

*Position Statement in the Conflict with the Alaska Synod Bishops
of the Congregation Council of Resurrection Lutheran Church, Juneau, Alaska*

*“We, baptized members of the Church of Christ, responding in faith to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, desiring to unite together to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and carry out God’s mission, do hereby adopt this constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Preamble to RLC Constitution and Bylaws, *emphasis added*)*

*A small group of detractors at RLC, who sat on council resorted to bullying tactics to install themselves as council officers. Although they were later removed from office, Bishop Wickstrom, acting without constitutional authority, reappointed the ousted president to facilitate an unconstitutional congregational vote (with less than an announced 2/3 vote threshold) aimed at ending Pastor Perkins' call and prematurely halting the congregation's discernment process. While Bishop Wickstrom retired weeks later, the RLC Council rejected the unlawful attempt to remove Pastor Karen. This apparently prompted Bishop Oslovich to continue pursuing the pastor's removal (possibly allowing Bishop Wickstrom to covertly participate) through a distorted *C15.11 / †S17.11 adjudication process. This culminated in the wrongful removal of Pastor Karen from the roster, the awkward appointment of a part-time interim pastor, and the continued staging of undocumented, non-transparent, and exclusive events at RLC. These include an unconstitutional and hastily called annual meeting designed to install a new council loyal to the detractors, undermining constitutional governance, rejecting congregational unity, and perpetuating injustice.*

Authoritarianism, Secrecy and Complicity

Hierarchical and Authoritarian Governance

Since early 2023, Bishop Wickstrom and subsequently, Bishop Oslovich have engaged in practices that suggest a hierarchical, authoritarian form of church governance, antithetical to the ELCA's mutually accountable and constitutional foundations. Their actions, in concert with a select group from RLC, demonstrate a troubling disregard for the established ecclesiastical constitution which stipulates the autonomy and interdependence of congregation and synod structures in the ELCA.

The next sections discuss the specific instances of authoritarianism within these dynamics. Detailed analysis reveals both the overt and covert ways in which the leadership's actions have undermined the church's mission and governance, highlighting the real impact on the Juneau community.

For those who desire power without checks and balances, or desire expediency of centralized power unencumbered by multi-perspective compromise, authoritarian rule is extremely attractive. However, one only needs to look to Martin Luther and his struggles with the papacy to find a distrust of autocratic power structures. The ELCA, and its various model congregation, synod and churchwide constitutions exemplify and carry forward these principles.

Authoritarian Actions of Bishop Wickstrom

In the Alaska Synod Constitution sections which specifically enumerate the bishop's powers (†S8.12-14 and †S17 et al), excluding those sections exclusively dealing with the bishop's authority concerning the ordaining, and rostering Ministers of Word and Sacrament, and Service (†S14.10 et al and †S14.30 et al, respectively), there are no powers listed where the bishop can exercise authority over congregations.

Despite this, Bishop Wickstrom attempted to exercise illegitimate authority over RLC, including:

- Inserting herself into RLC's discernment process (covertly allying with a small group of detractors), by appointing something she called a "listening team" (repeatedly distinguishing it from a Consultation Committee, which she could convene) to interview RLC members when she realized there were no grounds under *C9.05b.1 for the Consultation Committee process due to any inability or incapacity on the part of Pastor Perkins.
- Bishop Wickstrom then prepared recommendations from her "listening team's" report supporting a false narrative (created by the small group of detractors) that RLC could not continue to support a full-time pastor.
- Her report also suggested that the congregation could hold a simple vote to change RLC's pastoral call from full-time to part-time. She allowed the inference that such a vote would only require a 51% threshold but would terminate Pastor Perkins' call (contrary to the constitution).
- Much later, she proposed that she call, preside at, and bring her own parliamentarian to just such a meeting. She allowed the issue to drop after conversations with RLC's council leadership reiterating the congregation's discernment process progress and schedule.

- Due to issues within RLC over violations (bullying, harassment and swarming) of its Meeting Code of Conduct by certain council members against other council member(s), the subsequent correction of officers, and the bishop's desire to have a favorable presider for such a vote that would contradict a year of congregational discernment, the bishop was forced to re-appoint as president the council member who had been removed from that office, due to that correction of officers. See RLC Council Position Statement **Understanding Constitution Violations**.
- Over a year later and just weeks before her retirement, though uninvited and contrary to council and congregation decisions, she suddenly insisted on having a meeting for this vote, setting the agenda, specifying how the voting would proceed, co-presiding with her re-appointed president, and bringing the Synod's Counsel and Parliamentarian.

None of these authoritarian actions by Bishop Wickstrom are within the powers granted to the bishop under the Alaska Synod Constitution or RLC's Constitution, with the sole exception of the bishop's ability to request the president of RLC call a congregation meeting. While C10.02 provides that the "president of this congregation shall call a special meeting upon the request of the synod bishop," the bishop does not have the power to set agenda, preside, provide her own parliamentarian, let alone specify exactly what is to be voted on, or how a vote is to proceed.

Bishop Wickstrom simply acted as if she, by virtue of being "The Bishop," had the power to do so. Unfortunately, the small group of detractors at RLC shared this authoritarian ideology and was more than willing to accept her actions as being within the power of the Synod Bishop. No amount of discussion, nor any constitutional argument could dissuade this small, but loud group from their position that whatever the bishop says, goes.

In the lawsuit, filed solely by RLC council member Brendle (utterly without congregation, council or, *ad argumentum* – illegitimately – executive committee, authority), and presumably without consulting the bishop (who was aware of her lack of actual constitutional authority), council member Brendle requested that the Alaska Court validate her as president of RLC based solely on the action of Bishop Wickstrom re-appointing her as president of RLC.

Council member Brendle did this believing that Bishop Wickstrom had the power under the Alaska Synod Constitution, because she said she did. This will be unfortunate for both council member Brendle (who swore to her allegations in filing the suit) and Bishop Wickstrom who will likely be deposed (and may eventually be called to testify) to explain on what basis she claimed authority under the Alaska Synod Constitution to re-appoint council member Brendle as president of RLC.

Subsequent authoritarian actions of Bishop Oslovich indicate that he may be following the footsteps of his predecessor. If true, this would be another unfortunate development. He claims that he does not have the authority to undo actions that he mishandled or that the former bishop didn't have the authority to take in the first place. Members of the synod council, the synod and even the presiding bishop need to let him know the importance of working within one's constitutional authority, while acknowledging accountability for previous errors.

Authoritarian Actions of Bishop Wickstrom's Followers *(with the bishop's support)*

As previously discussed, the small group of detractors at RLC shares Bishop Wickstrom's authoritarian ideology, generally eschewing RLC's constitution. In fact, since the correction of officers due to violations (bullying, harassment and swarming) of its Meeting Code of Conduct by certain council members against other council member(s), in May 2024, they have been unable to hold a council meeting or even a valid congregation meeting (that satisfied constitutional requirements).

Instead, they attempt to govern the church by fiat, claiming authority of the president and members of an "executive committee" for all actions they take or permit (in lieu of council meetings). However, in RLC's constitution (following the ELCA Model Congregation Constitution), provides only that RLC's (C11.01.01) "...*president shall be the chair of this congregation and the Congregation Council.*" Additionally, (C13.01.01) "*Duties of the Executive Committee shall be:*

- a) *to serve as the Mutual Ministry Committee as necessary under C13.05.*
- b) *to choose a pastor as necessary to administer admonitions under *C15.01.*
- c) *to address matters as emergencies dictate."*

As with the Alaska Synod Constitution, RLC's constitution grants none of the powers or authority to either the president or their supposed "executive committee" (that never included the undisputed vice president). Regardless, this group's authoritarian practices have been used to create a secret "shadow church" where a select few wield disproportionate power over church decisions and assets.

Formation of a "Shadow Church" Which Has Become the Replacement RLC

Formation of this shadow church, their actions to consolidate control, and the implications for church governance and community trust are devoid of any RLC constitutional authority. These recent actions reveal a troubling effort to sabotage the church's mission and governance. Immediate intervention is necessary to prevent further, irreparable damage and restore integrity to RLC's leadership and operations. They initially held, unannounced, exclusive meetings influencing church policy without broader council or congregational input. These actions have been taken without transparency or documentation. The small group, supported by the bishops, have been unwilling to compromise, as they actually do not want to manage the church (e.g., worship, programs, relationships, facilities, church office). Their ultimate goal has been only to exclude those who do not join or acknowledge the small group as having exclusive control of RLC.

