



## Addendum

### Helpful Summaries to the RLC Council Position Statements

The Congregational Council of Resurrection Lutheran Church (RLC), Juneau, Alaska, conflict can be summarized:

*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.*

To help those interested in learning more about this conflict, the RCL Council has broken out the issues and explanations in separate "positions statements." This addendum has what are intended to be "helpful summaries" of these position statements. As to where to start:

- If you are most motivated by our call to work for justice with humility and integrity, the position statement [Challenge to Act Justly, Seek Truth and Fulfill Fiduciary Duty](#) may speak to you.
- If your highest priority is commitment to the covenants of baptism, ordination and election to other offices, position statement [Authoritarianism, Secrecy and Complicity](#) is where you may want to start.
- If you are most concerned about the "financial crisis" and believe RLC can't afford to focus on mission right now, or if you want to know what is happening with the congregation's money and why the budget the congregation passed for 2024 was neither followed nor reported, see the addendum *Money Over Mission* to the position statement [Authoritarianism, Secrecy and Complicity](#).
- If you care about the constitutional norms, we agree to share in the ELCA, or if you want this to go away, you would have to go back in time and prevent Bishop Wickstrom from violating our constitutions, allowing personal connections to substitute for complete and accurate information, and involving more people in the wrongs with subsequent smokescreens, please look at position statement [Understanding Constitutional Violations](#).
- If you want to know why we are bothering you, please look at the daily reality at our church and its mission and programs that affect the most vulnerable people in Juneau, or if you care about legal exposure, and the associated costly risks to the image of RLC, please start with position statement [What Happens Next and Your Involvement](#).

## **Understanding Constitutional Violations**

### **Harassment and Bullying Ignored**

For over two years, RLC has endured well-documented harassment and bullying of Pastor Karen, council members, and some guests. Despite repeated pleas for intervention, former Alaska Bishop Shelley Wickstrom and current Alaska Bishop Timothy Oslovich failed to investigate or oppose these behaviors. Bishop Wickstrom's advice to the pastor to "just leave" only empowered a small faction within the congregation to increase the behaviors and perpetuate a misleading narrative, further dividing our community. Bishop Oslovich's most recent actions have been taken as complete license for members of this vehement group to do whatever they want, whenever they want, without regard to others at RLC. Anyone who is not loyal to their faction is treated as subordinate or unwelcome.

### **Unconstitutional Vote Called by Prior Bishop**

Contrary to the congregation council's decisions, the congregation's approved annual budget, and the direction set by congregational discernment, Bishop Wickstrom pushed an unconstitutional vote to terminate the pastor's call with just a 51% threshold, thus bypassing the required two-thirds majority, with no claims of misconduct or fitness issues. Both bishops have since obscured the constitutional implications of this vote.

### **Interference in Church Governance**

In order to secure her choice of meeting presider for the unconstitutional vote, Bishop Wickstrom, without RLC or Alaska Synod constitutional authority, ignored the violations of RLC's Meeting Code of Conduct to re-appoint the council president (and secretary and treasurer) from the dissenting faction. This disregarded legitimate elections, opposed congregation efforts to minimize bullying, and enabled further governance disruptions.

### **Manipulation of C15.11 Adjudication**

Following Bishop Wickstrom's retirement, Bishop Oslovich pursued a C15.11 adjudication focusing on marginally relevant parliamentary details to retroactively legitimize prior unconstitutional actions. This process, flawed at every step and influenced by biased and misleading presentations from Bishop Oslovich and Synod Vice-President Leslie Swenson, ignored established church constitutional precedents and undermined the principles of fair governance. The RLC Council rightly refused to participate on these grounds. This flawed process is detailed in Addendum *Revised Annotated Alaska Synod Council RLC C15.11 Adjudication Documents*, attachment in RLC Council's Position Statement [Challenge to Act Justly, Seek Truth and Fulfill Fiduciary Duty](#).

### **Removal of Pastor Karen from the Alaska Synod Roster**

The abrupt removal of Pastor Karen from the roster, illegitimately timed to belie the authenticity of the controversial C15.11 process, was unkind and demoralizing for more than half of the congregation. Those new to church were especially deeply, perhaps permanently, injured. It also forced Pastor Karen to choose between rostered status and integrity, while she was simultaneously dealing with the complication of council member Brendle's pending lawsuit and its limitation of the options.

### Improper Appointment of an Interim Pastor and Scheduling of an Annual Meeting

A “congregation meeting” called by Bishop Oslovich to request he appoint an interim pastor lacked proper notice, transparency, and financial information, and was marked by questionable authority of Council Member Lisa Brendle to preside. This flawed meeting sought to justify unconstitutional actions, including the appointment which would provide a tie-breaking vote for the dissenting group. A questionable council meeting was called for the dissenting group, with minimal notice and attended by Bishop Oslovich and Brendle’s legal counsel. This meeting raised issues of quorum, procedural validity, and the constitutionality of its agenda. It included attempts to remove council members opposing the dissenting group. With the bishops’ apparent support, they set an annual meeting for January 26, 2025, bypassing constitutional requirements for proper notice, reporting, and member participation. Their actions include gerrymandering the voting body and unconstitutionally redefining council member terms to ensure control.

The actions of both bishops and this group at RLC, and the significant impact these actions have had are extensively briefed in RLC Council’s Position Statement [Understanding Constitutional Violations](#).

