

Greater Milwaukee Synod Council Meeting Minutes 18 March 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	X		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. Bill Beyer**, Reconciling in Christ Committee; **The Rev. Michael McAllister**, Wayfarer's Faith Collective (SAWC);

Call to Order

Vice President Caldwell called the meeting to order at 6:19 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

The Rev. Michael McAllister (Wayfarer's Faith Collective) led the Council in devotions based on Ezekiel 37—the animation of the dry bones. He shared of his experience learning to dive and the importance and essential nature of breath. He invited the Council to consider how the pandemic has caused us to notice what it looks like to “breathe differently.” He invoked the Spirit and breath of God and led the Council in a litany and prayer.

I. Consent Agenda

Council Action

SC 21.03.01. 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; approval of minutes from the Synod Council meetings of 21 January and 28 January 2021; approval of On-Leave from Call Status for **The Rev. Joshua Stibb**, effective 30 January 2021; and formally review of the Retired Roster for Ministers whose last names fall from S-Z.

II. Approval of Synod Calls

Council Action

SC 21.03.02. Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call to **The Rev. Maren Hooper**, serving in interim ministry at **St. John's, West Milwaukee**, effective 15 February 2021.

Council Action

SC 21.03.03. Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call to **The Rev. Elizabeth Jaeger**, serving as Hospice Chaplain and Bereavement Coordinator for Great Lakes Hospice, effective 5 January 2021.

III. Ministry Highlight- Wayfarer's Faith Collective.

The Rev. Michael McAllister, leader of the Synod-Authorized Worshipping Community **Wayfarer's Faith Collective**, presented about his ministry with the faith community. The

ministry began about three years ago, and has been a SAWC for the past year-and-a-half. **McAllister** convenes a group, “Big Questions, Thirsty Souls,” meeting in public spaces, to ponder questions of religion, faith, science, and other “big questions.” As an entry space, the goal is to have safe place for people to gather and ponder these questions, some sacred, others more philosophical. The other facet of the Collective is dinner gatherings, where (pre-pandemic) a meal served as the center of a communal gathering and spiritual reflection. The ministry draws individuals from a variety of religious and non-religious backgrounds; without a particular agenda, the group centers on what faith and spirituality mean. **McAllister** shared a brief video of the Dinner Gathering group who shared reflections from the participants. Many shared the importance of spiritual diversity for their sense of community, finding deeper connection, and imitating Christ through breaking bread together.

IV. Vice President’s Report

Vice President Caldwell reflected on the year of Synod Council meetings held via Zoom and gave thanks for the patience and persistence of the Council in navigating the ever-changing circumstances and keeping the Synod’s ministries of support and leadership going during the past year.

V. Bishop’s Report

Bishop Erickson submitted a full written report, providing staffing updates and general updates. Recent surveys of Synod Congregations have shown between one-third and one-half of congregations are meeting in some form in-person and indoors; He also presented his Sabbatical plans to the Council (22 May—21 August, 2021), including staff coverage.

The Bishop also updated the Council on his current board commitments (Outreach for Hope, Lutheran Campus Ministry, Mt. Meru Coffee Project, Carthage College, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. He has ended service on the boards of WeRaise, Lutheran School of Theology—Chicago, and Lutheran Social Services. **Bishop Erickson** noted the authorization of **Clare Sedlacek**, a candidate awaiting call, as temporary Synod-Authorized Minister for **Christ the King, Port Washington and Living Hope, Saukville**.

VI. Treasurer’s Report

Acting Treasurer Bob Reinders presented the Treasurer’s report. The 2020 Fiscal Year is now complete. Mission support income for the year was \$1.74 million, 96.8% of forecasted revenue. Many expense line items were lower, either due to proportional giving principles or reduced expenses because of COVID. The PPP funds added \$163,823 to the budget. Net income for the 2020 Fiscal Year was \$94,243.26.

Reinders added that **Abiding Savior Lutheran Church, Brown Deer**, has approved a dissolution plan, and named the Greater Milwaukee Synod a beneficiary. 24% of their liquidated assets will come to the Synod as an undesignated gift. He also noted the pass-through and designated funds for Council reference.

Council Action

SC 21.03.04. Acceptance of Financial Statements

The Council voted to accept the financial statements through 31 January 2021 as presented.

