

Greater Milwaukee Synod Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting held 17 March 2022.

Meeting held in person at the offices of the Greater Milwaukee Synod

1212 S. Layton Blvd. Milwaukee, Wisconsin

and via Zoom Technologies.

God's Vision: A world that embodies the fullness of life: justice, peace, equity, hope and love for everyone, including all races, genders, identities, abilities, and social status.

Our Mission: We follow Jesus, form communities, love all.

Meeting Attendance

Name	Conference/Position	Term Ends 8/31	Present	Absent	Anti-Racism
Jenny Brandt	North	2025		X	Pending
Robert Gee	Central	2025	X		11/2021
Vickie Stretz	West	2023	X		3/2021
The Rev. Matthew James	South	2025	Zoom		11/2021
Edwin Aparicio	West Central	2023		X	10/2019
The Rev. Denise Mbise	South Central	2023	X		4/2019
Amber Davis	At Large	2023		X	Pending
The Rev. Kevin Kretzmann Farrar	At Large	2023	X		4/2019
José Andrés Guerrero	At Large	2023	Zoom		Pending
The Rev. Kevin Beebe	At Large	2025	Zoom		11/2020
OPEN	At Large	2025		X	11/2021
Steven Hartfield	At Large	2025	X		11/2021
Joyce Caldwell	Vice President	2025 (2)	X		11/2018
The Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse	Secretary	2023 (1)		X	Pending
The Rev. Karen Pahl	Treasurer	2025 (1)	X		11/2021
The Rev. Paul Erickson	Bishop	2022 (1)	X		3/2021
VACANT	Youth Representative				
Jacob Guerrero	Young Adult Rep.	2025	X		Pending

Guests and Synod Staff

Others present included: **The Rev. Jennifer Arnold**, Assistant to the Bishop for Missional Leadership; **Walt Chossek (Kingo, Shorewood)**, President, Mt. Meru Coffee Project; **The Rev.**

Char Guiliani (Incarnation, Milwaukee), Reconciling in Christ Ministry Team; **The Rev. Chris Manke**, Executive Director, Outreach for Hope; **Sue Seidemann**, President, Women of the ELCA **The Rev. Matthew Short**, Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission.

**In compliance with new guidance regarding the recording of Actions from the Office of the Secretary, numbering for Synod Council Actions does not reset at the onset of each month, but continues throughout the year.*

*Thus, SC22.01.16. may be followed by SC22.03.17., not SC22.03.01.**

Call to Order

Vice President Caldwell called the meeting to order at 6:14 p.m.

Devotions

Walt Chossek of the Mt. Meru Coffee project offered a devotion based on John 15:1-8, the parable of the vine and the branches. **Chossek** shared a reflection from **Bishop Elias Kitoi Nasari** of the Diocese of Meru, noting the agrarian nature of this passage. Connecting the story of the vine and branches to the growth of coffee plants and the growth of the coffee ministry, he noted how God connects us with one another and God graciously gives what we need.

I. Consent Agenda

Council Action

SC 22.03.17. Approval of Consent Agenda

The Council voted to approve items from the consent agenda as presented, including approval of voice for visitors; adoption of agenda for this meeting; approval of minutes from the Synod Council meeting of 20 January 2022; approval of On-Leave from Call Status for **The Rev. David Dragseth**, effective 31 January 2022; and **The Rev. Sheila Rawn**, effective 20 February 2022; approval of Retired Status for **The Rev. David Patterson**, effective 1 March 2022; review of the Retired Ministers' Roster (last names A-I); approval of the Candidacy Committee and ratification of the Candidacy Committee Roster, including **The Rev. Delaney Schlake-Kruse (St. Paul's, Milwaukee)**, Chair; **Deacon Sue Giese**; **Esther Rusch (Faith, Cedarburg)**; **Debra Taylor (Cross, Milwaukee)** as continuing members; **Bishop Paul Erickson** and **The Rev. Klaus-Peter Adam (Lutheran School of Theology—Chicago)** as members ex-officio; and **The Rev. Allison Johnson (Journey in Faith, Racine)**, **Tyler Constable (St. Luke, Slinger)**, and **Diane Roznowski (Mt. Carmel, Milwaukee)** to 4-year terms, effective 1 May 2022.

