

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE  
COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES  
OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF KANSAS, INC.**

**March 18, 2026**

The Council of Trustees of the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas, Inc., met in the Larry Bingham classroom of the Bishop Kemper School for Ministry in Topeka, KS on March 18, 2026. Prior to the start of the meeting, the Venerable Jim Cummins, President and Chair, led a Standing Committee meeting. President Cummins called the Council of Trustees meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. The Rev. Canon Jody Carroll opened the meeting with prayer.

Members of the Council of Trustees present were:

- The Ven. Jim Cummins, President
- The Rev. Helen Hoch, Clerk
- The Rev. Canon Jody Carroll
- The Rev. Carl Edwards
- Mr. Tim Flynn
- The Very Rev. Laurie Lewis
- Mr. Stephan Mann
- The Rev. Margaret McGhee
- Mr. Ron Olson
- Ms. Teresa Ryther
- The Rev. Daryl Stanford
- Ms. Martha Stone (via Zoom)
- Mr. Mason Weber

Member absent:

- Ms. Melanie Laster

Also present as advisors to the Council of Trustees:

- Mr. Frank Taylor, Chancellor (via Zoom)
- Ms. Anne Schmidt, Bishop Search Consultant, Presiding Bishop's Office (via Zoom)

Also present:

- Ms. Michael Funston, Executive Assistant to the Bishop
- The Rev. Patrick Funston, Canon to the Ordinary
- The Rev. Caroline Howard, Curate for Creation Care
- Mrs. Michele Moss, Director of Operations (via Zoom)
- Mr. Couri Reinholtz, Assistant Treasurer and Comptroller
- The Rev. Karen Schlabach, Youth, Young Adult & Campus Missioner
- Mr. Chad Senuta, Director of Communications
- The Rev. Lisa Senuta, Canon for Spiritual Life & Clergy Care

## **Minutes**

President Cummins presented minutes from the February 11, 2026, meeting. After a few corrections, Mr. Mason Weber made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected which was seconded and passed unanimously.

## **Brief Report from Standing Committee Meeting/Executive Session**

There will be a new application process which will open on April 6 and close on May 11. The search and transition committees will have input in their areas. There will be no petition process. There was considerable discussion in relations to these two areas—reopening of application process and dropping of petition process.

Canon Patrick Funston led the Council in Noonday Prayer celebrating St. Cyril of Jerusalem. There was a time for lunch from 12:14 p.m. until 12:46 p.m. when President Cummins called the meeting back to order.

Canon Patrick suggested that the committee working with the Ecclesiastical Authority worksheet meet again to go over each of the areas for any necessary changes needed with the reopening of the application process, dropping of the petition process and looking forward to the end of President Cummins term in October which will occur before the time of Ecclesiastical Authority comes to an end.

Discussion then turned to the 167<sup>th</sup> Convention. It will now need to go back to a 2-day convention. Decisions will need to be made, and the question is who will be responsible for making them. The Rev. Margaret McGhee suggested that plans be made as they have been in the past. That information will then be reported to the Council who has the ability to veto. Canon Patrick stated that an election administrator will be needed and someone needs to be contracted for that. Ms. Teresa Ryther and Rev. McGhee stated that the election processes should be the same for regular and episcopal voting. The next topic was a theme for the convention. The Rev. McGhee asked if Canon Patrick could bring some suggestions to the COT. The next items to be discussed related to food—a banquet and Saturday's lunch. Convention appointments will need to include Chancellor, Treasurer, Vice-Chancellor, Commission on Ministry and Sub-committee on convention.

Canon Patrick will bring the topic of confirmations and possible suggestions to the Council in April. There was also a report on Gene Hart's ordination. Chrism Mass plans are on track.

Mr. Mason Weber asked about curates' positions. Canon Patrick reported that in the summer of 2027 there will be 6 diaconal candidates. Decisions will need to be made that may be a part of the 2027 budget.

## **Assistant Treasurer and Comptroller's Report**

Mr. Couri Reinholtz gave the financial report. He shared the apportionment revenue from the Income Statement, unrestricted, as of February 28, 2026. Church of the Covenant, Junction City is the only parish that has not turned in any apportionment

as of February 28. If nothing has been received by April 1, Mr. Reinholtz will contact them. Mr. Reinholtz has been meeting with Treasurer Mr. Brian Geary twice a month.

### **Treasurer's Report**

A report from the Finance Committee gave the following update: The Finance Committee has prepared a draft for a promissory note and amortization schedule for proposal to the Vestry of St. Aidan's, Olathe for their HVAC loan. The Finance Committee would like to suggest a 15-year term with a 3% annual interest rate for the first five years and a 6% annual interest rate for the remainder. The Finance Committee requested that the Council of Trustees approve these initial terms and a further directive and empowerment to Diocesan Treasurer Brian Geary to be the Council's representative to St. Aidan's with authority to negotiate and establish final terms to the mutual benefit of St. Aidan's, Olathe, and the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas.

The Very Rev. Laurie Lewis moved that the Council of Trustees authorize Treasurer Brian Geary to present the terms as presented to St. Aidan's, Olathe, and see to negotiate it to its end. The motion was seconded and after discussion passed unanimously.

