

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
May 18, 2017

Martin Luther Lutheran Church
9235 West Bluemound Road, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Please note that this summary is not an official document. The minutes on which it is based may not yet have been approved, or may be modified when approved.

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

Attendance

Name	Cluster/Position	Term Ends 8/31	Present	Absent	Anti- Racism
Ms. Sue Schmidt-Decker	Kenosha/West Racine	2017		X	10/2015
Vacant	Lake Country	2019			-
Vacant	Milwaukee 1	2017			-
Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland	Milwaukee 2	2017	X		1/2011
Ms. Claire Zautke	Milwaukee 3	2019	X		Pending
Rev. Bill Knapp	Milwaukee 4	2019		X	Pending
Mr. Tom Gauthier	Northern Lakeshore	2017	X		9/2013
The Rev. David Schoob	Northwest	2017		X	9/2013
Ms. Lynn Hooper	Racine	2017	X		Pending
Rev. Angela Khabeab	Waukesha	2019	X		10/2015
Rev. Lindsay Jordan	At Large	2019		X	2/2016
Mr. Jerry Key	At Large	6/2017		X	10/2016
Ms. Amber Davis	At Large	2019	X		Pending
Mr. Scott Manske	Vice President	2017 (1)	X		10/2015
Mr. Matthew Brockmeier	Secretary	2019 (2)	X		1/2012
Mr. Lee Johnston	Treasurer	2017 (2)	X		Pending
Rev. Paul Erickson	Bishop	2022 (1)	X		Pending
Ms. Sarah Muller	Youth Representative	2017	X		Pending
Rev. Jonathan Barker	Young Adult Rep.	2017		X	9/2013

Also present were Rev. Alexander (Sandy) Jacobs, Executive Director, Diakonia; Rev. Kristin Nielsen, Director of Rostered Leadership; and Rev. Matthew Short, Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission. Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman, Chair, GMS Reconciling in Christ Ministry Team, had to leave before the call to order for a family emergency.

Diakonia Report

Rev. Sandy Jacobs provided an overview of the Diakonia program, noting that it has been ongoing in the synod for ten years. During that time, there have been more than 130 program graduates.

Diakonia is a two-year program designed to enhance lay ministry, with graduates serving as leaders in their congregations. In response to a question, clarification was provided on the fact that Diakonia graduates are not the same as Ministers of Word and Service, despite the fact that the title deacon is used in both cases. Five graduates of the program have continued their studies and entered full-time ministry, however.

Rev. Jacobs thanked the synod for its support, which includes funding both to help cover instruction, and support for scholarships. He said that one of the things that has been good about the

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program in this synod is the diversity of the classes, including diversity of religious traditions, with participation by non-Lutherans.

There are four sites for classes; maintaining those four sites is one goal of the program. Other goals include enhancing the Latino ministries of the synod with a Spanish-speaking program, and attempting to contextualize the program for our area. While the national program is highly structured in terms of classes, one focus here is to include the study of world religions, many of which are represented in the Milwaukee area. A second additional focus may be peacemaking and reconciliation.

In addition to the synod's financial support, Rev. Jacobs urged members of the Council to encourage possible participants and teachers. He added that the cost of the program is \$60 per class, with twelve courses required for completion, and again referred to the discounts and scholarships that are available to students who cannot afford the regular fees.

Vice President's Remarks

Vice President Manske reported that he is not running for re-election. He engaged in a lengthy period of reflection and discussion before making his decision, but said that he realized that he cannot continue with the same level of effort. If that were the case, he said that he would feel like he was failing. He called it a hard decision, but said he was at peace with the decision not to continue. He expressed appreciation for the Council and the staff, adding that he "wanted to give something back to the church, and I've done that. It is time to move on."

Bishop's Report

Bishop Paul Erickson began by thanking Scott Manske for his dedication and commitment, saying it was "a lot of hard work, and you did it." While on the subject of synod leadership, the bishop told the Council that there are still insufficient candidates for current openings, including for the positions of vice president and treasurer. Time is short.

He continued with a recap of his written report, including important aspects of his new approach to the Synod Assembly. On the topic of the Assembly, he spoke in detail of how the Open Space sessions would work, leaving open the possibility of adding topics to those already selected through an online process for voting members.

