

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the 2019 Synod Assembly
Held via Zoom Webinar
from Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Hartland, Wisconsin
23 January 2021**

I. Welcome

Bishop Paul Erickson welcomed voting members and guests to the Special Meeting of the 2019 Synod Assembly. **Bishop Erickson** led an orientation session for voting members prior to the formal opening of the Special Assembly. Those present gathered and were able to practice using features of the Zoom Webinar and Election Buddy Voting Platform.

II. Opening of Assembly

Bishop Erickson led those present in the order for Opening the Synod Assembly and in a gathering prayer. He declared the assembly open and in session at 9:02 a.m. **Bishop Erickson** offered thanks to **Our Savior's, Hartland**, and its pastors, **The Rev. Jennifer Rose and The Rev. Matthew Rose**, for hosting the small group of synod leaders and leading the production of the virtual aspects of this Special Assembly meeting. A brief introduction to technology and methods for floor activity were provided to voting members. **Bishop Erickson** provided a reminder of the Synod's practice of including pronouns in one's personal introduction. He also described the use of unanimous consent under Robert's Rules of Order, which would be used during some of the meeting's procedural votes.

III. Adoption of Agenda

Vice President Joyce Caldwell (Faith, Cedarburg) moved and **The Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse (St. Matthew's, Wauwatosa)** seconded the motion to adopt the Special Assembly Agenda. Hearing no objection, the chair declared the motion adopted.

Assembly Action

SA19.S01.01. Adoption of Agenda

The Assembly voted to adopt the Agenda for the Special Meeting of the Synod Assembly as presented in pre-assembly materials.

The Assembly acted by unanimous consent.

IV. Approval of Rules/Election Procedures

Vice President Joyce Caldwell moved, on behalf of the Synod Council, to adopt the Special Assembly Rules and Election Procedures. Hearing no objection, the chair declared the motion adopted.

Assembly Action

SA19.S01.02. Adoption of Rules and Election Procedures

The Assembly voted to adopt the Rules and Election Procedures for the Special Synod Assembly.

The Assembly acted by unanimous consent.

V. Bishop's Report

Bishop Erickson yielded the chair to **Vice President Caldwell**. **Bishop Erickson** then provided a brief oral report to the Assembly.

A. Upcoming Assembly Information

Bishop Erickson informed the Special Assembly of the Synod Council action moving the 2021 Synod Assembly to a virtual Assembly on its original dates of April 30 and May 1, 2021 on a digital platform. The Italian Community Center has agreed to move all previous deposits forward to 2022, and the current plan will be to hold that Synod Assembly on May 20-21, 2022.

B. Staffing Report

Bishop Erickson applauded and thanked the Synod Staff, who have adapted and collaborated in the face of these challenges. The report lifted up Outreach for Hope, who welcomed its new Executive Director, **The Rev. Chris Manke**, in August.

C. Financial Update

Bishop Erickson shared a moment of mourning for the death of Synod Treasurer **Tom Gauthier**, who died from complications from cancer on 13 January 2021. He gave thanks and offered prayers for Tom's family, and the Synod, as together we grieve the loss of Gauthier's joyful spirit and generous heart.

Bishop Erickson noted the appointment of **Bob Reinders (Living Faith, Racine)** a current Synod Council member, as Acting Treasurer until a new Treasurer can be elected at the next Synod Assembly.

Through December 2020, Mission Support just over \$1.5 million had been received. The Synod budget anticipated receipts of \$1.8 million. It is expected that through the end of the Synod's fiscal year on 31 January 2021, budgeted mission support income will near the anticipated total. **Bishop Erickson** encouraged all congregations to submit their mission support contributions before the end of the month.

It was also noted that the Synod applied for and received a Paycheck Protection Program loan from the federal government in the amount of \$163,000, which is expected to be fully forgiven. This will most likely result in a fiscal year ending favorable to the budget and allowing reserve funds to be carried forward.

