

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
January 25, 2018

Faith/Santa Fe Lutheran Church
1000 South Layton Boulevard, Milwaukee

This Summary does not constitute official minutes of this meeting.

Ignited by God's love, Burning for Justice, We embrace the world

Attendance

Name	Cluster/Position	Term Ends 8/31	Present	Absent	Anti- Racism
Mr. George Sorenson	Kenosha/West Racine	2021	X		Pending
Mr. George Monis	Lake Country	2019		X	Pending
Rev. Tim Tahtinen	Milwaukee 1	2021		X	Pending
Ms. Janet Wunrow	Milwaukee 2	2021		X	Pending
Ms. Claire Zautke	Milwaukee 3	2019	X		Pending
Rev. Bill Knapp	Milwaukee 4	2019		X	Pending
Rev. Elizabeth Jaeger	Northern Lakeshore	2021	X		Pending
Mr. Mark Christiaansen	Northwest	2021	X		Pending
Mr. Bob Reinders	Racine	2021	X		10/2015
Rev. Angela Khabeb	Waukesha	2019	X		10/2015
Rev. Lindsay Jordan	At Large	2019	X		2/2016
Mr. Jerry Key	At Large	2019	X		10/2017
Ms. Amber Davis	At Large	2019		X	Pending
Ms. Joyce Caldwell	Vice President	2021 (1)	X		Pending
Mr. Matthew Brockmeier	Secretary	2019 (2)	X		10/2017
Mr. Tom Gauthier	Treasurer	2021 (1)	X		10/2017
Rev. Paul Erickson	Bishop	2022 (1)	X		10/2017
Ms. Anja Logan	Youth Representative	6/2018		X	Pending
Ms. Aliliywa Mbise	Young Adult Rep.	2021	X		10/2017

Also present were Rev. Jennifer J. Arnold, Assistant to the Bishop for Missional Leadership; Rev. Kristin Nielsen, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations in Mission; and Rev. Bill Beyer, Reconciling in Christ Representative.

Consent Agenda

Items on the consent agenda included approval of voice for visitors; approval of the agenda for this meeting; approval of minutes from the Synod Council meeting on November 16, 2017; approval of on leave from call status for Rev. Gabriel Marcano, effective December 15, 2017; and approval of retired status for Rev. Larry Westfield, effective February 1 2018; Rev. Norene Smith, effective February 1, 2018; Rev. Deb Ohrtmann, effective March 1, 2018; Rev. Steve Ohrtmann, effective March 1, 2018; Rev. Kathy Boadwine, effective March 1, 2018; Rev. David Larson, effective March 1, 2018; and Rev. Ingrid Huebner, effective March 1, 2018.

Council Action

Approval of Consent Agenda

The Council voted to approve all items in the consent agenda as presented.

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Approval of Synod Calls

Council Action

Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a synod call for Rev. Maren Hooper to Interim Ministry at Redemption Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wauwatosa, effective November 20, 2017.

Council Action

Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a synod call for Rev. Kathy Brown to Interim Ministry at House of Prayer Lutheran Church, Franklin, effective January 1, 2018.

Vice President's Report

Vice President Caldwell posed the question of where we are being called as a synod, particularly as the leadership of the synod. "Where is the call to the church, if we were Saul on the road?"

Responses included:

- A statement that underlying this question is the question of privilege for the select few.
- A call for being very clear about why we have churches.
- Concern about being blinded by "the way we've already done this," since what we relied on before is no longer there.
- A suggestion that the synod craft a new mission statement in order to be very clear about its purpose.
- Reference to a [recent article in Sojourners Magazine](#) which posed the question of whether we are living in a "Bonhoeffer moment." German theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer took a stand about the Jews being rounded up by the Nazis, and was ultimately killed in a concentration camp during World War II. The immediate question was what that moment looks like.
- A sense of feeling called to be more prophetic in preaching, which can result in resistance. The question of how far to push is important.
- The question of whether people are serious enough about their faith to risk hardship, such as unemployment, as a result of their speech or actions.
- "Silence is taken as assent; we do have to speak up."
- The fact that, in the King James Version of the Bible, you "lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill," meaning that "God goes to the dunghill places."
- A question on how "we put the zest into what is meant," finding a way to begin common ground in discussion.
- A reflection that we have "lost the personal connection in discussion."
- A further reflection on conflict within congregations.
- Looking for an opportunity to talk about what our mission is; what the church is offering in this moment.

