

# Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA

Minutes of the Synod Council Meeting

17 July 2025

Meeting held at Faith Lutheran/Cedarburg

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**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, building communities of justice, love, and mercy.

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## 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	5/2025
Beutin, Todd	South Central	2027		X	6/2023
Caldwell, Dr. Joyce	Vice President	2025 (2)	X		10/2023
Coleman, Dr. Laura	At Large Lay	2027	X		5/2025
Cook, Rev. Jackie	Dean Representative	2025	X		5/2025
Dotson, Dr. Rose	At Large Lay	2025	X		11/2021
Ellingson, Chuck	Central	2025	X		06/2023
Erickson, Rev. Paul	Bishop	2028 (2)	X		6/2023
Grosser, Linda	North	2025	X		10/2023
Guerrero, Jacob	Young Adult Rep.	2025		X	Pending
Guerrero, José Andrés	At Large	2027 (2)		X	Pending
Gyson, Rev. Joshua	At Large Clergy	2027	X		09/2024
Hartfield, Steven	At Large Lay	2025		X	11/2021
James, Rev. Matthew	South	2025	X		11/2021
Jordan, Rev. Kimberly	West	2027	X		5/2025
Pahl, Rev. Karen	Treasurer	2025	X		5/2025
Powers, Missy	West Central	2027	X		6/2023
Stobie, Rev. Sarah Crance	Secretary	2027	X		09/2024
VACANT	Youth Representative	2025			

## **Guests and Synod Staff**

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Others present included incoming Synod Council members: **Alexander Pechauer Bates (Hephatha Lutheran/Milwaukee)**, **Jeffrey Kehoe (Messiah Lutheran/Twin Lakes)**, **the Rev. Alexis Twito (Advent Lutheran/Cedarburg)**, and **Jean Nelson (Galilee Lutheran/Pewaukee)**; as well as **Mary Romskog**, Synod Staff; **the Rev. Aida Muniz**, Anti-Racism Team Co-Chair; **the Rev. Kristin Nielsen**, Assistant to the Bishop; **the Rev. John Norquist**, and **the Rev. Afi Dobbins-Mays**, Assistant to the Bishop along with various Faith Lutheran Congregation Council members who stayed for the devotion.

*\*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. \**

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## **Call to Order**

**Vice President Joyce Caldwell (Faith Lutheran/Cedarburg)** called the meeting to order at 6:26 p.m.

## **Devotions**

**Linda O’Leary (Faith Lutheran/Cedarburg)**, a member of Congregation Council, shared a devotion on grace.

## **I. Consent Agenda**

**Vice President Joyce Caldwell (Faith Lutheran/Cedarburg)** shared that the consent agenda was presented in Dropbox prior to the meeting. The minutes for June 28 need adjustments with the attendance record, **Secretary Sarah Stobie (Bay Shore Lutheran/Whitefish Bay)** will make the adjustments and present again at our next Synod Council Meeting.

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 25.07.40. Approval of Consent Agenda**

The Council voted to approve the following items from the consent agenda as presented: Approval of Voice for Visitors; Adoption of Agenda; Approval of Minutes for May 15, 2025; Approval of Minutes for May 31, 2025; Approval of Minutes for June 28, 2025; Approval of On Leave from Call Status – family and study leave is 6 years, standard leave is 3 years: N/A; and Approval of Retired Status: N/A.

## **II. Ministry Highlight: Synod Council Sharing**

**Vice President Joyce Caldwell (Faith Lutheran/Cedarburg)** shared that tonight, we are highlighting the Synod Council. The group present, after introductions, broke into small groups. Discussion ensued.

### **III. Approval of Synod Calls: None**

Vice President Joyce Caldwell (Faith Lutheran/Cedarburg) shared that there were no Synod Calls to review at this meeting.

### **IV. Vice President's Report**

Vice President Joyce Caldwell (Faith Lutheran/Cedarburg) shared her gratitude serving as Vice President of the Synod Council and that she has thoroughly enjoyed her time of service. She gave thanks for those who are serving and who will serve, and shared gratitude for God's grace in our work.

Members of the Synod Council shared stories and thanksgiving for Caldwell's service and leadership as Synod Vice President. A round of applause shared their appreciation.

