

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA

Minutes of the Synod Council Meeting

18 January 2024

Meeting held on Zoom

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 for Synod Council Members

Name	Conference/Position	Term Ends 8/31	Present	Absent	Anti-Racism
Coleman, Laura	At Large Lay	2027	X		
Anderson, Rev. Doug	At Large Clergy	2025	X		
Beutin, Todd	South Central	2027	X		6/2023
Caldwell, Dr. Joyce	Vice President	2025 (2)	X		10/2023
Dotson, Dr. Rose	At Large Lay	2025	X		11/2021
Erickson, Rev. Paul	Bishop	2028 (2)	X		6/2023
Grosser, Linda	North	2025	X		10/2023
Guerrero, José Andrés	At Large	2027 (2)		X	Pending
Guerrero, Jacob	Young Adult Rep.	2025		X	Pending
Gyson, Rev. Joshua	At Large Clergy	2027	X		Pending
Hartfield, Steven	At Large Lay	2025	X		11/2021
James, Rev. Matthew	South	2025	X		11/2021
Jordan, Rev. Kimberly	West	2027	X		Pending
Key, Jerry	Central	2025		X	Pending
Pahl, Rev. Karen	Treasurer	2025	X		11/2021
Schober, Missy	West Central	2027	X		6/2023
Short, Lucas	Youth Representative	2024		X	Pending
Stobie, Rev. Sarah Crance	Secretary	2027	X		06/2023

Guests and Synod Staff

Others present included: **Ms. Cheryl Bledsoe**, Healing Network, **the Rev. Afi Dobbins-May**, Assistant to the Bishop; **the Rev. Molly Doreza**, Healing Network; **the Rev. Chris Manke**, Executive Director of Outreach for Hope; **the Rev. Aida Muniz**, Anti-Racism Team Co-Chair; **the Rev. Kristin Nielsen**, Assistant to the Bishop, **Ms. Mary Romskog**, Synod Staff, **the Rev. Matt Short**, Assistant to the Bishop; and **Ms. Karina Ward**, Anti-Racism Team Co-Chair.

**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 **Joyce Caldwell** called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

Devotions

Ms. Cheryl Bledsoe shared a devotion for our meeting on the topic of peace, Matthew 11:28-30.

I. Consent Agenda

Vice President **Joyce Caldwell** introduced the two new persons, **Ms. Laura Coleman** and **the Rev. Douglas Anderson**, nominated to the Synod Council, and they introduced themselves briefly. Full nomination papers were in the Dropbox.

Council Action

SC 24.01.01 Approval of Consent Agenda

The Council voted to approve the following items from the consent agenda as presented, including: approval of **Ms. Laura Coleman** as At-Large Female Synod Council Representative (term ending 8/31/2027), approval of **the Rev. Douglas Anderson** as At-Large Rostered Minister (term ending 8/31/2025), approval of voice for visitors; adoption of agenda for this meeting; approval of minutes from the Synod Council meetings of 16 November 2023; annual approval of on leave from call status for **the Rev Susan Bowen**, standard leave began 7/22/2023, **the Rev. David Dragseth**, standard leave began 1/31/2022, **the Rev. Kerstin Hedlund**, family leave began 8/23/2015, **the Rev. Maren Hooper**, standard leave began 12/31/2022, **the Rev. Tim McIntosh**, standard leave began 7/1/2023, **the Rev. Adam Moreno**, standard leave began 9/20/2019, **the Rev. Paul Nuechterlein**, standard leave began 5/8/2023; **the Rev. Richard Suero**, standard leave began 7/1/2020, **the Rev. Kelly Taylor-Schaus**, family leave began 9/26/2014; and approval for Retired Status for **the Rev. Steven Kuhl** beginning on 01/01/2024 and **the Rev. Jennifer Arnold** beginning on 02/01/2024.

II. Ministry Highlight: Healing Network

The Rev. Molly Doreza shared a PowerPoint presentation and the background of the Healing Network beginning with the creation of the initial Task Force through a resolution at the Synod Assembly to the current Healing Network. A written report was also shared. **Doreza** shared that a website has been created ([The Healing Network | Faith And Addiction | Milwaukee \(thehealingnetworkofmke.com\)](http://TheHealingNetwork|FaithAndAddiction|Milwaukee.com)) and invited the Synod Council to visit it. **Doreza** stated that this was a pivotal time for the Healing Network. **Doreza** addressed funding has ceased from Siebert Lutheran Foundation, and the Healing Network is looking for new resources.

