

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
 Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
January 14, 2012
 Incarnation Lutheran Church
 1510 West Keefe Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Ignited by God's love, Burning for Justice, We embrace the world

Attendance

Name	Cluster/Position	Term Ends 8/31
The Rev. Eric Silberschmidt	Kenosha/West Racine	2013
The Rev. Steve Blyth	Lake Country	2015
Mr. Gus Barnes	Milwaukee 1	2013
Mr. Michael Herold	Milwaukee 2	2013
The Rev. Carolyn Fredriksen	Milwaukee 3	2015
Mr. Al Van Lith	Milwaukee 4	2015
Ms. Esther Rusch	Northern Lakeshore	2013
Ms. Beth Dorsey	Northwest	2013
Vacant	Racine	2013
The Rev. Sherrie Lorbeck	Waukesha	2015
The Rev. Gary Grindeland	At Large	2015
Ms. Debra Taylor	At Large	2015
Mr. John Gruber	At Large	2015
Ms. Susan Cyr	Vice President	2013 (2)
Mr. Matthew Brockmeier	Secretary	2015 (1)
Mr. Lee Johnston	Treasurer	2013 (1)
The Rev. Jeff Barrow	Bishop	2016 (1)
Vacant	Youth Representative	2013
Vacant	Young Adult Rep.	

Prior to the meeting, fellowship was enjoyed with a reading and prayer by Rev. Dennis Jacobsen quoting from and echoing Dr. Martin Luther King's ministry and calling; a fine Southern breakfast served by members of Incarnation; and a brief organ recital by James Stoebe including works by Adolphus Hailstork and J.S. Bach.

In addition to members of the Council, synod staff members Rev. Sandy Chrostowski, Kate Mattson and Ms. Mary Meyer were in attendance; along with Rev. Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld and Mr. Zach Wolf representing the Youth & Family Network; Rev. David Schoob, representing the Anti-Racism Task Force; and Ms. Better Warber, President of the Synod Women's Organization.

Youth and Family Ministry Network

Kate Mattson, Director of Youth and Family on Synod staff, and the two representatives of the Youth and Family Network, Rev. Thomas-Breitfeld and Mr. Wolf, were given the floor to discuss the question of how to proceed in implementing the 2010 Synod Assembly-approved "Resolution Regarding Synodical Youth Representation." Copies of the resolution were distributed, along with a brief outline of the approach to implementation recommended by the Network.

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The first topic for discussion was a request for clarification of the definitions and Synod actions regarding youth representation. Ms. Mattson said that the Network would like to “make this resolution better,” saying that the existing resolution doesn’t do a good enough job, with no defined process or timeline, and vagueness on the selection process. Secretary Matthew Brockmeier outlined language that was incorporated into the Synod’s governing documents in order to begin implementation of the resolution.

Mr. Wolf elaborated on Ms. Mattson’s concerns, urging that a plan be put in place to bring youth and young adults into leadership, avoiding what he termed “walking into a lion’s den” in having ill-conceived or badly-implemented plans that sour the young on the church in the long run. He reiterated that this was meant as a means to set up success rather than failure, and that the intent was not to invalidate the resolution.

Additional commentary included the idea of wanting to grow youth leaders upward, rather than a top-down approach, with the risk that the young who might end up serving on the Synod Council might be seen as tokens who are set up for boredom or failure. Also of concern was the idea that too much pressure would be applied to a youth representative to “be the one and only voice” representing their demographic, though Secretary Brockmeier stated his belief that, like any other member of the Council, the youth representative was not expected to bear the burden of representing an entire category of church members, but simply to be part of a body that was broadly representative of the community.

The Youth and Family Network plans to hold additional discussions in the near term, leading to a plan for presentation at the 2012 Synod Assembly. Part of their process will also be to research existing youth leadership programs in the Delaware-Maryland and Rocky Mountain Synods. This is meant to lay the groundwork for an education process and a youth leadership team.

One desired outcome will be formal orientation for youth and young adults, and others, going to the Synod Assembly. Rev. Thomas-Breitfeld said that this would be a side-by-side, concurrent event, grooming youth for leadership roles. She went on to say that the intent is to “build up” and “empower our youth,” enabling them to “see themselves as leaders.” Her opinion is that some congregations do this well, but others do not, with the proposed idea being an “intensive way of building future leaders.”

