

Greater Milwaukee Synod Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting held 21 July 2022.

Meeting held at the Greater Milwaukee Synod Office, 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
Jerry Key	Central	2025		X	Pending
Vickie Stretz	West	2023	X		3/2021
The Rev. Matthew James	South	2025		X	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		X	Pending
The Rev. Kevin Beebe	At Large	2025	X		11/2020
Rose Dotson	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)	Zoom		Pending
The Rev. Karen Pahl	Treasurer	2025 (1)	X		11/2021
The Rev. Paul Erickson	Bishop	2028 (2)	X		3/2021
Lucas Short	Youth Representative	2023	X		Pending
Jacob Guerrero	Young Adult Rep.	2025		X	Pending

Guests and Synod Staff

Others present included: **The Rev. Char Guiliani (Incarnation, Milwaukee)**, Reconciling in Christ Ministry Team; **The Rev. Kristin Nielsen**, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations in Mission **Mary Romskog**, Synod Assemble Manager; **The Rev. Matthew Short**, Assistant to

the Bishop for Evangelical Mission; and **Sonja Wolfe (Lord of Life, Kenosha)**, ELCA Church Council Representative.

**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 6:19 p.m.

Devotions

Treasurer Pahl led the Council in devotions from the resource *Jesus: Life Coach*, based on Luke 22:19, where Jesus multiplies the bread to feed thousands. Noting that Christ looks at what we have and multiplies in ways we could never imagine, the Council discusses where and how God has multiplied our metaphorical “bread.”

I. Appointment of Synod Council Member

Council Action

SC 22.07.47. Appointment of Synod Council Member

The Council voted to appoint **Lucas Short (Holy Cross, Menomonee Falls)** to fill the open Youth Synod Council seat immediately, for a term ending in May 2023.

II. Approval of Synod Council Conference Nominee

Council Action

SC 22.07.48. Approval of Synod Council Conference Nominee

The Council voted to approve the nomination of **Jerry Key (Reformation, Milwaukee)** as the Central Conference Synod Council Member, completing the term through 2025 vacated by **Robert Gee (Capitol Drive, Milwaukee)**, effective immediately.

III. Consent Agenda

Council Action

SC 22.07.49. 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 12 May 2022; approval of standard On Leave from Call Status for **The Rev. Tom Smith**, effective 7 June 2022; and approval of Retired Status for **The Rev. Jay Ford**, effective 1 August 2022.

IV. Synod Calls

Council Action

SC 22.07.50. Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call for **The Rev. Steve Rutter**, called to Interim Ministry at **Lake Park, Milwaukee**; effective 6 June 2022.

Council Action

SC 22.07.51. Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call for **The Rev. John Berg**, called to Interim Ministry at **Our Savior's, Oconomowoc**; effective 1 July 2022.

Council Action

SC 22.07.52. Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call for **The Rev. Karen Pahl**, called to Interim Ministry at **Mount Olive, Mukwonago**; effective 1 August 2022.

The Rev. Karen Pahl abstained from voting.

V. Vice President's Report

Vice President Caldwell ceded her report time to further discussion of the agenda topics related to the Authentic Diversity Audit later in the meeting.

VI. Bishop's Report

Bishop Erickson presented highlights from his written report to the Council. He noted the transition of **Lee Johnston**, who will be leaving the Synod Staff, and shared some details with the Council regarding human resources issues related to **Johnston's** departure. A revised job description has been posted and **Treasurer Pahl and Mary Romskog** will lead the interview process. **Treasurer Pahl** will be taking an increased role in helping transfer institutional knowledge and maintaining financial requirements until a new hire is onboarded.

The Bishop will be among the Synod's Voting Members at the 2022 Churchwide Assembly in Columbus, Ohio. He noted he has needed to replace voting members who are unable to attend and will use his appointment power to do that should other needs arise. He also addressed the timeline for the Authentic Diversity Audit and its impact on future synod programming.

Bishop Erickson presented his actions regarding matters of Synod Authorized Ministers and Call Status for Rostered Ministers. **Tracy Gingrass (Be Still)** and **Charlotte Linberry (St. Paul's Milwaukee)** have been authorized for ministry; **Linberry's** authorization will terminate 31 December 2022, following the completion of parental leave for **The Rev. Delaney Schlake-Kruse**.

