

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA  
 Summary of the Synod Council Meeting  
 January 22, 2015

Christ the Servant Lutheran Church  
 2016 Center Road, Waukesha, 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	10/2014
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
Vacant	Racine	2017			
The Rev. Sherrie Lorbeck	Waukesha	2015		X	1/2007
The Rev. Jay McDivitt	At Large	2015	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
Mr. Jack Walch	Youth Representative	2015	X		Pending
Mr. Jonathan Barker	Young Adult Rep.	2017	X		9/2013

Devotions were offered by Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland, who shared a reading from Dietrich Bonhoeffer with a tie-in to our time and place. Mr. Jonathan Barker will present devotions in March 2015.

Also present were staff members Rev. Chuck Brummond, Director of Rostered Leadership; Rev. Sandy Chrostowski, Director of Evangelical Mission; Ms. Rhonda Hill, Director of Discipleship, and Josiah Hill, Giver of Joy.

**Vice President's Remarks**

Mr. Manske reported that the Visioning Group he has convened has met twice, and is beginning to move toward more focused discussion. He intends to report back as the discussion progresses. A four to five month timeline for this process is envisioned.

Mr. Manske also highlighted two items further down the agenda, the first some better than expected financial news for January, to be covered in the financial report, and the second the discussion on the ELCA's Capital Campaign.

He ended his report with an appreciation of the volunteer efforts of the council, noting also the diversity of the council. He cited the need to honestly support each other, and to lift each other up every so often.

# Greater Milwaukee Synod Council January 22, 2015 Meeting Summary

## **Bishop's Report**

The bishop's report began with actions regarding the roster and fundraising events.

### **Council Action**

#### **Approval of On Leave from Call Status**

The Council voted to approve On Leave from Call status for Rev. Jane E. Fryda, effective February 1, 2015; and Rev. David J. Keller, effective April 24, 2014.

A question was raised about the reasons for granting On Leave from Call status, with the bishop answering that this was done in these cases where continuation of previous ministry service was not possible for one of several reasons. The bishop noted that three years is the standard time for On Leave from Call status, with renewal required annually.

### **Council Action**

#### **Approval of Events**

The Council voted to approve April 26, 2015 as Campus Ministry Sunday and October 24, 2015 as a fundraising event for Lutheran Campus Ministry.

### **Council Action**

#### **Approval of Retired Status**

The Council voted to approve retired status for Rev. Richard A. Peterson, effective January 1, 2015.

Bishop Barrow commented on the work of the finance committee in looking at long-term trends, praising Mr. Roger Schroeder for providing a very perceptive approach. The key observation has been that, with existing trends, over the next five years there will need to be some reduction in synod staff size. The primary cause remains that there are more and more stressed congregations, resulting in reduced giving. The key will be to adapt to that trend, but to remain proactive, empathizing initiatives like Cross+Generational Ministry in remaining staff positions.

In this light, consideration is being given to options that may exist as normal staff changes occur in coming years, including Rev. Chuck Brummond's stated desire to move toward interim ministry at some point.

The bishop elaborated on additional aspects of his written report, including brief thoughts on the painful reality for congregations facing uncertain transitions and the joy of creating Lenten devotions in collaboration with Outreach for Hope. These remarks included observations on the question of "who is my neighbor?"

Bishop Barrow was especially enthusiastic about The Table, an initiative developed by Venice Williams, building on work already done with Alice's Garden. The bishop noted that the synod is working with this project to shepherd it through any red tape, so that the project itself is not burdened as it develops its new ministry, which he described as "penetrating the heart of the community, reaching young voices who know what they are." He has also licensed Venice Williams to preside at communion.

In offering to support participation in this year's Festival of Homiletics, the bishop said that "we want to continue to challenge even our best preachers to become better preachers."

He ended his report with enthusiasm for the participation of Rev. Linda Norman, Treasurer of ELCA, as the ELCA's representative at the 2015 Synod Assembly. The theme for the Assembly is "Hope for a Broken World," appropriate in that it also coincides with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Outreach for Hope.

# Greater Milwaukee Synod Council January 22, 2015 Meeting Summary

## **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Mr. Lee Johnston reported that income from congregations continues its downward trend, with a likely drop-off of roughly \$100,000 for the nearly ended fiscal year from the fiscal year ended in January 2014. The better news is that January's results are better than expected, meaning that the synod may be able to break even for the fiscal year, given savings in staffing and other costs, and from the small business health credit, from the originally approved budget figures.

Questions posed to Mr. Johnston included whether increases in insurance costs from Portico have contributed to decreases in congregational giving and the impact of small business health insurance rebates during 2014. The bishop noted that most congregations are still using the Gold Plan for insurance. The rebates did make a difference in 2014, but will not be available in 2015.

In addressing the impact of these ongoing reductions, which fit a medium term trend of annual reductions in the range of \$100,000 in congregational giving to the synod, Bishop Barrow said that the "church is going through a pruning right now." He cautioned that there comes a point for congregations, and potentially for the synod, "where things implode," with an impact on seminaries and other parts of the ELCA's infrastructure.