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- A comment on the synod's history dealing with conflict in the Wisconsin Act 10 issue, where civil discussion was promoted.
- A question about how close we are to the edge of civility.
- Concern that God may lose patience with America, letting it suffer the same fate as Rome.

Joyce Caldwell concluded the conversation by asking the Synod Council to wrestle with these questions; to continue to ponder them and their significance. "Where are we being called to a place of leadership?" She said that she is open to input on topics and questions.

Bishop's Report

Bishop Paul Erickson reported that it was "good to be able to get away" and "good that the staff was able to keep things going" during his travels to Vancouver and the Holy Land. Key issues he highlighted from his written report were the new sexual misconduct policy and congregations in conflict. He said that he is looking for a broader group that can relate to such congregations.

For the March meeting he would like to look at planning for the 2019 Synod Assembly, which is planned to run on Friday evening and all day Saturday. He wants to announce these changes at the end of the 2018 Synod Assembly.

Of particular importance now is the Together in Mission event on February 10th. Rev. Jennifer Arnold has primary responsibility for planning this event, which includes cluster gatherings at lunchtime.

Rev. Lindsay Jordan noted that with the synod's newsletter emails going out on Thursday, many clergy who take Fridays off do not get information for several days. He asked if this could be adjusted to go out earlier, perhaps on Wednesday.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Tom Gauthier began with a seasonally questionable but always appropriate "I bring you good tidings of great joy!" He said that while December was the worst in a long time, with grim numbers, January was great. Income from mission support for the month so far has been \$274,452.01 (plus approximately \$3,000 today), and a year-to-date total of \$1,973,310.07. He said there is a good chance the synod will pass \$2 million in mission support for the fiscal year ending January 31st.

If that mark is met, all ministries that receive a pro-rated percentage of mission support income would receive their full allotment for the year. With savings from underspending on personnel, there is currently an operating surplus, which could be as much as \$50,000 for the year-end.

He continued by saying that of 122 congregations in the synod, 76 have fully met their commitments for the year, with 63 of those exceeding their pledged amounts.

Questions included whether there was any cushion to offer the possibility of a surplus for 2018-2019, particularly since the synod is now fully staffed. The answer was that the way the staff is configured, especially for healthcare costs, the personnel budget for next year should be under-spent.

Jerry Key asked about a proposal from some years ago to limit funds kept in reserve, returning amounts above a ceiling to support for ministry. There was uncertainty about when this action might have been taken, with research promised.

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Council Action

Acceptance of Financial Statements

The Council voted to accept the December 2017 financial statements as presented.

New Business

A. Review of Mission Support Projections for 2018-2019 Budget

Given the deficit in actual mission support compared to mission support budgeted at the time the agenda was prepared, it appeared that it might be prudent to reconsider the target amount for the 2018-2019 budget, but the influx of support during January indicates that this might not be necessary.

Bishop Erickson told the Council that Rev. Matt Short is responsible for mission support efforts, which will include visits to every congregation during late summer or early fall by members of the Synod Council and forty or fifty other volunteers. The purpose will be to ask what Jesus is doing in each place, to thank congregations for their efforts, and to share how Jesus is alive in the rest of the synod. The underlying idea is that mission support follows mission; it follows stories.

A question followed on the statistics document shared with the Council, with a desire for more focus on congregations rather than rostered leaders. The bishop explained that this document was meant to highlight the changing demographics of rostered leadership, with more retired pastors now than pastors called to congregations.

B. Deadlines for Nominations and Resolutions for 2018 Synod Assembly

Secretary Matthew Brockmeier shared information on last year's deadlines for nominations, resolutions and memorials, with an end of March deadline for congregations, committees and clusters; and following the May meeting for action by the Synod Council.

