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

**September 9, 2026**

The Council of Trustees of the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas, Inc., met via Zoom on September 9, 2026. Prior to the start of the meeting, the Venerable Jim Cummins, President and Chair, began the meeting with prayer. President Cummins called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

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
Ms. Melanie Laster
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
Mr. Mason Weber

Also present as advisor to the Council of Trustees:

Mr. Brian Geary, Treasurer

Also present:

Ms. Michael Funston, Executive Assistant to the Bishop
The Rev. Canon Patrick Funston, Canon to the Ordinary
Mrs. Michele Moss, Director of Operations
Mr. Couri Reinholtz, Comptroller and Finance Manager
The Rev. Canon Lisa Senuta, Canon for Spiritual Life and Clergy Care
Mr. Chad Senuta, Director of Communications
The Rev. Karen Schlabach, Youth, Young Adult & Campus Missioner

## Minutes

President Cummins presented minutes from the August 19, 2026, meeting. Canon Patrick Funston noted that in the financial notes it should read that Clark Hanner, CPA from Marr & Company attended the meeting to present a qualified opinion on audit information. Also, the line item for financial software was decreased. A motion to approve the minutes as amended by Canon Patrick was made by The Rev. Margaret

McGhee, seconded and passed unanimously. There will be an addendum to the October minutes to address the amendment to the Council of Trustees Minutes from the August 19 meeting which will be presented with an E-Vote and then ratification at the October meeting.

**President's Report**

The Venerable Jim Cummins, President, encouraged members of the council to attend the meet and greets with candidates on the slate to become 11th Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas COT members were also reminded to attend the convocation meetings being held the weekend following the meet and greets. Those convocation meetings will include an overview and time for questions for Canon Patrick and Mr. Couri Reinholtz, Financial Manager and Comptroller for the Diocese, relating to the 2027 Mission Plan.

President Cummins reminded that a committee and chairperson needs to be appointed to conduct candidate interviews for ordination. Mr. Stephan Mann volunteered to chair the committee and The Rev. Canon Jody Carroll, The Very Rev. Laurie Lewis, Ms. Melanie Laster, and Mr. Ron Olson agreed to participate as members of the committee.

Ms. Laster reported on the current situation at Covenant Church in Junction City. She's no longer on the vestry and was speaking in her personal capacity. Things seem to be going somewhat smoothly at the time; however, there still will be decisions to be made. Members of the parish would like permission to search for a part-time priest. They don't want to wait until the summer of 2027 to start that process. The Rev. Margaret McGhee asked what was considered to be "part-time". Ms. Laster said it would probably be similar to what they have with Fr. Matt Zimmerman—two days a week and Sundays.

Canon Patrick summarized what has happened in the background since the last meeting. At the last COT meeting, Patrick addressed the status of the search and return of the deed. Last year, the Council wished to wait until the next bishop is in place. That was shared with the senior warden. The mediators were also involved. Rev. McGhee stated that she sees this as a significant issue that the next bishop needs to be involved with. The COT should not make these decisions now. President Cummins has issues with the transactional nature of the situation. There was considerable discussion after which President Cummins asked that Canon Patrick, Rev. McGhee, and President Cummins will continue to work with the vestry and endowment committee at Covenant Church in Junction City.

**Canon's Report**

Canon Patrick asked to revisit the minutes of the August meeting to reflect on the issue that was discussed. The following e-mail will be sent out for an electronic vote after which it will be ratified at the first meeting in October and then become an addendum to the minutes for that meeting:

Canon Funston brought two items to the attention of the Council at the request of the Vicar of Covenant, Junction City, Fr. Matt Zimmermann:

1. Can Covenant begin the process to search for the priest-in-charge/vicar to follow Fr. Zimmermann?
2. The diocese's continued holding of Covenant's deed continues to be a sore spot for many in the congregation.

Following discussion, the Council directed Canon Funston to respond with the Council's expectation that previously discussed timelines be maintained. Regarding the search, Fr. Zimmermann's summer 2026 appointment as vicar was celebrated with the hope and understanding that a longer period of stability would provide more fruitful ground for reconciliation within Covenant and for discernment conversations with the 11th Bishop (or bishop-elect) about Covenant's next steps including both the resolution of its status under Diocesan Canon IV.7 (when the deed could be returned) and Covenant's discernment about its needed level of priestly support relative to its ability to afford it.

On September 10 and 11, 2026, eleven members of the Council of Trustees voted to approve this amendment, and one member of the Council of Trustees abstained.

Canon Patrick reported that a member of the vestry at Grace Church in Chanute was arrested. The parish is aware of what is going on. The Very Rev. Laurie Lewis shared appreciation for Fr. Daryl Standord's modeling in this situation. Fr. Stanford thanked Canon Patrick and Mr. Chad Senuta, Director of Communications, for their support as well as others. Canon Patrick reminded Council members that it's still an allegation. The Dean of the SE Convocation was notified of the situation.

Canon Patrick shared information on transition and deployment. With the resignation of Teresa Klimlick, transition ministry is now part of Canon Patrick's role.

St. James is doing a search for a new rector and is working on a parish profile.

St. Michael's and All Angels posted an advertisement for an associate position in July. They have received several applications.