Other things noted included the current registration for the Assembly (372 as of today), with the needed 60/40 proportion of lay to clergy being adhered to, but barely. He noted that the synod's policy of allowing all retired clergy to vote at the Assembly makes it more difficult to attain the correct proportion than is true in other synods, where retired clergy either do not have a vote, or have a vote only for a percentage of their ranks.

The bishop also reported that there will be sponsors for activities at the Assembly. Ministry partners like the ELCA's Mission Investment Fund, Church Mutual Insurance Company and Luther Manor will provide sponsorship, receiving two minutes to share their stories with the Assembly.

The Assembly also still needs volunteers to assist with registration and with tech. Potential volunteers for tech work should contact Mary Romskog at the synod office. It was noted that these are not intensive tech positions.

Bishop Erickson told the Council that the selection of a new financial administrator is almost complete, and should be announced within a week. Applications for the missional leadership post are being accepted through mid-June.

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The synod's Mission Support Challenges has garnered about \$5,000 from seven congregations thus far. In addition to attempting to meet the challenge for participating congregations, the bishop urged members of the Council to make personal contributions. The video which was shared with congregations will be shown at the Synod Assembly. There will also be another brief video inviting members to a prayer service at Ascension Lutheran Church in Milwaukee on October 31st, which will be a joint service with the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

Finally, there was a brief report on the work of the Reference and Counsel Committee, and the four resolutions that will be presented to the Synod Assembly. One of those, on the question of sanctuary, has been the subject of additional discussions and work. Both the original resolution and one with amended resolved statements will be presented at the Assembly.

Roster Matters

Rev. Wendy Wirth-Brock was most recently at Good Shepherd Trinity Church, Milwaukee, where she served as the interim pastor through March 31, 2017.

Council Action

Approval of On Leave from Call Status

The Council voted to approve On Leave from Call status for Rev. Wendy J. Wirth-Brock, effective April 1, 2017.

Rev. Brian Alberti was originally on the ELCA roster, receiving On Leave from Call status from the synod, which expired in 2014. He then became involved with the Episcopal Church. His official status at present is "approved for reinstatement upon receipt and acceptance of a letter of call." At some point, he may choose to transfer to the Episcopal roster. His call to the church in Florida is through our synod since his rostering has been through us.

Council Action

Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a synod call to Ecumenical Ministry for Brian Alberti at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Fernandina Beach, Florida, effective May 15, 2017.

Council Action

Approval of Retired Status

The Council voted to approve retired status for Rev. William A. Mains, effective June 1, 2017; Deacon Debra K. Ganser, effective June 1, 2017; and Rev. Carol J. Hegland, effective June 1, 2017.

Brief discussion on rules regarding voice and vote at the Synod Assembly for pastors not on roster of ELCA but serving in ELCA congregations. These rules do not apply to Rev. Jay Thorson, who would need to work for at least a year in an ELCA church before rejoining the roster, but do apply to Rev. Ron Ballew, who is rostered by the United Church of Christ, a full-communion partner of the ELCA.

Council Action

Approval of Voice

The Council voted to approve granting voice but not vote at the 2017 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly to Rev. Jay Thorson, serving under contract at Capitol Drive Lutheran Church, Milwaukee.

Council Action

Approval of Voice and Vote

The Council voted to approve granting of voice and vote at the 2017 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly to Rev. Ron Ballew under provision S7.27. of the Greater Milwaukee Synod's constitution.

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Reporting only: Rev. Matthew James has received an ELCA Church Council call to Director of Admissions at the Lutheran School of Theology – Chicago, effective November 7, 2016.

Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Lee Johnston reported that income was a bit down in April, but that the first three months of the synod’s fiscal year were really good overall compared to previous years. Giving has been above expectations at 102% of budget. The synod is also saving on staffing expenses, which are about 15% under budget. He said that the synod’s finances were tracking well going into the summer months.

Vice President Manske provided a brief history of commitments by congregations for the past four years. These commitments have fallen by about \$140,000. He cited the use of Synod Assemblies to provide a rationale to participants for the use of funding for the larger church – to remind people of what the synod does.

The bishop said that at the July Council meeting he would like to discuss the possible use of funds previously approved for projects that have been discontinued.