Ms. Cheryl Bledsoe also shared that there are 9 congregations and other partnerships currently engaged with the Healing Network. **Bledsoe** shared what the congregations are currently doing and how others can become involved. **Doreza** asked for prayers for the future funding and mission of the Healing Network.

III. Synod Calls –none at this time.

IV. Vice President's Report

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared she had sent an email regarding photos needed from all Synod Council members to place on the Synod's website. **Caldwell** lifted up that all Synod Council members must complete Anti-Racism training as part of their commitment to serve on Synod Council. **Caldwell** referred to the Attendance Roster in the minutes of the Synod Council meetings.

Caldwell waived the right to report and instead asked for Synod Council members to go into break out groups and review 4 questions concerning Synod Council Visibility and Engagement with Congregations. **Caldwell** shared that this was a key piece with the Authentic Diversity Audit. The questions shared were: 1) What communication would be helpful for congregations to be more aware of the work of the Synod Council? 2) What role could Synod Council members play in maintaining regular contact and relationship with individual congregations? 3) What role could Synod Council members play in discerning the health of individual congregations? 4) If Synod Council members had assigned congregations for regular contact, how many congregations and what frequency and types of contacts would be helpful and feasible?

Caldwell asked that each break out group have a scribe, write notes, and pass those unto to her for future review. When the breakouts ended, **Caldwell** asked for quick responses.

The Rev. Aida Muniz asked about the challenges of the role for Synod Council members, and that if each had 10 or more congregations, that would be a lot. There is also a relational aspect concerning the last two questions, which requires more than just being a contact person.

The Rev. Chris Manke shared that regarding communication, what if there was a “What are the top 5 things” that could be shared in the eNews with a link to share the minutes. It’s also possible then for Synod Council members who represent congregations to send the top 5 things and minutes as well.

V. Bishop’s Report

Bishop Paul Erickson submitted a written report prior to the meeting for review. **Erickson** shared that the financial administration work is still a process, and the plan is to finish Jan. 31 fiscal year, and then review how it is organized. The current structure is not working, and **Treasurer Karen Pahl** continues to put in more hours than desired. At the time of the meeting, **Erickson** was on an El Salvador trip and joined in via Zoom. Erickson shared that it was going great, and also explained his connection as a board member with LIRS (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services) which has been recently renamed to Global Refuge. **Erickson** shared that this has been a 2 year process. **Erickson** shared that his upcoming trip to Guatemala with Global Refuge may or may not happen this Spring. **Erickson** encouraged everyone to sign up for Together in Mission being held on Feb. 10. **Erickson** expressed that this was a kickoff for our Synod Assembly. The theme is Courage: May Courage Be Our Daily Breath. Together in Mission will have conference gatherings to review the Churchwide Assembly open nominations for voting members; the Churchwide Assembly will be held in Arizona in August 2025. **Erickson** encouraged new people to the Synod Council to review the one-page document in the Dropbox concerning Synod Preservation vs. Synod Administration to understand how we have used our process currently with Wellington Park Lutheran/Milwaukee and will use it with possible churches in the future. **Erickson** shared the differences between the two approaches and that the Synod Council plays an important role in the process.

VI. Treasurer’s Report

Prior to the meeting, **Treasurer Karen Pahl** presented the financial reports through the month of November in Dropbox. **Pahl** shared a summary which included that the Synod’s Mission Support, as of November, was at \$1.1 million against a budget of \$1.2 million. As of December, we had an additional \$125,000 budgeted for income, and we received \$175,000, so we are a little ahead in December. **Pahl** shared that January is a big month, and that a few large gifts came in already. **Pahl** shared that some congregations give once a year, and that is in January, and she anticipates almost \$100,000 to come in. **Pahl** shared that we will still have a deficit for the fiscal year. **Pahl** shared that letters were sent out to congregations about their current giving. **Pahl** reviewed expenses in a report shared in Dropbox. **Pahl** shared the Mission Support Report which is also in Dropbox. **Pahl** explained that we are behind 9.83% YTD for mission support. **Pahl** shared that legal fees and insurance are a little higher than the previous year. **Pahl** continues to work reviewing audit firms, and there will be a meeting soon to review.

