the Council to review reports by Kim Fox (p. 40) and Jessica Krzewina (p. 42).
 - b. **NDEF (p.44)** – Beth Lipp and John Baird reported that the NDEF received and funded seven grant requests (\$36,120 total). She noted that vestry letters need to accompany applications.
 - c. Commission on Ministry – Ashley Hubbard’s request for Postulancy in the Diocese of North Dakota was approved by the Commission.
 - d. **United Thank Offering (p. 43)**
 - e. **ND Council on Indian Ministry – NDCIM (pp. 46-47)**
 - f. Additional reports (no reports provided):
 - Shepherds for New Season Goals
 - Congregational Development Committee
 - Personnel Committee
 - Canons Committee
 - Episcopal Relief & Development
5. Bishop’s Report – Bishop reported on the following:
 - Clergy Retreat
 - NDCIM Spring Gathering [March 15, 2025]
 - Update on Title IV case – this is ongoing

Night prayers and recess

Saturday, February 15th 8:30am-2:00pm

Continental breakfast @ Holiday Inn Express and John Baird’s scones at St. Stephen’s.

I. Gather and Morning Devotions

II. Business Session

1. Ashley Hubbard will take minutes at the June DC meeting since Amy Phillips will be unavailable.
2. DC will meet August 22-23 in Minot (instead of in September).
3. Bishops Reports (cont'd from Friday meeting)
 - a. *WoDakota 2025* – Several suggestions were made for use of the funds received. John Floberg made a motion that half of the proceeds go to food pantries where there are Episcopal congregations and half to the ministry of St. John the Divine. Beth Lipp seconded. Motion passed. Donna commented that it is important to have WoDakota funding address different needs around the state from year to year. Bob Hoekstra noted that it is important for a report be made available [to whom?].
 - b. *Funding for a priest at St. John's* – The Bishop suggested that part of the Sudanese Fund could be used for the seminarian's moving expenses. Leo Wilking made a motion that the Finance Committee look at ways to sustain a priest at St. John's and this person would also assist the Bishop as the Bishop directs. Amy Phillips seconded, motion passed.
 - c. *Parish Visitations:*
 - i. The Bishop and Ashley Hubbard had a nice visit at St. Peter's, Williston and were joined by parishioners from Cartwright. George reported that St. Peter's will hold begin holding services in the Lutheran Church sanctuary in Williston (via a rental arrangement)
 - ii. Grace, Jamestown – Bishop will be facilitating a confirmation.
 - d. *Update on St. John's Moorhead repairs* – Along with sewer issue, there has been snow damage. Insurance wants an estimate but plumbers are unable to give bids because they don't know what they will find. The hope is that an adjuster will enable some kind of bid that will satisfy the insurance company. The church is waiting for the insurance to provide a report on the church structure and for the insurance company to send a plumber to give an estimate. George advised that if the insurance denies the claim, it should be appealed. Tyrrell recommended that the city also be contacted.
 - e. *Diocese of Texas Visit, May 14-17, 2025 (p. 48)* – Bishop reviewed the itinerary. Bishop is asking for Diocesan leadership to participate in the meeting on May 16 in Jamestown.

Noonday Prayers; Lunch provided by St. John the Divine, Moorhead

III. New Business

1. *Merger of Creation Care and Reconciliation Committees (p. 49)* – Bob Hoekstra moved to approve the merger, Leo Wilking seconded, motion passed.
2. *Proposed Revision of Sabbatical Policy (pp. 50-53)* – The proposed policy was reviewed. On page 50, first line, "full-time" will be replaced with "stipendiary." A recommendation to pursue other sources of funding (such as the Lily Foundation) will be added. On page 53, "overlooking" changed to "disregarding the entitlement to...." Leo made motion to accept changes to the amended policy, Beth Lipp seconded, motion passed.
3. *Mineral rights spreadsheet (pp. 54-58)* -- The Bishop will reach out to Bart Davis to find out what documentation he has and will look into hiring a mineral rights professional to develop accurate documentation for the Diocese.
4. Red Willow Camp Ministries, ELCA – The Bishop met with the Director and this camp is available to the Diocese (maybe even for a Diocesan convention).
5. Tribal Funding Cuts – The Bishop noted that the federal government is trying to make cuts to services that are guaranteed by treaty.

