

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
January 16, 2014

Lutheran Church of the Redeemer
2417 Drexel Avenue, Racine, Wisconsin

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

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. Lisa Bates-Froiland	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

Thanks to Lutheran Church of the Redeemer for their hospitality, with a wonderful meal provided for members of the Council.

Also present were Rev. Walter May, Assistant to the Presiding Bishop and Executive for Conference of Bishops for the ELCA; Rev. Paula Canby, GMS Co-Director of Rostered Leadership; Rev. Sandy Chrostowski, GMS Director of Evangelical Mission; Ms. Cindy Dobberke, GMS Funding Task Force; Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman, Chair, GMS Reconciling in Christ Ministry Team; Ms. Betty Warber, President of the Synod Women's Organization; Rev. Richard Warber, GMS Stewardship Committee; Richard Lindberg; and Rev. Larry Westfield, Director of Planned Giving, ELCA, representing the Synod Endowment Fund.

Devotions based on Matthew 4:12-17 were offered by Vice President Manske.

ELCA Mission Support Consultation

Rev. Walter May, Assistant to the Presiding Bishop and Executive for Conference of Bishops for the ELCA, was introduced by Bishop Jeff Barrow, who noted that he worked closely and well with the Conference of Bishops and was a good friend. The bishop asked for prayers for Rev. May, whose mother died last week at the age of 92.

Rev. May provided a framework for his remarks: defining mission support consultations, looking at the synod's mission support status, and underscoring the importance of mission support to

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the work of the church. He went on to note the importance of developing an ongoing dialogue between the ELCA and each synod on the question of mission support.

A brief video was shown that profiled the impact of mission support on ministries in Jeannette, Pennsylvania; Oro Valley, Arizona; Seattle, Washington; and Cuernavaca, Mexico. The core message was that the larger church knows how to do a good job and support missions in a way that individual missions may not be able to do. Rev. May asked for feedback on the video with an eye toward the creation of the 2014 edition.

Elaborating on the question of why the ELCA does these periodic consultations with synod councils, Rev. May noted the constitutional requirement to support the mission of the church, which is structured in an interdependent way, but said that relationship building was the essential reason. Consultation sessions occur at least every three years, but also take place if the synod is considering a reduction in the percentage of mission support.

He noted that the Greater Milwaukee Synod ranks high in percentage of giving, and at one time had the highest rank amongst synods.

Turning to a pair of graphs showing trends for giving for all synods and specifically for GMS, Rev. May noted a shift in giving from mission support to other benevolence not sent to the ELCA. This shift moved other benevolence ahead of mission support nationally in 2009, the though shift took place earlier, in 2005, in the Greater Milwaukee Synod. Discussion ensued regarding contributing factors. Among those suggested were an early increased emphasis on global partnerships, along with local missions like Outreach for Hope.

Possible distrust of the synod and national church was mentioned, with some level of breakdown in the relationship of the three expressions of the church.

Bishop Barrow emphasized what he sees as an increase in “congregationalism,” with decisions made at the local level and increased funding transfers between congregations.

Rev. May noted that despite total giving to congregations by their members more than doubling in ten years (to more than \$1 billion); there is a continued falloff in support for synods and the churchwide organization.

In closing, Rev. May asked those present to name exciting things going on in their own congregations or clusters. Among the responses were the development of a plan possibly leading to a congregational merger, improvements to church property that allow greater access, a food-related mission taking up residence in a new site, and a number of recent baptisms, including adult baptisms.

Bishop's Report

Expanding on his written report, Bishop Jeff Barrow spoke about his joy in doing Lenten devotions for Outreach for Hope; writing about holy places, out of the way places where God is present. He also said that he'll be teaching the Lutheran Confessions in diakonia this year.

Regarding the Meru committee's planned climb of Mount Kilimanjaro in September 2014, the bishop asked that those participating from the synod be regarded as an official delegation, and that the event be approved for fundraising.

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Council Action

The Council voted to approve official delegation status for those from the Greater Milwaukee Synod participating in the Meru committee's September 2014 climb of Mount Kilimanjaro, and for this event to be a recognized fundraising activity within the Greater Milwaukee Synod.

