

Greater Milwaukee Synod Council Meeting Minutes 17 September 2020

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
Bob Reinders	Belle City	2021	X		10/2015
Joshua Kuehn	Kenosha/West Racine	2021	X		Pending
Vickie Stretz	Lake Country	2023	X		Pending
The Rev. Sarah Stobie	Milwaukee 1	2021	X		Pending
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
Tom Gauthier	Treasurer	2021 (1)	X		10/2017
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. Chris Manke**, Outreach for Hope; **The Rev. Kristin Nielsen**, Synod Staff; **Sue Seidemann**, Women of the ELCA; **The Rev. Matthew Short**, Synod Staff; **The Rev. Mark Thompson**, Breaking the Chains, Milwaukee; **Greg Truex**, ELCA Federal Credit Union

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

The Rev. Mark Thompson led the Council in devotions, focusing on the texts of Paul written from prison and the ministry of Breaking the Chains. He led the Council in an opening prayer.

I. Consent Agenda

Council Action

SC 20.09.01. 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 16 July 2020; approval of On Leave from Call status for **The Rev. Paul Ihlenfeld**, effective 17 August 2020; and **The Rev. Elizabeth Jaeger**, effective 1 September 2020; and approval of Retired Status for **The Rev. Wendy Wirth-Brock**, effective 1 August 2020.

III. Ministry Highlight- Breaking the Chains Congregation

The Rev. Mark Thompson shared his gratitude for the support of the Synod Council and provided a brief overview of the ministry of **Breaking the Chains**, the Synod-Authorized Worshipping Community he has led since 2016. The ministry serves men in the low-security Felmers Chaney Corrections Facility and works to bridge partnerships with congregations across the Greater Milwaukee Synod. The Department of Corrections runs the facility and works with **the Rev. Thompson**, and has ultimate control over how the ministry functions.

Thompson noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively and strongly impacted the ministry since the limited freedoms many of the incarcerated men had enjoyed, including work release and the ability to gather for worship or conversations have been stopped completely and the men have been kept in solitary confinement. He shared the increased challenges of communicating and sharing with the men; he asked the Council to pray for all those incarcerated in these days as the pandemic has hit many incarceration facilities extremely hard.

Thompson also shared his work of reaching out to congregations across the synod, in a variety of settings and with a wide range of perspectives on the political issues of criminal justice; he noted that in every congregational visit he has made, at least one congregation

member has spoken to him about a family member or relative incarcerated in the criminal justice system. He thanked the Council for their support and asked for their continued prayers for both the ministry and all in the Wisconsin Department of Corrections System.

V. Vice President's Report

Vice President Caldwell reminded Council members of the importance of continuing our own anti-racism work and highlighted upcoming anti-racism virtual events she is leading with **The Rev. Marilyn Miller (Reformation, Milwaukee)**. There is an expectation that Synod Council members participate in regular anti-racism training.

In lieu of a more formal report, **Vice President Caldwell** invited members to share and check-in with one another on how things are going, both personally and within congregations. These relational check-ins, focused on hopes and joys, will continue at the November meeting.

VI. Bishop's Report

Bishop Erickson submitted a full written report and expressed verbal thanksgiving for the continued support of leaders throughout the synod and financial mission support in these unusual COVID times.

Synod staff continue to focus on adapting with and connecting with rostered ministers and lay leaders. The 5-week Synod worship videos offered to give congregational production a respite was very well received, with an average of 250 views per Synod Video, not including downloads edited in to other formats. Labor Day Sunday was the most widely used.

Bishop Erickson shared details about his 2021 Sabbatical plan, which was approved by the Executive Committee and is scheduled from 15 May—15 August 2021. He has applied for a pastoral study grant from the Louisville Institute, seeking to research the question, “In light of the pandemic, how have leaders of Christian faith communities responded, adapted, and innovated?” The tentative plan includes international travel, if allowable, and interviews with faith community leaders across the United States should that be necessary.