Overreach in Church Management

They have exercised unauthorized control over church operations, from worship practices to financial management, often sidelining duly elected officials and standard church governance processes. This includes refusing to attend regularly occurring meetings and later claiming that specific groups or activities weren't functioning, so needed to be superseded with their newly appointed committees. They have removed or blocked access to shared materials and tools without logical justification or explanation. Internet service has been limited, cut, then aggressively monitored to prevent streaming worship, other activities, and especially remote access to security cameras that had been monitored remotely for several years. These existing security cameras have been disabled or removed to prevent observation of covert activities. (There are other private spaces at the church, and we are unaware of any secret surveillance.)

Bullying and Harassment

Documented instances of intimidation and exclusion have aimed at consolidating power and silencing opposition, particularly targeting minority and marginalized community members within the church. Long-time and newer members have been driven away by negativity, ostracism, or downright exclusion, with some being interrogated about their right to be at RLC. They approach individuals in pairs or groups and leave interactions where they lack dominant numbers or bishop attendance.

Particularly Egregious Incident

A particularly egregious incident involved a report of physical assault by a group member. As this was captured on video and witnessed by many, the report resulted in even more radical, even militant, disabling of security and doorbells. Despite clear evidence and testimonies, Bishop Oslovich expressed skepticism and downplayed the severity of the incident. He questioned its validity and demanded unreasonable additional proof, such as police reports, while ignoring the broader issues documented. Rather than preventing further unacceptable behaviors, this signals an effort to systematically prevent them from being observed, while increasing the risks the security was installed several years ago to deter.

Financial Mismanagement and Risks

Actions have placed church finances at risk, undermining the financial stability and operational capabilities of RLC, and potentially exposing the church to legal and financial liabilities. Known grants have been summarily blocked and money for existing grants is being withheld, creating the risk that repayment will be required. This group (with the bishop) has said the congregation's money is "secured," but refused to tell the congregation where it is. Withholding all financial information from the congregation is preventing any oversight, keeping the congregation ignorant (at best) or misled (at worst) about its financial circumstances.

Targeted Disruption by a Select Group

A predominantly affluent, white faction within our congregation is intent on dismantling programs essential to those experiencing homelessness and food insecurities, those living with brain injuries or mental illnesses, struggling youth, Alaskan Native people and other vulnerable populations. Their actions, aimed at potentially closing and leasing or selling the downtown church property, starkly oppose the ELCA's mission of outreach and inclusion.

False Statements and Misrepresentation

Despite the ELCA Conference of Bishops' emphasis on integrity and truth, both Bishop Wickstrom and members of this small group have been documented making false statements to advance their agenda. Relentlessly repeating the false narrative, the group has overwhelmed otherwise uninvolved congregants and community members until it is the only "truth" they know. This undermines the trust and credibility critical to our church's integrity.

Constitutional Violations Becoming the Norm

The frequent disregard and violation of RLC's constitution by this group, supported by the bishops, has become disturbingly routine, abandoning any governance framework of our congregation. Executive authority that doesn't exist is claimed by officers appointed by former Bishop Wickstrom to take any actions without regard to or attempt to cooperate with the rest of the congregation. Overtures at cooperation are rebuffed..

Suspected Personal Motives

“We want” or “we decided” is declared, neither defining nor tolerating questions about the definition of “we.” Only the feeblest reasons are given, masking nothing more than personal preference or power plays. There is evidence to suggest that the actions of Bishop Wickstrom and the small group are driven by personality and personal vendettas, which appear to influence their decisions irrationally and detrimentally.

In the End, Is this About Just Money?

Substantial evidence suggests that the ideal location of RLC’s valuable property motivates some allegiances both inside and outside the church. The Addendum *Money Over Mission* can provide a sense of this location as the intersection the three primary communities in the City and Borough of Juneau. The CBJ City Hall will be moving many of its functions into the building that is kitty-corner from the church. RLC could easily become another ELCA congregation selling itself while abandoning the cost of downtown needs.

Tactics to Delay Justice and Jerrymandering of Voting Members

There appears to be deliberate delaying of any resolution or the lawful reinstatement of Pastor Perkins, while creating a narrow and closed body. Their strategy involves alienating loyal congregation members and manipulating worship control through Bishop Oslovich’s interim appointee. They also appear to have engineered the membership list to sway the upcoming voting, thus flipping the already narrow margin. Recruiting long ago inactive or removed members (who show no interest in RLC), while ignoring potential new members and pending baptisms previously supported and prepared by Pastor Perkins, skews the picture of RLC. Some of us are aware we are being excluded from member distribution lists, but it is impossible to know who else is rejected.

Rushed, Unconstitutional Annual Meeting to Elect a New, Exclusive Council

As the RLC Council tried to prepare for the annual meeting on February 9, 2025, the small group, apparently with the bishop’s support, have scheduled an imminent, rushed and unconstitutional annual meeting for January 26th. The intent is clearly to elect a new, exclusive council of their followers. This all further undermines constitutional governance and justice, ever more disabling conscientious ministry.

Additional details of some of the recent actions of this group are described in the Addendum *Recent Actions of Concern: Forming a Shadow Church* and Addendum *Merrell Emails with Presiding Bishop Eaton and the RLC Council*. The path towards healing and resolution is obstructed by these ongoing divisive and ruinous actions, underscoring the urgency for all concerned parties to take a stand for justice and integrity in church governance.

The Real Impact on the Juneau Community

The prolonged conflict at RLC, driven by the small yet influential faction within our congregation, has not only impaired our internal operations but also significantly impacted the broader Juneau community. The involvement of Bishops Wickstrom and Oslovich has intensified these disruptions, leading to the deterioration of essential community services and ministries that our city depends on.

People Experiencing Homelessness

RLC's critical role in managing the city's low-barrier shelter was intentionally subverted in 2023 in order to exaggerate a financial crisis (the contract to operate the shelter subsidized a portion of the pastor's compensation). The function has been relocated to a less accessible warehouse, which lacks basic facilities, necessary support and trained personnel. It leaves those experiencing homelessness with inadequate or inaccessible accommodations and services which the congregation was both prepared to and voted to provide during dangerous conditions. The result has been devastating.

Food Insecurity

Our food pantry and meal services, which are vital in addressing local hunger challenges, are under increasingly severe threat. Recent measures have included the cessation of the church's garbage service, creating unsanitary conditions that could lead to the shutdown of these crucial services by health inspectors. This was exacerbated when, between dump runs by volunteers, the same group reported the situation to the DEC, thus aiming to disrupt operations. Restricting internet access has impaired the use of food pantry software and support tools, including doorbells for accessibility. Indefinitely closing one of two bathrooms for "repairs" has limited one of the few places patrons could reliably use once a week.

Educational Programs at Risk

Our partnerships with the Juneau School District and various educational organizations, which utilize RLC's unique facilities for TV production and shelter management training, are endangered. These programs are crucial alternative learning environments for many community members, providing educational opportunities that are now being threatened. Reckless, unqualified moving or removing of sensitive equipment has subverted RLCs unique capacity and has created unnecessary physical and financial risks.

Threats to Youth Programs

This conflict has also undermined our collaborative efforts with local scouts, Native Alaskan youth dance groups, and various music ensembles. This disruption not only affects the youth directly but also reduces the cultural and educational opportunities that are vital for healthy development in a safe environment.

Disruption of Social and Health Services

The dissolution of partnerships with social service providers and community health services, particularly those serving Native Alaskan communities, is eroding trust and causing harm to the ELCA's reputation. These services are essential for supporting some of the most vulnerable members of our community and their destabilization has wide-reaching effects, not the least of which is betraying confession and reconciliation regarding colonialism.

Impact on the Arts

Juneau Live! Studio, a cornerstone for local performing arts groups for rehearsals and live performances, has suffered a loss of operational capability. This issue was further aggravated following a settlement meeting with Bishop Oslovich, which revealed ongoing secretive communications within the opposition group. Subsequent actions taken by this group, possibly in a bid to avoid exposure from recorded security footage, resulted in the presumably inadvertent disruption of the church's critical infrastructure, such as the phone and fire alarm systems.