II. Synod Calls

Council Action

SC 22.03.18. Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call for **The Rev. Lindsay Brennan** called to chaplaincy through Aurora at Home, Burlington; effective 17 March 2022.

Council Action

SC 22.03.19. Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call for **The Rev. Elizabeth Jaeger**, called to chaplaincy through Allay Home and Hospice, Brookfield, effective 18 January 2022.

III. Ministry Highlight

Walt Chossek, President of the Mt. Meru Coffee Project, presented a brief history and highlights of the Mt. Meru Coffee Project along with sharing the 2021 Annual Report. An offshoot of the synod partnership with the Diocese of Meru in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, the coffee project began with the goal of supporting farmers throughout Meru with living wages. The board's members are ratified by the Synod Council, who also holds accountability to approve bylaw changes.

Chossek noted the Coffee Project has adapted its business model, and recently took out ad space in *Living Lutheran* and began selling as a third-party seller through Amazon, both of which aim to spread exposure. The Project also is looking for skilled board members to help expand the reach of Mt. Meru Coffee deeper into social media.

IV. Vice President's Report

Vice President Caldwell thanked Synod Council members for their commitment and dedication to the work of the leadership retreat on the Synod's Anti-racism and Reconciling in Christ identities. She provided written summaries of the key takeaways from the Fall Conference Gatherings, which highlighted a desire for synod efforts on greater diversity and the concern over divisive and partisan issues in congregations. **Robyn DiGiacinto** will be working to turn this written report into a video, which will be shared on the Bishop Election Webpage.

V. Bishop's Report

Bishop Erickson highlighted information related to the Synod Budget and the Executive Committee's efforts to how to bring future budgets to balance. The ongoing practice of passing deficit budgets is no longer feasible; he noted that going forward, the likely way to remedy deficit budgets will involve a re-configuration of the Synod Staff.

Bishop Erickson also updated the Council on the vetting process to begin an Authentic Diversity Audit for the Synod. Inspired by **Bishop Leila Ortiz** and the Metro D.C. Synod, a small group of Executive Committee, Synod Deans, and Anti-racism leaders have begun recruiting proposals from three different firms who do this sort of institutional review. The approval to carry out this audit will come before the Synod Council at future meetings. The cost of this estimates around \$50,000.

VI. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Pahl presented the latest financial reports. Mission support in February was surprisingly low, with \$82,000 received. \$141,000 is the budgeted amount of Mission Support in February, the first month of the Synod's fiscal year. **Pahl** noted this may be an extreme deviation, and will follow-up on what might have led to this variation.

Council Action

SC 22.03.20. Reception of Financial Reports

The Council voted to receive the financial reports through 28 February 2022 as presented.

VII. Old Business

A. Update and Next Steps on Mission Appeal: "Equipping the Saints"

Vice President Caldwell, presenting as the Campaign Manager, reported that as of 14 March 2022, current gifts and pledges total \$519,660 of the \$2.3 million goal. She also noted that pilot congregations have begun giving from their pledges. **St. Olaf, Rubicon** has completed their giving; **Gloria Dei, Menomonee Falls** will soon receive commitments; **Grace, Thiensville** has discerned their capital campaign will include gifts to Equipping the Saints.

The Council discussed forming a disbursement committee to review ETS requests and begin to develop protocols for grants and other initiatives of the campaign. **The Rev. Matt James** indicated his interest in serving on that committee, along with **Steven Hartfield** and **The Rev. Denise Mbise**. Council postpone a decision on the funds to the May meeting.

The Council acted upon a recommendation from the Executive Committee to disburse funds from the Campaign which had been requested from Outreach for Hope and Lutheran Campus Ministry.