### **V. Bishop's Report**

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

### **VI. Treasurer's Report**

Prior to the meeting, Treasurer Karen Pahl (Christ the Servant/Waukesha) presented the financial reports in Dropbox. For the sake of new people, she walked through the types of reports, and the mission support graph.

Pahl shared that currently our income through June 2025 is \$553,036 versus a budget of \$600,378 which leaves us with a deficit of \$(47,342). This is offset by lower ELCA Churchwide Mission Support, Partner Ministries, Lutheran Campus Ministry, Synod Ministries and Leadership Development. Along with our total expenses being under budget by \$49,045 which leads us to a current deficit of \$(18,576) against a budgeted deficit of \$(22,280), Pahl shared that we are slightly ahead of our budgeted deficit.

Pahl shared that we must continue to note that our mission support is slightly down from the prior year and we are looking forward to continuing conversation about an annual fund, since we will conclude this year our ETS funds to offset the Assistant to the Bishop for Authentic Diversity.

#### **Council Action**

#### **SC 25.07.41. Reception of Financial Reports**

The Council voted to receive the financial reports as presented.

### **VII. Old Business**

#### **A. Report on the 2025 Synod Assembly**

**Mary Romskog** had shared the received evaluations from the Synod Assembly for review in Dropbox, as well as a printed report. **Romskog** walked through the report, expressing gratitude for the staff and volunteers. The Council also shared their gratitude to Romskog for her leadership.

**B. Update on Steps for Implementation of Policy on Discrimination**

**Vice President Joyce Caldwell** shared the policy was passed in the last year, and we have had some follow up discussions and we are consulting with someone to review it and perhaps offer some new advice. Discussion ensued.

**C. Update on Siebert Grant Denial and Steps Toward Creation of a Synod Annual Fund**

**Vice President Joyce Caldwell** shared we received a previous grant, for three years, for Authentic Diversity work, and our most recent request to extend the grant was declined.

**Bishop Paul Erickson** shared that he had met with people from Siebert in December, and they had seemed open to fund a 4<sup>th</sup> year, but later the Letter of Intent was denied. Discussion ensued.

**D. Update on Lawsuit on “Sensitive Locations”**

**Vice President Joyce Caldwell** shared that there was a special Synod Council meeting on June 28, 2025, that the Synod Council voted and agreed to participate in the Sensitive Locations Lawsuit.

**Bishop Paul Erickson** reminded the Council of the actions taken from that meeting, and that the synod participation did not cost the synod any funds—the lawyers are working *pro-bono*.

**E. Update on Movement Toward Holy Closure of Christ Lutheran/Jackson**

**Vice President Joyce Caldwell** shared that the bishop already reviewed this in his report, and reminded the Synod Council that a future, special meeting may occur.

**F. Update on Review of Compensation Chart**

**Vice President Joyce Caldwell** shared that this will be reviewed in September.

**VIII. New Business**

**A. Issuing Letter of Invitation to Extended Service for the Rev. Eli Henry, Lutheran Campus Ministry/Milwaukee**

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 25.07.42. Letter of Invitation to Extended Service for the Rev. Eli Henry, Lutheran Campus Ministry/Milwaukee**

The Council voted to approve the Letter of Invitation to Extended Service for **the Rev. Eli Henry, Lutheran Campus Ministry/Milwaukee** with one member abstaining.

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 25.07.43. Ratification of the Rev. Eli Henry to the Lutheran Campus Ministry Board.**

The Council voted to ratify **the Rev. Eli Henry** to the Lutheran Campus Ministry Board, effective immediately.

## **B. Reports and Actions on 2025 Synod Assembly Resolutions**

**Vice President Joyce Caldwell** shared the following resolutions and their current statuses since the 2025 Synod Assembly.

