

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
May 15, 2014

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

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		Pending
The Rev. Steve Blyth	Lake Country	2015		X	1/2013
Ms. Ar Lee	Milwaukee 1	2017		X	Pending
The Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland	Milwaukee 2	2017	X		1/2011
The Rev. Carolyn Fredriksen	Milwaukee 3	2015	X		Pending
Mr. Al Van Lith	Milwaukee 4	2015		X	Pending
Mr. Tom Gauthier	Northern Lakeshore	2017	X		9/2013
The Rev. David Schoob	Northwest	2017	X		9/2013
Ms. Marge Puntarec	Racine	2017		X	1/2010
The Rev. Sherrie Lorbeck	Waukesha	2015	X		1/2007
The Rev. Jay McDivitt	At Large	6/2014	X		Pending
Ms. Debra Taylor	At Large	2015	X		Pending
Mr. Jerry Key	At Large	2015	X		9/2013
Mr. Scott Manske	Vice President	2017 (1)	X		Pending
Mr. Matthew Brockmeier	Secretary	2015 (1)	X		1/2012
Mr. Lee Johnston	Treasurer	2017 (2)	X		Pending
The Rev. Jeff Barrow	Bishop	2016 (1)	X		1/2008
Vacant	Youth Representative	2015			
Mr. Jonathan Barker	Young Adult Rep.	2017	X		9/2013

Also present were Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman, Chair, GMS Reconciling in Christ Ministry Team and Ms. Betty Warber, President of the Synod Women's Organization.

Council Action

SC 14.05.03. Approval of On Leave from Call Status

The Council voted to approve On Leave from Call Status for Ann Williams, and an extension of On Leave from Call Status for Rev. Mark Ziemann.

Council Action

SC 14.05.04. Approval of Retired Status

The Council voted to approve Retired Status for Rev. Paul G. Hill, effective 3/1/2014; and for Rev. Paul A. Schwan, effective 6/30/2014.

Discussion regarding synod participation in the International Companion Program to the 2015 ELCA Youth Gathering, which will bring young people from Lutheran churches in other nations to the United States from late May 2015 through the Youth Gathering in Detroit in mid-July 2015. Sponsored youth will attend an orientation in Chicago, spend approximately five weeks with a host family and host congregation, and participate in the Youth Gathering. The sponsorship cost for synods is \$2,000 for the first participant, and an additional \$4,000 for subsequent participants, with the national church covering \$2,000 of the cost for the first participant. General agreement that this was a worthy program, with most discussion focused on the number of participants to be sponsored and

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the source of funds. Funds from several appropriate reserve accounts will be available, potentially including the Bishop's Discretionary Fund, according to Treasurer Mr. Lee Johnston.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve synod participation in the International Companion Program for the 2015 Youth Gathering for two participants, at a total cost of \$6,000.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve a renewed one-year term call to Rev. Chuck Brummond in his role as Director of Rostered Leadership.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve Disability Status for Rev. Ingrid U. Huebner.

Bishop Jeff Barrow spoke about several current issues and concerns. He praised Ms. Mimi Garcia, Administrative and Communications Associate, for her work, saying that it is "a joy to have [her] in the office." He went on to report that an event coordinated by Ms. Stephanie Luedtke, the synod's new Director of Cross Generational Ministry, was very well attended. He then provided an update on the shared work on Rostered Leadership, informing the Council that Rev. Paula Canby, who joined synod staff to share the Rostered Leadership work with Rev. Chuck Brummond, now needed to spend more time on her work for Faith/Santa Fe Lutheran Church, in light of their receipt of a Good Shepherd Fund grant to develop a Latino Lutheran ministry in Waukesha. Rev. Brummond will be able to pick up more time for this work again, meaning that the work will continue uninterrupted, with both Rev. Canby and Rev. Brummond involved, but with more time spent by Rev. Brummond and less by Rev. Canby. Expanding on this structure, the bishop suggested that this type of arrangement, where a called pastor does some work for the synod in addition to part-time work for a congregation, may be a model for future arrangements to help support pastoral calls where the congregational call itself cannot support the pastor.

The bishop spoke of his trip to El Salvador, where the Lutheran Church faces fiscal challenges and the challenge of working in an environment rife with violence. He noted the challenge he faced in having the mindset of wanting to "rush in and fix things," but being aware of the balancing act between the sustainability we talk about and the dependency we often create. He said that more conversations about how to address these issues were needed. He went on to say that "violence remains a huge issue." There were several issues of violence touching members of the church community during the bishop's visit. Bishop Barrow said that the issue of violence, often gang-related, "changes the way you look at immigration," knowing that the young often need to leave to escape violence and threats of violence in their homeland.