St. Paul's in Clay Center is still in an active search. There has been discussion relating to the possibility of a shared priest between St. Paul's, Clay Center, and Covenant, Junction City.

The Rev. Sarah Shipman is officially on the diocesan payroll and worked with The Reverend Clare Stern-Burbano before she went to Philadelphia.

St. Mary's, Galena, is receiving communion at least once a quarter.

Fr. Julian Campbell, Good Shepherd in Wichita, reached out about leasing space to a small Orthodox congregation. A formal agreement is coming.

Convention books have been mailed.

Canon Patrick gave an overview of the process for the elections for convention and the 11th Bishop. There is no concern about non-voting members in the Nave. There will be the possibility of voting without using one's personal device. The same voting system will be used for both sessions. There will be a system to make sure that only the proper people may vote,

A discussion was held relating to a Conflict-of-Interest policy. The Council does not currently have such a document that members have signed. Members need to look at the document presented and come to the next meeting with questions and concerns.

There was a brief break.

**Compensation and Benefits Handbook**

Canon Patrick then began an overview and possible changes to the Compensation and Benefits Handbook. The current policy dates from 2005 and was affirmed in 2007. It includes figures for full-time, part-time and supply clergy. The clergy compensation policy has to work with the health insurance policy. The policy currently in use by the Episcopal Diocese in Minnesota was used as a model. In response to a question, Canon Patrick stated that he feels the policy for Kansas should be revisited annually and updated, if necessary. This is a combination of a policy document and a teaching document. Considerable discussion began. It was suggested that members look over the document during lunch and more information will be presented after the financial reports.

**Noonday Prayer**

Canon Patrick led the group in noonday prayer with information about the Martyrs of Memphis

Lunch Break: 11:54-12:32

**Comptroller and Finance Manager's Report**

Mr. Couri Reinholtz presented the financial report. Apportionments are looking good. No parish is more than three months behind, and none are at 0%. The year to date is around 66%. Expenses are at a similar percentage being at or just around 64%. Looking at expenses, health insurance is at 381% of total budget, which is a big hit as well as the unrealized gains decrease of $409,000 in March.

**Finance Committee Report**

Mr. Brian Geary, Treasurer, informed the COT that the finance committee met on September 8. Mr. Geary is getting a quote in order to have an actual estimate of the liability for benefits. He has a couple of names. He reminded Council members that at some point the Diocese will need a new treasurer.

**Compensation and Benefits Handbook (continued)**

Canon Patrick continued the overview of the Compensation and Benefits Handbook with Group Life Insurance. Mr. Reinholtz reported that for some reason male lay employees of the Diocese were enrolled in the group, but female lay employees were not. Contact was made with representatives at CPG. Everybody can be late enrolled;

however, the Diocese will have to retro pay premiums back to their respective start dates. It may cost around $14,000 to resolve this issue. His recommendation is that this amount be taken from the operating fund reserve. Discussion followed after which Ms. Teresa Ryther moved that the amount needed to reestablish those who have not been covered be made by whatever means Mr. Reinholtz decides is best. There was a second and the motion passed unanimously.

The next issue to be discussed was the policy for group health insurance for retired lay employees. Canon Patrick gave a detailed explanation of the history of this policy. Mr. Reinholtz presented the current financial situation with options. During the ongoing discussion, Mr. Reinholtz reported that the health insurance and mission management plan has been severely underbudgeted. Ms. Teresa Ryther moved that the Diocese maintain the coverage as it is for 2027 with a letter sent to retirees explaining that it could change in 2028. After a second, the motion passed.

Canon Patrick led a discussion relating to medical and dental insurance. For the first time, the General Convention mandated Diocesan minimum for employer cost sharing for employees of Episcopal parishes over 1,500 hours and rearticulates the requirements of the Canons and Acts of General Convention relating to medical insurance provision for employees of Episcopal parishes about 1,500 annual hours. The Very Rev. Laurie Lewis moved the adoption of the "Medical and Dental Insurance" portion of the handbook. The motion was seconded. Discussion continued. The Very Rev. Lewis made a friendly amendment to her motion to incorporate the Council's minor changes. There was a second. President Cummins called the question and it was adopted unanimously.

Canon Funston walked the Council through the rest of the Handbook taking questions and noting the Council's discussion. Following this review, the Rev. McGhee moved that the Handbook be adopted subject to the final approval of the Council's changes by a subcommittee consisting of the Very Rev. Laurie Lewis, the Rev. Canon Jody Carroll and Mr. Stephan Mann working with Canon Patrick Funston. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**Reports from Trustees and Staff**

The Rev. Karen Schlabach, Youth, Young Adult & Campus Missioner, presented a written report.

The Rev. Canon Lisa Senuta reported that ten people from across the Diocese attended a recent discernment retreat. Over half are considering the diaconate.

Mr. Stephan Mann asked about the sale of the rectory in Newton.

Ms. Teresa Ryther led a safe church training in Newton which was attended by 12 people. Ms. Michael Funston, Executive Assistant to the Bishop, can let the clergy know when it is time to renew their training. It's up to local clergy to make sure lay leaders are in compliance.

The meeting adjourned at 2:24 p.m.

The next business meeting will be held via Zoom on October 14 followed by a Zoom meeting on October 28 to elect officers for the 2026-2027 year.

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The Rev. Helen Hoch
Clerk