

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
September 19, 2013

ELCA Churchwide Offices
8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, Illinois

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Attendance

Name	Cluster/Position	Term Ends 8/31
Ms. Sue Schmidt-Decker	Kenosha/West Racine	2017
The Rev. Steve Blyth	Lake Country	2015
Vacant	Milwaukee 1	2017
The Rev. Paula Canby	Milwaukee 2	2017
The Rev. Carolyn Fredriksen	Milwaukee 3	2015
Mr. Al Van Lith	Milwaukee 4	2015
Mr. Tom Gauthier	Northern Lakeshore	2017
The Rev. David Schoob	Northwest	2017
Ms. Marge Puntarec	Racine	2017
The Rev. Sherrie Lorbeck	Waukesha	2015
The Rev. Jay McDivitt	At Large	6/2014
Ms. Debra Taylor	At Large	2015
Mr. Jerry Key	At Large	2015
Mr. Scott Manske	Vice President	2017 (1)
Mr. Matthew Brockmeier	Secretary	2015 (1)
Mr. Lee Johnston	Treasurer	2017 (2)
The Rev. Jeff Barrow	Bishop	2016 (1)
Vacant	Youth Representative	2015
Mr. Jonathan Barker	Young Adult Rep.	2017

The synod traditionally holds its first meeting after the installation of newly-elected members at the ELCA's headquarters in Chicago, providing an opportunity for program-related presentations by church staff and brief meetings with the ELCA's leaders as available. Special thanks to Ms. Lydia Harris, Administrative Assistant in the Office of the Presiding Bishop, for her care and attention throughout the Council's time at the Lutheran Center.

Also present were Rev. Sandy Chrostowski, Director of Evangelical Mission from synod staff and Ms. Betty Warber, President of the Synod Women's Organization. Representing the proposed synodical endowment fund were Rev. Larry Westfield, Director of Planned Giving, ELCA; Rev. Ted Romberg, retired; and Mr. Larry Nines, member of St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Waukesha.

Making presentations or meeting with the Council were Rev. Roger Willer, Director, Theological Ethics, Office of the Presiding Bishop; Mr. David Swartling, Secretary of the ELCA; Ms. Mikka McCracken, Program Director, ELCA World Hunger-Constituent Engagement and Interpretation; Rev. Mary Frances, Associate Program Director, New Congregations, Congregational and Synodical Mission; and Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson.

Vice President's Remarks

Vice President Manske presented an outline for addressing goals for the Council during the coming year. Central to the outline are actions following resolutions passed by the Synod As-

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sembly, monitoring the synod's finances, and prayerfully considering new items that come to the Council's attention. He emphasized the importance of this work in the life of the synod.

Mr. Manske shared an overview of follow-up action needed from this year's Assembly, with a focus in this meeting on the call for a task force to "review the status and future of synod clusters." Extensive discussion on this topic followed, with concern that there is no clear sense of what clusters are expected to accomplish, beyond being vehicles for representation on the Council and in other forums. Bishop Jeff Barrow included an update on steps taken to develop the task force.

Council Action

The Council voted to give wide discretion to the Cluster Task Force in evaluating and making recommendations on the role and structure of clusters within the synod.

Council Action

The Council voted to appoint Ms. Esther Rusch as Chair of the Cluster Task Force, to appoint Mr. Jerry Key and Ms. Betty Warber as Task Force members, and to allow the Bishop and Executive Committee of the Synod to appoint other Task Force members.

Rev. Sandy Chrostowski urged consideration of a synod-wide mission strategy, with empowered and equipped leaders, as part of the task force process.

Mr. Manske continued his overview of Synod Assembly-related actions by noting that the development of a long-term policy on addressing the use of property sale proceeds will begin after Christmas, that the development of the committee called for in the resolution on Accompaniment With the People of the Holy Land will also come at a later meeting, and that the proposal dealing with the inclusion of language supporting Portico's Gold+ level health care program is included in consideration of Compensation Guidelines later on the agenda. He also noted existing vacancies on the Synod Council and the Nominating Committee.