In addition, **Bishop Erickson** reported that **Jay Thorson**, who recently retired from **Holy Trinity, West Allis**, did not seek to request retired status as a Rostered Minister and will no longer be a Rostered Minister in the ELCA. **German Novelli**, who was issued a Synod Call in

March 2022 after completing his ELCA Candidacy transition from the **Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod**, has been granted an exception from the Conference of Bishops to serve in specialized ministry without three years of congregational service.

The Council engaged in discussion with **Bishop Erickson** regarding the impact of conflict and discipline proceedings in the **Sierra Pacific Synod** and the impact of these issues across the church and within our Synod. **The Rev. Beebe** sought clarification as to the Greater Milwaukee Synod's policies and where there are gray areas of discretion where the Synod Bishop and/or Synod Council have power.

Aparicio shared testimony as a Latino ministry leader in this Synod, it has been challenging not only to see what has happened to the specific Latino ministry in **Sierra Pacific**, but also to note the impact on immigrants who are or who may feel called to serve the church. He urged care and humility in how we act and action to prevent similar situations from happening in the Greater Milwaukee Synod. The Council discussed the process for "On Leave from Call Status" and how best to create a system of transparent checks and balances when misconduct occurs and when the context is complex. There was consensus that review of the Synod's policy statement on misconduct and processes for removal from the roster should be descriptive and clear going forward.

Council Action

SC 22.07.53. Commission of Policy Statement Revision

The Council voted to act by revisiting, revising, and adopting new Synod policy statements related to misconduct, discipline, and call status, to be completed by the 2023 Synod Assembly.

In addition, Council members inquired about the process by which the Bishop issues or chooses not to issue public statements, in light of the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson*.

VII. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Pahl presented the latest financial reports. Overall, there is a \$51,000 deficit to date, slightly ahead of the projected deficit for this point in the fiscal year. Actuals compare favorably to the budget relative to expenses. Congregational Mission support remains below budgeted levels (\$73,000). It is unclear at this point if the shortfall in congregational gifts is across-the-board or related to delayed giving from a few congregations.

Council Action

SC 22.07.54. Reception of Financial Reports

The Council voted to receive the financial reports through 30 June 2022 as presented.

VIII. Old Business

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

1. Update on Receipts and Pledges

Vice President Caldwell, presenting as the Campaign Manager, reported the Synod

has received \$849,321, or 37% of the goal. We are now beginning the congregation phase of the campaign. Current giving from congregations is \$149,510 which includes the \$74,325. gift from the closing of Abiding Savior. Giving has been strong in the First Round congregation campaigns, with congregations exceeding their goals and finding renewed understanding and support for our synod and ministries.

The Synod Council will begin taking responsibility for designating the use of ETS funds. Working groups are beginning to take shape, with involvement from the Mission Table (innovation); Outreach for Hope (collaboration); and Leadership (Anti-Racism and RIC Teams, Synod Council. **Schlake-Kruse** noted the likely need for conflict of interest forms for these individuals. It is likely the Synod Council will receive recommendations on fund disbursements at its January meeting, following the total receipts from 2022.

2. Recommendation of Designating Funds from Mark Olson Estate

Council Action

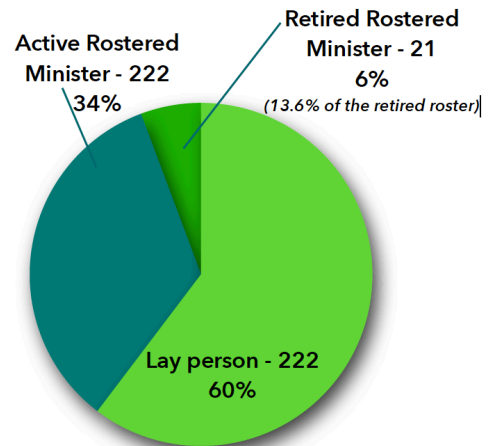
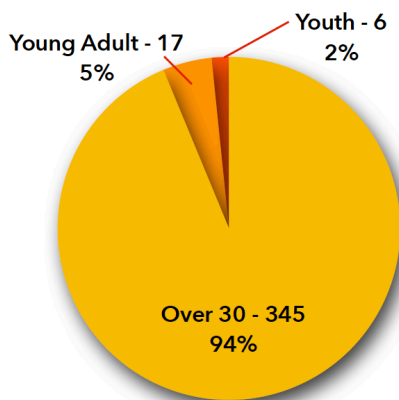
SC 22.07.55. Disbursement of Undesignated Funds

The Synod Council approved disbursing \$19,605 from the Mark Olson Estate Bequest to the Equipping the Saints Mission Appeal.