Council Action

SC 22.03.21. Approval of Equipping the Saints Funds Disbursement

The Council voted to approved disbursing \$19,000 in funds from the Equipping the Saints Appeal: \$10,000 to Lutheran Campus Ministry, and \$9,000 to Outreach for Hope.

B. Appointment of Youth Synod Council Member

Caldwell noted the Synod has received interest from an individual seeking a 2-year term on the Synod Council from a youth (someone under 18 at time of election/appointment). The timing of the term is currently for one remaining year, and may require action by the Synod Council after the Synod Assembly to keep terms in alignment.

C. Designation of Funds from Abiding Savior Sale Proceeds

The Council reached consensus to postpone any action on this matter until the May Synod Council Meeting.

D. Bishop Election Committee Update

Co-Chair Stretz updated the Council that 7 names were presented as Pre-Assembly Candidates to participate in the Bishop Election process set forth by the Council. 2 (**Bishop Erickson** and **The Rev. Michelle Townsend dé Lopez**) have agreed to participate in the process. They will still need separate nomination on the first (ecclesiastical) ballot. Information from and video interviews with these candidates will be available in the coming weeks and will come down once registration closes.

VIII. New Business

A. Synod Assembly Related Actions

1. Recommendation of Synod Assembly Rules for Approval

The Council discussed the Synod Assembly Rules presented by the Executive Committee. There was some debate on the rule limiting discussion to three speakers in favor and three against each motion; it was noted debate could be extended by vote at the Assembly.

There was some discussion of the use of the Lumi platform and how to engage virtual members in debate. It was noted that concerns with Lumi's functionality which arose at the 2021 Assembly have been resolved by the company.

It was noted the rules being recommended also include the rules for the election of a Bishop. There is some difference in the election on fourth ballot, compared to previous bishop's elections.

Council Action

SC 22.03.22. Recommendation of Synod Assembly Rules for Approval

The Council voted to recommend the 2022 Rules for approval by the 2022 Synod Assembly.

2. Recommendation of Synod Assembly Agenda for Approval

The Council discussed the proposed Assembly agenda. **Bishop Erickson** noted the timing of this Assembly will require voting log-in to close Friday at 5 p.m. and reopen on Saturday morning. Floor nominations will be received, but not from microphones.

Council Action

SC 22.03.23. Recommendation of Synod Assembly Agenda for Approval

The Council voted to recommend the 2022 Agenda for approval by the 2022 Synod Assembly.

3. Recommendation of 2023-2024 Synod Budget for Assembly Approval

The Council discussed the proposed 2023-2024 Synod. **Treasurer Pahl** noted this budget includes a deficit, in part because of the cash flow increase over the past years from federal PPP funding. Reductions have been made in areas of the budget related to candidacy costs and travel expenses for Synod Staff. As discussed in the Bishop's Report, the staffing of the Synod Office will need to be

Council Action

SC 22.03.24. Recommendation of 2023-2024 Budget for Approval

The Council voted to recommend the 2023-2024 Synod Budget for approval by the 2022 Synod Assembly.

reconfigured; however, decisions on this area cannot be made before the Bishop Election. (Note: A more detailed discussion of the 2023-2024 Synod Budget can be found in the March Executive Committee Minutes).

4. Designation of Synod Assembly Offering

Council Action

SC 22.03.25. Designation of Synod Assembly Offering

The Council voted to designate the 2022 Synod Assembly Offering in full to Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.

5. Approval of Nominating Committee Members

Council Action

SC 22.03.26. Approval of Nominating Committee Members

The Council voted to approve **The Rev. John Bischoff (United, Racine)** and **David Groenewold (St. Mark, Waukesha)** as Conference nominees serving on the Nominating Committee.

