

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
 Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
January 31, 2013
 Cross of Life Lutheran Church
 20700 West North Avenue, Brookfield, 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 meeting was preceded by a lasagna supper provided by Cross of Life.

Rev. Sandy Chrostowski, Director of Evangelical Mission; and Mr. Dave Groenewold, Director of Finance, were present from synod staff. Also present were Ms. Mary Beth Hoffman of the Synod's Reconciling in Christ Ministry Team; Mr. Dale Landgren of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago Board; Mr. Walt Chossek, Ms. Sue Johnson and Mr. Tom Johnson of the Meru Partnership Committee; and Ms. Betty Warber, President of the Synod Women's Organization.

Opening devotions were shared by Mr. John Gruber.

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Mr. Dale Landgren provided a written update on the status of and prospects for the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, accompanied by comments elaborating on a number of points. Central to his presentation were the challenges, most notably in finances and enrollment, facing the institution, accompanied by some level of optimism engendered by new leadership and directions, including a distance learning initiative under development in partnership with Valparaiso University. He noted that many of the challenges facing LSTC are shared by other ELCA seminaries, reflecting not just institutional issues but larger questions posed by a shrinking church and increasing levels of student debt.

Greater Milwaukee Synod Council January 31, 2013 Meeting Summary

Mr. Landgren asked for the opportunity to address the Council twice a year in future, following each LSTC board meeting, and requested that the synod find ways to educate congregations about the value of seminaries and to encourage their financial and prayer support.

Bishop Jeff Barrow agreed that seminary education is in transition, stating that the young must be encouraged to attend. Rev. Eric Silberschmidt supported the idea of frequent updates, given the rapidly changing environment for seminaries.

Meru Partnership Committee

The Meru committee provided written details on a proposed Partnership and Project Facilitator position and a two-year financial summary, with additional detail in remarks by Ms. Sue Johnson and Mr. Walt Chossek. Ms. Johnson gave an overview of the committee's history, from its founding in 1996 through its current configuration, with 21 Greater Milwaukee Synod congregations in partnership with 21 parishes and one school in the Meru Diocese. She also noted the importance of the Mt. Meru coffee program, which has been in operation for eleven years and is now bringing nine tons of coffee a year to Wisconsin.

Mr. Chossek, who serves as communicator and treasurer for the committee, spoke of the dire nature of conditions in the diocese, where, he said, drought is the defining issue, and 25-30% of people "are starving." He also noted the financial impact of the coffee program, which provided roughly \$140,000 in revenue last year. His primary concern for the committee is developing the position of Facilitator, a person or couple able to prioritize and coordinate the work of the committee, partner congregations and the synod with the needs present in the Meru Diocese.

The Facilitator would be a position recognized by the synod, with reporting responsibilities to the Synod Council, but without the synod's financial support. Bishop Barrow spoke in favor of the position, citing the need for extended visits to bolster the relationship between the synod and the diocese, and to assist in prioritizing actions in the synod.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the position of Meru Partnership Committee Facilitator.

I. Bishop's Report

Bishop Barrow elaborated on his written report in several areas. He noted that the sale of the Good Shepherd – Waukesha property was now complete, with the proceeds placed in the Mission Investment Fund, and gave an update on the development of a task force to review the use of these funds. Part of the question facing the task force will be whether a broad policy dealing with the disposition of funds from any future church closings should be included in their recommendations.

The bishop noted that the date for Advocacy Day in Madison is March 14th, with a focus on the 11x15 campaign to reduce Wisconsin's prison population. The 11x15 campaign was strongly endorsed at last year's Synod Assembly.

Also on the calendar is the April 16th service commemorating the 50th anniversary of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s letter from Birmingham jail. Rev. Ken Wheeler will join Bishop Barrow in celebrating this anniversary at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Milwaukee.

Most of the rest of the bishop's report involved a discussion on possible uses for the anticipated revenue surplus for the 2012-2013 fiscal year, with attention paid to targeted ministry for young adults, the ELCA's malaria campaign, additional support for the ELCA's general

Greater Milwaukee Synod Council January 31, 2013 Meeting Summary

fund, and reserve funds to cover possible future funding shortfalls for grant-supported synod staff positions. Several actions stemmed from this discussion.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the expenditure of \$20,000 to initiate a young adult ministry program, with funds allocated from the 2012-2013 fiscal year surplus.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the expenditure of \$25,000 to use as seed money to help promote Synod participation in the ELCA's Malaria Campaign, with funds allocated from the 2012-2013 fiscal year surplus, and to allocate any remaining 2012-2013 fiscal year surplus funds equally to additional support for the ELCA's general fund and to the synod's staffing reserve fund, with the additional provision that should the total 2012-2013 fiscal year surplus (including all funds already allocated in SC 13.01.05. and SC 13.01.06.) exceed \$80,000.00, all funds in excess of that amount will be equally distributed to support the Young Adult Ministry, the ELCA's Malaria Campaign, the ELCA's general fund, and the synod's staffing reserve fund.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve a synod call to interim ministry for Rev. Paul Ihlenfeld.

Council Action

The Council voted to acknowledge the work of Rev. Timothy L. McIntosh as Hospice Care Consultant at Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve a one-year extension of On Leave from Call Status for Rev. Carol R. Baumgartner.

III. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Mr. Lee Johnston and Director of Finance Mr. Dave Groenewold reported that giving for the year was again down, the sixth consecutive year for decreased support for the synod from congregations. Despite that, the synod expects to realize a surplus for the 2012-2013 fiscal year of up to \$80,000 due to reductions in expenditures. The largest savings were realized in staff expenditures, where a continuing reconfiguration of staffing and staff responsibilities has allowed the synod to provide essential functions at lower than budgeted cost.