Council Action

SC 24.01.02 Reception of Financial Reports

The Council voted to receive the financial reports through 30 November 2023 as presented.

VII. Old Business

A. Update on Equipping the Saints Mission Appeal

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that we currently have, between pledges and gifts, a total of \$1,269,154 dollars, and that we have received from those pledges to date a total of \$1,240,345.00. **Caldwell** shared that we are at 55% of our initial \$2.3 million goal.

Caldwell expressed that this is good news because we have a \$1.2 million that we would not have had without this appeal. **Caldwell** shared her gratitude for the ETS Appeal, and also shared that appeals can still happen this spring among our congregations.

B. Update on Sale of Building of Wellington Park Lutheran Church

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that the Wellington Park Lutheran Church building was sold for \$295,670 and that the residential building hopefully will be sold by June 30 and the Legacy Plan gifts will be dispersed. **Dr. Rose Dotson** shared that there was a challenge concerning the insurance with the separate house. **Dotson** shared that the Legacy Plan has a lot of organizations that will get funds from the sale. **Dotson** encouraged Synod Council to review the current report from the Administration Committee which shared more details. **Dotson** shared that there were challenges working with the congregation because it was mostly with one person, and that there had been issues of mistrust with the synod itself. **Dotson** expressed gratitude for the people who worked on the committee. **Dotson** shared that having previous relationships with congregations before this happens is crucial.

C. Review of Congregation Closure Process of Synod Preservation and Synod Administration

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that there is a document in the Dropbox that is important for synod council members to review and become acquainted with for future use. **Caldwell** shared we all should become acquainted with the process.

D. Review Needed Action on Synod Assembly Resolution

a. Resolution 5: Youth Listening Task Force in response to Resolution on Children and Vulnerable Youth

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that there is no action at this time.

VIII. New Business

A. Review Pulpit Supply Rates

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that current rate is \$175 for one service, plus mileage, with \$50 for each additional service. **Bishop Paul Erickson** shared the history of the rate, and this was discussed at the time of compensation guidelines. **Erickson** shared that the Synod Council could update the rates now or wait until the new task force reviews it, but that will delay an increase by 9-10 months. **Erickson** shared his recommendation to increase the pulpit supply rate to \$200 for one service, plus mileage, with \$50 for additional service. **Erickson** made the initial motion. **The Rev. Matt James** shared that most congregations have already made their budgets regarding the pulpit supply at \$175, and that while he supports it, the alignment is off regarding financial planning. After further discussion, the initial motion was altered to refer an increase in Pulpit Supply Rates to the Task Force on Compensation Guidelines.

Council Action

SC 24.01.03 Refer Raising Pulpit Supply Rates to the Task Force on Compensation Guidelines

The Council voted to refer to the Task Force on Compensation Guidelines to raise Pulpit Supply Rates to \$200.

B. Approve Executive Committee Recommendation of 3% increase for Staff Salaries for 2024

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that a motion was made by the Executive Committee for a 3% increase for staff salaries. **Caldwell** shared that there was a 2% increase in the budget. **Treasurer Karen Pahl** shared that after a review between **Pahl** and **Bishop Paul Erickson**, they both feel that a 3% increase will be ok.

Council Action

SC 24.01.04 Approval of 3% Salary Increase for Staff Salaries for 2024

The Council voted to approve a 3% salary increase for Staff Salaries for 2024.

C. Review and Approve Recommendation Distribution of ETS Funds, based on 2023 year end giving

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that in the Dropbox, there was a document which detailed the disbursements of the ETS funds based on 2023 year end giving. **Treasurer Karen Pahl** shared the document on screen. **Caldwell** reminded the Synod Council that

the process for applying for and receiving innovation grants was previously approved by Synod Council.