The Bishop's Anti-Racism Advisory Group, consisting of six individuals from a diversity of backgrounds, will begin meeting regularly with the synod staff, and will serve two purposes. First, the group will suggest resources (books, videos, articles, etc.) for the staff to explore and then conduct conversations to discuss together. Second, the group will take time to walk with the synod staff as they review the various ways they engage in our work to hold the synod staff accountable to operating from an anti-racist perspective. This will include work with candidates for ministry, conducting the call process, and stewarding the resources of the synod (financial, people, mission, etc.). Members include **The Rev. Kara Baylor (Carthage College); Sonya Wolfe (Lord of Life, Kenosha); Esther Rusch (Faith, Cedarburg), The Rev. Mark Jaramillo (Norway, Wind Lake); MaryBeth Hoffman (All Peoples, Milwaukee), and Miguel de Jesús (formerly Our Savior's, Milwaukee)**.

In his written report, it was noted that Bishop Erickson authorized **Pastor Germán Novelli Machado (Ascension, Milwaukee); Duane Swenson (Christ, Jackson); and Venice Williams (The Table, Milwaukee)** as Synod-Authorized Ministers in these specific contexts for an additional 12 months.

Bishop Erickson celebrated and presided over the ordinations of **The Rev. Tony Acompanado (Ascension, Waukesha); The Rev. John Anderson (Vernon, Mukwonago); and The Rev. David Rebey (Redemption, Wauwatosa)** in August and September.

VII. Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Gauthier presented the financial reports with evidence of a strong summer financially with no major surprises. He noted the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funds have “bought another year” of running a deficit budget for the Synod. Budget approval has been pushed back to the November Council meeting.

Council Action

SC 20.09.02. Acceptance of Financial Statements

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

VI. 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, noting the steps are in motion to “unpause” the campaign. The prospectus document remains in revision: edits are ongoing to the cover letter, Leadership section, Innovation section, and closing pieces in order to add the lens of racial equity to the document. Earlier sections focusing on financial literacy have been replaced by focusing on financial support for leaders of color.

The Rev. Chris Manke’s hiring as Outreach for Hope Executive Director has also impacted the appeal’s focus on what development support for congregations and Outreach for Hope looks like; listening has begun with OFH congregations. The Steering Team met on 1 September and is looking to present a more final draft to the Executive Committee in October.

Caldwell noted a special Synod Council meeting will be called for 22 October to approve, in part to allow for a targeted ask in November and December because of impacts to donations and tax law for 2020 from COVID relief legislation.

VII. New Business

A. Presentation from ELCA Federal Credit Union

Greg Truex, ELCA Federal Credit Union Director of Operations made a brief presentation to the Council. He noted that the Ministry serves 2000 members nationally. Highlights of this ministry include partnership in Resourceful Servants, a program of the Credit Union, Churchwide, the Mission Investment Fund, and the Lilly Foundation to promote financial wellness and offer congregational financial

assessments; small ministry loans available up to \$50,000; and the flexibility to provide 254 PPP loans, including 8 to Synod Congregations totaling \$238,563.

B. Introduction of Outreach for Hope Executive Director

The Rev. Chris Manke, Outreach for Hope Executive Director introduced himself to the Synod Council. He has spent the past 6 weeks getting settled and building relationships through one-on-ones with board members and ministry partner leaders and past leaders to get a sense of the scope. He has also been participating in worship services and digital worship with a number of congregations. **Manke** expressed his thanks for the support staff of **Phil Smith** and **Robyn DiGiacinto**, who have done much of the preparation work for the Outreach for Hope Ride/Run/Walk fundraiser.

C. Modification of Synod Continuing Resolution

Secretary Schlake-Kruse presented the Council with a proposed Continuing Resolution to modify **S6.03.A88**. The language in this Continuing Resolution, dealing with protected classes from discrimination, was out of date and also referred to outdated terminology for the new ELCA roster designations for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministers of Word and Service. **The Council** was presented an updated version of the continuing resolution for approval by 2/3 roll call vote.

Council Action

SC 20.09.03. Adoption of Continuing Resolution S6.03.A20.

The Council voted to adopt a modified and updated continuing resolution, S6.03.A20, to replace S6.03.A88.

D. Approval of 2021 Compensation Guidelines

The Rev. Jennifer Arnold presented the 2021 Compensation Guidelines to the Council. The last major review of the guidelines was completed in 2018. There are not any significant changes to format at this time; in 2019 the Council added a parental leave policy to the guidelines.