These examples underscore the severe and ongoing consequences of the arbitrary and capricious governance, dramatically damaging RLC's ability to worship together, and to serve and support the Juneau community. It is imperative that we address these issues promptly to restore the integrity of our services and continue our mission "to promote spiritual growth in Christ and service to all people." It is disproportionately harmful to the vulnerable among us. Continuing to support this autocratic leadership is destroying the congregation, and not at all covering up that which requires repentance.

Leadership and Accountability at a Crossroads

Utterly lacking in constitutional authority, Bishop Wickstrom, the small group, and now Bishop Oslovich followed and continue to follow their authoritarian tendencies, secretive maneuvers, and the complicity in sinful actions that starkly contrast with the ELCA's foundational governance principles. These actions challenge the constitutional frameworks of both RLC and the Alaska Synod, posing significant ethical and legal questions about the nature of leadership and accountability within the wider church body.

Prepared by Congregation Counsel of Resurrection Lutheran Church Council and reaffirmed as an official position statement by the Council on September 18, 2025, on information and belief, subject to reasonable amendment by Counsel, with concurrence of the Congregation President.

Addendums

- Money Over Mission

- Recent Actions of Concern: Forming a Shadow Church

- Merrell Emails with Presiding Bishop Eaton and the RLC Council

Addendum

Money Over Mission

This addendum explores potential motivations for the two years of wrongs committed against RLC, its congregation, officers, council, and pastor. These observations are based on referenced materials and the collective information and belief of the Resurrection Lutheran Church (RLC) Council.

Mission Growth During COVID

During the COVID-19 pandemic, RLC distinguished itself by not only sustaining but expanding its mission: *“The Mission of Resurrection Lutheran Church is to promote spiritual growth in Christ and service to all people.”* While many churches faced closures, RLC adapted by implementing safety measures and innovative programming to continue serving its community.

Virtual Worship and Outreach

- Uniquely embedded live-streamed worship services via the Juneau Live! YouTube channel.
- Grants funded significant improvements in audio and video production, allowing enhanced accessibility for remote participation.

Food Security and Education

- Continued and expanded food pantry services amidst other closures.
- Collaborated with Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church and the Juneau School District to provide safe spaces for students requiring online educational access.

Cold Weather Emergency Shelter (CWES)

- Contracted with the City and Borough of Juneau to operate a shelter from October to April for two years, filling a critical gap in community services.

Facility Improvements

- Renovations funded through grants included new flooring, a commercial kitchen, HEPA filtration systems, and plumbing upgrades.
- Utility costs and other expenses were partially offset by grant funding.

These efforts not only fulfilled RLC’s mission but also fostered stronger community relationships and attracted additional grants to sustain its work.

Misrepresentations of Financial Conditions

Following the pandemic, a small group at the 2023 annual meeting sought to convince the congregation to reduce Pastor Perkins’ call to half-time by presenting a misleading budget and false performance reports. These efforts were decisively rejected by the congregation, but they initiated two years of turmoil at RLC, exacerbated by the involvement of former Alaska Synod Bishop Shelley Wickstrom. Misrepresentations of RLC’s financial condition persisted as a justification for an unwelcome and constitutionally questionable congregation meeting, called by Bishop Wickstrom, to address an alleged “dire financial crisis.” Despite the congregation’s approval of a budget supporting a full-time pastor, the bishop proposed a vote to reduce the pastor’s call to half-time, which would have improperly required only a 51% majority, bypassing the constitutionally mandated two-thirds threshold.

Misuse of Financial Claims

- Throughout this period, repeated “reports” falsely claimed that mission-aligned programs were financially damaging the church and “costing money.”

- The treasurer eventually acknowledged that repairs and expenses associated with these programs were fully covered by grant and contract funding. Many programs even ended under budget, enabling unused funds to support the general budget per the CBJ contract.

Quiet Admissions, Public Misinformation

- While financial accuracy was quietly clarified in council meetings, the congregation was not made aware of these corrections. Erroneous claims of financial losses continued to dominate public discussions, undermining trust and transparency.

Blocking Growth Opportunities

- Despite the financial stability demonstrated by the programs, the treasurer and former treasurer/bookkeeper repeatedly obstructed the acquisition of additional grants and contracts aligned with RLC's mission.
- These actions directly contradicted the church's mission of growth and outreach, perpetuating a false narrative that the congregation could not sustain a full-time pastor or its expanding service programs.

These misrepresentations not only disrupted the congregation's governance but also jeopardized RLC's ability to fulfill its mission and maintain financial integrity. The intentional dissemination of false information and the blocking of grant opportunities undermined the church's growth potential and mission-focused outreach, highlighting a concerning pattern of obstruction and misinformation.

Just Follow the Money

When learning about the conflicts between RLC's council, a small faction of long-time members, and Bishop Wickstrom, a frequent question from outside observers is, "*Is the church or its property especially valuable?*" The answer is a definitive "yes," with its value expected to increase significantly due to its strategic location and potential for development.

The value of Resurrection Lutheran Church's (RLC) property lies not only in its physical facilities but also in its strategic location within Juneau. Attachments, such as the *RLC Juneau Area Maps* and the *Downtown City Employee Office Space Update Memo*, illustrate why this property holds significant interest for potential lease or sale.

Proximity to Key Infrastructure

- RLC is situated near the planned site for new City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) functions, kitty-corner to the church.
- The property includes two parking lots, which will likely become essential as CBJ's expansion exacerbates the already inadequate parking availability in the area.

Prime Real Estate Potential

- The church's location straddles a transitional area between residential and business districts, making it a critical asset for developers seeking to expand Juneau's downtown business district.
- Its proximity to federal offices, a school, the downtown fire station, and a planned CBJ/condo facility further enhances its appeal.

Influence and Motivations

Council member and former Juneau Mayor Ken Koelsch emerges as a key figure advocating for actions that align with this property's development potential. His influence and apparent political connections to CBJ leadership raise concerns about his motivations, particularly given his role in creating and supporting the narrative of financial crisis at RLC.

Advocacy Against Grants and Mission Growth

- Council member Koelsch was a leading voice in the faction pushing for the cessation of grants and manufactured claims of financial instability to justify cutting the pastor's position.
- He led the Financial Reality Task Force, which bypassed the pastor, council, and other task forces to suggest merging RLC with Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church (SOV) for transitioning to a "shared" pastor model (as shown in Attachment *Financial Reality Taskforce Budget*).

Connections and Conflicts

- He solicited and promoted dramatic complaints from a neighboring property owner who would benefit from increased property value if RLC's land were sold or leased.
- He influenced the St. Vincent de Paul Executive Director to malign RLC's hosting of the cold weather emergency shelter and negotiate a substandard situation for its third year.

Questionable Membership Practices

- He has maintained voting eligibility for himself and family members by meeting minimum requirements for years, despite nominal participation at RLC and active involvement in other local churches.

These actions suggest priorities that appear more aligned with property value and political gain than the mission and well-being of RLC. However, when congregation member Koelsch was sworn onto council in 2024, such priorities were likely be in conflict with his new fiduciary obligation to RLC as a council member.

Context and Future Implications

Despite several failed CBJ bond measures for a new city hall, the need for expanded infrastructure remains clear. Downtown Juneau's capacity to accommodate both tourism and business has reached its limits, making RLC's property a prime candidate for future development. Its location at the intersection of key downtown districts offers unique opportunities for public and private investment, potentially overshadowing its role as a mission-focused church.

Value of RLC's Assets

The assets of Resurrection Lutheran Church (RLC) hold significant financial and mission-oriented value. However, their management and the decision-making surrounding their use have been fraught with contention, misinformation, and actions that undermine open and collaborative stewardship.

Proceeds from Property Sale

Prior to the Cold Weather Emergency Shelter (CWES) contract, the congregation voted to sell a house adjacent to the church that was used by a non-profit music school and for storage. The proceeds from the sale were earmarked for specific purposes, including \$30,000 allocated for a three-year discernment process. A substantial portion of these funds remains available.

Despite the pastor's lack of involvement in the decision to sell, some congregants blamed her for the sale. This misplaced frustration underscores a broader pattern of misdirected anger and divisive narratives that have impacted church unity.