Mr. Johnston and Mr. Groenewold also reported that work on the 2014-2015 fiscal year budget, to be presented to the 2013 Synod Assembly, is proceeding.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the Profit and Loss Statement for the period from February 2012 through December 2012 as presented.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve a revised Greater Milwaukee Synod Check Signing and Wire Transfer Policy, with one signature by any authorized signer for checks or wire transfers up to \$5,000; one signature by an authorized signer, limited to the Bishop, Vice-President or Treasurer of the Synod, for checks or wire transfers from \$5,001 to \$35,000; two signatures by authorized signers, one of whom is the Bishop, Vice-President or Treasurer of the Synod for checks or wire transfers of \$35,001 or more; and the restriction that no signer will personally sign a check made payable to them.

Greater Milwaukee Synod Council January 31, 2013 Meeting Summary

IV. Reports

- A. Director of Evangelical Mission – A written report was submitted.
- B. Director of Discipleship – No report submitted.
- C. Director of Rostered Leadership – A written report was submitted.
- D. Youth and Family Network – A written report was submitted.
- E. Lutheran Campus Ministry – Mr. Lee Johnston, who also serves as a member of the campus ministry board, reported on Campus Ministry Sunday, scheduled for April 21, 2013.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve a synod-wide fundraising effort in support of Campus Ministry Sunday on Sunday, April 21, 2013.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve a synod-wide fundraising effort in support of the Meru Day of Prayer on Sunday, April 14, 2013.

- F. Deans – No report submitted.
- G. Anti-Racism Team – A written report was submitted.
- H. WELCA – A written report was submitted. President of the Synod Women's Organization Ms. Betty Warber updated the report with news that she now had quilting statistics from 32 congregations, which provided a total of 4,914 quilts to Lutheran World Relief in 2012. Mention was made of Ms. Norma Nachreiner, a quilter from St. Paul's in Random Lake who died last week at age 99, having sewn 170 quilt tops during the last year of her life.
- I. Outreach for Hope – A written report was submitted, including a request for ongoing permission to raise funds through Outreach for Hope's annual Family Bike Ride Fund Raiser and Picnic.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve a synod-wide fundraising effort in support of Outreach for Hope on the first Saturday after Labor Day every year.

V. Old Business

- A. Good Shepherd Sale – Addressed in Bishop's Report.
- B. MET Revision Task Force – Work ongoing.
- C. Sale Proceeds Task Force – Addressed in Bishop's Report.
- D. Synod Personnel Policy – Secretary Mr. Matthew Brockmeier provided an update on the process to develop a new personnel policy for the synod, based on the ELCA's policy for the churchwide organization. A second draft has been created following a meeting with Bishop Barrow. Next steps include reviews by staff and by legal counsel, with a goal of final Council action before the Synod Assembly.
- E. 2013 Synod Assembly – Mr. Brockmeier addressed the need for the Council to nominate individuals to serve as Synod Treasurer and on the Nominating Committee in advance of the Synod Assembly. The Nominating Committee nominee must be a lay male to serve for a three-year term, replacing Mr. John Gruber whose term expires at the end of this year's Assembly. Mr. Gruber may not succeed himself on the committee. There is also a current Nominating Committee vacancy for a member of the clergy to serve through the end of the 2014 Synod Assembly. There was brief discussion on revisions to the rules for selecting potential Treasurers, who may now either be nominated to and elected by the Synod Assembly, or appointed by the Synod Council. This topic will be revisited at the

Greater Milwaukee Synod Council January 31, 2013 Meeting Summary

next Council meeting, though the sense of the Council in this discussion was that election by the Assembly was preferable to appointment by the Council. Potential nominees are also sought in advance of the March 2013 meeting.

VI. New Business

Staff proposed the purchase of voting machines like those used on a trial (rental) basis at the 2012 Synod Assembly. The payback period, based on last year's rental rates, would be approximately five years, with the possibility of earning revenue by renting this system to other nearby synods for their assemblies. The machines were credited with decreasing delays in Assembly action in 2012.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the purchase of 500 voting machines and related items from Turning Technologies of Youngstown, Ohio, for a total purchase price of \$21,399.00 plus shipping and handling, with funds from accumulated surpluses from the Synod Assembly account.

There was brief discussion on a transition to stationery with the synod's new logo. This will be revisited at the March meeting when more information on prices is available.

- A. **Financial Controls Policies for Congregations** – Mr. Brockmeier presented a newly-drafted set of recommended bylaws for congregations addressing financial controls and safeguards. The intent is to promote these to congregations through the Congregational Leaders Event, the synod Listserve and other means, as well as to incorporate them into any discussions about revisions to congregational governing documents. The desired result is to raise awareness of financial control issues and minimize the chances for malfeasance by congregational staff or volunteers, a problem that is already evident in congregations in the synod and elsewhere.

Council Action

The Council voted to support the content and use of the proposed Model Financial Control Bylaws as presented.

- B. **Staff Changes** – Bishop Barrow reported that Ms. Kate Mattson, Director of Youth and Family Ministry, is now working a reduced schedule averaging approximately 22 hours per work at her request. Ms. Mary Romskog, Office Manager, is adding some responsibilities in support of candidacy as a result of this change. Additional changes in responsibilities and hours may occur as the need arises.

Next Meeting

Thursday, March 14, 2013 – 5:30 pm Dinner; 6:15 pm Synod Council Meeting

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

Signed,

Matthew Brockmeier
Synod Secretary