The Council then discussed designating the 2020-2021 Budget Surplus. The Executive Committee recommends designating \$94,243.26 toward Undesignated Reserves to offset any shortfall for the 2021-2022 Budget.

Council Action

SC 21.03.05. Designation of 2020-2021 Income Surplus

The Council voted to designate \$94,243.26 of surplus income from 2020-2021 to the Synod's Undesignated Reserve Funds, effective immediately.

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. The next groups to receive the prospectus and an invitation to give include the boards of Outreach for Hope and Lutheran Campus Ministry, who are in line to receive funding from the Mission Appeal. An event is scheduled in April for current and former Synod Staff. A video is being completed for presentation to the Synod Assembly to share the heart and soul of the appeal. Congregational invitations to give is still a year away, due to the uncertainty of the past and future. Total pledges and gifts are approximately \$188,000.

VIII. New Business

A. Action to Approve Continuing Resolution on Conference Membership for Rostered Ministers

Council Action

SC 21.03.06. Approval of Continuing Resolution

The Council voted to approve Continuing Resolution S12.01.01.A21., which states: All rostered ministers shall belong to and relate with the conference of their congregation of membership unless they submit a written request to the Executive Committee of the Synod Council.

B. Recommendation of 2022-2023 Synod Budget to 2021 Synod Assembly

Acting Treasurer Reinders presented a variety of scenarios regarding the 2022-2023 Synod Budget for Council Recommendation to the 2021 Synod Assembly. Because of actual realities of declining congregational Mission Support, the proposed budget lowers forecasted income by \$100,000 to \$1.7 million. Without any further budget cuts, the deficit budget would predict a loss of \$167,000.

Proposed scenarios included lowering ELCA Mission Support from the Synod (currently at 52.5%), lowering the percentage of budget shared with Lutheran Campus Ministry (currently at 7%), and various combinations and amounts of those line items. Deficits would be reduced from between \$120,000--\$60,000 under those scenarios. **Reinders** also noted there is not a projected salary increase in the budget for synod staff at present.

The Council discussed what budget to recommend to the Synod Assembly. They discussed reserve funds and designated funds present within the Synod's assets and their impact on the budgeting process; the relative positioning of Synod Mission Support vis-à-vis other synods; other sources for budget cuts and the relative leanness of the budget (**Stobie**); impact of Campus Ministry cuts on the programs of LCM and the Mission Appeal (**Kretzmann Farrar**); and the importance of staff compensation (**Anderson**).

Council Action

SC 21.03.07. Recommendation of 2022-2023 Synod Budget to 2021 Synod Assembly

The Council voted to recommend a proposed 2022-2023 budget to the 2021 Synod Assembly with a 1% staff salary increase, 50% support for the ELCA, and 6% support for Lutheran Campus Ministry, for a total deficit budget of \$117,000.

C. Approval of Nomination Deadlines for 2021 Synod Assembly

Council Action

SC 21.03.08. Recommendation of Deadlines within Synod Assembly Rules

The Council voted to approve the 2021 Synod Assembly Deadlines within the rules to be adopted by the Synod Assembly: **“Registration for the 2021 Synod Assembly shall close at 12:00 noon, on Monday, April 26. No registrations will be received after the deadline has passed. Due to the limitations of the meeting host software and voting credentials, no walk-in registrations will be accepted.”**

Council Action

SC 21.03.09. Recommendation of Deadlines within Synod Assembly Rules

The Council voted to approve the 2021 Synod Assembly Deadlines within the rules to be adopted by the Synod Assembly: “**Nominations from the floor for non-conference elections will be accepted by the nominating committee until 9:00 p.m on Friday, April 30th, 2021.**”

D. Recommendation of Rules to 2021 Synod Assembly

Council Action

SC 21.03.10. Recommendation of Synod Assembly Rules

The Council voted to recommend the full rules for the 2021 Synod Assembly for approval.