Mission Endowment Fund

RLC maintains robust Mission Endowment Fund alongside other dedicated funds. Over the years, the congregation has strategically grown this fund, crossing thresholds that allow for greater distributions to support chosen benevolences. Financial reports for the Mission Endowment Fund have historically been presented separately from other assets, creating the perception that these funds are untouchable for congregational investment.

Lack of Open Deliberation

- The potential use of endowment funds for mission growth, such as retaining a full-time pastor, has not been openly discussed. Suggestions by the pastor to inform the congregation and explore this option were met with hostility, including dismissive and disparaging comments from some members.

Exclusionary Attitudes

- Members of the small group allied with Bishop Wickstrom have treated the endowment as personal property, with one individual reportedly stating, *“I am not going to let her use up our endowment on those people,”* implying selective stewardship inconsistent with ELCA principles, biblical teachings, and the Gospel.

Obstructed Decision-Making

The congregation has been denied the opportunity for meaningful discussions on stewardship priorities due to the small group’s control. This group has promoted a narrative of imminent financial crisis to justify cutting the pastor’s position, effectively precluding an honest evaluation of alternative options.

Exclusionary Leadership

- The self-appointed leadership of “President” Brendle and her group aggressively marginalizes dissenting voices and stifles open, respectful deliberation. Their unwillingness to compromise reveals a focus on consolidating power rather than managing the church’s worship, programs, and facilities.

Risk of Congregational Decline

- The group’s inward-focused, cost-cutting approach threatens the surprisingly emerging vitality of RLC’s mission. Such attitudes have historically led churches to stagnate, ultimately resulting in closures and the redistribution of remaining funds to external ministries.

The management of RLC’s assets should reflect a commitment to transparency, inclusion, and mission-focused stewardship. The current climate of exclusion and misinformation undermines the congregation’s ability to make informed decisions about its future. Without a shift toward collaborative governance, RLC risks not only losing its assets but also its mission and identity as a community-serving congregation.

Location, Location, Location: Real Estate

While some argue that Juneau requires only one ELCA congregation, such a conclusion overlooks the distinct identities, ministries, and needs of Resurrection Lutheran Church (RLC) and Shepherd of the Valley (SOV). The Financial Reality Task Force, supporting this perspective, budgeted for a merger between the two congregations. However, the budget and the work of the task force were never completed. Such a move would disregard the unique role that RLC plays in addressing the diverse and evolving needs of its community.

Community and Ministry Context

RLC and SOV serve fundamentally different communities, and their ministries reflect these distinctions. RLC's history as a generous, community-focused congregation places it in a unique position to meet the changing needs of downtown Juneau. Like many urban churches, RLC has adapted its outreach to serve those who may never sit in its pews but nonetheless experience God's love through its ministries.

Outreach Beyond Traditional Models

- Many individuals served by RLC have never been churched, have been hurt by church experiences, or hold strong prejudices against organized religion.
- Building trust and relationships with these neighbors takes time and may not result in traditional membership, but it aligns deeply with the Gospel's call to service.

Breaking Traditional Metrics

- Success is no longer measured by "butts-in-pews" but by the lives transformed through RLC's ministry. This requires a radical rethinking of how mission work is defined, funded, and carried out in a downtown setting.

RLC's Unique Role in Juneau

RLC's central location makes it ideal for reaching vulnerable and marginalized populations who might otherwise lack access to supportive services and ministries.

An Inclusive, Redeployable Presence

- RLC is strategically positioned to extend the ELCA's presence to populations in Juneau who are overlooked or underserved.
- The congregation already serves hundreds who consider RLC their spiritual home, some of whom are choosing baptism or membership through reaffirmation.

Community Collaboration and Growth

- More than half of RLC's congregation is enthusiastic about discerning and shaping the next chapter of the church's mission.
- The church's location near emerging business developments offers new opportunities for collaboration with the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) and local organizations, paving the way for innovative ministry efforts.

The Cost of Loss

Losing RLC's presence would not only diminish the ELCA's reach but also squander an irreplaceable opportunity to innovate and serve in ways that other congregations cannot. The ongoing struggle for control of RLC by a small group backed by the bishops risks erasing the very ministry that embodies the ELCA commitments to ministries among diverse cultures and communities, people with disabilities, and the young-adult population, as well as people and communities experiencing poverty.

Impact on the Congregation

- For those dedicated to RLC's vision, the current conflict is deeply painful. It threatens to dismantle years of faithful work and God-led surprises that have shaped RLC's ministry.

Impact on the ELCA

- If RLC is lost, the ELCA sacrifices not just a church but a powerful example of adaptive ministry in a changing world. The question remains: Can the ELCA afford to forfeit this vital mission field?

RLC stands at a crossroads, poised to continue its transformative ministry or risk being silenced by those unwilling to face, let alone embrace, change. The congregation and its supporters remain committed to discerning how God is calling them to serve. If allowed to thrive, RLC could redefine what it means to be a Lutheran church in Juneau. If stripped away, the opportunity may never

return. What if God's next great work in Juneau is meant to be through RLC—its congregation, its council, and its pastor?

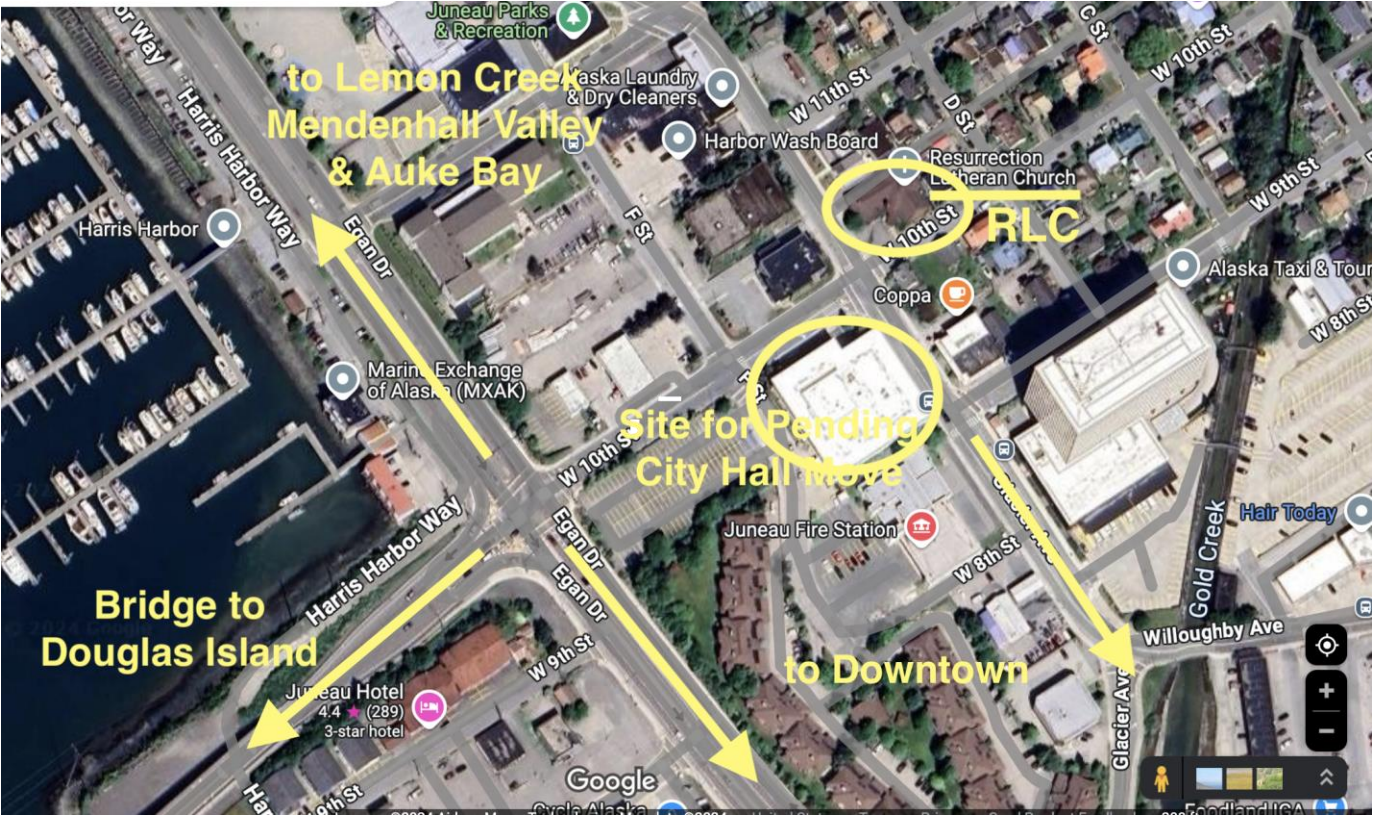
Attachments

- RLC Juneau Area Maps

- Downtown City Employee Office Space Update Memo

- Financial Reality Taskforce Budget

Attachment
RLC Juneau Area Maps



Attachment Downtown City Employee Office Space Update Memo

Section F, Item 3.