Bishop's Report

Bishop Jeff Barrow provided a brief written report along with comments on several areas, with a focus on staffing. In the wake of Ms. Kate Mattson's departure, and in light of the pending departure of Rev. Chuck Brummond, Bishop Barrow indicated that he may want to revamp the division of responsibilities within the staff. He noted that he has not quite three years to serve on his term as bishop, and said that he was unsure whether he would seek a second term. With this in mind, given the wide discretion of bishops to form their own staffs, he wants to be sure that potential hires understand that their tenure might be limited. He said that recruiting new staff was a key priority, higher than recruitment for the task force.

Council Action

The Synod Council voted to approve On Leave from Call Status for Rev. Amy Becker and Rev. Rod Nordby.

Council Action

The Synod Council voted to approve a Call to Synod Interim Ministry for Rev. Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld.

The bishop briefly discussed concerns raised by dissension within a congregation based on issues pertaining to ELCA affiliation.

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He ended his report by referring to his written report addressing a retreat planned by Milwaukee clusters 1 and 2, expressing the hope that the points made in his report can be extended into an overarching synod strategy. The points he emphasized were:

- Understanding that the church belongs to God: it is not “our little kingdom”
- Believing that “the ELCA is about social ministry because the gospel is about social ministry”
- Asking what we are doing to birth the church beyond us
- Urging a concept of the community around the church
- Taking a global approach that enhances understanding of local issues
- Knowing that the ELCA embraces diversity rather than seeking a comfortable environment
- Knowing also that “God’s heart is always with the poor”

ELCA Presentation

Rev. Roger Willer, Director, Theological Ethics, Office of the Presiding Bishop

Rev. Roger Willer provided an overview of the ELCA’s *Social Statement on Criminal Justice*, approved by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly. In his role as Director of Theological Ethics he played a key role in facilitating meetings during the statement’s development, as well as working with the writing team and reviewing the statement’s ethical implications.

He said that the strong support given this statement (a vote of 97.24% in favor), which he called a “ringing affirmation” of the statement, was the result of the hard work and rigorous process used by the ELCA in considering such statements, which are an expression, he added, of the concerns of the membership of the church.

Rev. Willer indicated that the statement is not an end in itself, but will lead into additional work on the question of criminal justice ministry in the ELCA, with particular attention paid to issues of race and gender as they intersect the criminal justice system. Noting that the statement grew out of concern for the massive level of incarceration in the United States, he cited examples of action like Wisconsin’s 11x15 Campaign as positive steps, while also calling for congregations and members “to accountability to involvement in the issues of the criminal justice system.”

He added that the statement, to be published in final form in December, will be very technical, in that it was designed to address the needs of the legal profession and judicial system for precision. A study guide will be developed after publication. Key issues for consideration coming out of the statement are hospitality, accompaniment and burden-sharing.

Finally, Rev. Willer explained a change for the development of ELCA social statements, which in the future will only be undertaken with Church Council approval, following the call for the statement by the Churchwide Assembly. Issues raised up by the Churchwide Assembly may thus be addressed through a social statement, a social message, or some other means.

Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Mr. Lee Johnston reported that the synod is doing well thus far in its fiscal year (which began on February 1st), with income at approximately 97% of budget. Even with income slightly behind expectations, the synod is ahead overall because expenses have been kept down. This is especially true for salaries, leaving the synod \$55,000 ahead on its profit and loss statement ending August 31st.

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Vice President Manske asked whether the synod's cash flow was in good shape, with the answer that it was, and that there was a reasonable chance that they synod would end its fiscal year with surplus funds for distribution.

Mr. Al Van Lith questioned whether expenses are shown being down because they have been averted or whether there is any delay in expenses coming in. Treasurer Johnston said that these figures represent real savings, not any timing issues.

Before ending his report, Mr. Johnston asked the Council to consider funding a scholarship tied to service on the Synod Council by any future youth representatives.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the Profit and Loss Statement for the period from February 1, 2013 through August 31, 2013.