Moving to problems closer to home, the bishop introduced the synod's recent initiative in the "northwest corridor," including Capitol Drive, Wellington Park, Peace, Florist Avenue, Redemption, and Abiding Savior Lutheran churches, to foster dialogue similar to the work that has been done in Racine to find sustainable outcomes for the church. The synod's Director of Discipleship, Rhonda Hill, is "looking at strategy" for these congregations, all of which are "fragile" and "vulnerable" now. Part of the question is whether to explore combinations, or whether there are other mission strategies for these neighborhoods and congregations. While this is a critical issue for this area right now, the bishop said that this "is not just happening in the northwest corridor, it is happening throughout the synod," with "congregations starting to talk about having six months to a year left" before they cannot proceed. The bishop noted, as he has at other times re-

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cently, that while these are not new problems, the resource crunch is tending toward being more immediate and potentially critical.

Bishop Barrow praised Rev. Joseph Ellwanger's new book, "Strength for the Struggle: Insights from the Civil Rights Movement and Urban Ministry," as a powerful book. The bishop said it would be good to help to publicize the book, not just as a celebration of Rev. Ellwanger, but because "there is a story to tell," adding that Rev. Ellwanger's congregation, Hephatha Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, is promoting and celebrating this work.

The bishop then reviewed the resolutions pending for the Synod Assembly, noting the recommendations made by the Reference and Counsel Committee at its meeting on Tuesday.

Resolution 1, On Establishment of a Synod Endowment Fund, was recommended for passage by the Committee. The bishop noted that there continues to be "confusion about the purpose for the endowment," adding that the basic idea is that money is being left on the table as individuals make estate or other giving plans, with the endowment a means to "offer suggestions to people looking to create bequests."

The committee recommended against approval of **Resolution 2, Encouraging Voting Member Diversity and Participation**. While sympathetic to the goals of the resolution, there were concerns about a loss of flexibility in planning future assemblies and the possibility of unintended consequences as the resolution was written. The bishop observed that "legislating solutions can create problems." He noted that "we are a commuter assembly now," and said that he "likes the fee-free idea." Aside from the resolution, there has been discussion and preliminary planning to move the 2015 assembly to a new venue, with possibilities at this stage including Carthage College or Mt. Mary University.

Resolution 3, Encouraging Intentional, Called Interim Ministry in our Synod, will be presented to the assembly without recommendation by the committee. The immediate impact on the budget, coupled with procedural hurdles regarding changes to the budget and the level of support needed at the assembly, were key factors in withholding a recommendation. Bishop Barrow said that in terms of the desired outcomes the synod has in some ways come close in its current approach to interim ministry, and that this resolution, if approved, "would almost dictate a realignment of the synod staff." It would also, he continued, "create a two-tiered interim structure" with a different status for the synod-called interim ministers.

The bishop reported that the committee recommended adoption of **Resolution 4, Opposing Discriminatory Legislation**, which was created in reaction to laws like Arizona's recent law allowing discrimination based on religious beliefs.

On the topic of the ELCA fundraising campaign, the bishop said that materials are now available through the churchwide website. He said that "we need to decide by the fall how to approach this," adding that "there are some areas already underway, like the malaria campaign."

The final item from the bishop's report was the empowerment of laity. This has come up, particularly in the discussion on clusters, with concerns that the lay people have moved aside from active participation in some aspects of the life of the church. He cited an example of the trend, where cluster assemblies are no longer well enough attended by the laity to identify lay voting members for the churchwide assembly, and clergy end up suggesting individuals in their discussions with each other. The bishop's hope is to "invite laity back into leadership," noting that

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events like theological conference and the boundaries workshop have offered opportunities for renewed lay involvement, with the result being increased vitality for lay leaders.

Vice President Manske picked up the discussion on the fiscal impact of Resolutions 2 and 3, noting that he had been developing a fiscal analysis of the impact of approving the resolutions. He expressed concern that we find better approaches to discussing these important issues, with the possibility of engaging the Synod Assembly Planning Committee on the issues raised in Resolution 2, but adding that there is not a good Council or committee vehicle for discussing interim ministry. Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman said that to her, “resolutions have always been a backwards process” and that there “should be more a grassroots process” for developing the issues considered in resolutions. Rev. David Schoob added that “we expect task forces to come up with an answer,” but said that Council is responsible for creating a vision. He added that “we should take the role of making this happen; we don’t take our accountability seriously.” The bishop said that he values this discussion, adding that on the question of interim ministry “we are responsible for a body of people” and that the “synod attempts to find the right fit.” Ms. Sue Schmidt-Decker noted her appreciation for the thoughtfulness by the synod in finding the right interim minister. Rev. Sherrie Lorbeck said that the synod needs to be “looking at a full range of discussion on ending ministry” when congregations may no longer be viable, not just finding interims. Mr. Jerry Key, echoing Rev. Schoob’s comments, said that “we are the governing body; we should be leading that discussion.”