Bishop Erickson also noted that Outreach for Hope partnered with the Synod in a special appeal last Spring, raising over \$90,000 for COVID-19 ministry grants and to support Project Lunchbox, which provided additional food for various food ministries in the synod. In addition, the ELCA conducted a COVID-19 appeal, and the Greater Milwaukee Synod applied for, received, and distributed over \$65,000 in grants from our churchwide partners for congregational support, emergency relief, and technology upgrades. On behalf of the Synod staff and congregations, **Bishop Erickson** reflected deep gratitude for the generosity, partnership, and innovation demonstrated by so many people across the synod.

D. Ministry Update

Bishop Erickson offered reflections on the challenges of ministry in these times, lifting up the leadership in congregations who have been flexible in pivoting to new ways to connect, serve, and worship. He shared a brief overview of Synod Staff ministries, including: weekly Zoom meetings for rostered ministers, pre-recorded worship services for congregational use for eight different Sundays, and a number of opportunities to explore and discuss relevant topics throughout the year.

He also noted his work of writing so many pastoral letters offering reflections and guidance in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, racial injustice, and political turmoil. He expressed gratitude for the synod's support through grace, prayers, partnership, patience, and support.

Vice President Caldwell then returned the chair.

VI. Vice President's Report

Vice President Caldwell updated the Assembly on the Synod Mission Appeal, "Equipping the Saints," of which she serves as Campaign Manager. She offered a brief review of the 2019 Synod Assembly action that authorized a synod-wide mission appeal. In the fall of 2019, the Synod Council approved a case statement authorizing a \$2.3 million mission appeal named, "Equipping the Saints."

A Steering Team was formed in 2020 and met in the final days of life before the pandemic. The implementation of the appeal was paused, which allowed the Synod Council and Steering Team to make refinements to the case statement responding to the events of 2020. The Steering Team's goal is to "organize the resources with which God has blessed us to strengthen and support our ministries and leaders to become the Church God needs us to be." The Synod Council approved the revised case statement this past November.

The areas of focus of the mission appeal are: (1) Innovation & Collaboration, which will include grants to congregations who reach out in new and life-giving ways

and that strengthen partnerships through Outreach for Hope; and (2) Leadership, with particular areas of investing in racial equity, campus ministry, and our rostered ministers.

With the approval of the case statement, The Synod Council and Equipping the Saints steering team have demonstrated their support of the mission appeal with near 100% participation in giving. Their gifts, along with a special gift from **Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Milwaukee**, at the time of their closing, provides a foundation for the appeal with close to 10% already committed toward the total amount. Caldwell expressed confidence that the generosity exists within the synod to allow us to meet these exciting goals.

She noted that the pandemic has meant a slower rollout of the appeal, but it has reinforced the need for innovation and creativity in ministry and the need for deeper collaboration and partnerships. The events of this year have underscored the need for racial equity and justice. More about Equipping the Saints will be shared at the Synod Assembly on May 1.

VII. Credentials Report

Lee Johnston (Redeemer, Milwaukee) presented the preliminary report of the Credentials Committee. As of 9:30 a.m., a total of 248 voting members were registered and present. 9 visitors through the Zoom platform accounted for a total attendance of 257. Per the ELCA's representational principles, and based upon the 2019 Synod Assembly registrations, lay members continue to exceed 60% of total voting membership. Since this is a special assembly, all voting members who were seated for the last regular assembly in May of 2019 were still considered voting members of this special assembly.

Bishop Erickson declared a quorum was present.

**Following the Assembly, an audit of credentials and Zoom data was completed and it was determined that the final registered attendance for the Special Assembly was as follows: 266 voting members (114 clergy, 152 lay), and 9 visitors, for a total of 275 members.*

VIII. Welcome Lakeside Lutheran Church, Kenosha

Vice President Joyce Caldwell moved, on behalf of the Synod Council, to formally receive **Lakeside Lutheran Church, Kenosha**; as a congregation of the Greater Milwaukee Synod.