In speaking of the request by Mr. Dale Landgren, the synod's representative on the board of directors of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, to speak to the Synod Council at its March 2014 meeting, the bishop noted that Mr. Landgren's previous appearance before the Council was well-received and considered valuable. General agreement that this invitation should be extended.

Bishop Barrow expressed significant concern for congregations, stating that in the last month or month and a half, he has seen a new level of stress in our congregations unlike anything in the last two years. He mentioned that some are moving closer to the line of being insolvent, making it a difficult time. He went on to say that both very fragile congregations and some that should not be struggling are going through this, accompanied in many cases by a period of fear and blame.

He sees increasing stress between congregations and pastors, with pastors hitting areas of stress that surprise him. Another part of the response may be to ask members of the Synod Council to be part of these conversations.

As at least part of a potential response to this situation, the bishop wants to gather congregational presidents together and to listen to their view of what is happening. He noted that the Congregational Leaders Event was begun with presidents, but that's been overwhelmed by the success of the event in a way that has removed the focus from the presidents.

A question was asked as to whether the presidents are healthy leaders themselves, with the answer that there are probably enough strong leaders in the room to carry the day. Mr. Jerry Key noted that one factor is that inexperienced individuals are in many cases facing these problems, but that many also bring significant gifts to be part of the solution. The bishop said that he wants to listen first, to find out what is going on in congregations. Vice President Manske concurred, saying that at a time when older leaders are departing and new ones are arriving it is good to share ideas, with education and mentoring being important.

The bishop said that if you looked at a third of the synod's congregations, they will be great churches with a promising future, while the other two-thirds are in a state of decline. He went on to say that, while this has been true to some extent for a number of years, what has changed is that "we are closer to the edge," and can no longer see a solution if there is a crisis, or the congregation's membership declines further. He added that this sparks fear, leading to what he's been increasingly confronting in congregations.

Moving to staffing issues, the bishop informed the Council that interviews would take place next week for the part-time Cross+Gen staff position, reiterating his point from the last Council meeting that, despite a desire from the Cross+Gen Team for full-time staffing, this is not possible in the current synodical staffing climate nationwide, where positions are being cut and not created. He noted satisfaction with the recent hires of Rev. Paula Canby and Ms. Mimi Garcia.

Bringing to the Council's attention the Latino ministry in Racine, the bishop asked the Council to keep in mind the idea of committing additional funds if the synod runs a surplus for the just-ending fiscal year.

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Council Action

The Council voted to approve synod calls to Rev. Kara Baylor to serve as Campus Pastor at Carthage College and to Rev. Nicholas Slater to serve as Chaplain at Shorehaven in Oconomowoc.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve two fundraising events for Lutheran Campus Ministry; Campus Ministry Sunday on April 6, 2014 and a Campus Ministry friends/fundraising event on Saturday, October 25, 2014.

The bishop reported that additional details are needed before the Council takes action on work to be done by Rev. Steven Kuhl with the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee.

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Bishop Barrow addressed a congregation in crisis, Peace Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, a congregation that has received ongoing support from Outreach for Hope. The key issue in the very short term is the likely departure of the pastor, with support needed from Outreach for Hope and the synod for a severance package. The bishop asked for consideration of funding by the synod, if needed, to augment funds allocated by Outreach for Hope.

In addition to funding support for a possible severance package, Secretary Mr. Matthew Brockmeier and Treasurer Mr. Lee Johnston have scheduled a meeting with a representative of Peace on Monday the 20th to review the situation and discuss strategy.

There was further discussion about whether any such funding should be considered a loan, though it was agreed that this was not realistic given the current financial situation for Peace.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the expenditure of synod funds, if needed, for a possible severance package for Peace Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, with the additional provision that the Council will receive frequent status updates.

Executive Committee

Vice President Mr. Scott Manske reported on the Executive Committee meeting that included discussion on several aspects of Anti-Racism training that will be included on the March Council agenda and deferral on action on additional appointees to the Cluster Task Force, an action included later on tonight's agenda.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Mr. Lee Johnston reported that income for the synod is again trending downward. He said there will still be a surplus for the fiscal year ending this month, but that income for November and December was down significantly, and the synod has had its worst January in ten years.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the financial statements for the current fiscal year through November 2013 as presented.