City and Borough of Juneau
City & Borough Manager's Office
155 Heritage Way
Juneau, Alaska 99801
Telephone: 586-5240 | Facsimile: 586-5385

TO: Deputy Mayor Smith and CBJ Assembly
FROM: Katie Koester, City Manager
DATE: October 25, 2024
RE: Downtown City Employee Office Space Update

The purpose of this memo is to get Assembly direction on next steps towards purchasing two floors of the Burns Building for downtown city office space, namely research and development of documents for a condominium association. It also provides an update on recently acquired Juneau School District (JSD) facilities, Marie Drake and Floyd Dryden.

Burns Building

At the August 5, 2024, meeting the COW was provided with a memo on the Downtown City Employee Office Space. As a result of the direction received at that meeting the CBJ has moved forward with hiring an appraisal service to determine the fair market value of the Burns Building as though it was being divided by floors and sold as business condo space. Under these parameters the Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation would continue to own the third floor of the building and CBJ would own the first and second floors. The appraisal is scheduled to be completed in December.

With the appraised value being determined, it is reasonable to begin work on drafting business condo bylaws, covenants, conditions and restrictions, and rules and regulations. This process will likely take many months and will bring to our attention the inherent conflicts and controversial negotiation points that come with the creation of a business condo and an acquisition of office space by the CBJ.

Also at the August meeting, the COW was informed that the total assessed value of the Burns Building was roughly 50% of the asking price for the first two floors. This number was incorrect in that the assessor's valuation that was provided did not include the two separate parking lots which add significant value to the property. The parking lots are assessed at \$2.09M bringing the total assessed value to \$11.02M. The owners of the building have offered two floors (with associated 80 plus parking spots) to the CBJ for \$12M.

Other Downtown Office Space

CBJ continues to be in the midst of an office space shuffle.¹ As of the [August 5 COW](#) we anticipated moving downtown employees displaced by Muni Way into Marie Drake. The HVAC system at Marie Drake has long needed repairs that could not be done while the building was occupied because of the potential to disturb old asbestos dust caked in the duct work. Nortech was brought in to do the testing and found high levels of asbestos in the mechanical room (223A) and classroom wing associated with the air handling units. It is important to note that no airborne particles of asbestos were found during this round of testing or the last round of testing in 2019. Rather, the work that needs to be done, including HVAC repairs and basic improvements to set up office space (like pulling cable to set up workstations) should not be done until the proper abatement takes place. Nortech recommends remediation projects totaling \$2.8M and 10 months before allowing occupancy of the classroom wing. The gym and planetarium wing have been abated and are safe for public occupancy. In the near term, this finding puts a hold on city employee uses for Marie Drake. Longer term, it puts in jeopardy public uses without significant investment in remediation.

Staff will bring options for Marie Drake to PWFC in December, however demoing the building, or at least a portion of the building should be considered. A preliminary estimate to demo the entire building and turn the lot into 212 parking spots is \$9M. This is also the cost to demo part of the building, keeping the gym,

12

planetarium and basement, gaining about a third of the parking. Gutting and remodeling the entire building comes in at a rough estimate of \$75M, which is consistent with JSD asks for remodeling over the years.

On the topic of facilities recently inherited from JSD, at the [August 5 COW](#) the body gave staff direction to move forward with negotiations with Tlingit & Haida for childcare related functions at Floyd Dryden at fair market value. University of Alaska Southeast's Early Childhood Hub was the next highest ranked proposal and was identified as a compatible use. Staff is aiming to bring you lease documents for both organizations at the December 16 regular meeting.

Recommendation: Direct the Manager and Attorney to research establishing a business condo association including bylaws, covenants, conditions and restrictions, and rules and regulations to better understand the practicalities of purchasing two floors of the Burns Building.

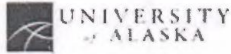
ⁱ Where are downtown city employees now?

- Parks & Rec admin has moved into the former JSD administrative building, adjacent to Harborview Elementary.
- Over the next month or so, sections of Finance will be joining them in that building: Accounts Payable, Purchasing, and Payroll.
- Land & Resources, and the Special Project Planning Manager have moved into the former Parks & Rec space in City Hall. Some of the open space will likely to be used by Finance in the next few weeks.
- The 224 conference room in City Hall will be permanently Finance/Controllers staff.
- IT has been largely remote working. Over the next month or so, they will be moving into the Auke Bay Marine Station (Docks & Harbors operated). The office adjacent to the Assembly Chambers downstairs will be a hot desk for IT operations.
- As the above pieces move, Finance Admin & Budget will be moving into vacated space in the former IT wing of City Hall with HR, and Emergency Management will be moving into where AP is now between the Manager's Office and 224.

Attachment
Financial Reality Taskforce Budget

12/19/23, 2:29 PM

UA Mail - Financial reality task force budget 09/01/23



Delores Graver <degraver@alaska.edu>

Financial reality task force budget 09/01/23

3 messages

koelschkm@gci.net <koelschkm@gci.net>

Sat, Nov 18, 2023 at 11:20 AM

To: delores graver <delores.graver@uas.alaska.edu>, Dan Wetherall
<seafite@alaskan.com>

Cc: Kristin Cadigan McAdoo <kcadiganmcadoo@gmail.com>

This is the last budget discussion we had as a task force until we went into a "holding pattern" There are several areas where our proposed budget numbers are different from the October Statement of Income and Expenses by Account but it could be used as a starting point base for the 2024 RLC budget. The template does not contain the Warming Center or anything similar and it does show a half time shared ministry which we were to discuss and decide to go to or not before the end of 2023.

 **RLC draft budget 2024.docx**
17K

koelschkm@gci.net <koelschkm@gci.net>

Mon, Nov 20, 2023 at 10:25 AM

To: delores graver <delores.graver@uas.alaska.edu>, Dan Wetherall
<seafite@alaskan.com>

Cc: Kristin Cadigan McAdoo <kcadiganmcadoo@gmail.com>

if you receive this would you let e know as our email has been acting wonky

From: "Ken Koelsch" <koelschkm@gci.net>

To: "delores graver" <delores.graver@uas.alaska.edu>, "Dan Wetherall" <seafite@alaskan.com>

Cc: "Kristin Cadigan McAdoo" <kcadiganmcadoo@gmail.com>

Sent: Saturday, November 18, 2023 11:20:28 AM

Subject: Financial reality task force budget 09/01/23

[Quoted text hidden]

 **RLC draft budget 2024.docx**
17K

Delores Graver <degraver@alaska.edu>

Tue, Nov 21, 2023 at 4:08 PM

To: koelschkm@gci.net

I have received this.