A brief welcome video was presented from the members of **Lakeside Lutheran Church** and its pastor, **The Rev. Jim Lynch**. Congregation Treasurer **Nancy Otis** shared the journey of **St. John's** and **Holy Nativity Lutheran Churches** of **Kenosha** toward forming a new congregation.

Both churches were comprised of mostly older members and looked toward the future, seeing challenges of membership and sustainability. **Otis** noted, “As God would have it, leaders from both churches, with support of **Pastor Lynch**, began discussions of what it might look like to work together.” Over more than a year, the Holy Spirit nudged the uniting of both church families and forming a new congregation one week prior to COVID restrictions halted in-person gatherings. 2020 COVID restrictions have slowed the in-person camaraderie, but creativity among God’s people at Lakeside Lutheran has remained strong. Their hope is that God’s Spirit would enliven this new church family to respond to the gospel and the needs of community. Hearing no objection, the chair declared the motion adopted.

Assembly Action

SA19.S01.03. Recognition and Reception of Congregation

The Assembly voted to recognize and receive Lakeside Lutheran Church, Kenosha, Wisconsin, as a congregation of the Greater Milwaukee Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as of 15 March 2020.

The Assembly acted by unanimous consent.

IX. Action on Constitutional Changes

Bishop Erickson introduced the consideration of proposed changes to the organizational structure of the Greater Milwaukee Synod. He provided an outline of motions presented to this Special Assembly by the Synod Council and reviewed steps for voting members to participate from the “virtual floor” of the Special Assembly.

A. Action to Modify Bylaws to Shift from Clusters to Conferences.

1a. Motion On the Floor

Vice President Joyce Caldwell moved, on behalf of the Synod Council, to: *Amend Bylaws S12.01.01. and S12.01.02. to replace all references to mission clusters with the term “conference;” and to Amend Bylaw S12.01.02. to further specify the role of Conference Dean and the function of conference with the language as presented to the Synod by the Synod Council following its meeting on 19 November 2019.”*

1b. Discussion

Cathy Hinrichs (Mt. Hope, West Allis) spoke against the motion. She noted the importance of words and shared dictionary definitions of the words “cluster” and “conference.” She lifted up clusters as a source of unity, common concerns, and similarity, while noting conference is often used as a means of disseminating information. She indicated changing the number does not mean changing the name.

Jerry Key (Reformation, Milwaukee) spoke in favor of the motion, noting the change of name indicates a change in direction.

1c. Motion to Amend

Cathy Hinrichs (Mt. Hope, West Allis) moved to amend the motion, changing the word “conference” to “cluster.” The motion was seconded by Heather Bumstead (Bethania, Racine).

1d. Discussion on the Motion to Amend

The Rev. Beth Ann Stone (Mt. Pleasant, Racine) spoke against the amendment. **Stone** noted her cluster would continue to identify for organization, text study, and use that language. She shared using separate language would be less confusing for these different purposes.

The Rev. David Schoob (Trinity, West Bend) spoke against the amendment. While sympathetic to the meaning of words, the present clusters have not been functioning in unity around common cause at present. He noted conferences will serve specific administrative function, and that conference seems a helpful term for the purposes expressed.

The Rev. Kevin Beebe (Spirit Alive, Kenosha) spoke against the amendment. He noted a positive change in his cluster since COVID began. While he has yet to meet some fellow colleagues in the governance cluster, he has found a new non-synod organized cluster with great collegiality among pastors in Kenosha in these times. He noted that the original motion removes the governance from the organic use of cluster. He described cluster as a ministry word and conference as a governance term.

1e. Point of Order

Jerry Key (Reformation, Milwaukee) made a **Point of Order**, asking the chair to ensure those present telephonically would receive enough time to leave the Zoom session, call in their vote, and return to the webinar.