Stemming from this discussion, Rev. Schoob made a motion for the Council to take up the questions surrounding participation in the Synod Assembly, with the discussion framed by the outcome of the vote on Resolution 2, but not limited by that outcome.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve engaging in discussions on the issue of the diversity or representation at and affordability of the Synod Assembly over the next year.

Vice President

In brief comments, Vice President Manske explained that he, synod staff and other leaders have worked diligently to “do what we can to make things run smoothly with advance preparation for Council meetings,” including attempting to provide information ahead of time. Despite those efforts, he said that meeting agendas have been so full that there has often been very little time to discuss things in the manner they deserve. Given the very tight agenda for the Council’s six meetings a year (with only five really structured for intense discussion), Vice President Manske suggested the alternative of having another meeting or meetings along the lines of the current meeting structure, or scheduling one or more long Saturday meetings.

He said that his sense was that people feel constrained from talking, because of concern about adding time to the already lengthy meetings, and that he doesn’t want to get to where people don’t feel like talking. This is an issue that he and the bishop have discussed, and Mr. Manske said that he wants to work to find better ways of engaging members of the Council.

Discussion on Mr. Manske’s remarks included a question of whether the Council was structured to foster real discussion or whether it was designed to rubber-stamp decisions. Rev. Schoob said that he doesn’t mind meeting more often, with Mr. Tom Gauthier adding that if additional meetings are held, they should focus on discussion or presentations, and not on regular business. Mr. Johnston opined that the Council has its own version of the “church year,” with a busy cycle

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during the first half of the calendar year, and less pressure from the Synod Assembly until the end of the year. He also noted that the special Saturday session held by the Council a couple of years ago allowed work on things for which there otherwise isn't enough time.

Mr. Manske recommended that the Executive Committee review this issue for the Council's next year, reiterating that he does not mean to limit voices or participation. This was agreed by consensus.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Mr. Lee Johnston reviewed the March financial statements – we're doing okay – about \$500 below budget, unlike last year, when we were slightly above budget. He attributed this to the more complete staffing levels this year. The only question had to do with the source of a negative figure for Net Income Equity on the balance sheet, which Mr. Johnston will research, sharing his findings with the Council by e-mail.

Mr. Johnston also informed the Council that complete financial reports will be made available for the Synod Assembly.

Reports

- A. **Director of Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted.
- B. **Director of Discipleship** – No report submitted.
- C. **Director of Rostered Leadership** – No report submitted.
- D. **Cross+Generational Ministry** – No report submitted.
- E. **Lutheran Campus Ministry** – No report submitted.
- F. **Reconciling in Christ** – A written report was submitted.
- G. **Anti-Racism Team** – No report submitted.
- H. **WELCA** – A written report was submitted, with Ms. Betty Warber speaking enthusiastically to the Council about the Synodical Women's Organization's keynote speaker for their October convention in West Allis. Ms. Tasha Schuh is an inspirational speaker from Ellsworth, Wisconsin, whose own experience with traumatic injury and paralysis forms the basis for her message of challenge and encouragement.
- I. **Outreach for Hope** – No report submitted.

Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland noted that some reporting entities have rarely or never had reports during her tenure on the Council, encouraging all entities to submit regular reports to build awareness of their work by the Council.

Old Business

- A. **Funding Policy Task Force** – This new task force, formed in response to 2013 Synod Assembly Resolution 2 (Resolution on the Use of Funds from the Sale of Greater Milwaukee Synod Church Properties), had its first meeting recently. The group consists of Mr. Manske, Mr. Brockmeier, Rev. Sandra Chrostowski, Ms. Cindy Dobberke, and Rev. Vicki Watkins. The start of the committee was timed to follow completion of the Good Shepherd funding process, so that lessons learned from that process could be incorporated into the new task force process. This means that the deadline in the resolution, submitting a final report to the 2014 Synod Assembly, won't be met. The task force will continue to meet, following up on the good discussion held at the first meeting, and working with a draft document Mr. Manske is preparing.