Delores

[Quoted text hidden]

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Delores E. Graver

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12/19/23, 2:29 PM

UA Mail - Financial reality task force budget 09/01/23

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<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ik=f0731150e2&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f:1782934492247771417&simpl=msg-f:1782934492247771417> 2/2

Draft 3 09/01/23

RLC income*: general funds \$164,845

Expenses*:

Administrative total: office supplies \$2,230, telephone/internet \$4,000, postage \$538, Vanco service \$1,300 \$10,768
Convention and Conferences \$2,700 (moving expenses \$3,300), grow reserve account \$1,200, (pastoral sabbatical \$1,200),
move-moving expenses \$3,300 and pastoral sabbatical \$1,200 to Shared Ministry and move grow food pantry \$5,000 to Social
ministry (delete grow reserve account \$1,200)

Stewardship total \$179

Audit Committee (delete audit committee funding from general budget CPA \$15,000) 0

Social Ministry total: \$13,000 food pantry dedicated \$8,000, general fund \$5,00 support \$5,000

Education total: Bible camp \$500 dedicated, Ak Synod Seminarian gifts:4@\$325 from dedicated D. Gwyther account 0

Evangelism total: advertisements \$783, resource material \$224 \$1,007

discernment process \$10,000 from dedicated Berg House Fund (no Radio Ministry \$13,000),

Property total: church utilities \$18,000, church maintenance \$13,000 garage utilities \$500, \$52,238
bus insurance \$570, building insurance \$15,912, equipment replacement \$500 (addition to church maintenance \$3,856)

Worship supplies total: \$1,325

Music total \$619

Shared Ministry pastoral compensation and benefits total \$64,211

salary \$45,459 housing allowance \$42,000, employer share of SS/ Medicare \$6,691,
pension/health ins \$23,921, continuing ed \$5,100, medivac ins \$250, books and periodicals \$500,
moving expenses \$3,300, pastoral sabbatical \$1,200
50% of current compensation package of \$128,421=\$64,211

Minister of Music and Music Staff Substitutes \$6,493

minister of music 3 services per mo., 6 scheduled services off 34 weeks per year
music staff substitutes \$35 for bell choir rehearsal, \$35 bell choir performances,\$50 other

Personnel Compensation

sexton \$3,509, Guest pastors \$583, FICA/Medicare/Workers Comp for \$2,382???? Guesstimate \$6,474
(Employer FICA/Medicare \$8005?, Workers Comp \$1,920? \$6,474 Secretary and sexton combined salaries are \$14,478 so
sexton salary is 24% of total used 24% of FICA/Medicare and Workers Comp for \$2,382) (delete secretarial position)

Partnership total \$16,485

10% of line 17 general operating receipts \$164,845 all to synod or divided among synod, southeast partnership, mental health
substance abuse, housing, reentry for incarceration, family/youth, rural ministries partnership at 10% total, not 13%

*total expenses \$161,489

Green-dedicated funds

Red-reductions or cuts

* Informational alternative 2024 draft #3 working budget drawn from RLC 06/25/2023 adopted budget

Addendum

Recent Actions of Concern: Forming a Shadow Church

The recent actions of a small, influential group within Resurrection Lutheran Church (RLC) reveal a dangerous agenda that goes far beyond simple disagreement. This faction, consisting of approximately eight dissenters closely allied with Bishops Wickstrom and Oslovich, has aggressively positioned itself as the rightful council and officers of RLC while working to displace the existing council, officers, and congregation members. Their documented discussions and actions suggest an alarming plan: to close RLC, potentially merge it with Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church (SOV), sell off church property, and “protect” (hoard) the endowment.

This primarily affluent, white faction has openly disregarded the diverse communities RLC serves. Their efforts, seemingly supported and encouraged by the bishops, aim to preemptively suppress challenges to their actions from Alaska courts, the Synod Council, other congregations, the Synod Assembly, the Churchwide Council, or the Presiding Bishop. These plans raise significant concerns about governance, transparency, and severe conflicts of interest that threaten the mission and future of RLC.

Formation of a “Shadow Church”

This group has effectively formed a shadow church, which they are treating as a replacement for RLC. Their actions to consolidate control and sideline the broader congregation lack any constitutional authority under RLC’s governing documents.

- Exclusive Meetings
They initially held unannounced, exclusive meetings that influenced church policy without transparency or input from the full council or congregation, nor documentation.
- Lack of Transparency
These meetings often contradicted established church procedures, further eroding trust within the congregation
- Exclusionary Goals
The group’s ultimate objective appears to be the exclusion of those who do not align with their views, rather than the effective management of RLC’s ministry, including worship, programs, and facilities.

This concerted effort to consolidate power has not only undermined RLC’s governance but also sabotaged its mission and community trust. Immediate intervention is critical to prevent further irreparable harm and restore the integrity of RLC’s leadership and operations.

Bishops’ Exclusive Support of Small Group

Security footage (appropriately obtained with posted notifications) shows members of this dissenting group frequently discussing their privileged access to both bishops. Some have even boasted about getting the bishop on the phone when something hasn’t gone their way. This exclusive support for the dissenting group’s unilateral decisions demonstrates the bishops’ alignment with this faction, further marginalizing the broader congregation and undermining traditional governance and inclusive decision-making at RLC.

Christmas at RLC

During Christmas preparation, RLC’s official Worship and Music Committee (chaired by the Worship and Music Director) planned its usual services at 5:30 pm and 11 pm on Christmas Eve, along with a 10 am service on Christmas Day. These services, a long-standing practice, were designed to engage the congregation and the wider community during the holiday season. However, the dissenting group, unable defend replacing the widely appreciated Juneau Live! Studio broadcasts with their iPhone Zoom setup preferred

by some prioritizing in-person aesthetics, unilaterally formed an alternative Worship and Music Committee. This group decided to hold only a single 5:30 pm Christmas Eve service, disregarding congregation tradition, the broader congregation's preferences and community accessibility.

Bishop Oslovich's Actions

- Support for the Dissenting Group

Bishop Oslovich approved the presider for the 5:30 pm service organized by the dissenting group and personally attended the service via Zoom. During the service, he actively engaged with attendees, greeting them during the sharing of the peace.

- Ignoring Usual Services

Despite three requests from the RLC Worship and Music Committee for permission to preside for the other Christmas services (11 pm Christmas Eve and 10 am Christmas Day), these requests went rudely unanswered.

Bishop Oslovich Availability to Small Group

In a recent incident which involved the JPD, the bishop was immediately available on the phone to members of the group, as is often the case, while calls and emails from RLC Council members go unheeded.

Bishop Oslovich Concern for Small Group

- During a Zoom meeting with the bishop, he was especially concerned with a link to security footage which had been provided to JPD (at their request) regarding a report made by a volunteer of an assault by a member of the small group who also can be heard saying "You are not welcome here." The bishop claimed he could not hear or see the recorded incident and wanted to know how to get the information from the JPD to prove anything actually happened. He expressed no concern for anything else reported.
- This was reminiscent of Bishop Wickstrom requesting Pastor Perkins provide six months' worth of RLC meeting recordings to review, where the small group exhibited appalling bullying and harassing behavior, yet only commenting on an accidental misstatement of Pastor Perkins about a particular constitutional requirement. She neither acknowledged nor expressed concern about any of the pervasive distressing behavior.

With this level of support, the dissenting group has grown increasingly emboldened, escalating the harm to RLC's governance, congregation, ministries, and the wider Juneau community. Immediate intervention is critical to prevent further damage and restore justice, accountability, and constitutional governance at RLC.

A Staged Coup: The Bishops' Bid for Control Under the Guise of Fair Process

A "congregation meeting" called by Bishop Oslovich to request he appoint an interim pastor raised significant concerns, including improper notice, lack of financial transparency, the unconstitutional removal of Pastor Karen Perkins, and the questionable authority of Council Member Lisa Brendle to organize and preside over the meeting. The Addendum *A Staged Coup: The Bishops' Bid for Control Under the Guise of Fair Process* provides detailed documentation of how the bishops and a small dissenting group continue to undermine RLC's governance. These actions culminated in an attempt to appoint an interim pastor despite unresolved legal and constitutional issues, further jeopardizing RLC's mission and governance integrity.

Concerns Raised by the RLC Council and Congregation Members

An attachment to the addendum includes a letter from the majority of the RLC Council and congregation members, explaining their decision not to attend or participate in the proposed congregation meeting. Their absence was a deliberate act to avoid legitimizing a process they deemed flawed, inappropriate, and invalid. Key objections included:

Lack of Proper Notice

The meeting was not adequately announced to all members.

Complications Surrounding the Interim Pastor

The appointment process lacked transparency and clarity. In the end, the inappropriately appointed interim pastor is barely part-time, pulpit supply, apparently appointed by the bishop to provide a council tie-breaking majority vote.

Insufficient Financial Information

Critical financial data necessary for informed decision-making was unavailable.

