

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
September 20, 2012
Atonement Lutheran Church
2915 Wright Avenue, Racine, Wisconsin

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

Attendance

Name	Cluster/Position	Term Ends 8/31
The Rev. Eric Silberschmidt	Kenosha/West Racine	2013
The Rev. Steve Blyth	Lake Country	2015
Vacant	Milwaukee 1	2013
Mr. Michael Herold	Milwaukee 2	2013
The Rev. Carolyn Fredriksen	Milwaukee 3	2015
Mr. Al Van Lith	Milwaukee 4	2015
Ms. Esther Rusch	Northern Lakeshore	2013
Ms. Beth Dorsey	Northwest	2013
The Rev. Warren Williams	Racine	2013
The Rev. Sherrie Lorbeck	Waukesha	2015
The Rev. Gary Grindeland	At Large	2015
Ms. Debra Taylor	At Large	2015
Mr. John Gruber	At Large	2015
Ms. Susan Cyr	Vice President	2013 (2)
Mr. Matthew Brockmeier	Secretary	2015 (1)
Mr. Lee Johnston	Treasurer	2013 (1)
The Rev. Jeff Barrow	Bishop	2016 (1)
Vacant	Youth Representative	2013
Vacant	Young Adult Rep.	

The meal before the call to order featured Danish delicacies, including open-face sandwiches (some on pumpernickel), deviled eggs and kringle. Excellent repast!

Synod staff in attendance were Rev. Chuck Brummond, Rev. Sandy Chrostowski and Ms. Kate Mattson. Others attending were Rev. Dick Johnson of Lutheran Campus Ministry and Mr. Jerry Key of the Anti-Racism Team.

Opening devotions were shared by Mr. Matthew Brockmeier.

Campus Ministry

Rev. Dick Johnson, representing Lutheran Campus Ministry, made a presentation to the Council on the ministry's status and prospects. He began with words of thanks to the Council and the synod for their steadfast support of campus ministry, support that has included significant funding. He also praised the efforts by Bishop Jeff Barrow to find gifted pastors to provide this ministry at both the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee and Marquette University. These pastors are both working three-quarter time.

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Financial support from the synod, and from funds directed to campus ministry by the House of Prayer when it closed its doors, allowed the Corner House at the UWM campus to be rehabbed, again becoming an attractive and useful facility and, in the long term, a valuable asset. Rev. Johnson also noted that campus ministry's finances are overseen by Mr. Dave Groenewold, the synod's Director of Finance, leading, he said, to a high degree of transparency.

Lutheran Campus Ministry has also adopted new bylaws and articles of incorporation designed to tie-in more closely with the synod. An immediate manifestation of these closer ties is a direct role for the synod in any future calls.

Questions posed to Rev. Johnson, and to Bishop Barrow, revolved around the changes forced on the program's Marquette branch, especially the closing of the campus office for that pastor. Both the bishop and Rev. Johnson stated that there had not been better options in what had been a disappointing process with Marquette's leadership, but the bishop went on to say that the possibility of basing that pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church nearby may provide significant opportunities for the program and the synod.

All thanked Rev. Johnson for his gracious and focused presentation.

Bishop's Report

In his remarks, Bishop Barrow reinforced the themes spelled out in his written report, where he reflected on the need to maintain high expectations for those in ministry, especially in preaching and in welcoming. In presenting these thoughts, he made clear that he was not attempting to weed people out: rather he said that "we should not threaten each other; we should encourage each other" in reaching for the highest possible standards. At the end of the day, he said, what people want to know is that God loves them, and that the church welcomes them and encourages them to connect to one another.

The bishop also provided a staffing update, praising the recent high school graduate who served as receptionist during the summer, and noting that he loved having the voices of the young represented in the church. The personnel committee is moving toward hiring the new Administration and Communications Assistant, working with an impressive pool of applicants. He said that he is especially comfortable with those on staff, giving him confidence in their ability to keep the work of the synod moving during a time when he has significant responsibilities to the church in meetings and events away from Milwaukee. These include a pending seminary visit to San Francisco, a regional bishop's meeting, a major conference in El Salvador in November, and his current hosting of the delegation from Tanzania. The sum total of these comments is the belief that this is an exciting time in the church.