Another question addressed the above-budget legal expenses. The bishop explained that there have been situations requiring legal advice and work. Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland suggested looking into pro bono legal assistance when significant legal resources are needed. There was general recognition and appreciation for the work and skills of the synod attorney, Mr. Stephen Knowles.

Other discussion included the status in the budget of the bishop's discretionary fund (not a budget item, but a separate restricted fund) and whether salaries for ministers on synod staff are based on the standard synodical guidelines for compensation for rostered leaders (generally yes).

Mr. Johnston concluded by saying that final figures for FY2015 will be available for the March Council meeting. Rev. Sandy Chrostowski noted that congregations behind in their pledges were sent a letter today.

Two final items were a statement by Mr. Manske on the need to set up sub-committee on compensation in March, and a question from Mr. Tom Gauthier on congregations that have atypical fiscal years (the answer to that was simply to coordinate with the synod on giving patterns).

## **Council Action**

### **Approval of Financial Statements**

The Council voted to approve the synod's financial statements as of December 31, 2014 as presented.

### **Action Items – Old Business**

**ELCA Capital Campaign** – Mr. Manske commented on his written report on the development of the campaign and the synod's role to date in funding the key campaign foci. Rev. Chrostowski added that the campaign is running ahead of schedule nationally. Discussion on balancing the struggles of congregations to make ends meet with these larger goals, many of which will resonate strongly with individual donors, who provide 60-70% of the campaign's funding. The bishop noted that the concept of giving to a generic national campaign does not stir passion, but that individual pieces of that campaign can stir passion. Rev. Carolyn Fredriksen cited the possibility of educating people on the issues at the core of the campaign, saying that "malaria was fun for us." [Yes, laughter.] Discussion on the value of tangible representations of problems and solutions, especially those engaging children. Rev. David Schoob suggested encouraging congregations to pick a particular focus for the long-haul during the campaign, with

# Greater Milwaukee Synod Council January 22, 2015 Meeting Summary

Mr. Johnston suggesting touting the success of the malaria campaign. Motion by Mr. Johnston to focus on congregations, including new and renewing congregations and disability ministries, during 2015, with information provided on all campaign options. Second by Rev. Bates-Froiland.

## **Council Action**

### **Approval of ELCA Campaign Focus**

The Council voted to approve a synodical focus on congregations in the ELCA's Capital Campaign for 2015, including new and renewing congregations and disability ministries, with information provided to congregations on all campaign options.

**Conversion of Continuing Resolution S10.07.A14 to Bylaw S10.07.02.** – This item was not addressed, but will be revisited in March.

## **Action Items – New Business**

### **Discussion of Lease and/or Sale of Iglesia “El Nuevo Pacto” (Rogers Street Property)** –

Brief discussion to provide context and clarity in advance of receiving an expected offer for final purchase of this property, which was formerly Redeemer Lutheran Church (South Side). It has been on the market on-and-off for a long time, with some time vacant, and most recently used by Iglesia El Nuevo Pacto. Their lease tenancy, which began in 2011, was not related to earlier Council action to approve a possible sale in 2008. It is anticipated that this will be addressed at the March meeting.

**Approval of Greater Milwaukee Synod Endowment Fund Committee** – A list (including resumes) of individuals willing to serve on the initial Synod Endowment Fund Committee was presented to the Council. Discussion included the fact that two additional individuals are sought for the committee, with an eye toward creating a more diverse group. Ms. Rhonda Hill had suggested expanding the group to six to effectively address the question of diversity. Rev. Schoob and Mr. Jerry Key spoke to the need to build diversity into the development of such groups from the beginning, so that all members can be on an equal footing, rather than having diversity added toward the end of the process. Mr. Key opined that while it may take longer to create a group using that method, the group is likely to move forward more rapidly and effectively once it is in place. He urged that, as a body of believers, we think differently in this regard, with a serious look at who is at the table from the beginning. The opportunity to serve will be sent out through Listserve, and will expressly solicit interest from people without experience in endowment funds.

## **Council Action**

### **Approval of Endowment Fund Committee**

The Council voted to approve Mr. Larry Nines, Rev. Ted Romberg, Rev. Howard Vrankin and Rev. David Keller as the initial members of the Greater Milwaukee Synod Endowment Fund Committee.

**Approval of Bylaw Amendment for Outreach for Hope** – Mr. Manske introduced a change approved by Outreach for Hope to their bylaws to allow for the creation of an advisory committee. The bylaws of Outreach for Hope require approval by the Synod Council following any changes accepted by the Outreach for Hope board of directors.

## **Council Action**

### **Approval of Bylaw Amendment for Outreach for Hope**

The Council voted to approve an amendment to add Article VI, Section 2 (h) to the bylaws of Outreach for Hope, with the following wording:

## Greater Milwaukee Synod Council January 22, 2015 Meeting Summary

(h) Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee is a group of individuals available to the President, the Chairperson, and the Board of Directors for consultation on special needs and interests. Members of the Advisory Committee shall permit their name to appear publicly on behalf of Outreach for Hope. Members serve terms of two years, without term limits, subject to approval by the Board of Directors.