Brendle's Questionable Authority

Council Member Lisa Brendle did not possess the constitutional authority to call or chair the meeting.

Ongoing Disruption at RLC

The bishops' continued support of the dissenting group exacerbated the church's instability.

Contrived Purpose

The meeting appeared designed to serve the interests of the small group rather than the congregation. The bishops' request for the meeting included an inaccurate claim about RLC Council functioning that applied only to the small group.

Intentional Harassment by Inviting Pastor Vance Attend

The involvement of Pastor Vance, who had broken trust with Pastor Perkins and others at RLC earlier in the year, was perceived as an act of deliberate antagonism.

Pending Legal Outcomes

The appointment of an interim pastor should have awaited the resolution of the Brendle lawsuit, as well as a request from the congregation with its expectations.

This staged meeting underscores the broader pattern of governance manipulation and disregard for constitutional processes at RLC. Immediate intervention is necessary to restore trust, stability, and integrity to the church's leadership.

Failed Attempts to Hold Council Meetings by Small Group

The small dissenting group has repeatedly failed to hold legitimate council meetings, despite their claims of authority. Their efforts have included:

Secret Meetings and Informal "Get-Togethers"

- The group has convened unannounced meetings of their "shadow church," sometimes held offsite (e.g., the downtown library or Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church). These meetings were neither properly noticed nor constitutionally valid.
- They also offered informal "get-togethers" involving council members and others, which lacked the procedural requirements to constitute official meetings, but purportedly resulted in official decisions.

Failed November 21, 2024, Meeting

- In their meeting agenda for November 21, 2024, the group claimed, "This is the first legally held meeting of the RLC council since April 30, 2024." However, they failed to achieve a quorum, rendering the meeting invalid.
- Long-time congregation member and past president Adam Garner attended the meeting, as the remainder of the legitimate RLC Council was attending its regularly scheduled November 2024 meeting with its regular Zoom link and a quorum.

Meeting Objective – Interim Pastor Compensation

- According to Garner, the group's primary objective, requested by Bishop Oslovich, was to authorize compensation for the interim pastor, whom the bishop had improperly appointed.

- This attempt mirrored a prior effort at the unconstitutional congregation meeting called by the bishop to request approval for the interim pastor's appointment, suggesting a pattern of disregarding proper procedures.

Improper Use of "Executive Committee"

- When the group failed to establish a quorum at the November 21 meeting, they claimed to enter an "executive committee" session. This misused the RLC Constitution's C13.0 Executive Committee provision and confused it with a parliamentary executive session—neither of which were appropriate for the situation.
- They told congregation member Garner to leave the meeting permanently without further explanation or defensible, constitutional reason, further undermining transparency and trust.

Authorization for Compensation Still Unresolved

Despite their efforts, the group failed to authorize compensation for the interim pastor. The issue reappeared in subsequent agendas, indicating their ongoing inability to conduct legitimate business. On the agenda for the following alleged council meeting of Thursday, January 9th (below).

Alleged Council Meeting of Thursday, January 9, 2025 (attended by Bishop Oslovich)

A particularly concerning event was the alleged council meeting held on Thursday, January 9, 2025. This meeting raises disconcerting procedural and constitutional issues:

Improper Notice and Accessibility Issues

- The meeting was called at 8:19 AM on the same day, qualifying at best as a special council meeting. Proper notice was not provided to all RLC Council members not associated with the small dissenting group.
- The meeting took place offsite at the downtown library, making it inaccessible to many council members. Long-time congregation member and past president Adam Garner attempted to join via the announced Zoom link but was denied access.
- The agenda indicated that both Bishop Oslovich and attorney Joe Geldhof (representing Lisa Brendle and Kristin Cadigan-McAdoo in the Brendle lawsuit) were on the agenda to attend the meeting.

Concerning Agenda Items

Attempts to Remove Non-Aligned Council Members

- The agenda included a proposal to remove council members (Clarice Bethers, Connor Blackwell, Dolores Graver, Karen Lawfer, Lucy Merrell, and Nelson Merrell) for alleged absences from three consecutive meetings "without cause."
- As noted above, in their meeting agenda for November 21, 2024, the group claimed, "This is the first legally held meeting of the RLC council since April 30, 2024." This is contradicted with the claim of missed meetings. No minutes from any supposed council meetings were distributed to all council members.
- President Lawfer, in her response letter (see Addendum *President Lawfer Response to Brendle Meeting Agenda*), noted that RLC Constitution C12.01 refers only to absences from regular council meetings, which this group has consistently failed to hold.

Announcement of 2025 Annual Congregation Meeting

While not on the agenda, the group subsequently announced the 2025 Annual Congregation Meeting for Sunday, January 26, 2025. However, under the RLC Constitution, only the council can call such meetings.

Legitimacy of the Alleged Council Meeting

Several factors undermine the validity of this alleged meeting and its actions, including the scheduling of the Annual Congregation Meeting

Lack of Quorum

- Even assuming all six dissenting members were still council members, and the improperly appointed interim pastor could vote, the required quorum for a 13-member council would be seven members. No evidence has been presented that this quorum was met.
- In contrast, the legitimate RLC Council has regularly held meetings with quorums, with approved reports and minutes distributed to all council members.

Council Composition

- Due to repeated absences without cause, some dissenting members are no longer council members under the constitution (Koelsch and Mickel in October; Cadigan-McAdoo and Magee in December). The RLC Council has since added two members, pending confirmation at the next congregation meeting, reducing the effective council size to 10 members. Without these absent members, the January 9 meeting lacked a quorum.

Authority to Call a Special Meeting

- Special council meetings must be called by the president or pastor. The validity of both Council Member Brendle and the interim pastor is disputed, further invalidating the meeting.

Impact on the Annual Congregation Meeting

- The validity of the January 9 meeting directly affects the legitimacy of scheduling the Annual Congregation Meeting for January 26, 2025. The RLC Council had already resolved at its regular December 2024 meeting to schedule the meeting for February 9, 2025, contingent on meeting the requirements of C10.01.01.b. This scheduling was later postponed pending the outcome of the Brendle lawsuit and necessary preparations to ensure compliance with the constitution.

Tactics to Delay Justice and Gerrymandering of Voting Members

The small dissenting group appears to be deliberately delaying resolution of the ongoing conflict and the lawful reinstatement of Pastor Perkins while narrowing the decision-making body. Their tactics include:

Alienation of Loyal Members

The group has worked to isolate loyal congregation members and manipulated worship practices through Bishop Oslovich's interim appointee.

Manipulation of Membership Lists

- Recruiting long-inactive or removed members with little or no interest in RLC to sway upcoming votes.
- Ignoring prospective new members and pending baptisms who were supported and prepared by Pastor Perkins.

Exclusionary Communication Practices

Some congregation members, including those loyal to the existing council, have been excluded from member distribution lists. However, the full extent of this ostracism remains unclear.

Rushed, Unconstitutional Annual Meeting Supported (if not Recommended by the Bishops)

The RLC Council had properly scheduled the annual meeting for February 9, 2025, and postponed during the January regular council meeting. Despite this, the small dissenting group, with apparent support from the bishops, attempted to rush and improperly schedule

an unconstitutional annual meeting for January 26, 2025. Key issues with the meeting include:

Improper Scheduling

- The meeting was unconstitutionally scheduled, as detailed in the section “Alleged Council Meeting of Thursday, January 9, 2025.”

Lack of Proper Notice

- The dissenting group failed to provide notice to all congregation members as required by RLC’s constitutional procedures.

Failure to Meet Reporting Requirements

Annual Meeting Report Not Distributed

- RLC Constitution C10.01.01.b requires that written reports be distributed to all congregation members at least one week prior to the meeting.
- Council Member Brendle’s notices offered only optional electronic distribution of reports upon request. Physical copies were briefly available on January 19, 2025, the date the reports were due. They were immediately removed from that accessible location just as Karen Lawfer entered the building.

Misleading and Deficient Reports

- Reports were missing critical information, including committee and officer reports and accurate financial data.
- Some reports contained false or misleading information and were misattributed to individuals who did not prepare or approve them.
- Bishop Oslovich included a letter endorsing the dissenting group and praising their “vision for the future,” further undermining transparency about communications between the bishop and this group.