Bishop Barrow gave a brief update on the status of the ELCA's Malaria Campaign, with news that the synod has been asked to commit to raising \$250,000 over three years in support of the campaign. He was optimistic that this could be accomplished, noting that \$50,000 had already been raised by the end of August, and that a team of dedicated individuals stood ready to spearhead the synod's campaign, if approved. He noted that good materials to support synodical campaigns were available from the ELCA. The Council voted to approve an effort to raise \$250,000 over three years in support of the ELCA's Malaria Campaign.

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Bishop Barrow ended his report by asking for one call to synod interim ministry and the approval of an appointment to the Wartburg Seminary board. The Council voted to approve a call to Pastor Suellen Myers for synod interim ministry and to approve the appointment of Pastor Noreen Smith to the board of Wartburg Seminary.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Lee Johnston reported that through the end of August giving by congregations to the synod was roughly \$100,000 below budget. Offsetting this shortfall was under-spending of approximately \$122,000 through the same period. It is possible that the synod will balance its books for the fiscal year (ending on January 31st), but the degree of the shortfall at this time of the year is of concern. In response to a question, Mr. Johnston noted that there is traditionally some reduction in support during the summer, similar to what happens in many congregations. There was a comment noting concern about the continued fall, year after year, in support, and the potential over time for erosion of the synod's ability to maintain sufficient staff.

Reports

- A. Director of Evangelical Mission – A written report was submitted. Rev. Sandy Chrostowski elaborated on the report, especially the portion dealing with the Macedonia Project. In recent months four events, two dinners and two workshops, have been presented, reaching a total of more than 130 individuals. With a conference scheduled for late October and the next dinner for January, Rev. Chrostowski underscored the importance of using multiple approaches to increase mission support. She noted that while congregations undergoing the MET process have this issue as part of their work, it is also important to share this with congregations not currently involved in other transition. In answer to questions she said that the approach in the dinners was being fine-tuned based on experience, within the existing framework. Rev. Sherrie Lorbeck shared some feedback from participants who said that the first hour's presentations were good, but that valuable interaction with tablemates was cut short for additional presentations that weren't as valuable. She urged review of the format to address this concern, and to encourage building relationships between those who met at the dinners.
- B. Director of Discipleship Rhonda – No report submitted.
- C. Director of Rostered Leadership – Rev. Chuck Brummond provided an update, written and verbal, on current transitions for leaders and congregations. He noted that roughly ten percent of congregations are currently in transition, somewhat fewer than average. At the same time, there are many rostered leaders who are seeking calls, meaning that available positions are very tight, even for highly qualified leaders. Leaders from the synod are looking elsewhere for calls, while a large number of leaders from other synods are looking for openings here. Intensifying the situation are congregations that can no longer afford full-time calls (leading to multiple congregations sometimes sharing a pastor) and larger congregations that are forced to cut back from multiple pastors to a single leader. The human cost of this situation includes rostered leaders without calls losing their insurance coverage.
Rev. Brummond noted that the Fall Theological Conference at Green Lake has roughly 75 or 80 advance registrants, with a tight situation for rooms. Some discussion followed about the difficulty of planning events when registrations come in late, leading in some cases to events being cancelled for lack of registration.

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- D. Youth and Family Network – A written report was submitted, augmented by comments from the synod’s Director of Youth and Family Ministry, Ms. Kate Mattson. Ms. Mattson made clear that the work of Youth and Family Ministry is currently focused on creating a mission of cross generational ministry, not as a top-down structure imposed on the synod or leaders, but as a vision that resonates with youth leaders and others working with youth. This vision includes the notion that cross generational ministry is not just a part of effective ministry – it is effective ministry.
She also noted the high visibility of youth from the synod at this summer’s Gathering in New Orleans, with many speaking or performing; and the work of two sisters at Good Shepherd in Waukesha who have taken the lead in anti-bullying workshops.
- E. Reconciling in Christ – No report submitted.
- F. Anti-Racism Team – A written report was submitted. Team member Mr. Jerry Key, joined by Council and Team member Ms. Esther Rusch, elaborated on the report, especially as it pertains to support for clergy of color by the synod, engaging members of the Council in discussion on the topic.
- G. WELCA – A written report was submitted.
- H. Outreach for Hope – A written report was submitted.