Arnold noted that the projected Consumer Price Index (CPI) was at less than 1% inflation, which led the guidelines to advise against any Cost of Living Increase for 2021. She noted “the hope and goal” is that congregations whose Rostered Ministers who are below guidelines would offer an additional 1% increase to get them closer to compensation guidelines.

Portico Benefit Services has offered language to describe changes in retirement plans, which are taking on new titles; the ELCA Church Council also asked Portico to adjust Gold+ and Silver + health care coverage, which is reflected in the guidelines. **Arnold** also noted that with pulpit supply moving to online platforms, virtual supply preaching guidelines have been added for “the broadcast of preaching events.”

Kuehn sought clarification as to why the synod doesn't offer compensation guidelines for communications coordinators, administrators, and non-rostered church staff members. **Bishop Erickson** noted the ELCA's legal counsel advises against that because the Synod is not the employer. Many Council members shared they believe some sort of document in this regard would be worthwhile, including links to other non-profit organizations. In response to a process question, **Arnold** noted that the work on this year's guidelines was done predominantly by Synod Staff in conversation with **Bishop Erickson**.

Schlake-Kruse spoke against approving the guidelines as presented, noting that not allowing for a cost-of-living increase sets a bad precedent for congregations in their relationship with Rostered Ministers. **Stobie** and added the culture of many churches looks to the Synod Guidelines and expressed concern about the lack of recommending a cost of living increase. **Arnold** clarified there would still be an increase for added years of experience in the guidelines as presented. The Council also discussed the intent and considerations of congregations and the impact of COVID on rostered leaders and salary.

Bishop Erickson noted that the years of experience increase will be 2-3%; he also named that many rostered leaders are in need of catching up to guidelines, which also impact retirement contributions. **Kretzmann Farrar** noted that as of 15 September, the 2021 federal Cost of Living Increase had been 1.3%; which is both lower than past years and higher than the time of the guidelines' creation.

Kretzmann Farrar also reminded the Council of previous work to adjust guidelines for Deacons to "catch up" to Ministers of Word and Sacrament guidelines since the ELCA's adoption of these categories of ordained leaders and sought clarification as to how that was weighed into this year's guidelines. **Arnold** noted that last year, Deacons were increased 4% to try and close the gap, and there is no end-goal for where their guidelines should increase.

Schlake-Kruse moved (Kuehn Seconded) to approve the Compensation Guidelines with an added 1% cost-of-living increase added, provided that the Synod Secretary and Synod Staff responsible for Rostered Leaders communicate with congregational leaders to strongly encourage all Rostered ministers be paid up to guidelines for years of experience and to consider all factors listed in the Compensation Guidelines document. **Aparicio** noted concerns for congregations already far behind with COVID; **Caldwell** reiterated these are guidelines and congregations negotiate with regard to their ability.

Kuehn amended (Christiaansen second) the original motion to read: “*an added 2% cost-of-living increase for Ministers of Word and Service and a 1% cost-of-living increase for Ministers of Word and Sacrament.*” The amendment was opposed by one member.

Council Action

SC 20.09.04. Approval of Amendment to Motion

The Council voted to amend the motion on the floor to read “to approve the Compensation Guidelines with an added 2% cost-of-living increase for Ministers of Word and Service and a 1% cost-of-living increase for Ministers of Word and Sacrament. And that the Synod Secretary and Synod Staff responsible for Rostered Leaders communicate with congregational leaders to strongly encourage all Rostered ministers be paid up to guidelines for years of experience and to consider all factors listed in the Compensation Guidelines document.

Council Action

SC 20.09.05. Approval of 2021 Compensation Guidelines

The Council voted to approve the 2021 Compensation Guidelines with an added 2% cost-of-living increase for Ministers of Word and Service and a 1% cost-of-living increase for Ministers of Word and Sacrament. The Council also directed the Synod Secretary and Synod Staff responsible for Rostered Leaders communicate with congregational leaders to strongly encourage all Rostered ministers be paid up to guidelines for years of experience and to consider all factors listed in the Compensation Guidelines document.