Reports

- A. **Director of Evangelical Mission** – Written and verbal reports were submitted, with the written report including Rev. Sandy Chrostowski's ongoing work and a spreadsheet showing applications received for the synod's special grant program. She reported briefly on the review process and criteria for these grants, which will be reviewed by the special funds task force beginning next week. Of particular importance will be an impact in communities beyond congregations. Of her ongoing work, Rev. Chrostowski highlighted the work on the joint Lutheran-Presbyterian congregation, Good Shepherd Trinity in Milwaukee and the small steps continuing in Faithworks in Racine toward a possible collaborative entity. She reported that these projects are "moving ahead, and exciting." She reported that she will miss the 2014 Synod Assembly because her daughter is getting married that weekend.
- B. **Director of Discipleship** – No report submitted.
- C. **Director of Rostered Leadership** – A written report was submitted.
- D. **Youth and Family Network** – No report submitted.
- E. **Lutheran Campus Ministry** – No report submitted.
- F. **Reconciling in Christ** – No report submitted.
- G. **Anti-Racism Team** – Written and verbal reports were submitted. Rev. David Schoob reminded the Council that the Anti-Racism Team is here to serve the synod, with a request to "please let us know what that might be." Mr. Jerry Key encouraged participation in events, keeping in mind that these activities can provide "a way to think about perception where there is no crisis." The Team is presenting a book discussion on "One Church, Many Tribes" at Lutheran Church of the Great Spirit on October 23rd, and a showing of the movie "Lincoln" on Saturday, November 16th at Ascension in Milwaukee.
- H. **WELCA** – A verbal report was submitted by Ms. Betty Warber, who encouraged participation at the Synodical Women's Organization's October 12th convention in Rubicon.
- I. **Outreach for Hope** – A written report was submitted.

Old Business

- A. **Funds Task Force** – The current process has already been addressed in the reports, and the ongoing process will be addressed later. There will likely be some recommendations before Thanksgiving. A final review may need to be coordinated with the Siebert Lutheran Foundation, since there are some proposals structured so that funding from both sources would be necessary for successful implementation. An update is planned for the

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November meeting, with final action on grants probably done through an electronic meeting.

- B. **Synod Personnel Policy** – The draft Employee Handbook, provided in advance to Council members, was discussed.

Council Action

The Council voted to amend the motion to approve the Employee Handbook by adding the words “at the employee’s discretion” following “The Synod provides up to twenty working days” in the first sentence of the Maternity/Paternity Leave section, and adding the sentence “The leave must be completed within six (6) months after the placement of the child or the date a newborn child leaves the hospital” to the end of the same paragraph.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the Employee Handbook as amended.

- C. **MET Revision Task Force** – This item will be renamed in the future to reflect that there is no task force: the issue is in staff’s hands, with Rev. Chuck Brummond making ongoing amendments.

New Business

- A. **Election of Non-Officer Executive Committee Members**

Council Action

The Council voted to elect Ms. Marge Puntarec, Ms. Debra Taylor and Mr. Al Van Lith to the Executive Committee for terms through the September 2014 Council meeting.

ELCA Greeting

Mr. David Swartling, Secretary of the ELCA

ELCA Secretary David Swartling thanked the Council for coming to the Lutheran Center. Quoting the ELCA’s constitution, he said that “[t]his church shall seek to function as people of God through congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, all of which shall be interdependent,” exhorting the members to repeat “[m]y synod’s constitution is a missional document!”

ELCA Presentation

Ms. Mikka McCracken, Program Director, ELCA World Hunger-Constituent Engagement and Interpretation

Ms. Mikka McCracken spelled out the three C’s of her work against hunger: Called, Comprehensive, and Church-with-Church. She continued by citing statistics on hunger: 1 in 8 with chronic hunger globally, 1 in 6 with food insecurity in the United States, 1 in 8 with food insecurity in Wisconsin, 85% of families with food insecurity in this country having at least one working adult in the household, and 1 in 2 American children relying on food assistance at some point in their lives.