E. Approval of Voice and Vote at the 2021 Synod Assembly

Council Action

SC 21.03.11. Approval of Voice and Vote at 2021 Synod Assembly

The Council voted to approve voice and vote for the following ministers serving in ELCA congregations for 2021 Synod Assembly: **The Rev. Debra Trakel**, a pastor of the Episcopal Church, serving as interim pastor at **Ascension, Milwaukee**; **The Rev. Germán Novelli Machado**, a pastor of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, serving as bridge pastor at **Ascension, Milwaukee**; **The Rev. Ron Ballew**, a pastor of the United Church of Christ, serving as interim pastor at **Reformation, Milwaukee**; and **The Rev. Muriel Otto**, a pastor of the United Church of Christ, serving at **Unity, Brookfield**.

F. Recommendation of 2021 Synod Assembly Agenda

Council Action

SC 21.03.12. Recommendation of 2021 Synod Assembly Agenda

The Council voted to recommend the 2021 Synod Assembly Agenda for approval, subject to any necessary modifications.

G. 2021 Synod Assembly Offering Designation

Council Action

SC 21.03.13. Designation of Synod Assembly Offering

The Council voted to designate offerings from the 2021 Synod Assembly to the ELCA Women's International Leaders Fund.

H. Recommendation of Churchwide Assembly Amendments

Council Action

SC 21.03.14. Recommendation of Churchwide Assembly Amendments

The Council voted to recommend adoption of all "Recommended" amendments to the Constitution for Synods to the Greater Milwaukee Synod Constitution as approved by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

I. Appointment of Nominations Committee

Council Action

SC 21.03.15. Appointment of Nominations Committee

The Council voted to appoint the Executive Committee of the Synod Council to function as the Nominations Committee for the 2021 Synod Assembly.

J. Discussion of Nominations to the 2021 Synod Assembly

Vice President Caldwell noted the Synod Council's responsibility to secure nominations for the office of Treasurer, Youth Synod Council Member, and Young Adult Synod Council Member. She asked for the Council's attention for a special virtual meeting sometime in early-to-mid April to approve those actions.

K. Conference Change Request

Council Action

SC 21.03.16. Approval of Conference Change

The Council voted to approve the request of **North Cape Lutheran Church, Franksville**, to belong to the South Conference of the Greater Milwaukee Synod.

L. Synod Council Vacancy

Vice President Caldwell announced the receipt of the formal resignation from **Joshua Kuehn** from his seats on Synod Council, Lutheran Campus Ministry Board, and Consultation Committee, effective 1 April 2021. She thanked him for his dedication and service to the Synod Council.

IX. Reports

- A. **Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted.
- B. **Congregations in Mission** – A written report was submitted.
- C. **Missional Leadership** – A written report was submitted.
- D. **Lutheran Campus Ministry** – No report submitted.
- E. **Reconciling in Christ** – **The Rev. Bill Beyer** presented updates on the RIC Team’s work to address the 2018 Synod Assembly mandate to “provide continuing education for Synod Staff with regard to issues concerning the LGBTQIA+ community. **Schlake-Kruse** noted that the ELCA is currently training all Synod Candidacy Committees on racial and gender bias with help from Reconciling Works.
- F. **Anti-Racism Team** – Written report submitted.
- G. **Women of the ELCA**- No report submitted.
- H. **Outreach for Hope** – Written report submitted.
- I. **ELCA Church Council** – No report submitted.
- J. **Endowment Committee**- No report submitted.

X. Closed Session

Vice President Caldwell called the meeting into Closed Session with Council consensus at 8:10 p.m.

Council Action

SC 21.03.17. Entry into Closed Session

The Council, through unanimous consent, entered Closed Session for the purposes of a confidential matter at 8:10 p.m.

The Council voted to end the Closed Session at 8:24 p.m.

Council Action

SC 21.03.18. Termination of Synod Call

The Council voted to accept the recommendation of the Breaking the Chains Steering Committee to terminate the relationship between Breaking the Chains Church, a Synod-Authorized Worshipping Community and its mission developer, **The Rev. Mark Thompson**, effective 31 March 2021.

Council Action

SC 21.03.19. Adjournment of Closed Session

The Council voted to end the Closed Session at 8:24 p.m.

XI. Adjournment

Council Action

SC 21.03.20. Adjournment

The council, reaching the end of its agenda of business, adjourned with a prayer by **Bishop Paul Erickson** at 8:24 p.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 20th, 6:15 p.m.

Scheduled 2020-2021 Council Meetings:

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

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