Kuehn continued discussion of a task force to explore lay support personnel pay guidelines, which he recommended would offer a sliding scale for years of service, education levels, and cost-of-living. **Bishop Erickson** noted the need to limit Synod Attorney consultation as much as possible. A motion was made, then amended to be replaced, setting forth a task force to discuss these guidelines.

Council Action

SC 20.09.06. Direction for Lay Support Personnel Task Force

The Council voted to direct the Synod Vice President to appoint a task force exploring compensation guidelines for lay support personnel, with a report due by the September 2021 Synod Council meeting.

E. Appointments to Discipline Committee

Council Action

SC 20.09.07. Appointment of Discipline Committee Members

The Council appointed the following individuals to 6-year terms on the Discipline Committee due to the cancellation of the 2020 Synod Assembly: **The Rev. Tyler Rasmussen (Mt. Zion, Wauwatosa); The Rev. Kristin Berglund (St. Peter's, Sheboygan); and Mark Voelz (St. Paul's, Milwaukee).**

F. Approval of Congregational Relocation

The Rev. Matt Short presented the request of **Redemption Lutheran Church, Wauwatosa**, to receive approval to move their congregation as the result of an offer to purchase their building. Per †S13.20, the Synod Council must approve any relocation. **Martin Luther, Milwaukee** has been in partnership with the congregation and is willing to receive them into the building for the present time.

Council Action

SC 20.09.08. Approval of Congregational Relocation

The Council, per †S13.20, approved the relocation of **Redemption Lutheran Church** to the building of **Martin Luther Lutheran Church, Milwaukee**.

VIII. Reports

- A. Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted. **The Rev. Matt Short** also reported a request has been made by **Ascension Lutheran Church, Waukesha**, for funding to support Spanish-speaking ministry there. There are funds available from the Good Shepherd/St. Andrew's designated funds to support those ministries. **Gauthier** noted that monies in that restricted account could also be designated for continued use for Latino ministry in Waukesha at the discretion of Synod Staff.

Council Action

SC 20.09.09. Disbursement of Synod funds for Latinx Ministry

The Council approved sharing \$5000 from the Good Shepherd/St. Andrew's designated funds to support Latinx Ministry through **Ascension, Waukesha**; and approved allowing monies from these restricted accounts to be continued toward Latinx ministries in Waukesha at the direction of Synod Staff. *Due to a conflict of interest, **Edwin Aparicio** abstained from voting on this action.

- B. Congregations in Mission** – A written report was submitted. **The Rev. Kristin Nielsen** shared her gratitude for other staff members covering her responsibilities during her sabbatical and for the Council for encouraging her time for renewal. She

encouraged advocacy within congregations to develop formal sabbatical policies for their rostered ministers.

- C. Missional Leadership** – A written report was submitted. **The Rev. Jennifer Arnold** shared updates on the Opioid and Other Substance Abuse Task Force initial trainings and updates on Anti-Racism work and programs offered by the synod.
- D. Lutheran Campus Ministry** – No report.
- E. Reconciling in Christ** – Written report submitted.
- F. Anti-Racism Team** – No report.
- G. Women of the ELCA** – **Sue Seidemann** noted the Board met via Zoom in August and October; She has joined other Women of the ELCA Presidents from Region 5 for mutual support and encouragement. She also noted the *Gleanings* Newsletter has been the primary means of communication.
- H. Outreach for Hope** – Written report submitted. **Bob Reinders** encouraged all to keep pedaling as the OFH Board continues on-boarding with **Pastor Manke**.
- I. ELCA Church Council** – No report submitted.
- J. Endowment Committee**- No report submitted.

IX. Adjournment

Council Action

SC 20.09.10. Adjournment

The council adjourned with a prayer of sending for **The Rev. Kristin Nielsen** at 8:51 p.m.

Next Meeting: November 19, 2020, 6:15 p.m. via Zoom

*Special meeting will likely be called for 22 October. Please note e-mails for invitation.

Scheduled 2020-2021 Council Meetings:

Thursday, November 19th

Thursday, January 21st

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.

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17 September 2020
Online Meeting via Zoom Technologies

Signed,

The Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse, Synod Secretary