

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA

Minutes of the Synod Council Meeting

19 September 2024

Meeting held at Christ the King Lutheran/Port Washington and 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
Andersen, Rev. Doug	At Large Clergy	2025	X		Pending
Beutin, Todd	South Central	2027	X		6/2023
Caldwell, Dr. Joyce	Vice President	2025 (2)	X		10/2023
Coleman, Laura	At Large Lay	2027	X		Pending
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
Powers, Missy	West Central	2027	X		6/2023
Short, Lucas	Youth Representative	2024			Pending
Stobie, Rev. Sarah Crance	Secretary	2027	X		06/2023

*Jerry Key resigned prior to this meeting.

Guests and Synod Staff

Others present included: **the Rev. Aida Muniz**, Anti-Racism Team Co-Chair; **the Rev. Chris Manke**, **the Rev. Matthew Short**, **Janet Blank** (Advent Lutheran/Cedarburg) and **Al Gresch** (Faith Lutheran/Cedarburg).

**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. **Caldwell** thanked **the Rev. Daniel Flucke**, **Laura Coleman**, and the crew from the church for their hospitality.

Devotions

Janet Blank (Advent Lutheran/Cedarburg) led the devotions sharing about the practice of Dwelling in the Word, in honor of EPIC (ELCA Partners in Christ), focusing on Acts 16, and how this practice and scripture changed the group EPIC in their work and discernment.

I. Consent Agenda

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that the consent agenda was presented in Dropbox prior to the meeting.

Council Action

SC 24.09.77. Approval of Consent Agenda

The Council voted to approve the following items from the consent agenda as presented, including approval of voice for visitors; adoption of agenda; approval of minutes for 11 July 2024; approval of On Leave from Call Status for **the Rev. Larry Harpster**, standard leave effective 5/1/2024, and **the Rev. David Dragseth**, standard leave 2-year extension effective 1/31/2025; approval of Retired Status for **the Rev. Grant Quever** effective 10/1/2024; approval of appointment of **Brie Ruehle** to Nominating Committee for a one-year term, beginning September 1, 2024-August 31, 2025; ratify Outreach for Hope Board Members Board Members: **Tim Muth**, **Dr. Chris Beloin**, **Bishop Paul Erickson**, and **Sonja Wolfe** with the roles being Board Chair: **Julie Starks**, Vice Chair: **Tim Muth**, Treasurer: **Scott Manske**, and Secretary: **Carol Witt**; and ratify Lutheran Campus Ministry Board Members **Becky Yakes** and **the Rev. Alissa Kretzmann Farrar**.

II. Ministry Highlight: Cedarburg EPIC (ELCA Partners in Christ) **Listening Process**

Al Gresch (Faith Lutheran/Cedarburg) discussed the joint ministry through EPIC—5 congregations within Cedarburg and Grafton, working together in mission and ministry. **Gresch** shared that at first, there was confusion about the purpose of the group EPIC. **Gresch** shared that it was helpful to do the 6 months of Dwelling in the Word process. The group began asking 5 large open questions within our communities, the first being “What gives you hope?”

Janet Blank (Advent Lutheran/Cedarburg) shared the importance of this group, and how it is helping to build community. Two videos were shared.

Blank shared that the EPIC Churches are Advent Lutheran, Faith Lutheran, St. John Lutheran, Immanuel Lutheran, and Trinity Lutheran—all in the Cedarburg, Grafton areas.

In response, **Pastor Matt Short** shared that listening in the communities can expand and connect us in our communities. **Short** shared that the success is not the impact on others, but on what the ones does the initiative learn.

Vice President Joyce Caldwell thanked the group for sharing their stories and for inspiring the Synod Council to consider new ways to build community.

III. Synod Calls

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared the synod calls as listed on the Agenda.

Council Action

SC 24.09.78.

Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve **the Rev. German Novelli** to interim ministry at Faith Lutheran/Santa Fe in Milwaukee effective 9/1/2024.

Council Action

SC 24.09.79.

Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve **the Rev. Kathy Brown** to interim ministry at Living Faith Lutheran/Racine effective 9/8/2024.

IV. Vice President’s Report

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that **Mary Romskog** asked for quicker responses to her emails regarding attendance at Synod Council meetings. **Romskog** needs to know for food and quorum. **Romskog** has created a new way to RSVP with a new checkbox. The Synod Council was asked to please be more attentive and RSVP on time.

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that the next Antiracism Training, Loosening the Bonds, is a more expanded program, and it will be offered on Saturday, Sept 28, 2024. Pastor

Bill Beyer will participate on behalf of the RIC Team. **Caldwell** reminded the Synod Council that this training is needed, and we offer a log of previous dates taken within the minutes.