Commending the documentary “A Place at the Table,” she went on to talk about the prevalence of hunger in our communities, and the intense need for federal food aid. Despite the work of faith-based communities to address the problem of hunger, she said that was only about 7% of total food aid. Much larger are federal programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which may see as many as 1.7 million people removed from its rolls because of current budget action by Congress.

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ELCA World Hunger, which is “our response to hunger, here and abroad,” uses a four-pronged approach in its work: relief, development, education and advocacy, working “as a church with other churches.” In this church-to-church work is the recognition that, with our support, other churches where help is needed provide the best means to address needs in their communities, rather than having outside agencies (like ELCA World Hunger) impose solutions that may not be optimal. The Greater Milwaukee Synod’s contributions to World Hunger were \$294,741 in FY2012, and have been \$71,190 through July in the current fiscal year.

ELCA Presentation

Rev. Mary Frances, Associate Program Director, New Congregations, Congregational and Synodical Mission

Rev. Mary Frances explained the ELCA’s current, and evolving, approach to mission starts. She told the Council that the work of new starts begins at the local and synodical levels. Ideas, she said, come from the synodical mission tables, eventually proceeding to the ELCA’s review table for new worship communities. Using several pie charts, Rev. Frances provided insight into the types of new starts (increasingly in the form of “Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities or SAWC,” and less frequently in the form of “Congregations Under Development”), the ethnicity of new starts (38% white, with noticeable growth in Latino/Hispanic starts), the geography of new starts (a majority in urban settings, but still more than one-third in rural or small town settings), and the economic setting of new starts (heavily weighted to middle and upper-middle class areas).

She explained that SAWCs provide the opportunity to develop new starts with a smaller investment (up to \$30,000 over a three-year funding cycle, which can be extended), possibly leading to the development of new congregations. The higher cost of a Congregation Under Development, which she said cannot really be borne by any single expression of the church (churchwide, synodical or congregational), means that the balance of new starts is shifting over time to SAWCs, and now to SAWC Probes, which are generally six to twelve month trials of mission ideas.

Other trends include a move in immigrant communities to ask for English-language worship, meaning that bilingual pastors (not just speakers of other languages) are often essential; developing mission settings for ministry with, and not just to, people in poverty; and, in some cases, congregations setting up new locations for worship or creating new congregational expressions for ministry to different populations, such as different ethnic groups. There are currently 340 ministries under development.

In response to questions, Rev. Frances told the Council about the Welcome church in Philadelphia and a Jesus Dojo in Edmonds, Washington. She ended by saying that new congregations must be nimble and flexible, responding to the needs of growing communities. “Emerging ministries must evolve – not be stuck.”

- E. **GMS Endowment Fund** – Rev. Larry Westfield, Director of Planned Giving, ELCA; Rev. Ted Romberg, retired; and Mr. Larry Nines gave a presentation on the Proposal to Establish the Ministry Endowment Fund of the Greater Milwaukee Synod. This proposal stemmed in part, according to Rev. Westfield, from discussions with Outreach for Hope, but the proposed reach goes beyond just that ministry.

Rev. Westfield said that he and his colleagues were asking for approval of their proposal as an initial step in developing this plan. He noted that more than half of all synods have a similar fund, and that this synod is the only one he works with that does not already have

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one. Mr. Larry Nines recounted his work on planned giving for his congregation, emphasizing that funds going to endowments of this sort typically are planned giving, and do not compete with the need for operating funds.

Rev. Ted Romberg reinforced this notion, stating that a congregation he was serving had a long-standing endowment fund that had, he believed, no impact on ongoing giving. He said that an “endowment fund at a local level gives opportunities that would not exist. This would be an opportunity to do this regionally, with an impact on global ministry” and would be “a way of tapping new sources of income to support things that are held to be important.”

Another factor noted by Mr. Nines was the possibility to assist congregations to develop their own endowment funds.

In answers to questions, the group said that gifts to such a fund could be designated for specific purposes, though there would be encouragement to give to the fund for use in the areas of greatest need and that the fund would be part of the synod and not a separate legal entity. Rev. Romberg said that he believed being part of the synod would offer more control over the fund.