1. Recreate the Welcome Statement of the Greater Milwaukee Synod –*We are working on now, and will post on website.*
2. Resolution to Thank Congregations—*The bishop will speak with a churchwide representative about this at the Churchwide Assembly.*
3. Partnership with Sumud-For Justice in Palestine and Israel—*this will be added as a synod ministry team through a continuing resolution.*
4. Addressing the Legacy of Indian Boarding Schools in the United States—*our resolution joined 22 other synods, and it will be presented to the floor at the Churchwide Assembly.*
5. Resolution in Support of Efforts to Hold the Fossil Fuel Industry Accountable—*the bishop signed the petition.*
6. Amended Evaluate and Update the Call Process—*the bishop shared that it was received, but no action will be done at the Churchwide Assembly.*

## **C. Amend the existing Continuing Resolution S11.01.D22. on Synod Ministry Teams**

**Vice President Joyce Caldwell** shared the reason for updating the Continuing resolution from 2022. The proposed changes were presented.

**S11.01.D22.** The Synod Council shall authorize and support the following teams:

- Racial Equity and Justice Team
- Synod Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Ministry Team
- Synod Latino Strategy Team

- Mt. Meru Partnership Team
- El Salvador Partnership Team
- Sumud Ministry Team
- Youth and Young Adult Ministry Team
- Immigration and Refugee Ministry Team

The Synod Council will annually ratify the chair of each team. The Bishop shall appoint a synod staff member as liaison to each team to assist with, support, and ensure the work of the team is carried out as needed.

- a. 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 as they engage in the work related to the team's area of focus. Leadership team members shall not serve in any particular role for longer than six years.
- b. Each team shall identify a non-voting representative to the Synod Council for regular dialogue and reporting.
- c. 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.
- d. 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 Action**

#### **SC 25.07.44. Approval of the Amendments to the Existing Continuing Resolution S11.01.D22.**

The Council voted to approve the amendment to the existing Continuing Resolution.

### **D. Any More Business? -- None**

### **IX. Reports**

- A. Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission** – No report at this time.
- B. Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations in Mission** – **The Rev. Kristin Nielsen** was present, and a written report was in the Dropbox.
- C. Assistant to the Bishop for Authentic Diversity and Leadership** – **The Rev. Afi Dobbins-Mays** was present. Dobbins-Mays shared that June was a busy month, and that she will have a full report for the next meeting.
- D. Lutheran Campus Ministry**- No written report was submitted.
- E. Reconciling in Christ Team** – No written report submitted. **Chuck Ellingson** shared that the synod had a wonderful Pride month, Pride parade, and Pride worship service.

- F. Anti-Racism Team** – No written report submitted. **The Rev. Aida Muniz** shared the new name for the team, Racial Equity and Justice Team.
- G. Women of the ELCA-** No written report submitted. Retreat coming up in September. All women can attend.
- H. Outreach for Hope** – Run Ride Walk is in September! Please support this work.
- I. Latino Strategy Table**— No written report submitted.
- J. Endowment Committee-** No written report submitted.
- K. Healing Network-** No written report submitted.
- L. Mt. Meru Partnership Team** – **New this month**
- M. El Salvador Partnership Team**– **New this month**
- N. Sumud Ministry Team**– **New this month. July event 27<sup>th</sup>**
- O. Youth and Young Adult Ministry Team**– **New this month**
- P. Immigration and Refugee Ministry Team**– **New this month**

## **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. Celebrated the sharing of wisdom as outgoing, continuing, and newly elected Synod Council members reflected together in small groups.
2. Recognized and celebrated the leadership gifts that have been shared by outgoing Synod Vice President Dr. Joyce Caldwell.
3. Celebrated the new RIC Welcome Statement that was approved at the Synod Assembly and will be posted on the synod website.
4. Took action in welcoming Rev. Elias Henry as the new pastor for Lutheran Campus Ministry.
5. Approved Continuing Resolution S11.01.D22. that establishes an annual process to appoint chair/co-chairs/team leader(s) to each of the synod ministry teams of Racial Equity and Justice, RIC Ministry, Synod Latino Strategy, Meru Partnership, El Salvador Partnership, Sumud Ministry, Youth and Young Adult Ministry, and Immigration and Refugee Ministry.

## **XI. Adjournment**

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 25.07.45. Adjournment**

The Council, reaching the end of its agenda of business, adjourned with a Closing Ritual for outgoing members at 8:12 p.m.

**Next Meeting:**  
**Thursday, September 18, 2025**  
**Location: TBD**

*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