6. Recommendation of Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions

a. Voting Membership for Retired Rostered Ministers

The Council discussed proposed amendments to bylaws and continuing resolutions related to the voting membership of retired rostered ministers. The proposed changes will reduce the number of retired ministers who are automatically voting members at Synod Assembly to 15% of the total roster. Currently, all rostered retired ministers are

automatically made voting members, which throws the percentage of lay and rostered individuals out of compliance with the Constitutional requirements for a legal meeting.

Bishop Erickson provided some history related to previous attempts to amend this issue and clarified how retired rostered ministers will caucus to elect their representatives. This action requires approval by the Assembly. It was also noted that all retired rostered ministers would still be welcome to attend Synod Assembly at a discounted rate, but would not have voting privileges.

Council Action

SC 22.03.27.

**Recommendation of Bylaw Amendments
For Adoption by 2022 Synod Assembly**

The Council voted to recommend amendments to the following bylaws and continuing resolutions related to the voting member status of retired rostered ministers to the 2022 Synod Assembly:

Amending bylaw **S7.22.01.** to remove retired rostered ministers from automatically counting as voting members; Adding bylaw **S7.22.02.**, granting voting member status to “Retired ministers of Word and Sacrament on the synod roster formally serving in transitional ministries in congregations of the synod;” and adding bylaw **S.7.22.03**, which allows Retired rostered ministers to elect members from retired roster not to exceed fifteen percent of the total number of retired ministers to serve as voting members at the Synod Assembly; and striking continuing resolution **S7.21.A22.**, which granted additional lay voting members to maintain a legal meeting status in 2022.

b. Voting Membership for SAWCs

The Council acted upon the Executive Committee’s recommendation to update the governing documents’ language regarding the representation from Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities

Council Action

SC 22.03.28.

Amendment to Continuing Resolutions

The Council voted to replace Continuing Resolution **S7.26.A17.** with **S7.26.A22.**, which states: “All Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities are allowed three voting members of the Synod Assembly, one of whom shall be the community’s Synod Authorized Leader (if not rostered), and the other two elected from the lay participants of the Worshipping Community.

c. Voting Membership for Lutheran Campus Ministry

d. RIC and Anti-Racism/Racial Equity Teams

The Council acted upon a recommended Continuing Resolution from the Executive Committee, which formally names and codifies the existence and guidelines for the Synod Anti-racism and Reconciling in Christ Ministry teams. **Vice President Caldwell** lifted up the role of these formalized groups for accountability with the Synod Staff and Synod

Council Action

SC 22.03.30.
SC 22.03.29.

Adoption of Continuing Resolution

The Council adopted Continuing Resolution S11.01.D22, which states, "The Council voted to adopt Continuing Resolution S7.21.C22, which states, "The Synod Council shall authorize and support the Synod Antiracism Team and the Lutheran Campus Ministry within this synod may elect no more than two students, preferably of differing gender identities, as voting members to the Synod Assembly, and ratify the chairperson of each team. The Bishop shall appoint a synod staff person as liaison to each team to assist with,

support, and ensure the work of the team is carried out as needed.

- b. Each team shall identify appropriate leadership to ensure the delivery of programs and events in accordance with the responsibilities of the team, including accompanying congregations on their racial justice and LGBTQIA+ justice education and strategy development. Leadership team members shall not serve in any particular role for longer than six years.
- c. Each team shall identify a non-voting representative to the Synod Council for regular dialogue and reporting.
- d. Each team shall serve as an accountability partner with the Synod Council and Synod staff, serving in an advisory role in development and revision of synod policies, practices, and procedures.
- e. Each team shall include rostered ministers and lay leaders from across the synod who engage with the leadership team to carry out the team's work."

Council. This is a byproduct of the work of the Authentic Diversity working group and the Synod Council retreat held in February.

e. Language Updates to Synod Constitution

The Council acted on a number of proposed amendments to bylaws and continuing resolutions presented by **Secretary Schlake-Kruse**, which attempt to bring sections of the governing documents in line with current verbiage, practices, and functions of the Synod's life.