6. **Public Advocacy Policy Proposal (pp. 59-60)** – After discussion of the policy, two amendments were made to the proposed policy: “IV.5. -- The Council and/or Bishop will facilitate emotional/mental health support to any individuals who experience hurtful retaliation as a result of public advocacy; and “VI. This policy does not endorse or deny the ability of priests, deacons, or vestries from addressing concerns that effect their communities.” Tyrrell moved to approve the policy as amended, Leo seconded, motion passed. Amy will write a brief summary of the proposal for the next Prairie.
7. Request from St. Gabriel’s – John Floberg made a request of \$25,000 for a new septic system for Star Lodge. NDEF approved \$10,000 contingent on the remaining \$15,000 coming from the Diocese. Jason moved to endorse the \$10,000 from NDEF, Rafael seconded, all approved. Leo made a motion that the remaining \$15,000 (or whatever the updated estimate is) be taken from the Real Estate Fund, Elsie seconded, motion passed.
8. All Saints, Valley City Realtor Listing – A real estate firm in Valley City is assessing the value of the church. Diocesan costs would be 6% of the sale, plus the cost associated with creation of an abstract (\$1500-2000), plus \$500 closing costs. On behalf of the Standing Committee, Elsie made a motion to approve the sale of All Saints Valley City, Tyrrell seconded, motion passed by Standing Committee members present. Bob Hoekstra made a motion to list the property using the real estate assessment, Beth Lipp seconded, motion passed. The Bishop will move forward with listing the property and will ensure that a stoneware place setting will be delivered to the Diocesan office, that place settings be made available to former members, and that the communion setting be delivered to the Diocesan office.

IV. Action Items review

1. A tab on the Diocesan website will be created containing current Diocesan policies. Jess will look at how other Dioceses display their policies.
2. A data base/online shareable file structure will be created for diocesan documents.
3. The bishop will schedule a zoom meeting to explain finances to any interested DC members. John Baird will facilitate this meeting.
4. The Finance Committee will develop a procedure for congregations to apply for grants through the Real Estate fund.
5. The Finance Committee will discuss the use of Designated and Restricted funds (spending, repurposing, etc.) and make recommendations to the Diocesan Council.
6. The Bishop will ensure that all relevant Diocesan leaders are invited to the first Tuesday zoom meeting.
7. Jason Thoms will get dates from the Nominating Committee related to the bishop selection process.
8. The Transition Committee will be established by the Standing Committee.
9. Half of this year’s WoDakota appeal funding will go to food pantries in areas containing an Episcopal Church and half of the funding will be used for St. John’s ministry.
10. The Finance Committee will look at ways to sustain a priest at St. John’s Moorhead.
11. The Bishop will reach out to Bart Davis to find out what documentation he has related to Diocesan mineral rights, and the Bishop will look into hiring a mineral rights professional to develop accurate and complete documentation for the Diocese.
12. Amy will write a brief summary of the Public Policy proposal for the next Prairie.
13. The Bishop will move forward with listing the Valley City church property and will ensure that a church stoneware place setting is delivered to the Diocesan office, that place settings are made

available to former members of the church, and that the communion setting will be delivered to the Diocesan office.

Council thanks the parishes of St. John's and St. Stephen's for their hospitality.

Adjournment at approximately 1:10pm.

Diocesan Council for 2025

Standing Committee (Elected by Diocesan Convention)

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| • The Rev. Dn. Elsie Magnus | St. Peter's, Walhalla | 1st term 2025 |
| • Dr. John Baird | St. Stephen's, Fargo | 1st term 2025 |
| • The Rev. Dn. Beth Lipp | St. George's, Bismarck | 1st term 2026 |
| • Dr. Jason Thoms | St. George's, Bismarck | 2nd term 2026 |
| • The Rev. Dr. John Floberg | Standing Rock | 1st term 2027 |
| • Tyrrell DeCoteau | St. Sylvan's, Dunseith | 1st term 2027 |

East Region: (Elected by Regional Convention Delegates)

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| • The Rev. Dn. John Anderson | St. Stephen's, Fargo | 2nd term 2025 |
| • Donna Pettit | St. Paul's, Grand Forks | 2nd term 2025 |
| • Susan Lisok | St. John the Divine, Moorhead | 1st term 2026 |
| • The Rev. Robert Hoekstra | Grace, Jamestown | 1st term 2026 |
| • Jael Mogga | St. John the Divine, Moorhead | 1st term 2027 |
| • Amy Phillips | St. Stephen's, Fargo | 1st term 2027 |

West Region: (Elected by Regional Convention Delegates)

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • George Abdilnour | St. Peter's, Williston | 1st term 2025 |
| • Elaine McLaughlin | St. Jame's, Cannon Ball | 1st term 2025 |
| • Raphael DeCoteau | St. Sylvan's, Dunseith | filling unexpired term 2026 |
| • Rachel Schmidt | All Saints, Minot | 1st term 2026 |
| • The Rev. Lindsey Dwarf | St. Luke's, Fort Yates | 1st term 2027 |
| • Karilee Liberman | St. Paul's, White Shield | 1st term 2027 |

Ex Officio: *(with seat, voice, and vote)*

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| • Chancellor – Leo Wilking | St. Stephen's, Fargo |
| • Treasurer – TBA | |

Calendar Dates

Diocesan Council	June 20-21, 2025 Jamestown, ND
Ordination of Peter Akecmeir	June 22, 2025, 4:00 St. John the Divine, Mhd
53 rd Annual Convention	October 24-25, 2025 Prairie Knights, Ft. Yates