### Reports

**Director of Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted. Rev. Chrostowski highlighted two elements. First was additional elaboration on The Table, the new ministry idea being developed by Venus Williams. She reinforced the idea presented by the bishop that the synod wants to address the background work with the ELCA to allow the ministry to devote full attention to its development. Part of this is consciously avoiding the synodically authorized worship site pathway, though that may preclude funding that might normally be available for those on this path. The bottom line is to avoid strictures on how this ministry grows. Rev. Jay McDivitt asked whether this ministry had been in consultation with nearby congregations. Rev. Chrostowski responded that discussions with other congregations have not taken place yet, but that there have been some discussions involving Good Shepherd Trinity Church and the Presbytery of Milwaukee. Discussions with other congregations are a likely near-term step. The second report highlight was an update on the proposed new start prison ministry for the Felmers O. Chaney Correctional Center in Milwaukee, with Hephatha, Reformation and Cross Lutheran churches playing key roles. A new ministry, if successfully established, would involve a pastor. At present there is Bible study in the facility. Rev. Chrostowski provided a sense of urgency for the project, noting that the present head of the facility is supportive, but will be leaving soon, leaving uncertainty about what can be developed later.

She reported on a mid-April event for multiple synods that the Greater Milwaukee Synod will host on behalf of the ELCA. The focus will be on moving deeper into mission. She also noted that registration for the Stewardship Fair, to be held on February 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, is at 33, ahead of last year at the same time. The deadline for registration is January 29<sup>th</sup>, and Rev. Chrostowski is hoping to double or triple the current registration numbers.

**Director of Discipleship** – A written report was submitted to the Secretary at the meeting, with electronic distribution anticipated after the meeting.

**Director of Rostered Leadership** – Rev. Brummond gave a verbal report on the increasing need to “think out of the box” and be more creative on congregational transitions. He said that the standard answers no longer work well in all situations, with the process of assigning an interim and calling a new pastor sometimes “challenged by the changed demographics of congregations.” In doing this work there is an effort to respect congregationalism, where congregations want a voice in the process, and a desire to be a resource. He called this an “engaging challenge.” Mr. Brockmeier added brief comments underscoring the need for flexibility in this process, based on the ongoing work at his congregation, St. Paul’s in Random Lake, following the retirement of Pastor Ned Dorau. His comments included appreciation for the flexibility shown and the dialogue in which the synod and congregation have engaged, and an understanding of how difficult it can be to create new approaches in response to fluid situations. Rev. Brummond ended his report by thanking the Council and Bishop Jeff for “letting me hang around,” saying that he is never bored by this position, though he still wants the opportunity to re-enter interim ministry. He added that he remains committed to being a resource to whomever takes up the work in his place, and noting that the call process manual has been tweaked, with added tools, to help people through transitions. A transition status report was provided on paper, with plans to distribute an electronic version after the meeting.

# Greater Milwaukee Synod Council January 22, 2015 Meeting Summary

**Cross+Generational Ministry** – No report submitted.

**Lutheran Campus Ministry** – No report submitted.

**Reconciling in Christ** – A written report was provided.

**Anti-Racism Team** – A written report was submitted.

**WELCA** – A written report was submitted.

**Outreach for Hope** – No report submitted.

## **New Business**

None

## **Old Business**

**Funding Policy Task Force Update** – A meeting is scheduled for January 28<sup>th</sup>.

**May 2014 Synod Assembly Resolution 2 – Voting Member Diversity and Participation** – Mr. Manske reported that review of options for future Synod Assemblies is included in the work of the planning committee for the current Synod Assembly, which will be held in a new venue with a new schedule. Discussion will be ongoing.

**May 2014 Synod Assembly Resolution 3 – Intentional Interim Ministry** – Rev. McDivitt reported that he has met with Bishop Barrow and Rev. Brummond to lay the groundwork for developing a task force. Several individuals have been identified to serve on the task force, which has not yet met. Included, in addition to Rev. McDivitt, are Rev. Brummond, Rev. Sandy Jacobs, Ms. Jo Pirlott, Mr. Jeff Smith, Rev. Suellen Myers and Rev. John Horner-Ibler. Mr. Paul Svingen will serve as a resource person. More individuals are sought, with outstanding invitations to pastors and congregations. Mr. Key expressed a desire to join the group. The goal is to meet by the end of February, with fact-finding taking place now.

**May 2014 Synod Assembly Resolution 4 – Opposing Discriminatory Legislation** – There is no action at this time.

**Cluster Task Force** – There is no action at this time.

## **Next Meeting**

**Thursday, March 19, 2015 – 5:30 pm Dinner; 6:15 pm Synod Council Meeting**

Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5601 Washington Ave., Kenosha

## **Future Meetings**

- Thursday, May 7, 2015 – St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Palmyra
- Thursday, July 16, 2015 – Bishop Jeff Barrow's Home
- Thursday, September 24, 2015 – The Lutheran Center, Chicago

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

Submitted,

Mr. Matthew Brockmeier  
Synod Secretary