Reports

- A. **Director of Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted. Rev. Sandy Chrostowski added a verbal report, highlighting the need for mission support. A template of

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a workplan for the stewardship team was provided to the Council, along with handout on the Macedonia Project work during the past two years. Rev. Chrostowski reported that this work included working with Vibrant Faith, and a series of Macedonia Project workshops. Rev. Richard Warber worked on this project as a mission interpreter. Richard Lindberg added that it was a challenge to find congregations willing to invite the team to make presentations: no one has yet made an invitation. A map showing the location of all Greater Milwaukee Synod congregations was also handed out. Rev. Warber also wrote a piece for the Synod Synopsis in late December. It was noted that there were a number of cancelled services at the end of the year. Rev. Chrostowski urged the Council to take St. Paul's message to heart to make their final 2013 payments, hoping that congregations will respond.

- B. **Director of Discipleship** – No report submitted.
- C. **Director of Rostered Leadership** – Rev. Paula Canby gave a verbal report, noting that 20 congregations are currently in transition, and giving detail on recent leadership transitions. Rev. Jon Breimeier was called to Christ the King in Port Washington on December 1st, with installation in late February; Rev. Tim Tahtinen was ordained on November 24th and called to Divine Word-Pentecost; and Rev. Arlen Solem, who was ordained on Saturday, November 16th, was installed as Associate Pastor of Cross Lutheran in Milwaukee on November 24th.
- D. **Youth and Family Network** – No report submitted.
- E. **Lutheran Campus Ministry** – No report submitted.
- F. **Reconciling in Christ** – Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman provided a verbal report, including an anti-bullying workshop at Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church in Menomonee Falls and the development of additional anti-bullying workshops with Rev. Marilyn Miller in conjunction with MICAH and some schools. Reconciling in Christ is also creating a joint task force on criminal justice social statement with the Anti-Racism Team, with a focus on the impact of criminal justice issues on LGBT people. Ms. Hoffman said that Reconciling with Christ was also looking for opportunities to meet with more congregations.
- G. **Anti-Racism Team** – A written report was submitted. Mr. Key added that the Team is looking into how to approach the criminal justice statement with congregations, and also mentioned the joint venture with the Reconciling in Christ Team.
- H. **WELCA** – A written report was submitted.
- I. **Outreach for Hope** – No report submitted.

Old Business

- A. **Funds Task Force** – Chair Rev. Chrostowski reported on the work and results of the Task Force to address dispersal of funds from the sale of the property of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Waukesha. Bishop Barrow had formed the group, which has been meeting since July 2013. She called this a time of great discernment, prayer and blessing. The Task Force received 35 proposals, representing blessings of creativity and ideas and collaboration across the synod. Those applying included collaborations of congregations, neighborhood organizations and non-profits, providing a wide range of proposals. The Task Force used eight criteria in their review, which was finalized at a meeting Monday. Rev. Chrostowski reported the Task Force's recommendations. The bishop spoke, saying that he was pleased with the results. He said that the proposals and recommendations speak well of synod, adding that the largest proposed grant was to develop a Latino ministry on Waukesha, giving birth to a new start from an previous ministry. He also noted that the synod's global partners fared well in the process, with recommendations for grants for projects in the Meru Diocese and El

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Salvador. He said that the proposed grant to support the work of Just One More Ministry represented a lot of churches working together. The bishop added that in one sense he was disappointed, in that there was strong support for ministries already under way, and he would like to grow the church. He reminded the Council that this discussion is bigger than the individual grants. The bishop also raised technical concerns regarding the proposed grant to Our Savior's Lutheran Church in West Bend for projects in El Salvador, based on the relationship of the synod and the Lutheran church in El Salvador. He agreed to meet with representatives of Our Savior's and the synod's El Salvador Committee to clarify and address these concerns, with a plan to resubmit this grant for Council approval in March. Secretary Brockmeier added that the wealth of proposals represents an opportunity to see what can be done, and is being done, in the synod. Rev. Chrostowski suggested that a video of the funded ministries might be created for the Synod Assembly.

Following a motion to table consideration of the grants and to approve the grants as presented was an amendment to separate the prospective grants.