Report from Canon Patrick Funston and the Finance Committee on Bethany House & Garden Staff Funding for 2026. With the re-instatement of Creation Missioner position to full-time, there is a shortfall between the amount budgeted and amount needed for salary and pension. The proposed salary and pension is \$48,126. The budgeted amount is \$17,616 leaving a gap of \$30,010. The Finance Committee is requesting that the Council of Trustees approve an additional \$49,114.60 draw from the Walsh Fund to meet this 2026 funding need.

The Rev. Margaret McGhee moved that the Council of Trustees authorize to use the money in the Walsh Fund to cover the shortfall in Bethany House & Garden funding. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Canon Patrick stated that the Council has funded this through 2026 and will need to deal with 2027. Ms. Teresa Ryther asked about the head gardener line item.

The Rev. McGhee and President Cummins presented information relating to Church of the Covenant in Junction City. Now that Fr. Wesley has moved, there will need to be a priest-in-charge or rector. There has been no real resolution between the Vestry and the Endowment Committee. The suggestion is that things slow down for awhile and operate with supply priests. Canon Patrick suggested that someone from the Council connect with the Vestry after Easter.

There was discussion concerning the ordination of Gene Hart. Additional discussion was held relating to transition and deployment. The Rev. Daryl Stanford moved to certify and recommend Gene Hart for ordination to the transitional diaconate. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The Very Rev. Laurie Lewis moved that Gene Hart be allowed to look for, but not accept without the approval of the

Council of Trustees, employment outside of the Diocese of Kansas. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

### **Canon's Report**

After a short recess, The Rev. Patrick Funston, Canon to the Ordinary, stated that 5-6 congregations have not completed their parochial reports. He read and responded to Ember Day letters. All seems to be going well.

Canon Patrick shared information from his written report on transition & deployment; chief administrative counselor to Ecclesiastical Authority addressing information on weekly administrative staff meetings and ordination process administration with Michele Moss; and working to get parochial reports turned in. Also included was a listing of items relating to clergy and parish support.

President Cummins asked for volunteers to work with Canon Patrick as a Transition Committee. Mr. Ron Olson, Mr. Tim Flynn, Ms. Teresa Ryther, and The Very Rev. Laurie Lewis will be members of that committee.

### **Reports from Trustees and Staff**

The Rev. Karen Schlabach, Youth, Young Adult & Campus Missioner, shared information from a prepared report. She reported on Youth events and camp numbers as well as Young Adult & Campus Ministry at both KU and K-State and a variety of other projects and items that Mtr. Schlabach has been working on.

The Rev. Lisa Senuta, Canon for Spiritual Life & Clergy Care, informed the Council of the death of Rev. Rex Matney. She is working on plans for the clergy retreat, Chrism mass, Discernment Day and retreat.

The Rev. Caroline Howard, Curate for Creation Care, shared that Mr. Hurst Coffman will be the chair for the board that was to have their first meeting the next day. Work is being done on clarifying the mission for Bethany House and Gardens.

The Rev. Canon Jody Carroll presented a report from the diocesan staff with initial thoughts, questions and requests for the Council. She particularly addressed the point which stated: "Decisions and processes previously made or assumed for the shorter interim may not be the best for the longer. Shifting some responsibilities around among the staff and bringing more COT members into the work will help us all remain healthy and effective leaders."

The Very Rev. Laurie Lewis closed the meeting with prayer.

The meeting concluded at 2:50 pm.

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The Rev. Helen Hoch  
Clerk

## **Addendum to March 18, 2026, Council of Trustees Minutes**

### **Standing Committee Notes, March 18, 2026 (before the COT meeting)**

Mr. Ron Olson and The Rev. Canon Jody Carroll met with staff members on Friday, March 6.

The Very Rev. Torey Lightcap and Mr. Scott Howard, co-chairs of the Search Committee, made a presentation and stayed for a while to answer any questions.

President Jim Cummins addressed the new search timeline. Ms. Anne Schmidt, consultant, suggested that the council start by reporting the timeline in April and relating to the new search process. She didn't feel that there was a need to publish all the dates at this time. President Cummins said that when the application period opens and closes should be posted. Rev. Daryl Stanford stated that the other dates aren't set in stone yet and may change depending on circumstances.

The Very Rev. Laurie Lewis moved to relaunch the application period on April 6, 2026. There was a second and the motion passed unanimously.

The Rev. Margaret McGhee moved to adopt the rest of the calendar as printed using the later dates with the Transition Committee being allowed to choose dates for meet and greets. Not all dates are for publication. There was a second and after discussion the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Teresa Ryther moved that we no longer have a petition process for this election. There was a second and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:54 a.m.

### **Standing Committee Notes, March 25, 2026**

The Very Rev. Torey Lightcap and Mr. Scott Howard, co-chairs of the Search Committee, joined the meeting. They, as well as The Rev. David Jenkins, had spoken with the three candidates who had not made the final cut. There was discussion on this topic.

The Rev. Helen Hoch moved that the charge to the Search Committee should be changed from 3-5 candidates for a slate to 2-5 candidates. The motion was seconded. The Rev. Canon Jody Carroll suggested that the motion be amended to 2 or more instead of 2-5 candidates. That was seconded. After discussion, the motion was voted on as amended: The charge to the Search Committee should be changed from 3-5 candidates on the slate to 2 or more candidates. This motion passed unanimously.

President Cummins suggested that a standing committee meeting should not be necessary until the next Council of Trustees meeting which will be on April 15. The meeting was adjourned at 9:36 a.m.