1f. Action on Motion to Amend

Without further discussion, **Bishop Erickson** called for a vote via Election Buddy platform.

Voting Results: The Motion to Amend

Vote Tally: YES: 38 NO: 193 Abstentions: 7

The Motion to amend failed.

1g. Action on Motion 1

Without further discussion on the floor pertaining to Motion 1, Bishop Erickson then called for a vote on Motion 1:

Assembly Action

SA19.S01.04. Amendment of Bylaws

The Assembly voted to amend bylaws S12.01.01. and S12.01.02. to modify the governance and structure of the Synod's sub-groups, as presented, shifting from clusters to conferences.

Vote via Election Buddy Platform: 231 in favor, 22 opposed, 5 abstentions.

B. Action to Modify Continuing Resolution to move to 7 Conferences.

2a. Motion

Vice President Joyce Caldwell moved, on behalf of the Synod Council, *to amend the numerical makeup of Continuing Resolution S12.01.A12, replacing ten mission clusters with seven conferences; and to direct the Synod Council to populate and organize these conferences with congregations, as referenced in Appendices 1, 2, and 3, following the Special Synod Assembly no later than 1 February 2021.*"

2b. Amendment to the Motion

Amber Anderson (Martin Luther, Milwaukee) moved to amend the motion on the floor, *changing the word "seven" to "six."* **The Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse (St. Matthew's, Wauwatosa)** seconded the motion.

2c. Discussion on the Amendment

The Rev. David Schoob (Trinity Lutheran West Bend) spoke in favor of the amendment. He values having fewer bodies as a part of the synod structure, which would allow for more at-large members. **Schoob** noted that this could lead to more inclusive synod leadership with regards to identity, race, and orientation. He noted the change allows for greater

flexibility and nimbleness as a synod, which have proven challenging in cluster structures.

The Rev. Tom Kent (Christ Our Savior, Sussex) spoke in favor of the amendment. Having served as a cluster dean for 30+ years, **Kent** noted Some clusters have functioned well while others have not, attributing this to the small number of congregations in some clusters. He spoke in favor of conferences fulfilling a nominating purpose administratively, and not collegially.

The Rev. Tom Smith (Trinity, Kenosha) spoke in favor of amendment, recommending the change would separate ministry goals from administration goals.

The Rev. Alexis Twito (Faith, Cedarburg) sought clarification as to the goal of more diverse representation and how this shift would function differently. **Secretary Schlake-Kruse** responded that many of the current clusters are segregated in areas without much diversity among congregation members, in part due to a history of redlining and the hope is this shift allows the Kin_dom of God to be more fully represented in our synod committees and leadership teams.

Kegian Fox (Martin Luther, Milwaukee) spoke in favor of the amendment, noting his hope that younger generations would bring good perspective to synod leadership.

Jerry Key (Reformation, Milwaukee) raised a clarifying question about how and where the representational principles are in writing.

Secretary Schlake-Kruse offered reference to the Synod Constitution and Appendices 1, 2, and 3 of the Constitution for more detailed reference.

The Rev. Karen Pahl (Lutheran Church of the Resurrection Racine) asked a clarifying question on the geographic nature and the ability of congregations to request a different conference structure.

Bishop Erickson, as chair, provided clarifying information that such requests can be made to the Synod Council, but must be moves into a geographically neighboring conference.

The Rev. Kipp Zimmermann (St. Stephen the Martyr Greendale) spoke in favor of the amendment, noting that anything we as a synod can do to facilitate greater inclusivity and to put to rest the racism and other isms that may exist in our synod, is worth doing.

2c. Action on Motion to Amend

Bishop Erickson, noting a lack of discussion against the amendment, ended discussion and called for a vote via Election Buddy.

Assembly Action

SA19.S01.05. Amendment to Motion 2

The Assembly voted to amend Motion 2, changing the number of conferences to six, replacing 7.