Council Action

SC 24.01.05 Approval of Disbursements of ETS Funds based on 2023 year end giving

The Council voted to approve the disbursements of ETS (Equipping The Saints) Funds as detailed on the document presented: Innovation Grants (20%) at \$80,000, OFH Collaboration Grants (20%) at \$80,000, Lutheran Campus Ministries (11%) at \$44,000, Grants (BIPOC/LGBTQIA+) (11%) at \$44,000, and Rostered Ministers (16%) at \$64,000.

D. Approve Appointment of Committee to Review Synod Guidelines for Compensation and Continuing Education (Resolutions 3 and 4)

Council Action

SC 24.01.06 Approval of Appointment of Committee to Review Synod Guidelines for Compensation and Continuing Education

The Council voted to approve the appointment of the following to serve on the Committee to Review Synod Guidelines for Compensation and Continuing Education: **Ms. Karie Clement, the Rev. Kristie Jaramillo, the Rev. Daniel Flucke, Ms. Linda Grosser, the Rev. Joshua Gyson, the Rev. Casey Sugden, and Mr. Larry Gnatzig.**

E. Approve Executive Committee Designation of 3 at large voting members for 2025 Churchwide Assembly Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that we will elect, at this Synod Assembly, 2 fewer voting members than before because our membership has gone down, and overall the Churchwide Assembly will have fewer voting members as well. Conferences will meet at Together in Mission and choose their representation at Churchwide Assembly. All of this was approved previously and made into an appendix of the constitution.

Council Action

SC 24.01.07 Approval of 1 rostered, 1 lay female, 1 lay male at large voting members for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly

The Council voted to approve the designations for Churchwide Assembly voting member positions as 1 rostered, 1 lay female, and 1 lay male.

F. Approve Executive Committee recommendation to amend the 2024 Budget to meet the request of Region 5 to increase our support

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that we are a part of Region 5, and that we received a letter from Region 5 asking for an increase in support in shared ministry. **Caldwell** shared that there was a document in the Dropbox for review. The request is for an increase from 5 cents to 7 cents per baptized member. **Caldwell** shared that this will be about \$1,000 difference. **Bishop Paul Erickson** shared that the funds support a Regional Candidacy and Leadership Manager, and expenses of the Region which includes gatherings of regional bishops and staff with our neighboring states, Illinois and Iowa. Between Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa, there are 12 synods.

Council Action

SC 24.01.08 Approval of amending the 2024 Budget to meet the request of Region 5 to increase our support from 5 cents to 7 cents per baptized member

The Council voted to approve the amending of the 2024 Budget to meet the request of Region 5 to increase our support from 5 cents to 7 cents per baptized member.

G. Review of Proposals for 2025 Synod Assembly and Approve a Location

Mary Romskog joined the meeting to review a document in the Dropbox which was shared by **Vice President Joyce Caldwell**. **Caldwell** shared three different, potential locations and reviewed the basics and costs of each. **Romskog** stated that all were very similar. The document showed great detail and research done. **Romskog** created a poll for Synod Council members to complete, and the results would assist in determining choices and priorities.

Council Action

SC 24.01.09 Approval to authorize the Synod Staff to approve the location and a contract for the 2025 Synod Assembly

The Council voted to authorize the Synod Staff to approve the location and contract for the 2025 Synod Assembly.

H. Approve the Executive Committee recommendation for a 5 pm start time at the 2024 Synod Assembly

Council Action

SC 24.01.10 Approval of the Start Time for 2024 Synod Assembly

The Council voted to approve the 5 p.m. start time for the 2024 Synod Assembly at the Italian Community Center/Milwaukee.

I. Approve Executive Committee recommendation for the Deadline of March 22, 2024, for resolutions, memorials and nominations for the 2024 Synod Assembly

Council Action

SC 24.01.11 Approval of the Deadline of March 22, 2024 for resolutions, memorials and nominations for the 2024 Synod Assembly

The Council approved the March 22, 2024 deadline for all resolutions, memorials and nominations for the 2024 Synod Assembly.

J. Approve Executive Committee recommendation for the Deadline of May 1, 2024, for Synod Assembly Registrations

Council Action

SC 24.01.12 Approval of the Deadline of May 1, 2024 for 2024 Synod Assembly registrations

The Council voted to approve the May 1, 2024 deadline for 2024 Synod Assembly registrations.