Mr. Jerry Key expressed concern that, when money comes into the equation, “we start to collect people who are motivated by money.” He asked how this can be constructed so that it is not a magnet for such people, and so that it does not conflict with the synod’s stated goal of not accumulating money. Rev. Westfield responded that the answer to that would be in guidelines to be created that would create a tool for continuing ministry.

Council Action

The Council voted to Recommend to the 2014 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly “the establishment of a new and separate fund to be known as the Greater Milwaukee Synod Endowment Fund, (herein referred to as the Fund) and, with the following provisions:

- The purpose of this Fund is to distribute financial support to ministries of the GMS. Those ministries include but are not limited to the following areas: Hunger & Poverty, Justice & Antiracism, International & Global, Youth Leadership & Development, Health & Wellness
- No portion of the distributions of the Fund shall be used for the annual operating budget of the GMS, and,
- The GMS Endowment Fund Committee (herein referred to as Committee) shall be the custodian of the Fund, The committee is to be formed through the action of the GMS Council by appointment or, if the Council decides, by the same process as is followed for the staffing of other synod standing committees. The committee will have the authority to establish the investment plan, after receiving approval of such investment plan from the GMS Council and take appropriate action to carry out that plan. The committee will also have the responsibility to recommend distributions to the GMS Council for their approval. Once approval is granted the Committee would then be responsible to see that distributions is/are carried out as quickly as possible, and,
- The purpose, governance, administration and management of the Fund and Committee will be defined by the plan of operation to be approved by the GMS Council. The Fund will be subject to an annual audit, as part of the GMS audit. In addition, The

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Committee shall report on a bi-monthly basis the status of the Fund, including investment return, additions, distributions, and make-up of investment portfolio.

- The GMS Council with the advice of the task force working on the creation of the GMS Endowment will select a name by which the GMS Endowment will be known and identified.
- The task force working on the creation of the GMS Endowment will also provide recommendations to the Council regarding the plan of how to attract funds to the Fund.

The resolution included notes on actions to be taken at the November Council meeting.

ELCA Greeting

Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson

Members of the Council joined Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson in his office for a brief visit, with Bishop Hanson sharing stories and insights. Included was an account of a meeting with King Abdullah II of Jordan, with the King stating the need for maintaining a strong Christian presence in the Middle East. The bishop also talked about other initiatives involving other faiths, including significant work with the Episcopal Church, and soon-to-be-undertaken discussions with the Catholic Church.

B. Council Meeting Schedule

Council Action

The Council voted to approve its meeting schedule through September 2014:

- Thursday, November 7, 2013 – St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Palmyra
- Thursday, January 16, 2014 – Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Racine
- Thursday, March 20, 2014 – St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wauwatosa
- Thursday, May 15, 2014 – Martin Luther Lutheran Church, Milwaukee
- Thursday, July 17, 2014 – Bishop Jeff Barrow's Home
- Thursday, September 18, 2014 – Trinity Lutheran Church, West Bend

C. Synod Office Lease Extension

Council Action

The Council voted to approve an extension of the synod's office lease through September 30, 2014 at a rate of \$2,169 per month.

- D. **Synod Compensation Guidelines** – A brief overview of the revised compensation table and guidelines was provided. The primary consideration is a recommended rate structure that will increase more in 2014 for less experienced pastors, in light of wage comparisons with other synods in our region and changes in the health care premium structure.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the Minimum Compensation Guidelines for 2014 for congregations as presented.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the 2014 Compensation Guidelines for Clergy and the 2014 Compensation Guidelines for Associates in Ministry, Diaconal Ministers and Lay Professionals as presented.

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Council Action

The Council voted to approve participation in the Portico Gold+ Health Benefit Plan for synod employees in 2014.

Next Meeting

Thursday, November 7, 2013 – 5:30 pm Dinner; 6:15 pm Synod Council Meeting

St. Matthew Lutheran Church, 313 Main Street, Palmyra

Submitted,

Matthew Brockmeier
Synod Secretary