No Constitutional Presider for Annual Meeting

- Due to repeated absences without cause, as of the adjournment of the RLC Council regular January meeting on January 16, none of the dissenting members are left on the RLC Council, nor can claim to be president.
- As is extensively discussed in RLC Council Position Statements **Understanding Constitutional Violations** and **Challenge to Act Justly, Seek Truth and Fulfill Fiduciary Duty**, neither Bishop Wickstrom’s unconstitutional attempt to reappoint council member Brendle regarding June 9th meeting, nor the misused and flawed the *C15.11 / †S17.11 adjudication can restore council member Brendle to that position.
- Further, as discussed in RLC Council Position Statement **Authoritarianism, Secrecy and Complicity**, Bishop Oslovich does have constitutional authority to override the dissenting members vacancies on council or reappoint council member Brendle as president.

Unconstitutional Intentions

- The dissenting group used this meeting to further undermine the governance structure by:

Gerrymandering Voting Membership

- Manipulating who qualifies as a voting member to influence meeting outcomes.

Improperly Redefining Council Membership

Unconstitutionally declaring

- Which members remain on the council and the duration of their terms.

- Which terms have expired but are eligible for reelection.
- Which members have “termed out” after six continuous years of service.

Pending Legal Outcomes

The ongoing Brendle lawsuit, in which the court has indicated it will retain jurisdiction, further invalidates the scheduling of this meeting. The court’s ruling will clarify the rightful officers and governance of RLC, and the annual meeting should be postponed until this decision is rendered.

The January 26, 2025, meeting is a clear example of rushed and unconstitutional actions designed to consolidate power within the dissenting group, disregarding the congregation’s governance and constitutional protections. The longer you let the pretense continue, the more power their dysfunction dominates the congregation. The ongoing harm to RLC’s trust, integrity, and mission underscores the urgent need for intervention and accountability.

The bishops continue to align with a small dissenting group within RLC, intensifying their efforts to consolidate control and suppress challenges or potential challenges from the RLC Council, the synod council, the press, the community, or the courts. Their actions include:

- Removing Pastor Perkins from the Alaska Synod roster.
- Hastily appointing a part-time interim pastor at a questionably convened congregation meeting.
- Failing, at least, twice to hold a valid council meeting to approve the interim pastor’s contract.

Addendum

Merrell Emails with Presiding Bishop Eaton and the RLC Council

December 27, 2024

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton,

I know you've been inundated with communications about the unrest at Resurrection Lutheran Church (RLC) in Juneau, Alaska. I am a council member, the music director, and a 50-year member of RLC. Attached is an email I sent to all council members a week ago. Unfortunately, the small group I refer to in my letter, some of whom were my friends, have become vicious and overtly power-hungry, showing little concern for the well-being of RLC or its members.

Last Sunday, just before the service, this group turned off the internet gateway located in the church office they have locked us out of, preventing us from streaming the service on YouTube. The following day, Brad Perkins (facility manager among other roles) and President Karen Lawfer saw the office doors open and attempted to access the internet gateway. They were physically blocked, and Brad was pushed to the ground, leading to a 15-minute recorded standoff. The police intervened, spending over two hours at the scene to negotiate that the internet would be operational for streaming the Christmas services.

This group failed in their attempt to take over the established eight-member Worship and Music Committee by adding seven new members to vote to end streaming services, which average over 60 views a week, and replace it with a lesser iPhone Zoom service. They have openly expressed their intention to end the successful Juneau Live! Studio ministry among other outreach initiatives. Despite their failure, they formed their own committee and unilaterally decided there would be only one Christmas service at 5:30 PM, disregarding our tradition of three services and a community dinner on Christmas Eve, which benefits the poor and vulnerable in our community.

Karen Lawfer, acting within her capacity, requested Bishop Oslovich three times to preside over communion at the late Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services, which he ignored, yet he was available to attend the 5:30 PM service hosted by the dissident group on Zoom.

If there is a perception that avoiding this issue will make it dissipate, that is a grave misunderstanding. With Pastor Karen removed from the Alaska roster, the ELCA has lost leverage, and those of us committed to justice see no other recourse but to pursue this to the fullest extent, including through forthcoming legal proceedings which will publicize these matters.

Should this small, disruptive faction continue unchecked, I foresee a significant exodus from RLC and potentially the ELCA, which would be a tragic loss to a once thriving, mission-focused church.

Lucy Merrell
Music Director, Council Member
Resurrection Lutheran Church, Juneau, Alaska

Attachments

Email Response from Bishop Eaton on 1/9/25

Email to RLC Council Members on 12/18/24

Addendum

Merrell Emails with Presiding Bishop Eaton and the RLC Council

(Attachment Email Response from Bishop Eaton on 1/9/25)

January 9, 2025

Dear Ms. Merrell,

I have received your correspondence regarding Resurrection Lutheran in Juneau, Alaska.

However, I cannot intervene. It would not be wise or helpful for me to involve myself where it simply is not possible for me to be physically present, adequately informed or sufficiently prepared to follow up in a responsible way. For these reasons and others, the ELCA's governing documents do not give the presiding bishop, or any others at the churchwide organization, any authority to intervene in instances such as yours. To the contrary, the governing documents of the ELCA grant synods the authority regarding the administration of adjudication. The synod bishop works directly with congregations and rostered ministers within the synod. I know Bishop Tim Oslovich and I trust his care for the people and ministries of your synod.

Jesus Christ is the source of our hope and our unity, and I am confident in the Holy Spirit's power to bring healing and reconciliation. My prayer is that you find your hope in God's promise to be faithful.

God's peace,



Elizabeth A. Eaton

Presiding Bishop

[Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](https://www.elca.org/)

8765 W. Higgins Rd. | Chicago, IL 60631

773.380.2600

Addendum

Merrell Emails with Presiding Bishop Eaton and the RLC Council

(Attachment Email to RLC Council Members on 12/18/24)

Date: December 18, 2024

Subject: Future at RLC

Dear Council Members and Others,

I want to thank all of you for your patience and support during Ted's illness. I appreciated those of you that came to Ted's service. It was the most difficult period of my life.

I want you to know my plans for the future. I am at Tori's until her 50th birthday January 2, and then returning to Juneau. I intend to play for services during January and then go to Molokai. I haven't been there for, I think, three years and need to check on the condition of our condo—besides getting some sun.

While I am there I will consider what kind of church RLC is and if I want to return. These are some of the problems I've seen that are concerning for me:

As Music Director I have not had access to my office for months unless I am supervised. Why? What do you think I will do there?

I have not had access to Sundays or Seasons, either paper or online. Why? Other than to throw your weight around.

People are planning worship services without consulting the Worship Committee. Why? The committee is constitutionally mandated and has been the only RLC committee that met regularly for years, including throughout 2024.

I am angry at the theft of microphones and cameras, some quite expensive. I will encourage prosecution.

I am angry that people are trying to disable equipment without knowing how to do it and had disabled the fire alarm system.

I am angry that someone is disabling the temperature sensors for the refrigerators and freezers for the food pantry.

I am angry that people are not made welcome and a volunteer was pushed and told "You go away. You're not welcome here."

I am angry that anyone worshipping online was just cut-off. No explanation. No consideration.

I am angry at anyone accessing confidential files, and the theft of the parish register, from the pastor's office. And the vandalism, like cutting holes in the wall of the pastor's office to bypass the locked door. Bunch of criminals.

I am angry at the theft of \$205,000 from the church's bank account. When I asked Lisa's about it I was told "you don't have to worry about it."

And then there's the issue of "Lisa's Council."

Council meetings should be announced and open to any member. They can not be secret. Visiting members should not be told to go home by invoking non-existent executive anything.

Council meetings require minutes taken and available for anyone to see. I have not seen any from "Lisa's Council." The minutes and reports from the regular council meetings have been distributed to all of council.

Council meetings require regular financial reports. How can we fulfill our fiduciary responsibilities without one? Lisa's group knows where the money is, so how come no financial reports? The money belongs to the congregation. We are entitled to know where it is.

Who is making these decisions? None of this is about the Gospel, the ELCA, our constitution, our mission or anything holy.

After 50 years, can I be at a church like this? Do I want to? I am hurt and angry that this seems like your goal.

Prayerfully,
Lucy Merrell
Music Director, Council Member