B. Synod Assembly Review

Synod Assembly Manager Mary Romskog presented highlights from her written report from the 2022 Synod Assembly. Overall, feedback from evaluations was good, and the planning team noted the need for a longer overall Assembly when there is a Bishop Election. There were 368 voting members registered and 406 total registrants.

Voting Member Demographics



Romskog noted the demographics of voting members, specifically related to age and roster status. Financially, the cost of registration this year netted a \$25-27 loss per person if the Assembly were to break-even. She did note there was an increased cost in purchasing the new *All Creation Sings* hymnals, food costs (inflationary) and

technology costs (new firm). There was a significant increase in the Assembly Offering, which shared \$18,000 with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.

C. Updates on Authentic Diversity Audit

Bishop Erickson and **Vice President Caldwell** shared updates on the next steps and formation of “priority topics” for the Authentic Diversity Audit’s survey stage. Gold Enterprises has requested a document review of Synod policies and governing documents, which is underway.

The Synod Council divided into small groups to discuss and discern what areas we hope this audit will explore in our Synod’s life and practices.

VIII. New Business

A. Synod Staff Job Description Review

Bishop Erickson gave a brief verbal overview of the updated job descriptions and his vision for the Synod Staff going forward. He sought general approval for his descriptions and vision for the Assistant to the Bishop Positions. As discussed in previous Council meetings, and as proposed in grants with the Siebert Lutheran Foundation, a new position is being formed to create an **Assistant to the Bishop for Authentic Diversity and Leadership**. Other positions will be an “Assistant to the Bishop for Innovation and Collaboration” and “Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations in Transition.”

Bishop Erickson noted his hopes this new position, and the individual hired to fill it, will help the synod live into the results of the Authentic Diversity Audit and lead congregations in employing and creating diversity strategies. There is some “fuzziness” yet as how this staff member will assist with call processes.

Council members engaged in discussion about aspects of the job description. There was discussion of opening all or one position to new hires, how to integrate the new assistant on a continuing Synod Staff, and the financial realities of a Synod budget with a high percentage on salaries. The Council sought some clarification around the specificity of the roles of the new assistant related to call process. Rather than formally approve these roles, the Council reached consensus to forward further questions, reflections, and ideas to **Caldwell**, where there would be space for further follow-up with the Executive Committee.

B. Update on Congregational Property and Building Issues

1. Capitol Drive Lutheran Church

Bishop Erickson presented an update on the pending Holy Closure of **Capitol Drive, Milwaukee**. The church currently owns two buildings, an educational building at 5205 W. Capitol Drive and the church building at 3970 N. 54th Street, Milwaukee. The congregation’s asset disbursement plan includes plans to transfer ownership of the 54th Street property to the Greater Milwaukee Synod for use by **The Table**, the Synod Authorized Worshipping Community led by **Minister Venice Williams**. **The Table** has already been using and plans to lease portions of the property to a variety of ministries

and businesses. It is ELCA practice that Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities (SAWCs) do not own property, but that deed to any property is held by the Synod until the SAWC is more established. An informal agreement has been reached with **The Table**, and a lease agreement is being drafted to clarify that all costs and fees related to the building (taxes, maintenance, utilities, etc.) will be borne by **The Table**.

Council Action

SC 22.07.56. Receipt of Property

The Synod Council approved receiving the ownership of the building formerly housing Capitol Drive Lutheran Church—3970 N. 54th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin—pending the congregation’s vote to transfer the property and the drafting of a lease agreement by the Synod Attorney.

2. St. Peter/Kujichagulia Center Property

Bishop Erickson also presented an update on the property formerly housing St. Peter Lutheran Church (39th and Capitol Drive, Milwaukee) and the Kujichagulia Lutheran Center. The land there included the church building and an adjacent parsonage. He provided a brief history on a painful history of this property over the past twenty years. The ownership of the property was transferred from the synod to the Kujichagulia Lutheran Center by means of a Quit Claim Deed, with a stipulation that if the property was no longer being used as intended, the synod could reclaim ownership

Currently, the church building on the property has fallen into significant disrepair; the parsonage has been and is currently occupied by **Minister Venice Williams** and her family. **Williams** has maintained this property and paid all property taxes on the whole parcel. The Kuji Center is still listed as the legal owner of the property; however, the Center was legally dissolved in 2011.