Mr. Manske thanked Mr. Johnston for his eight years of service as synod treasurer, calling it “great service to the synod.”

It was again noted that nominees for the treasurer’s position and others are needed.

Council Action

Acceptance of Financial Statements

The Council voted to accept the April 2017 financial statements.

Old Business – Action Items

Open Positions

Few candidates. Need candidates. Hurry.

2014 Resolution 2 – Voting Member Diversity

Vice President Manske prepared a report to submit to the Synod Assembly. While this resolution was not adopted, it was referred to the Synod Council for consideration. Bishop Erickson reported that he is engaged in ongoing conversations on the bishops’ listserv on this topic.

Council Action

Submission of Report

The Council voted to forward the “Report on Resolution 2 of 2014 Synod Assembly” to the 2017 Synod Assembly, and to include in documents provided electronically but not in print for Voting Members of the Assembly.

2013 Resolution 2 – Policy and Procedure on Proceeds from Congregational Closings

In January 2016, the Synod Council voted to recommend a set of policies, procedures and recommendations to the Synod Assembly. Since this was not done, and since the resolution authorized final action by the Council, action to implement these documents was proposed and agreed. This result will be reported to the 2017 Synod Assembly.

Council Action

Adoption of Policies, Procedures and Recommendations

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The Council voted to adopt the Policy on the Use of Funds from the Sale of Greater Milwaukee Synod Church Properties, the Procedure for the Distribution of Grants from the Sale of Greater Milwaukee Synod Church Properties, and Options for Missional Closing and Disbursement of Assets as presented, as called for in 2013 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly Resolution 2.

2016 Resolution 4 – Justice for the Holy Land through Responsible Investment

This report, including details of follow-up by the ELCA on investment policies and by the synod on the status of invested funds, was prepared by Vice President Manske.

Council Action

Submission of Report

The Council voted to forward the “Response from the Synod on 2016 Resolution 4 on Investment in the Holy Land” to the 2017 Synod Assembly, and to include in documents provided electronically but not in print for Voting Members of the Assembly.

Status on Resolutions from the 2016 Synod Assembly

This is an updated summary of the status of items that were acted upon last year by the Synod Assembly.

Some discussion on what constitutes sufficient follow-up for items where the action called for is primarily the distribution of information with a call to action. Letters for two items were not sent by the synod following the 2016 Assembly. It was agreed that calls for action from both the 2016 and 2017 assemblies would be consolidated into a single letter following this year’s Assembly, with any necessary status updates taken into account.

Council Action

Submission of Report

The Council voted to forward the report on “2016 Resolution Action” to the 2017 Synod Assembly, and to include in documents provided electronically but not in print for Voting Members of the Assembly.

New Business – Action Items

Memorials and Resolutions

No additional memorials or resolutions presented for action.

Recognize and Receive New Congregations

Council Action

Recognition and Reception of Congregation

The Council voted to recognize and receive Journey in Faith Lutheran Church, Racine, Wisconsin, as a congregation of the Greater Milwaukee Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as of January 24, 2017.

Council Action

Recognition and Reception of Congregation

The Council voted to recognize and receive Unity Lutheran Church, Brookfield, Wisconsin, as a congregation of the Greater Milwaukee Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as of January 1, 2017.

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Council Action

Recognition and Reception of Congregation

The Council voted to recognize and receive Living Faith Lutheran Church, Racine, Wisconsin, as a congregation of the Greater Milwaukee Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as of February 14, 2016.

Council Action

Recognition and Reception of Congregation

The Council voted to recognize and receive United Lutheran Church, Racine, Wisconsin, as a congregation of the Greater Milwaukee Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as of June 4, 2017.

Approval of Campus Ministry Grant Application to the Siebert Foundation

Consideration of a request by Campus Ministry for permission to submit a grant proposal to the Siebert Foundation. A question was raised as to why there is a difference in peer ministry stipends between the two schools. Rev. Matthew Short suggested that having a house at UWM makes a difference in the number of students participating. This response satisfied the question.

Council Action

Approval of Grant Submission

The Council voted to approve submission of a grant request by Lutheran Campus Ministry to the Siebert Foundation for funds totaling \$21,500, including \$7,200 in Peer Ministry Stipends for Marquette University, \$9,800 in Peer Ministry Stipends for UWM, \$3,200 in support of the Fall Training event, and \$1,300 in support of the Winter Retreat.