### **Authoritarianism, Secrecy, and Complicity**

Since February 2023, Bishop Wickstrom has secretly aligned herself with a small, group who disdain RLC’s mission and ministries. Some were even worshiping at Shepherd of the Valley (SOV) when Pastor Karen was called to RLC. Among other issues, this group objected to the installation of a social justice-oriented, female, full-time, experienced pastor. This covert alliance persists more than six months following Bishop Wickstrom’s retirement, despite there being no legitimate justification for her continued involvement in the matters of RLC.

This group, along with Bishop Wickstrom and, more disturbingly, Bishop Oslovich, have demonstrated a belief, which is not based in fact, that the ELCA—including its congregations like RLC and synods such as the Alaska Synod—operates as a hierarchical, authoritarian organization. Their belief in this perceived structure, congregation presidents and bishops, up to the Presiding Bishop, wield authority that allows them to bypass or override constitutional mandates and structures.

The actions of both bishops and this group at RLC, and the significant impact these actions have had on the Juneau community, are extensively outlined in RLC Council’s Position Statement [Authoritarianism, Secrecy and Complicity](#).

### **Challenge to Act Justly, Seek Truth and Fulfill Fiduciary Duty**

It is profoundly challenging to confront the possibility that those we have entrusted with our church’s leadership may have betrayed that trust. Many within RLC’s congregation, including its council, officers, and Pastor Karen, have grappled with this painful realization. Some members still place their trust in these leaders, despite the unconstitutional, unjust, and at times shameful actions of former and current bishops, as well as long-time congregation members—some of whom were once friends. These leaders have exploited such trust to shield their actions. However, past righteous deeds and reputations do not provide immunity to commit wrongs.

The actions of Bishop Wickstrom, Bishop Oslovich, Vice-President Swenson, and Attorney Manzella could expose them and the Alaska Synod to legal and ecclesiastical liabilities for fraud, gross misrepresentation, and misconduct. This includes facilitating others' improper behavior, which significantly undermines the ethical foundations of our church governance.

Fiduciary duty for members of the synod council is defined by an expectation to act in good faith and in the best interests of the synod and the wider church community. Similarly, fiduciary duty for a Presiding Bishop entail acting in good faith and in the best interests of the ELCA. This shared responsibility includes a commitment to uphold the church's mission, adhere to its constitutions, and manage its resources responsibly and ethically.

Such fiduciary obligations leave no quarter for covering for, nor turning a blind eye to malfeasance for the sake of a friend's reputation, to protect the office, the synod, or the ELCA, nor does it allow shying away from involvement or not stepping up in challenging times. Those who cannot accept such responsibility often resort to resignation when faced with significant malfeasance by their leadership because failure to act may lead to complicity.

The unjust actions of both bishops, the small group at RLC, your fiduciary obligations, and the risks of turning a blind eye are detailed in RLC Council's Position Statement [Challenge to Act Justly, Seek Truth and Fulfill Fiduciary Duty](#).

## **What Happens Next and Your Involvement**

The bishops' support for a dissenting faction and the improper appointment of an interim pastor are an attempt to manipulate governance through unconstitutional meetings, and the deliberate exclusion of loyal congregation members from decision-making. The dissenting faction uses tactics such as gerrymandering membership lists, scheduling a rushed and unprepared annual meeting, and undermining the legitimate RLC Council.

The RLC Council is poised to initiate extensive outreach, engaging all Alaska Synod congregations and councils, other ELCA churches beyond the synod, and the wider community of partners who rely on RLC's ministries and programs. Many have repeatedly asked, "What can we do?" We have diligently pursued every possible avenue that would be more discrete. RLC now has the focus of the state on our church body. RLC has prepared draft letters and petitions, ready to circulate, which highlight the ongoing harm caused by the degradation within RLC. Plans include exposing the involvement of those complicit in covering up the malfeasance committed by bishops.

RLC will also proceed with discovery, depositions, and other preparatory legal actions scheduled during a conference with the judge overseeing the Brendle lawsuit. This phase will further expose the complicity of both bishops with the small faction undermining RLC, its leadership, congregation, ministries, and the broader Juneau Community. Additionally, we are filing with the court a motion for a temporary restraining order (TRO) regarding their staged annual meeting this Sunday, January 26, 2025, which the RLC Council considers invalid and will not be attending. Because they have rushed this meeting, we have asked the court for an expedited hearing in the coming weeks to nullify the illegitimate actions they intend to pursue at their "meeting."

Should Bishop Oslovich continue his uncritical support of former Bishop Wickstrom's actions (and possibly continued secret involvement)—potentially enabled by his non-involvement—a dedicated group of RLC members is prepared to use their resources to visit every congregation and council. They will present evidence of the bishops' malfeasance, including emails, letters, and recordings from security cameras (with posted warnings), to illustrate the risk of similar interference in their affairs, including potential unconstitutional removals of their pastors. This group is expected to seek support in advocating for censure of Bishop Oslovich at both the synod council and 2025 Assembly for willful disregard or violation of the church's constitutions and bylaws.

The forthcoming events and the potential impact of your involvement (or lack thereof) are detailed in RLC Council's Position Statement [\*What Happens Next and Your Involvement\*](#).

### **Call to Action**

Please urge Bishop Oslovich to reflect on and address the wrongs of the past two years. Specifically, request Bishop Oslovich declare, upon further reflection, Bishop Wickstrom's actions taken with regard to the RLC June 9<sup>th</sup> congregation meeting were unconstitutional, the \*C15.11 / †S17.11 adjudication he declared is moot, his appointment of an interim pastor for RLC has ended, and that Pastor Karen has not been removed the Alaska Synod roster.

*Prepared by Congregation Counsel of Resurrection Lutheran Church Council on behalf of the Council, on information and belief, subject to reasonable amendment by Counsel, with concurrence of the Congregation President.*