V. Bishop's Report

Bishop Paul Erickson submitted a written report in Dropbox prior to the meeting for review.

Erickson shared working that the staff and treasurer are working on the transition with Christina Blake, our new financial person onsite.

Erickson shared building ownership and closure issues regarding St. Peter Lutheran Church/Kujichagulia Lutheran Center in Milwaukee. Christ Lutheran/Jackson will be celebrating their 125th Anniversary soon, and they are in the process of discussing their next steps.

Erickson shared Christ Church/Mequon will be meeting on Oct. 22 with leadership team and will be discussing how to help them disaffiliate. The bishop explained the process for disaffiliation. The bishop noted that the process was very amiable and open.

VI. Treasurer's Report

Prior to the meeting, **Treasurer Karen Pahl** presented the financial reports in Dropbox.

Pahl shared that there are 2 reports available, July and August. **Pahl** shared information for the August reports. **Pahl** noted that through August, our total income was \$803,798, and that we are \$100,000 behind related to mission support. **Pahl** shared that as a result, partnership payments are being dispersed at a reduced rate because we do not have the full amounts from congregations yet. This is holding our expenses at \$79,800 under, which is helpful. **Pahl** shared that anticipated payments are made by Churchwide for **Pastor Matt Short**, ETS and more—we will be under budget.

Pahl reviewed the provided Mission Support graph. **Pahl** shared that in August 2020, we had \$945,000 in mission support, but today we have a \$140,000 difference. **Pahl** shared that this is a trending decrease in support.

Discussion ensued.

Council Action

SC 24.09.80. Reception of Financial Reports

The Council voted to receive the financial reports as presented.

VII. Old Business

A. Update on Congregation Calls for Congregation Officer Information

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared gratitude to the members for getting the information from our many ministry sites. **Caldwell** shared that there are 26 congregations still missing with their data.

B. Update on Fall Congregation Visits

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that the visits with Church Councils were coming together. **Pastor Matthew Short** sent emails to those who volunteered. **Short** shared that an Airtable was created because of the work. **Short** thanked the Synod Council for assisting with the task. **Short** shared that there are 30 some congregations who are still unclaimed.

Discussion ensued.

C. Discuss Draft of Greater Milwaukee Synod Discrimination Policy

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that there is a draft of the policy in the Dropbox, and that it was sent out directly in email to the Synod Council. **Caldwell** briefly reviewed the draft. **Caldwell** shared that this policy would be on the website along with the misconduct policy.

Discussion ensued.

Bishop Paul Erickson shared that a key piece of the new policy will be a synod team where formal complaints can be filed. **Erickson** shared that this is a critical component. Lay and rostered will serve on it—it will be a diverse group for all people to find someone who is like them to connect with and share.

Caldwell shared that the Synod Council would vote on it in November.

D. Update on Development of Synod Annual Fund

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared the Executive Committee had a discussion on a potential Annual Fund, and decided that we are not ready to move forward at this level. **Caldwell** shared the need to bring in additional income, especially to support staff, **Caldwell** reminded the Synod Council that **Pastor Afi Dobbins-Mays** salary is partially funded by a Siebert grant which ends in a year.

Bishop Paul Erickson shared that we will not amend this budget, but we will need to amend 2025, probably in March at our Synod Council meeting.

VIII. New Business

A. SA Minutes—Tabled.

B. Recommendation of Portico Medical Plan for Synod Staff for 2025

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared that the Synod Council does this at every September meeting.

Bishop Paul Erickson shared that this is almost the same as last year, except the addition of Value Co-Pay options for staff. The motion to approve comes from the Executive Committee.

- i. Resolved: The GMS will provide health care benefits with Portico Benefit Services at either the Silver+, Value Co-Pay or the Gold+ Level, at the employee's discretion.

Council Action

SC 24.09.81. Approval of Portico Medical Plan for Synod Staff for 2025

The Council voted to approve the Portico Medical Plan for Synod Staff as either the Silver+, Value Co-Pay or the Gold+ Level, at the employee's discretion.

C. Recommendation of Compensation Guidelines for 2025 with a 2% Cost of Living Increase

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared this recommendation was is in the Dropbox, The motion to approve the 2025 Compensation Guidelines is from the Executive Committee to the Synod Council.

Discussion ensued.

Caldwell shared that the Executive Committee will review the percentage grid and perhaps create a new task force to do more work before September. The Synod Council expressed gratitude for the special task force which submitted their report after much work.