Ms. Mattson said that she does not support appointing a youth on synod council with the current structure and lack of a formal mentoring program, stating that a professional youth worker could serve as a representative instead, having an excellent ability to speak for youth. She cited the need for educating and mentoring youth, creating a trusting relationship where they understand what’s going on at meetings. Referring again to the Delaware-Maryland Synod she said that youth apply to be on leadership teams, with mentoring, for worship and service activities, with teams to plan and implement a Lutheran youth organization. She said this took a couple of years to develop.

Secretary Brockmeier expressed concerns about youth representation not being empowered through this structure, saying that giving the young direct voice is what is important, and citing examples of youth leadership roles that have been successfully undertaken.

Treasurer Lee Johnston, Ms. Rusch, and Vice President Cyr all stated their support for the good ideas presented by the Youth and Family Network, which they saw as building leadership. Rev.

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Eric Silberschmidt said that youth desire to have an impact with energy and excitement, adding that he saw this as a structure to get them more involved.

Other statements at this point included Ms. Mattson saying that she doesn't underestimate youth; Mr. Barnes urging the use of the gifts of youth; and Rev. Schoob saying that, for the Churchwide Assembly, having a youth caucus helped the young, adding that we must be accountable to reach goals we set. Bishop Jeff Barrow noted that the percentages [10% participation by youth and young adults] are a goal, urging work toward mentoring and broad agreement on this issue.

Treasurer Johnston suggested a "Synod 101" session for the congregational leaders' event, with a focus on youth. He asked what the council can do to help with the process of structuring and launching youth development.

Rev. Silberschmidt said that he wants this conversation to continue, with Youth and Family Network engagement, perhaps at every other Council meeting, saying that we should encourage and nurture a structure that is viable. Ms. Rusch indicated that Ms. Mattson wants assistance in this from the Synod Council, with Vice President Cyr seeking input on what exactly is needed.

Final comments moved out to look at how other constituencies are supported on the Synod Council and elsewhere, especially members at-large and persons of color. Rev. Schoob cited a need for "foundational strength for representatives of any group," with encouragement for the Council to take a broader look at this issue.

Action was taken to address the lack of an existing formal process to nominate individuals for the position of young adult representative on the Synod Council, with the understanding that multiple candidates would be sought to fill this position at the 2012 Synod Assembly. The Council approved an amendment to the Continuing Resolution adopted at its meeting of November 17, 2011 to add language providing for young adult representation through the same process as that adopted for youth representation. The revised Continuing Resolution reads:

S10.01.B12. The Synod Council, in cooperation with Youth and Family Ministry, shall be empowered to nominate candidates for the positions of youth member and young adult member on the Synod Council in the absence of such nominations by the youth council as described in S10.01.06.

The minutes of the Thursday, November 17, 2011, Synod Council meeting, with a date correction in the section on the call to order, were approved.

I. Bishop's Report

Bishop Jeff Barrow presented a written report in which he provided a brief overview of 2011 and preview of 2012. In his estimation societal polarization and the changing realities facing the church were hallmarks of 2011, while the approach to resources, especially the resource of youth as exemplified by the Gathering in New Orleans, promises to do much to frame 2012. He reiterated his oft-stated contention that he is blessed to be in ministry to southeastern Wisconsin, working with others who add to his, and our, blessings.

In remarks to the Council, the bishop said that the polarization of the larger society is reflected in the churches. He has always loved the "broad-shouldered" approach of the ELCA, and still wants the church to be that. Departures of congregations have been painful. They started out as responses to the sexuality question, but expanded to become tied to a whole range of issues.

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Bishop Barrow, mentioning an adjudicatory leaders meeting at Green Lake, recommended *The Big Sort*, a book that deals with the ongoing mainline decline since 1965 and the link of fundamentalism to a range of issues. He believes in the ELCA as a place where people with different views can be together in the Gospel, with justice from the Word.

The changing face of the church cannot be ignored, according to the bishop. Half of synod staff time is now spent dealing with congregations at the tipping point, with not enough time to encourage and bless the congregations that are thriving. It is important to look at the congregations: how do we link folks up together, bring people together in neighborhoods. Referring again to *The Big Sort*, he said that since 1965 the mainline churches have just been toughing it out, a situation that really is not working.

Referring to his recent surgery and aging, he said he realized that there are now things that won't be done again. But transcending this realization is the idea that it is a great time to be the church. Some of the pain of casting off old assumptions frees us to be what the church can be.

Citing an example, he mentioned that Redeemer in Milwaukee, which was a nice church 30 years ago in the commonly understood sense, but is now taking radical steps, bringing new life to their block while maintaining a worship presence in the community. They have undertaken very elaborate mapping of the neighborhood. A lesson is that life is fragile, but the future has promise. This congregation may be able to do good ministry AND be sustainable.

The bishop is excited about the Youth Gathering in New Orleans, saying that the ELCA's youth gatherings are one of the largest gatherings of any type in the country aside from sporting events. They are indeed the largest gathering of adults in ELCA in the years in which they take place. This year those attending will be housed with others from their synod.

In that the Youth Gathering sends a message about what we are as a church, the bishop wants the synod to help assure its success. His hope is to raise \$30,000 to help the 600 participants from 36 congregations who have registered. His goal is to provide \$500 to each congregation, for a total of \$18,000; with the other \$12,000 to be available through scholarships to individual attendees. His plan is the "50/50 This is Not a Raffle," with 50% of the proceeds to the Gathering, and the other 50% to other causes. The three "co-winners" of this non-raffle would choose where to send a one-third share of the second 50% from a list of five ministries (Outreach for Hope, GMS Campus Ministry, the ELCA's Malaria Campaign, the synod's Global Partners in Tanzania or El Salvador, or any ELCA congregation [not just in this synod]). The bishop opined that this will be a fun way to raise money while at the same time raising up other important ministries.

It was voted to approve Bishop Barrow's proposed "50/50 This is Not a Raffle" in support of participation by the Synod's congregations and their members in the 2012 Youth Gathering in New Orleans and other selected ministries, with "tickets" to be sold for \$10 each, and a drawing for three "winners" at the 2012 Synod Assembly. (No individuals will personally benefit by participating in this "non-raffle.")

Moving on to issues pertaining to the Synod's ongoing income erosion, the bishop said that Rev. Chrostowski, the synod's Director of Evangelical Mission, will arrange a gathering of key congregations, roughly 20 in number, based on giving. He expressed a need to hear that

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they are on-board with the synod's efforts to stabilize funding; pushing them to support the synod's ministry. He said that he is concerned about the decline and the prospect that we end up projecting a continuing decline. Ms. Rusch asked whether more money means more influence, with the bishop replying that it's not about influence, simply about the reality that a relatively small group of congregations have an outsized impact on overall synod income, stating that it's not to identify the "elite," but to realize who is effectively pushing finances. Rev. Chrostowski said that the goal is to determine how to get to a healthy place in giving. Ms. Rusch said that how you arrive at increases and what happens with decreases are two important conversations. Notice was taken that some congregations that are not big donors, and in some cases are in fact heavily funded, do tithe to the synod, representing true sacrifice and support. The bishop said that if the largest donor congregations are solidly on-board, they can be an inspiration to the synod. He said that this represents a short list of congregations, with some needing to be challenged and others to challenge each other.

Bishop Barrow addressed staff transitions, specifically the pending departure of Mary Meyer. Assistance in the transition process will be provided by Else Thompson from the ELCA. Part of the process will be to work with Mary to determine what has to be kept essentially as is, and what can be done differently. He said that this review is necessary in an age of downsizing, with no real prospect of being able to increase staff at any point. The question, he said, is how do we keep doing things better and more efficiently with a staff of ten engaged in unique ministries.

Finally there was a continuation of the ongoing discussion on the use of the proceeds from the sale of St. Andrew's. It was agreed that this must be a Synod Council decision, with an informal recommendation to staff that a detailed proposal be presented to the Council at a future meeting. Such a proposal should include any large-impact items, stemming from the bishop's earlier comments about wanting to have this money make a difference, as well as any amounts to be set aside for discretionary use or as part of the process for setting the next synod budget.

The Council voted to approve an open-ended Synod Call to the Rev. Larry Smith for synod interim ministry.

The Council also voted to approve Mr. Dale Landgren as a member of the Board of Directors of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, replacing the Rev. Dr. Harvard Stephens for the remainder of his term and continuing for a three-year term beyond the expiration of Dr. Stephens' term.

II. Executive Committee

The executive committee met by teleconference on January 11th to approve this morning's agenda, with some discussion on the Operational Ethics and Anti-Fraud policies. Minutes of that meeting were approved.

III. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Mr. Lee Johnston reported that synod income from benevolence was approximately \$130,000 under budget, though this is more than offset at this point by under-expenditures of roughly \$209,000 compared to year-to-date budgeted amounts. With the likelihood of an operating surplus for the fiscal year because of these under-expenditures, brief discussion ensued about

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the possible need to dispose of funds that exceed the synod's reserve cap of \$200,000. It was suggested that any such issue be addressed as part of the next year's budget, in that with full staffing and a continued decline in giving levels they may be needed to support operations in the near term.

The Treasurer's Report was approved as presented, and annual housing allowances were approved for 2012.

IV. Reports

- A. Director of Evangelical Mission – A written report was submitted. In addition, Rev. Chrostowski elaborated on her report by highlighting the work of the Synod Stewardship Team, the Mission Interpreter Training scheduled for 9:00 am to noon on Saturday, January 21st at Adoration in Greenfield, and ongoing work to prepare congregations to make LIFT's heavy lifting lighter through the development of easy-to-use implementation tools. LIFT will be included on the synod's website and at the synod leaders' event.
- B. Director of Discipleship – No report submitted.
- C. Director of Rostered Leadership – No report submitted.
- D. Youth and Family Network – A written report was submitted. Kate Mattson provided additional information at the meeting. Appreciation was expressed for her spending a large portion of her birthday at this meeting.
- E. Lutheran Campus Ministry – No report submitted.
- F. Deans – No report submitted.
- G. Anti-Racism Team – A written report was submitted. Rev. Schoob highlighted upcoming events, with special emphasis on the Crossroads Anti-Racism Training scheduled for January 26th through 28th at Atonement in Racine. He reminded the Council that all Council members are expected to participate in Anti-Racism Training at some point.
- H. WELCA – A written report was submitted.
- I. Outreach for Hope – No report submitted: a current newsletter was distributed at the meeting.

V. Old Business

The synod strategy for church placement, based on a proposal to do a market-based study, will be discussed at the next Council meeting, due to time constraints.

An update of the work of the Collective Bargaining Task Force was provided by Ms. Debra Taylor. The next steps will be a series of four listening sessions to solicit opinions and feelings on this issue. The sessions will be held on Wednesday, February 15th from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at St. John Lutheran (20275 Davidson, Brookfield); Saturday, February 25th from 9:30 to 11:30 am at Cross Lutheran (1821 N 16th, Milwaukee); Thursday, March 8th from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at Atonement Lutheran (2915 Wright Ave, Racine; and Sunday, March 18th from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at Grace Lutheran (303 Green Bay Rd, Thiensville). Additional details will be forthcoming. The Council voted to approve the expenditure of \$250 for expenses related to the Collective Bargaining Task Force's Listening Sessions.

VI. New Business

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- A. Action on the proposed Synod Antifraud Policy was deferred until legal review of the document by the ELCA is completed. This review was requested to be sure that all proposed actions were legal and would not open the synod to liability.
- B. Meru Day of Prayer – April 22. The Council voted to approve a synod-wide fundraising effort in support of the Meru Day of Prayer on April 22, 2012.
- C. Affirmation forms for the synod's new Operational Ethics Policy were distributed, with those present urged to sign and submit them to Secretary Brockmeier. Distribution will continue to all those covered by the policy.

Following adjournment, those attending the meeting returned to the sanctuary for a brief sending performance by Incarnation's Gospel Choir, which included a rendition of *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*.

Signed,
Matthew Brockmeier
Synod Secretary