Reports

Evangelical Mission Report – A written report was submitted by Rev. Short, his first in his new position. In brief remarks, he said that it is becoming clear that working with the Latino mission strategy and with All People's Church will be his priority during the first six months of his tenure. He also plans to meet with leaders of the various synod ministries in the near future. His work will include participation in three "tables" (DEM committees): new starts, redevelopments and stewardship. There is also a fourth table, dealing with mission support, part of an effort to help congregations and members see the value of pooled resources. He spoke enthusiastically about using the available meeting technology at the synod office to help staff the tables, since the technology makes it much easier to promote participation by outlying congregations.

Director of Discipleship – A written report was presented.

Director of Rostered Leadership – A written report was provided, in table format, showing the status of congregations by cluster. Rev. Kristin Nielson gave additional remarks on her report.

Cross+Generational Ministry – Position Vacant – No report submitted.

Lutheran Campus Ministry – No report submitted.

Reconciling in Christ – A written report was presented.

Anti-Racism Team – A written report was presented.

Women of the ELCA – No report submitted.

Outreach for Hope – A written report was presented. Rev. Jim Bickel is retiring at end of December 2017. Board wants to post this position and begin to interview soon. There will be oppor-

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tunities to thank Rev. Bickel for his ministry during the fall. The bishop brought the Council's attention to a pending shift in the Outreach for Hope bylaws and the synod's continuing resolutions to provide an option for a designee to take the synod vice president's place on the Outreach for Hope Board of Directors. This will be considered at the July Council meeting.

Good Shepherd Trinity Administration Commission – The Administration Commission for GST includes eight members and one alternate member. Synod Council members Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland, Mr. Matthew Brockmeier, and Mr. Lee Johnston serve as members, with Council member Mr. Jerry Key serving as the alternate member. Rev. Carol Hegland is the fourth regular member of the commission who is Lutheran; the other four members are from the Presbyterian Church.

There was an overview of the commission, which is meant to accompany Good Shepherd Trinity as it seeks to identify a path forward following two unsuccessful congregational votes to close. It was noted that a majority, close to two-thirds of the congregation, voted in each instance to close.

Following the second vote on closure, the congregation voted to sell one of its two buildings, the former Good Shepherd Lutheran Church building on 48th Street in Milwaukee. Because of the hybrid governance structure (it is a federated Presbyterian/Lutheran congregation), real estate transactions require approval by both the synod and the presbytery (the Presbyterian equivalent of the synod). This hybrid structure also means that the congregation's property is held in trust jointly for the synod and the presbytery, rather than belonging to the congregation outright.

A policy adopted by the Presbytery of Milwaukee in 2015 outlines how property issues are to be handled. This policy was provided to members of the Council. Included are requirements for information that was not provided by the congregation, including technical items such as a professional appraisal of the property, and provision for disposition of the sale proceeds.

Council Action

Deferral of Action on Property Sale

The Council voted to defer action to approve the possible sale of Good Shepherd Trinity Church's building at 3617 North 48th Street in Milwaukee pending the receipt of complete information required by the Presbytery of Milwaukee's "Policy to Buy, Sell, Encumber, or Lease Church Property", including information on the planned use of the sale proceeds (Provision 2) and all other information required in Provision 3 of the Policy.

Items on Hold

Vice President Manske reported on discussions regarding the possible dissolution of Milwaukee Cluster 4 and consolidation of Milwaukee Clusters 1 and 2. While there had been consideration of creating a resolution to address these issues, the discussions did not reach a point where that was feasible. Bishop Erickson suggested additional discussion to create a more comprehensive approach to the future of the synod's clusters.

Next Meeting

Thursday, July 20, 2017 – 5:30 Dinner; 6:15 Meeting

Bishop Erickson's Home, 3072 South 47th Street, Milwaukee

Future Meetings

- Thursday, September 21, 2017 – The Lutheran Center, 8765 W Higgins Rd, Chicago*

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

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*The Lutheran Center meeting in September 2017 will be an all-day session.

Submitted,

Mr. Matthew Brockmeier
Synod Secretary