Council Action

The Council voted to reject a motion to table consideration of grants from the Good Shepherd Fund.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve an amendment to have separate motions for each proposed grant recipient from the Good Shepherd Fund.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the dispersal of funds received from the sale of property belonging to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Waukesha in the form of a grant of \$100,000.00 to Faith/Santa Fe Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, for the Development of a Latino Lutheran ministry in Waukesha, with the stipulations that the recipient tithe 10% of the grant amount to a ministry beyond the Greater Milwaukee Synod and approved by the synod; that annual reports be submitted to the synod on project activities and finances for the life of the grant as included in the proposals; and that all funds be returned to the synod if the recipient ministry closes or ceases to be affiliated with the ELCA within five years of the date of the award.

Council Action

The Council voted to reject the dispersal of funds received from the sale of property belonging to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Waukesha in the form of a grant of \$75,000.00 to Our Savior's Lutheran Church, West Bend, for a Community Development project in El Salvador.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the dispersal of funds received from the sale of property belonging to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Waukesha in the form of a grant of \$95,000.00 to the Greater Milwaukee Synod Tanzania Committee for a Clean Water Project in Tanzania to be undertaken in partnership with the Greater Milwaukee Synod Meru Diocese Partnership Committee, with the stipulations that the recipient tithe 10% of the grant amount to a ministry beyond the Greater Milwaukee Synod and approved by the synod; that annual reports be submitted to the synod on project activities and finances for the life of the grant as included in the proposals; and that all funds be returned to the synod if the recipient ministry closes or ceases to be affiliated with the ELCA within five years of the date of the award.

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Council Action

The Council voted to approve the dispersal of funds received from the sale of property belonging to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Waukesha in the form of a grant of \$75,000.00 to St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wauwatosa, for support of the work of Just One More Ministry, with the stipulations that the recipient tithe 10% of the grant amount to a ministry beyond the Greater Milwaukee Synod and approved by the synod; that annual reports be submitted to the synod on project activities and finances for the life of the grant as included in the proposals; and that all funds be returned to the synod if the recipient ministry closes or ceases to be affiliated with the ELCA within five years of the date of the award.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the dispersal of funds received from the sale of property belonging to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Waukesha in the form of a grant of \$75,000.00 to All People's Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, for a Food Security Program, with the stipulations that no funds be used for the portion of the grant proposal dealing with the acquisition of a house; that the recipient tithe 10% of the grant amount to a ministry beyond the Greater Milwaukee Synod and approved by the synod; that annual reports be submitted to the synod on project activities and finances for the life of the grant as included in the proposals; and that all funds be returned to the synod if the recipient ministry closes or ceases to be affiliated with the ELCA within five years of the date of the award.

Council Action

The Council voted to reject the transfer of funds in the amount of \$10,000.00 received from the sale of property belonging to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Waukesha to the Greater Milwaukee Synod Endowment Fund.

- B. **Funding Policy Task Force** – With the completion of the primary task of the Funding Task Force, the bishop will begin work on assembling the next task force, dealing with recommendations for future funds dispersal.

Council Action

The Council voted to authorize Bishop Jeff Barrow to appoint members of a Funding Policy Task Force, which is charged with developing a policy for the distribution of funds received from any future congregation closings, consistent with Resolution 2 from the 2013 Synod Assembly.

- C. **Synod Personnel Policies** – Secretary Mr. Matthew Brockmeier reported that in his contacts with Synod Attorney Mr. Stephen Knowles following Council action in November to pursue the question of sharing the synod's new employee handbook: Attorney Knowles repeated his strong opposition to sharing the handbook with congregations or other outside entities, citing legal liability among other issues. The follow-up question, whether Attorney Knowles would be willing to draft a model employee handbook for congregations, remains pending, though the concerns cited in his response to the original question make his doing so unlikely. Attorney Knowles has indicated that the best way to address this is through an educational event for church leaders, which he plans to conduct as a stand-alone event, probably in March.
- D. **Cluster Task Force** – Two new members were proposed for the Cluster Task Force. In discussion there were questions regarding the composition of the committee, and whether the individuals being nominated had sufficient experience with clusters to bring to the Task Force's deliberations. The bishop answered by noting that he wants a wide range of people,

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especially lay people, to represent the diversity of the synod on the Task Force, and that the current nominees brought both experience and diversity to the panel.

Council Action

The Council voted to appoint Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman and Ms. Bridgette Schulz as members of the Cluster Task Force.