Vote via Election Buddy Platform: 230 in favor, 22 opposed, 5 abstentions.

2d. Action on Motion 2

The Special Assembly then returned to consider the Amended Motion on the floor.

“To amend the numerical makeup of Continuing Resolution S12.01.A12, replacing ten mission clusters with six conferences; and to direct the Synod Council to populate and organize these conferences with congregations, as referenced in Appendices 1, 2, and 3, following the Special Synod Assembly no later than 1 February 2021.”

With no further discussion, Bishop Erickson called for a vote via Election Buddy.

Assembly Action

SA19.S01.06. Amendment of Continuing Resolution

The Assembly voted to amend Continuing Resolution S12.01.A12 as amended, and to direct the Synod Council to populate and organize conferences in Appendices 1, 2, and 3 no later than 1 February 2021.

Vote via Election Buddy Platform: 225 in favor, 1 opposed, 2 abstentions.

C. Action to Modify Bylaws to complete Cluster/Conference Transition

3a. Motion

Vice President Joyce Caldwell moved, on behalf of the Synod Council, to *Amend Bylaws S9.01.01.; S10.01.01.; S10.01.04.; and 10.06.01.; en bloc: a) to replace all references to mission clusters with the term “conference;” b) to remove reference to electing representatives to the regional steering committee in S9.01.01., c) to adjust the number of at-large seats on the Synod Council to six; and d) to change outdated references in terminology from “ordained” to “rostered.”*

3b. Discussion

The Rev. Kipp Zimmermann (St. Stephen the Martyr, Greendale) sought a clarifying question about part (d) of the motion, related to the terminology regarding rostered ministers.

Secretary Schlake-Kruse replied to the question, referring to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly’s change in terminology following the modification to the Ministers of Word and Service and Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

Ron Czischke (Messiah, Twin Lakes) sought clarification about the number of at-large Synod Council seats and the impact of Motion 3 on the make-up of the Synod Council.

Secretary Schlake-Kruse responded to the question, noting S10.01. of the Synod Constitution sets a range for the number of Synod Council members, and that the decision before the Special Assembly would reduce the number of overall Synod Council members by 1. Schlake-Kruse noted that the decision to modify the synod council roster could be made at a later date after the Synod lives in the new conference structure for a time.

Kegian Fox (Martin Luther, Milwaukee) sought clarification as to the age limits and membership of Youth and Young Adults on the Synod Council.

3c. Action on Motion 3

Without further discussion, Bishop Erickson called for a vote on the motion via Election Buddy.

Assembly Action

SA19.S01.07. Amendment of Bylaws

The Assembly voted to amend bylaws S9.01.01.; S10.01.01.; S10.01.04.; and 10.06.01.; replacing references to clusters with the term conferences.

Vote via Election Buddy Platform: 222 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention.

X. Closing of Assembly

Bishop Erickson shared closing remarks, noting that the Synod Council will vote to populate the new conferences with synod congregations in the coming week and will communicate the new conferences to the synod by February 1st. Synod Staff will work to coordinate meetings of these new conferences so that deans may be elected and nominations made for Synod Council representatives and Churchwide Assembly voting members by March 15. The Nominating Committee will also be seeking nominations for the Synod consultation committee, Synod Treasurer, and Synod Vice-president. March 15 is also the deadline for any resolutions to be submitted to the synod office, in advance of the April 30—May 1 synod assembly.

Bishop Erickson offered a word of gratitude for those who have served as deans of mission clusters. He also invited the Special Assembly to join in the Together in Mission Event, which will be a series of Saturday morning online workshops on February 13, 20, and 27.

Bishop Erickson closed the Assembly with the Order for Closing the Assembly and prayer.

XI. Adjournment

Assembly Action

SA19.S01.08. Adjournment

With the agenda of business completed, **Bishop Erickson** adjourned the Special Virtual Meeting of the 2019 Synod assembly at 11:28 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse, Synod Secretary