Council Action

**SC 22.03.31. Recommendation of Constitutional Amendments
for Approval by the 2022 Synod Assembly**

The Council voted to recommend proposed amendments to S6.03.B15.; S8.22.A13.; S10.01.B12.; S10.07.01.; and S11.02.01. for approval by the 2022 Synod Assembly.

7. Discussion of Resolutions and Memorials

Bishop Erickson presented an update on resolutions and memorials received to date ahead of Assembly. Action will be recommended by the Reference and Counsel Committee.

B. Ratification of Reconciling in Christ Chair

Council Action

SC 22.03.32. Ratification of Reconciling in Christ Chair

The Council voted to ratify **The Rev. Char Guiliani (Incarnation, Milwaukee)** as Chair of the Reconciling in Christ team and non-voting representative to the Synod Council.

C. Adoption of Anti-Racism Team Mission and Charge

Vice President Caldwell asked for the Council's formal approval of the charge to authorize the new incarnation of the Anti-Racism team, which will be discerning its own name going forward. This carries out the function of **S11.01.D22.a.**, approved earlier at this meeting. As noted in the Vice President's report, "the presence and impact of racism continues to devastate our communities within and outside of the church, harming the whole people of God and keeping us from living as the Beloved Community God intends. The purpose of the Racial Equity Team of the Greater Milwaukee Synod includes, but is not limited to:

- providing for anti-racism training to rostered ministers, synod council and congregational leaders that fosters understanding of the reality of racism, its roots and its impact;
- accompanying congregations and groups as they move more deeply into development of anti-racism strategies;

- _serving as an accountability partner with synod council and synod staff in the ongoing work of transformation toward racial equity.

Expectations of Team: the team will meet monthly; team members are asked to commit for two years.”

Council Action

SC 22.03.33. Adoption of Anti-Racism Team Authorization and Charge

The Council voted to authorize the formation of a new Anti-racism team under specific guidelines and charge them to carry out purposes of training, accompaniment, and accountability throughout the Greater Milwaukee Synod.

D. Appointment of Lutheran Campus Ministry Board Member

Council Action

SC 22.03.34. Nomination to Lutheran Campus Ministry Board.

The Council voted to nominate **The Rev. Matt James** as Synod Council representative on the board of Lutheran Campus Ministry in Greater Milwaukee.

IX. Reports

- A. Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted. **The Rev. Short** noted that the Synod Staff were part of a zoom call with Mission Insight, an organization that provides demographic data for specific areas to help ask better questions for congregations in transition. The staff are testing the software to see its feasibility for use with interim pastors at a cost of \$3,000, funded by grant dollars. He also noted his separate work as a facilitator for “Leading Well” events. He noted the possible formation of an additional Synod Authorized Worshipping Community and an emerging partnership between **Capital Drive, Milwaukee** and **The Table, Milwaukee**.
- B. Congregations in Mission** – A written report was submitted.
- C. Missional Leadership** – Written report was submitted.
- D. Lutheran Campus Ministry** – Written report was submitted.
- E. Reconciling in Christ** – Written Report submitted.
- F. Anti-Racism Team** – No report.
- G. Women of the ELCA-** Written report submitted. **Seidemann** noted that there is no constitutional provision allowing for disbanding of the organization. Synod leaders are working with the Churchwide Women of the ELCA leaders to discern next steps.

- H. Outreach for Hope** – Written report submitted. **The Rev. Manke** highlighted the success of Lenten Devotions from Outreach for Hope.
- I. ELCA Church Council** – No report.
- J. Healing Network**- No Report submitted.

X. Adjournment

Council Action

SC 22.03.35. Adjournment

The council, reaching the end of its agenda of business, adjourned with prayer at 8:40 p.m.

**Next Meeting: Thursday, May 12 at Lord of Life, Kenosha
5:30 dinner, 6:15 meeting begins.**

Unless otherwise published in advance, all meetings begin at 6:15 pm.

Signed,

The Rev. Kevin Kretzmann Farrar, Acting Secretary