- E. **ELCA Capital Campaign** – There was no discussion of this item.
- F. **Synod Endowment Fund** – Rev. Larry Westfield provided an update on the development of the Endowment Fund, which the Council recommended to the Synod Assembly by action at its November 2013 meeting. He noted that Treasurer Johnston is involved in the work of setting up the fund, and thanked the Council for its support. He said that since 2001 the synod has been a partner in Lutheran Planned Giving (giving thanks for participation), along with 18 other agencies and synods. Part of the reason for seeking to create an Endowment Fund, he continued, was the growing number of people interested in making legacy gifts, with another reason being how to best to promote the idea of making legacy gifts. In discussion, it became clear to Rev. Westfield and others that the synod needed a container to receive gifts, which led to the conversation about forming a synod Endowment Fund. In advance of a final decision on the creation of the Fund at the Synod Assembly, an Endowment Committee will be formed which will strategize how to structure the Fund. There are two existing volunteers who will be part of that committee. While the task force that developed the plan for the Endowment Fund has had its last meeting, the work of the task force is not done. Two attorneys, Mr. R. Timothy Muth of Reinhart, Boerner, Van Deuren, and Mr. John Remmers of Cramer, Multhauf & Hammers LLP, are preparing documents to structure committee. Rev. Westfield sees an opportunity to invite members of congregations in the synod to find appropriate ways to provide stewardship of their estates. He said America is looking at a huge intergenerational wealth transfer, and that Lutherans have not done well with capturing part of this to this point.

New Business

- A. **Synod Assembly Resolution 4** – Vice President Manske gave a brief overview of needed actions to follow up on 2013 Synod Assembly Resolution 4, Accompaniment, Awareness-Raising, and Advocacy for the People of the Holy Land. There was no substantive discussion beyond agreement to create a committee to begin working on the resolution's recommendations.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the creation of a committee to respond to the call in 2013 Synod Assembly Resolution 4 on Accompaniment, Awareness-Raising, and Advocacy for the People of the Holy Land.

- B. **GMS Nominating Overview** – Secretary Brockmeier asked members of the Council to review the list of positions needing nominations this year, several of which are the responsibility of the Council. He noted that an abnormally high number of open positions were available on the Consultation and Discipline committees as a result of a large bloc of members elected to those positions by the 2008 Synod Assembly.
- C. **Mt. Meru Coffee Project Bylaw Revisions** – Vice President Manske informed the Council that the Mt. Meru Coffee Project had submitted bylaw revisions that they had approved dur-

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ing the fall but that needed ratification by the Synod Council to take effect. There is concern about some of these proposed changes, which will be addressed in detail at the Council's March meeting.

- D. **Appointment of Ms. Ar Lee to the Synod Council** – Milwaukee Cluster 1 has nominated Ms. Ar Lee to serve as a member of the Synod Council, filling a lay female vacancy that has existed since no candidate was nominated before the regular election at the 2013 Synod Assembly. Ms. Lee's synod nominating form was made available to the members of the Council. There was concern about the fact that her congregation is in Milwaukee Cluster 2, though clusters 1 and 2 have continued to conduct joint meetings in the model of the Coalition.

Council Action

The Synod Council voted to appoint Ms. Ar Lee as the Milwaukee Cluster 1-nominated member of the Synod Council, to serve through August 31, 2017.

- E. **Fundraiser for Serenity Inns** – The synod received a request from Serenity Inns to conduct a fundraising appeal on the synod Listserve. The precedents for similar fundraising efforts include Outreach for Hope and the Mount Meru Coffee Project, though both of those are separately incorporated ministries directly affiliated with the synod, and Serenity Inns is not. It was noted that Serenity Inns receives support from a number of Greater Milwaukee Synod congregations. Bishop Barrow spoke in favor of the proposal, with special attention to the relationship between the work of Serenity Inns and the goals of the 11x15 Campaign to reduce prison populations, which is a synod priority.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve a one-time use of the synod Listserve by Serenity Inns, Inc. for fundraising purposes.

Next Meeting

Thursday, March 20, 2014 – 5:30 pm Dinner; 6:15 pm Synod Council Meeting

St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1615 Wauwatosa Avenue, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

Future Meetings

- 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

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

Submitted,

Matthew Brockmeier
Synod Secretary