Council Action

Approval of Deadline for Nominations, Resolutions and Memorials

The Council voted to set March 31, 2018 as the deadline for nominations for election at the Synod Assembly, and for the submission of Resolutions and Memorials by congregations, clusters and committees for consideration at the Synod Assembly; and a deadline of May 17, 2018 for the submission of Resolutions by the Synod Council.

C. Continuing Resolution on Executive Committee Action

Secretary Brockmeier asked the Council to consider codifying action taken by the Synod Council in July 2015 to allow the Executive Committee to act in place of the Synod Council when time is a factor in making decisions between Council meetings. He noted that actions taken in a meeting may not be as easy to reference in the future as items that are included in the synod's governing documents as continuing resolutions.

Council Action

Approval of Continuing Resolution

The Council voted to approve Continuing Resolution S11.01.B18. as follows:

S11.01.B18. The Executive Committee may act in place of the Synod Council when decisions are required between regularly scheduled meetings of the Council, and when called to do so in a manner consistent with bylaw S10.07.01.

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D. Staff Cost of Living Increase

Bishop Erickson presented the recommendation of the Executive Committee to provide a cost of living increase for staff for the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

Council Action

Approval of Staff Cost of Living Increase

The Council voted to approve a two percent wage increase for all staff employed more than six months during 2017, and a one percent wage increase for any staff with less than six months service in 2017.

VIII. Reports

- A. Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted. In Rev. Short’s absence, the bishop briefly discussed support for “redevelopers.” There will be training, grants and coaching for rostered leaders taking on this work.
- B. Congregations in Mission** – A written report was submitted. Rev. Kristin Nielsen told the Council that there are actually more congregations being accompanied than are listed, as listings are only added when formal transitions begin. She went on to reiterate that a one-size fits all approach no longer works. The goal, she said, is to determine how the congregation can articulate who they are now and what they are being called by God to do moving toward. She elaborated on one specific area, that of pastoral sharing. Aside from simple transitions, sometimes the issue is how to articulate the roles for an increasing staff in growing congregations. “How do we function as an organization, as a church body, in continuing to fulfill the Gospel?” It is, she said, never boring.
- C. Missional Leadership** – A written report was submitted. Rev. Jennifer Arnold prefaced her verbal remarks by talking about how she is continuing to learn about the call process and accompanying congregations, knowing that it is an art, not a science. The February 10th Together in Mission event is her focus at the moment, with about 40 congregations having registered members. She also reported that the Fall Theological Conference will take place in Green Lake from September 23rd through 25th.
- D. Lutheran Campus Ministry** – No report submitted.
- E. Reconciling in Christ** – A written report was submitted. Rev. Bill Beyer, who has recently taken over as representative to the Council, recounted the history of the Reconciling in Christ Committee, which began with the question of marriage equality but did not have a similar tight focus in the recent past. Their goal is to help the synod and to walk with congregations. To provide a better ministry, they will focus this year on the Pride Parade, but not active participation in PrideFest, and will develop a fall session on coming out. These will lay a foundation for seeing what is needed in the synod, and will begin a partial reinvention of the committee.
- F. Anti-Racism Team** – No written report submitted. The team is reorganizing some of their work, and is in conversation with Lutherdale to develop an anti-racism and anti-bullying event.
- G. Women of the ELCA** – No report submitted.
- H. Outreach for Hope** – No report submitted.

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Next Meeting

Thursday, March 15, 2018

Ascension Lutheran Church, 1415 Dopp Street, Waukesha

Future Meetings

- Thursday, May 17, 2018 – St. Olaf’s Lutheran Church, W653 Roosevelt Road, Rubicon
- Thursday, May 31 – Saturday, June 2, 2018 – Synod Assembly – Country Springs Hotel, Pewaukee
- Thursday, July 19, 2018 – Bishop Erickson’s Home, 3072 South 47th Street, Milwaukee
- Thursday, September 20, 2018 – Jackson Park Lutheran Church, 4535 West Oklahoma Avenue, Milwaukee

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings are preceded by a dinner at 5:30 pm, with the meeting beginning at 6:15 pm.

Submitted,

Mr. Matthew Brockmeier
Synod Secretary