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- B. **Cluster Task Force** – A written preliminary report was submitted. Mr. Manske noted that he found the results thus far interesting, despite the low level of participation in the task force’s listening sessions. He said that the key finding seemed to be that there is not a groundswell for change in the cluster structure. Rev. Schoob agreed that it was a good report which should go to assembly, but felt that the spirit of the resolution had not been addressed. He spoke of his sense of that spirit: in essence, how do we connect people across cluster boundaries? Bishop Barrow stated that there is general acknowledgement that the clusters as currently structured don’t work very well, and encouraged the continuation of the discussion. In a follow-up, Rev. Schoob said that there are ways other than restructuring to address the spirit of the resolution. Mr. Manske said that he would like to see what happens with this issue at the Synod Assembly. Rev. Lorbeck encouraged looking at ways to unite people around topics, like health care or justice; getting people to work on topics together. Rev. Bates-Froiland suggested that some ministry ventures may bring people together, and said that some initiatives are already doing that. Rev. Schoob made a motion to expand the discussion by the Council beyond the confines of the question of cluster structure. Following some discussion on this motion, Rev. Jay McDivitt moved to end discussion.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve a motion that it intentionally address the concept of cross-fertilization across clusters and throughout the synod.

- C. **ELCA Capital Campaign** – Synods are urged to work on what they are passionate about, but there will not be dollar amounts assigned by churchwide. Tracking of results by synod is really only being done for the Malaria Campaign and World Hunger. There is a need to get moving, but there is not a lot of direction by churchwide, beyond available tools on the website.
- D. **Greater Milwaukee Synod Endowment Fund** – In the July Council meeting some of the proposed governing items can be reviewed, following approval by the assembly. The documents, both the original draft by the workgroup and a revised draft created by Mr. Manske, were provided to Council members. The key item is that there will be a new committee established to manage the endowment fund, for which we’ll need to find people who are passionate about the endowment concept. Questions from members focused on whether the Synod Assembly will make governance decisions or simply approve the endowment’s creation. The Assembly’s role is to approve creation, though the resolution does include some limits on what can be done with endowment funds. Another question was whether the Assembly was required to act, or whether the Council could have created an endowment by its own initiative; the answer was that the Council could have created the endowment, but the decision was made to have this be an Assembly decision.
- E. **2013 Synod Assembly Resolution 4, Accompaniment, Awareness-Raising, and Advocacy for the People of the Holy Land** – Bishop Jeff is following up on implementation.
- F. **Mt. Meru Board** – In response to a request for information to the Mt. Meru committee, a resume was provided for one Mt. Meru board member, Mr. Anthony Petersen.
- G. **Addendum to Synod Council Minutes to show those who have attended Anti-Racism Training** – Motion to add a column showing the date members have most recently attended synod-approved Anti-Racism Training. The next training opportunity will be in October.

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The secretary was asked to contact Ms. Esther Rusch for current information on members' status.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the addition to a column to the Council minutes format to indicate when each member last participated in synod-approved Anti-Racism Training.

H. Extension of Period for Use of Funds by Spirit Alive! Lutheran Church in Kenosha –

The bishop reported that Spirit Alive! was negotiating the purchase of property at the time of the original agreement for the synod to provide funding, but that fell through. Rev. McDivitt questioned whether giving money in this fashion was normal practice, and asked where the money came from. Bishop Barrow responded that this was money from sale of St. Andrew's, and that this can encourage appropriate support for promising mission endeavors. He added that he would have liked to have had a similar opportunity for the use of a portion of the money from the sale of Good Shepherd. Discussion on the motion by Rev. Schoob to allow a one-year extension of the possible use of \$150,000 for this purpose included a question as to whether it would be appropriate to have more discussion on the issue of congregationalism within the synod. Rev. McDivitt and Rev. Bates-Froiland expressed discomfort with an extension for the use of funds. Motion carried, with four opposed.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve an extension of action in May 2013 (SC 13.05.05.) setting aside a sum of up to \$150,000.00, for Spirit Alive! to purchase available real estate, with funds to be taken from the old new mission start, and the balance from the proceeds of the sale of St. Andrew's, for use within one year of this date.

New Business

A. Committee Transparency – Rev. Schoob asked for increased transparency on synod committee membership. Secretary Brockmeier responded that this information is being collected and refined through the policy affirmation process, and should be available for placement on the synod's website in the near future.

Next Meeting

Thursday, July 17, 2014 – 5:30 pm Dinner; 6:15 pm Synod Council Meeting

Bishop Jeff Barrow's Home

Future Meetings

- 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