K. Approve Executive Committee recommendation to move the May 16, 2024, Synod Council meeting to May 9, 2024

Council Action

SC 24.01.13 Approval of Moving the next Synod Council meeting from May 16, 2024 to May 9, 2024.

The Council voted to move the date of the next Synod Council meeting from May 16, 2024 to May 9, 2024.

L. Appointment of Synod Council Representative to Mt Meru Coffee Board

Council Action

SC 24.01.14 Approval of Synod Council Representative to Mt Meru Coffee Board

The Council voted to appoint **Mr. Todd Beutin** to the Mt. Meru Coffee Board to fill the vacancy left by **the Rev. Kevin Beebe's** departure.

M. Appointment of Synod Council Representative to Finance Committee

Council Action

SC 24.01.15 Approval of Synod Council Representative to Finance Committee

The Council voted to appoint **Ms. Laura Coleman** to the Finance Committee to fill the vacancy left by **Mr. Todd Beutin**.

N. Identification of Nominating Committee

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that at Together in Mission, the conferences will gather and choose a representative for the Nominating Committee.

O. Other Business?

IX. Reports

- A. Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted by **the Rev. Matthew Short**. **Short** encouraged the Synod Council to review the opportunities listed on the website.

Council Action

SC 24.01.16 Approval of Closure of Wayfarer's Faith Collective

The Council voted to close Wayfarers Faith Collective, rescinding its designation as a Synod-Authorized Worshipping Community, and giving thanks for the faithful ministry of those involved, as well as Developer, **the Rev. Michael McAllister**.

Council Action

SC 24.01.17 Approval of Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities for 2024

The Council voted to authorize the following ministries that are continuing as synod-authorized worshipping communities in 2024: Be Still, The Table: A 21st-Century Style Community in the 21st Century and Breaking the Chains Church.

Council Action

SC 24.01.18 Approval of Strategic Ministries

The Council voted to designate the following ministries that are continuing as strategic ministries in 2024: Ascension Lutheran Church/Waukesha, Cross Lutheran Church/Milwaukee, Grace Lutheran Church/Kenosha, Hephatha Lutheran Church/Milwaukee and Lutheran Church of the Great Spirit/Milwaukee.

- B. Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations in Mission** – A written report was submitted. **The Rev. Kristin Nielsen** shared that the report was also on the website. There are 30 listed congregations in transition with 3 more coming in 3-4 weeks. **Nielsen** shared that retirements are coming at the end of spring. **Nielsen** shared that there have been a lot of conversations that are not listed concerning people who are dealing with conflict, and are in times of discernment, etc. **Nielsen** asked the Council to keep the congregations in transition in prayer.
- C. Assistant to the Bishop for Authentic Diversity and Leadership** –A written report was submitted by **the Rev. Afi Dobbins-May**. **Dobbins-Mays** shared that she has returned from sabbatical.
- D. Lutheran Campus Ministry**-No written report submitted.
- E. Reconciling in Christ** –No written report submitted.
- F. Anti-Racism Team** – No written report submitted. **Ms. Karina Ward** shared some updates with the council.
- G. Women of the ELCA**- No report submitted.
- H. Outreach for Hope** – A written report was submitted.
- I. Latino Strategy Table**—No report submitted. The next meeting will be scheduled in the near future.
- J. Endowment Committee**- No report submitted.
- K. Healing Network**- Presented report at beginning of our meeting.

X. Synod Discussion: What's the top 5 highlights?

1. Healing Network should be lifted up
2. Formation of the Compensation Task Force, including increase of pulpit supply to \$200
3. Small group discussions on how we can increase awareness of Synod Council members.
4. Upcoming nominations, deadlines, etc.

Secretary Stobie shared that she would email out to Executive Committee her first draft of 5 points to share in the next electronic newsletter from the Synod.

XI. Adjournment

Council Action

SC 24.01.19 Adjournment

The Council, reaching the end of its agenda of business, adjourned at 8:49 pm. **Bishop Paul Erickson** closed the meeting in prayer.

Next Meeting:

Thursday March 21, 2024

Location: St. John Lutheran Church/Jackson

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings begin with dinner at 5:30 p.m. and formal business at 6:15.

Submitted,

Rev. Sarah Crance Stobie

The Rev. Sarah Crance Stobie, Synod Secretary