Bishop Erickson and The Rev. Matt Short have consulted with **Williams** who seeks to remain in the parsonage and is still hoping to include the building as a long-term part of ministry at **The Table**. **Williams** has requested the property remain one parcel, and **Bishop Erickson** would recommend the Synod take the necessary steps to claim ownership of the property and prepare a document clarifying the relationship, roles, and rights of **Williams, The Table, and The Greater Milwaukee Synod**.

The Council discussed concerns related to insurance of this property and other financial liability in reclaiming this property. There was consensus to table action on this item until further clarification could be received regarding insurance and liability for the property.

3. Peace Lutheran Church

Bishop Erickson also presented an update on the status of **Peace Lutheran, Church, Milwaukee**. The congregation lost ownership of their building (51st and Villard, Milwaukee) in previous years due to unpaid debts, and was claimed by the City of Milwaukee. The primary leader of the congregation, **Will Robertson**, has joined a new congregation, and as the pandemic set in, all activity of the congregation has ceased.

Bishop Erickson has consulted with the Synod Attorney and Churchwide Counsel as to best practices for acknowledging the disbanding of a congregation.

Council Action

SC 22.07.57. Acknowledgment of Congregational Dissolution

The Council voted to acknowledge the congregation **Peace Lutheran Church, Milwaukee**, has ceased functioning as a congregation and has dissolved; and to authorize **Bishop Paul Erickson** to take all necessary steps to register this dissolution with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the State of Wisconsin.

C. Synod Council Communication with Luther Seminary

Vice President Caldwell presented a request from **Charlotte Linberry (Lake Park, Milwaukee) and St. Paul's Lutheran Milwaukee** where they are serving as Vicar, asking the Synod Council to draft and sign a letter strongly encouraging Luther Seminary to reverse its decision to not pursue becoming a Reconciling in Christ institution.

Council Action

SC 22.07.58. Authorization of Letter to Luther Seminary

The Council voted to authorize a letter from the Synod Council to the leadership of Luther Seminary, encouraging the Seminary to become a Reconciling in Christ institution.

D. Election of Synod Council Executive Committee

Council Action

SC 22.07.59. Election of Executive Committee Members

The Council elected **Rose Dotson, The Rev. Matt James, and Steve Hartfield** to serve one-year terms on the Executive Committee, effective 1 September 2022.

IX. Reports

A. Evangelical Mission – A written report was submitted.

- i. **The Rev. Short** noted constitutional changes have formalized an ecumenical partnership already being practiced at **The Hospitality Center, Racine**. Previously only organized as an agency of The Episcopal Church, the Center's board voted to amend its constitution to "affiliate with the ELCA as a partnered outreach ministry," in the spirit of Called to Common Mission. Three Board Seats have been apportioned to members of Greater Milwaukee Synod Congregations.
- ii. The ELCA is working with area leaders to innovate Young Adult Ministry in Milwaukee's downtown area following the transition at Lutheran Campus Ministry at Marquette University. Following a model institution by Churchwide leaders,

“Gather” may be a path worth following. These ideas center on a lay-led young adult ministry that focuses on empowerment, and does not operate as a traditional SAWC. iii. **The Rev. Short** also shared updates from **Vance Blackfox**, ELCA Director for Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations, who is proposing a redevelopment strategy for **Lutheran Church of the Great Spirit, Milwaukee**. Formal action from the Synod Council. to support this redevelopment will be needed the Synod Council will be needed going forward.

- B. Congregations in Mission** – A written report was submitted.
- C. Missional Leadership** – No report was submitted. **The Rev. Arnold** is on sabbatical.
- D. Lutheran Campus Ministry** – No report was submitted.
- E. Reconciling in Christ** – A written report was submitted.
- F. Anti-Racism Team** – No report.
- G. Women of the ELCA**- Written report submitted.
- H. Outreach for Hope** – Written report submitted.
- I. Latino Strategy Table**—An oral report was shared by **Aparicio** and **The Rev. Short**. The Latino Strategy Table has its first retreat, with 65 individuals present. There is good excitement and energy among these leaders in our synod.
- J. ELCA Church Council** – No report submitted.
- J. Healing Network**- Written Report submitted.

X. Adjournment

Council Action

SC 22.07.60. Adjournment

The council, reaching the end of its agenda of business, adjourned with prayer at 9:07 p.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, September 22nd.
Dinner at 5:30; Meeting at 6:15

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

Submitted,

The Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse, Synod Secretary