Council Action

SC 24.09.82. Approval of Compensation Guidelines for 2025 with a 2% Cost of Living Increase

The Council voted to approve the submitted 2025 Compensation Guidelines with a 2% Cost of Living Increase.

D. Recommendation of Continuing Resolution.

Vice President Joyce Caldwell shared the history behind the need for the new Continuing Resolution. The motion to approve comes from the Executive Committee.

S9.03.01.F24. Members of the Nominating Committee will be appointed to staggered three-year terms and will follow the representational principles of the synod. New members of the committee will regularly be appointed at the July meeting of the Synod Council, with term start of September 1. The Nominating Committee will present their report on nominations for open positions at the March meeting of the Synod Council.

Council Action

SC 24.09.83. Approval of Continuing Resolution S9.03.01.F24. to the Synod Constitution.

The Council voted to approve the new Continuing Resolution S9.03.01.F24 which further defines the membership of the Nominating Committee and when they will submit reports to the Synod Council.

Bishop Paul Erickson shared that we passed a bylaw for deans and that the first, election took place on Tuesday. **The Rev. Jackie Cook**, dean of the West Conference, was elected by her peers. It is a one year term. September 1, 2024-August 31, 2025. **Cook** will join us at our next meeting.

Caldwell shared that Jerry Key has resigned as lay member from Central Conference.

E. Update on Listening Team for Youth and Young Adult

Laura Coleman shared that 10 people attended the Young Adult listening session last week. There is a need for connections and togetherness. **Pastor Rachel Young Binter** had shared that for Gather—all 10 signed up for that, and there is excitement. **Coleman** shared that there is another meeting in October at UWM—Corner House, and the Youth, 14-18, group will be meeting as well. **Vice President Joyce Caldwell** expressed gratitude that this work was being done as a result of resolutions previously made at Synod Assembly.

F. Discussion on Ascension Office Lease.

Bishop Paul Erickson shared that there is a document in the Dropbox for review, and that it provides a history of the landlord relationship between Ascension and the Synod office. **Erickson** shared that the formula has not been used since 2018. The church gave the Synod office a 32-page document, and it was going through our legal counsel.

Discussion ensued.

Vice President Joyce Caldwell asked if the Synod Council would allow the Executive Committee to review the lease and move forward on it if needed before our next Synod Council Meeting in November.

Council Action

SC 24.09.84. Authorize the Executive Committee to move on the lease with Ascension Lutheran/Milwaukee.

The Council voted to authorize the Executive Committee to review and move on the lease.

G. Other Business

IX. Reports

- A. Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted. **Pastor Matt Short** reminded the Synod Council members about the great resources on our synod website, especially the stories page. **Short** also highlighted the Gather MKE group, and how this was an exciting opportunity for our younger adults.
- B. Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations in Mission** – A written report was submitted.
- C. Assistant to the Bishop for Authentic Diversity and Leadership** – A written report was submitted.
- D. Lutheran Campus Ministry-** A written report was submitted. **Pastor Matt James** shared that the Corner House was off to a great start, and asked Synod Council members to promote the upcoming fundraisers as able.
- E. Reconciling in Christ Team** – No report submitted.
- F. Anti-Racism Team** –**The Rev. Aida Muniz** shared there is a new co-chair, **Pastor Denise Mbise**, and that work is being done to recruit and train liaisons.

Council Action

SC 24.09.85. Ratify the Rev. Denise Mbise to Serve as Co-Chair of the Anti-Racism Team

The Council voted to ratify **the Rev. Denise Mbise** to serve as co-chair of the Synod's Anti-Racism Team.

- G. Women of the ELCA-** No report submitted.
- H. Outreach for Hope** – A written was report submitted. **The Rev. Chris Manke** shared that the big fundraiser for OFH was this Saturday, Sept 21, **Manke** shared that 600+ registered so far, it looked like great weather. **Manke** thanked those who are helping,
- I. Latino Strategy Table**—No report submitted.
- J. Endowment Committee-** No report submitted.

K. Healing Network- No report submitted.

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

Vice President Joyce Caldwell led a discussion on the top 5 highlights that should be shared with the Synod. At the time of the meeting, the following highlights were raised and will be reviewed and edited before giving to the synod staff to post.

1. Listening: EPIC listening, Fall Conversation Visits, Youth Listening
2. Compensation Guidelines, there is an increase.
3. Gather MKE is happening.

XI. Adjournment

Council Action

SC 24.09.86 Adjournment

The Council, reaching the end of its agenda of business, adjourned with the Lord's Prayer at 8:14 p.m.

Next Meeting:

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Location: Ascension Lutheran/Milwaukee

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Sarah Crance Stobie

The Rev. Sarah Crance Stobie, Synod Secretary
Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA