

Greater Milwaukee Synod Council Meeting Minutes 21 January 2021

Meeting held virtually via Zoom Technologies due to COVID-19 pandemic.

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	Cluster/Position	Term Ends 8/31	Present	Absent	Anti- Racism
Temporarily Open	Belle City	2021			
Joshua Kuehn	Kenosha/West Racine	2021		X	Pending
Vickie Stretz	Lake Country	2023	X		10/2020
The Rev. Sarah Stobie	Milwaukee 1	2021	X		10/2020
Janet Wunrow	Milwaukee 2	2021	X		Pending
The Rev. Denise Mbise	Milwaukee 3	2023	X		Pending
Amber Anderson	Milwaukee 4	2023	X		10/2019
The Rev. Elizabeth Jaeger	Northern Lakeshore	2021	X		4/2019
Mark Christiaansen	Northwest	2021	X		Pending
Edwin Aparicio	Waukesha	2023	X		Pending
The Rev. Kevin Kretzmann Farrar	At Large	2023			4/2019
José Andrés Guerrero	At Large	2023		X	Pending
Amber Davis	At Large	2023	X		Pending
Joyce Caldwell	Vice President	2021 (1)	X		11/2018
The Rev. Matthew Schlake- Kruse	Secretary	2023 (1)	X		Pending
Bob Reinders	Acting Treasurer	2021 (1)	X		10/2015
The Rev. Paul Erickson	Bishop	2022 (1)	X		10/2017
Sarah Booher	Youth Representative	2021	X		Pending
Aliliywa Mbise	Young Adult Rep.	2021		X	10/2017

Guests and Synod Staff

Others present included: **The Rev. Jennifer Arnold**, Synod Staff; **The Rev. Molly Doreza**, Synod Opioid and Other Substance Abuse Task Force; **The Rev. Kristin Nielsen**, Synod Staff; **Sue Seidemann**, Women of the ELCA; **The Rev. Matthew Short**, Synod Staff; **The Rev. Fred Thomas-Breitfeld**, Anti- Racism Team; and **Venice Williams**, The Table SAWC.

Call to Order

Vice President Caldwell called the meeting to order at 6:16 p.m. Due to social distancing precautions in place on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held over live-stream via Zoom Technologies.

Devotions

Venice Williams, minister at **The Table**, one of the Synod's Authorized Worshipping Communities (SAWC), leader of **Alice's Garden** and the **Kujichagulia Producers' Cooperative**, led the Council in devotions sitting on the text of Micah 6:8, focusing on the aspect of "loving mercy," and its impact on noticing who and what God puts in our present for our humility and our attention. **Williams** also led the Council in prayer.

I. Consent Agenda

Council Action

SC 21.01.01. Approval of Consent Agenda

The Council voted to approve all items from the consent agenda as presented, including approval of voice for visitors; adoption of agenda for this meeting; to approve of minutes from the Synod Council meeting of 19 November 2020; approved continued On-Leave from Call Status for the following Rostered Ministers: **The Rev. Elizabeth Baires; the Rev. Amy Becker-Perez; The Rev. Amanda Christensen; The Rev. Paul Ihlenfeld; the Rev. Elizabeth Jaeger; the Rev. Chad Kline; Deacon Douglas Krekling; The Rev. Jay McDivitt; The Rev. Adam Moreno; The Rev. Grant Quever; The Rev. Sheila Rawn; The Rev. Stacy Seger; The Rev. Harvard Stephens; The Rev. Richard Suero; The Rev. Kelly Taylor-Schaus (with extension); The Rev. Dean Willich, and the Rev. Logan Vang;** approved authorizing Bishop Erickson to request On Leave from Call Extensions for **The Rev. Kirsten Hedlund and The Rev. Maren Hooper** at the 2021 Conference of Bishops Meeting; and approved Retired Status for **The Rev. Marilyn Miller**, effective 1 January 2021; and **The Rev. Pres Hoffman**, effective 1 February 2021.

II. Approval of Synod Calls

Council Action

SC 21.01.02. Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call to **The Rev. Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld**, serving in Interim Ministry at **Luther Memorial, West Allis**, effective 14 December 2020.

III. Ministry Highlight- The Table

Synod-Authorized Minister Venice Williams presented on the ministries of The Table, Alice's Garden Urban Farm, and the Kujichagulia Producers' Cooperative, located at the Sherman Phoenix. The Table is a formal SAWC that began with an outdoor parish at the Alice's Garden Urban Farm, where folks gardening and coming to many of the events asked, "Can we have a church?" **Williams** noted that she sees her role as working to listen to the community and be a partner in saying yes, empowering leadership, and building resources to harvest what might happen with God's help. She noted that with the pandemic in 2020, Alice's Garden became an incredible "third space," and that the City of Milwaukee Health Department has not traced a single COVID outbreak to any of the ministries of Alice's Garden.

Referencing the preface of Micah 6:8 and noting that to whom much is given, much is required, **Williams** stated that The Table and her ministry refuses to get stuck only in the real need to address poverty, but to also address and reach out to community and cultural development, economic development, root causes of injustice, and vocation and career development. **Williams** lifted up the many programs and ministries already happening in 2021, possible partnerships that are being finalized, and noted gratitude for the Table's ministry team, the Oneida Nation, **The Rev. Cheri Johnson**, who serves as Spiritual Caretaker at the garden and leads labyrinth walks, and partnerships with the Lutheran School of Theology—Chicago, Marquette University, and the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee. She noted that support from the Synod Council and Synod Office has helped this ministry continue to bear fruit.

IV. Vice President's Report

Vice President Caldwell shared a remembrance of the late Synod Treasurer, **Tom Gauthier**, whose sudden death touches many parts of our Synod. She offered gratitude for his gifts and named the great loss many are feeling throughout our Synod, where he took an active role both on the Synod Council and in many synod ministries. She also noted **Gauthier's** vocation as an advocate for jobs and employment for those with disabilities, his membership at **Grace, Thiensville**.

Caldwell noted that the Executive Committee met with Bishop Erickson earlier in January for a process of evaluation and self-reflection, annual review, and goal setting. She also lifted up the expectation that Synod Council Members are expected to participate in Anti-Racism education during their Synod Council term, and highlighted the upcoming virtual sessions on 12-13 March 2021.

V. Bishop's Report

Bishop Erickson submitted a full written report. He noted that the pace of things has certainly picked up in this new year, especially with the upcoming Special Synod Assembly and the general flow of work with regards to the new First Call process and mobility. He has begun receiving and responding to the annual Rostered Minister reports. He also noted the continued process of check-ins and further meetings to process and discuss "Return-to-Worship 2.0" protocols from the Wisconsin Council of Churches.

Bishop Erickson also noted the Bishop's Antiracism Advisory Group continues meeting and will discuss *Waking Up White* with the Synod Staff. He provided a few updates ahead of the Special Meeting of the 2019 Synod Assembly. He also shared that the Italian Community Center

CC has agreed to move all Synod Assembly deposits to 2022 (May 20-21) if we cancel an in-person 2021 assembly.

VI. Treasurer's Report

Acting Treasurer Bob Reinders noted that through 11/12 of the budget year, revenues of \$1.5 million are 92.4% of the budget. This is an improvement of 2% since October. He noted that PPP Loan Funding was a "saving grace," and the current net income is \$62,700. The Synod does not qualify for the 2nd round of PPP funding. **Reinders** drew the Council's attention to the Dedicated Funds Balance reports, which holds monies that the Synod holds in unrestricted savings account funds and will be important for the funding and budget discussions in upcoming months.

Council Action

SC 21.01.03. Acceptance of Financial Statements

The Council voted to accept the financial statements through December 2020 as presented.

VII. Old Business

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

Vice President Caldwell presented in her role as Campaign Manager for the Equipping the Saints Appeal. She noted that the rollout plans continue and that on the meeting date, \$187,800 had been pledged and/or received, accounting for 8% of the total Appeal Goal. She will present a brief report on the appeal at the Special Meeting of the Synod Assembly. Retired Rostered Ministers will be the next group to receive information and be asked to consider participating.

B. Update from Opioid and Other Substance Abuse Task Force (2019 Resolution 2)

The Rev. Molly Doreza presented a brief update on behalf of the Task Force, who have now adopted a mission statement, elected officers, and established fiscal agency through **Atonement, Muskego**. There are many grant applications in progress and the Task Force is meeting in February with the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee Center for Urban Population and Health for a strategic planning initiative. 16 congregations were part of the September training event; 7 have been registered for virtual leadership training taking place later in January.

VIII. New Business

A. Approval of 2021-2022 Synod Budget

Acting Treasurer Reinders presented the 2021-2022 Synod Budget for Council approval, in lieu of the 2020 Synod Assembly, which was cancelled. He noted the

budget was updated with more current data and information related to the context of the pandemic on revenues. Projected income from congregations will remain at \$1.8 million. This is an optimistic projection, but **Reinders** noted many expenditures in the budget are proportionally rated to incomes received. At current, benevolence and mission support to the ELCA is 52.5% of budget; 5.6% of the budget supports partner ministries. Changes made to the proposed budget included: removing grant-supported leadership events (the Synod is not expected to apply for Siebert Lutheran Foundation granting in this budget year); salary increases to account for cost-of-living adjustments and merit and equity adjustments; and a maintaining of travel expenses in the budget despite lower actuals (due to COVID-19).

The budget proposed will be a deficit budget of \$113,300; this is normative for the Synod, but the PPP Loan funds are an unusual addition to this year's budget, which will likely be unrepeatable. The Council also discussed the balances of savings, reserves, and undesignated accounts.

Council Action

SC 21.01.04. Approval of 2021-2022 Synod Budget

The Council voted to approve the 2021-2022 Synod Budget, acting on behalf of the cancelled 2020 Synod Assembly, as presented by the Finance Committee.

B. Recommendation of Agenda for Special Meeting of the 2019 Synod Assembly

Council Action

SC 21.01.05. Recommendation of Special Synod Assembly Agenda

The Council voted to recommend the Agenda for the Special Meeting of the 2019 Synod Assembly for Special Assembly approval, concurrent with the meeting notice provided by the Synod Secretary.

C. Recommendation of Rules for Special Meeting of the 2019 Synod Assembly

Council Action

SC 21.01.06. Recommendation of Special Synod Assembly Rules

The Council voted to recommend the amended Rules for the Special Meeting of the 2019 Synod Assembly for Special Assembly approval.

D. Recommendation of Motions for the Special Meeting of the 2019 Synod Assembly

Secretary Schlake-Kruse presented the motions to be discussed at the Special Meeting of the 2019 Synod Assembly for Synod Council recommendation. The council discussed the motions, focusing on the possibility of amending the number of proposed conferences from seven to six. **Director for Evangelical Mission The Rev. Matthew Short** noted that in conversation with current deans, the preference would be to have 6, rather than 7 conferences. Proposals for conference membership have been drafted for both options; shifts to the Northwest and Southwest Regions of the Synod would eliminate the seventh conference. **Bishop Erickson** noted that the primary feedback to the Synod staff involved the conference membership of some pastors in the Muskego and Mukwonago areas, who prefer to be aligned with Waukesha and Brookfield congregations. The Council focused discussion that an amendment from the floor to change the proposed number of conferences from 7 to 6 would likely occur.

Council Action

SC 21.01.07. Recommendation of Motion for Special Synod Assembly

The Council voted to recommend Motion 1 to the Special Meeting of the 2019 Synod Assembly for adoption: “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. (SC 19.11.09).”

Council Action

SC 21.01.08. Recommendation of Motion for Special Synod Assembly

The Council voted to recommend Motion 2 to the Special Meeting of the 2019 Synod Assembly for adoption: “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.”

Council Action

SC 21.01.09. Recommendation of Motion for Special Synod Assembly

The Council voted to recommend Motion 4 to the Special Meeting of the 2019 Synod Assembly for adoption: “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 S9.11 and 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.’ (These changes in language were presented to the Synod by the Synod Council following its meeting on 19 November 2019. (SC 19.11.09)).

E. Approval of Voice and Vote at the Special Meeting of the 2019 Synod Assembly

Council Action

SC 21.01.10. Approval of Voice and Vote at the Special Meeting of the 2019 Synod Assembly

The Council voted to approve voice and vote for the following ministers serving in ELCA congregations for the Special Meeting of the 2019 Synod Assembly: **The Rev. Ron Ballew**, a pastor of the United Church of Christ, serving as interim pastor at **Reformation, Milwaukee;** and **The Rev. Germán Novelli Machado**, a pastor of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, serving as bridge pastor at **Ascension, Milwaukee.**

F. Approval of a Virtual 2021 Synod Assembly

Bishop Erickson noted that the 2021 Synod Assembly would likely need to be held in a virtual format, given current COVID numbers and in-person restrictions. The Special Synod Assembly has been instructive in demonstrating the need for more adaptations to technology and voting programs.

Council Action

SC 21.01.11. Approval of Virtual 2021 Synod Assembly

The Council voted to approve a virtual meeting for the 2021 Synod Assembly, to be held April 30—May 1, 2021 in accordance with the electronic meeting statutes of the State of Illinois.

G. Recommendation of 2021 Synod Assembly Rules—Deadlines

Council Action

SC 21.01.12. Recommendation of Synod Assembly Rules—Deadlines

The Council voted to recommend the following nomination and resolution deadlines as a part of the Synod Assembly Rules for the 2021 Synod Assembly: **Monday, March 15th: deadline for memorials, resolutions, and nominations from congregations, committees, or clusters, or conferences.**

Thursday, March 18: deadline for Synod-Council initiated resolutions.

H. Approval of Amended Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws for Lutheran Campus Ministry

Bishop Erickson presented the Lutheran Campus Ministry approved amended Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. He noted that the updates approved by LCM clarified the relationship between the Synod and LCM regarding nominations and elections of board members, Any changes to these documents needs both approval from the Churchwide expression and the Synod.

Council Action

SC 21.01.13. Approval of Lutheran Campus Ministry Governing Documents

The Council voted to approve the Amended Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of Lutheran Campus Ministry of Greater Milwaukee, effective 1 February 2021.

IX. Reports

- A. Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted.
- B. Congregations in Mission** – A written report was submitted. **The Rev. Kristin Nielsen** shared there are 25 congregations publicly in transition, with others in the works but not able to share publicly yet; Transitions in congregations are happening with more regularity than early in the pandemic. There is a shortage and challenge in identifying and finding interim and transitional pastors, and in many congregations, leadership support is lasting longer and requiring more time.
- C. Missional Leadership** – **The Rev. Jennifer Arnold** lifted up the modified Together in Mission Workshops, which will be held over three Saturdays in February. She also described a shift toward more continuous learning opportunities, as opposed to one-off sessions. She also noted the trauma of the pandemic and its impact on Rostered Ministers and their service in congregations.
- D. Lutheran Campus Ministry** – Written report submitted.
- E. Reconciling in Christ** – Written report submitted.
- F. Anti-Racism Team** – No report submitted.

- G. Women of the ELCA- Sue Seidemann** presented that the Synod's Women of the ELCA board meeting will be held via Zoom; regional meetings have also been held virtually. The Triennial Women's gathering will likely be cancelled and resumed in 2023. To date, the Churchwide expression is asking all synod Women of the ELCA groups to have virtual gatherings only.
- H. Outreach for Hope** – No report submitted. **Reinders** noted the Lenten devotions will have accompanying videos this year. **Schlake-Kruse** asked for a clarification about the fundraising efforts and competition, which was referred to the board.
- I. ELCA Church Council** – No written report submitted.
- J. Endowment Committee-** No report submitted.

IX. Adjournment

Council Action

SC 21.01.14. Adjournment

The council adjourned with a prayer by **Bishop Paul Erickson** at 7:54 p.m.

Next Special Meeting: January 28th 2021, 6:00 p.m. via Zoom.

Scheduled 2020-2021 Council Meetings:

Thursday, March 18th

Friday-Saturday, April 30th—May 1st: Synod Assembly

Thursday, May 20th

Thursday, July 15th

Thursday, September 16th

Unless otherwise published in advance, all meetings begin on Zoom at 6:15 pm. Links to the meeting can be provided by the Synod Office, specifically Mary Romskog.

Signed,

The Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse, Synod Secretary