Old Business

- A. Pentecost/Divine Work – There was a brief update on the effort to sell the parsonage, which is currently mortgaged for more than market value.
- B. GMS Logo – This item was deferred, to be addressed as part of the marketing discussion at the November 3rd retreat.
- C. Synod Assembly – Brief discussion of the 2012 Assembly, with most present having been favorably impressed. Not all liked the worship service held in the banquet hall at round tables. It was noted that there were no evaluation forms distributed at this year’s assembly.
- D. Response to Resolution 6 – Mr. Matthew Brockmeier gave a brief overview of the Resolution 6 issue, based on action by the 2012 Assembly to “forward the information and process” to the congregations and to the state’s political leaders. Two draft documents were presented, one of which provides the requested overview, the second providing some process information to address potential congregational concerns about the synod dealing with the collective bargaining issue. Mr. Brockmeier noted that, in preparing these documents, he concluded that the value of the process was the primary finding, and that the issue of collective bargaining became incidental to the process in the findings of the Task Force. The Council voted to approve the Resolution 6 Statement for general distribution and the Resolution 6 Preface for distribution with the Statement to congregations of the synod as presented.

New Business

- A. Executive Committee Members Election – Volunteers were sought for one-year terms as members of the synod’s Executive Committee, to serve alongside the synod’s officers. It was noted that Mr. Gus Barnes’ resignation from the Council as he began his life as a student at Wartburg Seminary led to a vacancy on the Executive Committee. The two remaining incumbents agreed to continue if elected, with Ms. Debra Taylor volunteering to join them. The Council voted to elect Ms. Beth Dorsey, Rev. Eric Silberschmidt and Ms. Debra Taylor to one-year terms on the synod’s Executive Committee.

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- B. Synod Council Schedule – It was agreed that, with the exception of the November 2012 retreat, all Synod Council meetings over the next year would take place on Thursday evenings. The following schedule was agreed:

Saturday, November 3, 2012 – Synod Council Retreat - 8:00 am – 3:30 pm

Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church, W156N8131 Pilgrim Rd, Menomonee Falls

Thursday, January 31, 2013 – Synod Council Meeting

Cross of Life Lutheran Church, 20700 W North Ave, Brookfield

Thursday, March 14, 2013 – Synod Council Meeting

Capitol Drive Lutheran Church, 5229 W Capitol Dr., Milwaukee

Thursday, May 9, 2013 – Synod Council Meeting

Cross Lutheran Church, 1861 N 16th St, Milwaukee

Thursday, July 11, 2013 – Synod Council Meeting, including departing and new members

Bishop Barrow's Home

Thursday, September 19, 2013 – Synod Council Meeting and New Member Orientation

Times TBD - ELCA Churchwide Offices, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, Illinois

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings begin with a meal at 5:30 pm and call to order at 6:15 pm.

Confirmation of some locations is pending.

- C. November 3, 2012 Retreat – Vice President Ms. Sue Cyr provided an overview of the Synod Council retreat. The morning, beginning at 8:00 am, will include overviews of the synod's Operational Ethics and Anti-Fraud policies by Mr. Brockmeier, with forms provided for those present and for members of committees unable to attend. The remainder of the morning session, through approximately 11:00 am, will focus on asset mapping and committee involvement.

The Council will tend to regular business during the lunch break, and will resume retreat activities afterward with extended discussions on marketing and brand identification and on policies having to do with funds received through the disposal of the assets of closed congregations. The afternoon session is expected to run until approximately 3:30 pm.

All available synod staff, and representatives of all committees or other reporting organizations, are expected to attend the morning session. All members of the Synod Council are expected to attend the entire day.

- D. 2013 Synod Assembly – The 2013 Assembly returns to the Country Springs Hotel and Conference Center in Pewaukee from Thursday, May 30 through Saturday, June 1, 2013.

Signed,

Matthew Brockmeier
Synod Secretary