

**Board for Communication Services  
Minutes (approved 5/26/08)  
April 17-18, 2008  
LCMS International Center, Saint Louis, MO**

**Thursday, April 17**

Present: Dennis Clauss, chairman; David Strand, executive director; David Berger, John Bush, Ernest Garbe, David Kluth, Candace Mueller, Kevin Vogts, Eileen Bishop List (non-voting)

Following the morning chapel service, the chairman called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM

M/S/C to adopt agenda as printed.

M/S/C to approve the minutes of the telephone conference of November 2, 2007

M/S/C to approve the minutes of the telephone conference of January 18, 2008

M/S/C to approve the minutes of the meeting of February 4-5, 2008

M/S/C to enter executive session.

The executive session provided opportunity for a frank and open discussion of the cancellation of KFUEO-AM radio program, Issues, Etc.; the termination of its host, The Rev. Todd Wilken, and producer, Mr. Jeff Schwarz; and the various factors related to these actions.

Lunch and gathering with BCS staff

The time from ca. noon to 1 PM was devoted to a board and staff “get-acquainted” luncheon, during which members of the board and staff introduced themselves with brief oral biographical sketches. Following the meal, the board and staff convened in groups, e.g., publications, internet, and discussed matters such as measuring effectiveness in their work. Both board and staff expressed appreciation for this opportunity.

Executive session, cont.

In the interest of transparency and openness in doing the Synod’s business, the following summary of responses to questions and related discussion is supplied:

Executive Director (ED) David Strand reported that he made the decision alone regarding the cancellation of "Issues, Etc." and the terminations of its host and producer, based on the BCS policy to operate KFUEO in a fiscally responsible manner and to work toward the policy of operating within the budget. After discussing his decision with the BCS chairman, the ED implemented the decision. The board was not directly consulted, either by the ED or by the board chairman. The actions were based on four categories of information: 1) KFUEO financial data, including Synod audited financial statements; 2) the financial condition of the Synod, which could not sustain subsidizing the growing deficits of KFUEO; 3) the monthly request from the

Synod Treasurer and Executive Director of Accounting and Finance to address the deepening deficits; and 4) the ED's analysis of the number of listeners to the program.

The termination process followed standard HR procedure. On March 18, the Executive Director of Communications and the Executive Director of HR met with Rev. Wilken and Mr. Schwarz to inform them that "Issues" was being discontinued and that their positions were being terminated. The ED (BCS) described the process as being carried out with compassion and dignity. The Rev. Wilken and Mr. Schwarz were told that many factors led to the decision, were given a letter that discussed the basis for the decision generally, and were offered opportunity to discuss in detail the reasons for the termination at another time of their choosing. The meeting was civil and ended with prayers by both Rev. Wilken and Mr. Strand. Following the meeting, it became apparent that information on the action had been released, followed by much speculation in various quarters and communicated primarily on the web via e-mail and web-logs. Two official communications were subsequently issued by the ED, one short release fairly early and a longer communication later. Neither explanation seemed to satisfy those who objected to the cancellation of the program, and speculation about "real reasons" continued. The ED and chairman expressed surprise that the reactions and speculation were far beyond any reasonable anticipation of reaction to the decision.

Discussion among board members focused on the lack of information regarding (1) the extreme pressures to reduce expenditures because of the significant shortfall in the Synod's unrestricted funds, and (2) the strong inclination expressed by some officials to take drastic action relative to KFUE. There had been no indication in previous board meetings that this program, or any specific program on KFUE, and its personnel were at risk of the action taken. "Issues, Etc." had been cited in the report to the 2007 synodical convention as a model of AM program national syndication, and as recently as November the board's Subcommittee on KFUE Intervention had indicated that no savings this fiscal year were likely to result from staff reductions because of the cost of severance packages. While some board members were satisfied that the action was rightfully taken by the ED and the chairman of the BCS according to the board policy manual, others expressed disagreement, along with concern and dismay that a decision with predictable public ramifications would not be preceded at least by board consultation and preferably action. Ignorance of the ED's action led to a number of awkward situations when questions were posed to some board members. Concern was also expressed that station management has apparently not been properly tasked with making the necessary budgetary decisions and reduction of expenditures.

The session was recessed at 6:30 PM

### **Friday, April 18**

Following the chapel service, the chairman called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM.

#### Executive session, cont.

The executive director provided an overview of the unprecedented shortfall in the synod's 2007-2008 budget, resulting in deep spending cuts to prevent deficits.

**M/S/C** to exit executive session.

Discussion continued regarding appropriate responses to the concerns expressed in executive session and the intent to resolve matters in satisfactory manner.

**M/S/D** that the program Issues, Etc., be restored to KFUE-AM; that the Rev. Todd Wilken and Mr. Jeff Schwarz be asked to return to host and produce the program; and that, since the program was canceled and the two men were dismissed to reduce costs to the synod, time be allowed until August 31 to develop increased funding and/or reduce the costs of the program.

A poll of the board was requested.

Voting in favor: Berger, Garbe, Vogts                      Voting against: Bush, Clauss, Kluth, Mueller

**M/S/D** to encourage Rev. Wilken and Mr. Schwarz to work quickly toward establishing a Recognized Service Organization under which to operate Issues, Etc., assuring them continuing use of the program name and restoring them to full time employment at KFUE until August 31.

[**M/S/D** to call the question with no discussion]

A poll of the board was requested.

Voting in favor: Berger, Garbe, Vogts                      Voting against: Bush, Clauss, Kluth, Mueller

Discussion continued regarding the complexities of both communicating and arriving at a satisfactory conclusion once employment regulations and laws have entered the picture.

**M/S/C** to adopt the following statement to share with the church and KFUE listeners:

The Board for Communication Services deeply regrets the cancellation of the program, Issues, Etc., owing to the financial realities facing KFUE and the synod at large. The board recognizes the value of the program to the synod for nearly 15 years and is seeking ways to develop more cost-effective, engaging Lutheran apologetic programming for broad distribution.

The board thanks God for the blessing Issues, Etc., has been to faithful listeners both in the synod and its wider radio audience and asks for their prayers and their continued support of the synod in its commitment to address the fiscal challenges of maintaining a high-quality broadcast ministry.

In addition to the statement, the executive director will also prepare, in consultation with two board members, a concise "Q&A" document on the cancellation of Issues, Etc. to share with the synod and its radio and web listening publics. All communications will be shared widely and posted at least on the KFUE and LCMS web sites.

The executive director informed the board that he has met with CAO Ron Schultz to begin work on the request of the Board of Directors that synodical communications be better coordinated and that Bylaws relative to communications be re-examined with an eye to achieving more effective and efficient communication services for the synod.

The chairman noted the need for the board to clarify lines of responsibility regarding major decisions in the policy manual. He also expressed his desire and intent that the board communicate more frequently between meetings. If budgetary constraints result in fewer

meetings, other means of communications will have to be used.  
Kevin Vogts agreed to take the place of Candace Mueller on the joint BOD/BCS KFUD committee.

**Future meeting dates:**

**May 10**, 9 AM Central Daylight Time (8 AM Eastern Daylight Time) - telephone conference

**May 26** (all day) - **27** (morning) — Crowne Plaza Hotel, St. Louis (tentative, to be confirmed in the telephone conference)

**August 4** (all day) - **5** (morning) — Crowne Plaza Hotel, St. Louis

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 PM and closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

David O. Berger, secretary