

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
March 19, 2015

Lord of Life Lutheran Church
5601 Washington Road, Kenosha, 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
Ms. Lynn Hooper	Racine	2017	X		Pending
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

Also present were Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman, Chair, GMS Reconciling in Christ Ministry Team; Ms. Stephanie Luedtke, GMS Director of Cross+Generational Ministry; and Ms. Betty Warber, President, Synod Women's Organization.

Initial Action Items

Vice President Manske introduced the agenda, proposing additional items that had come to the Council's attention following the Executive Committee's agenda-setting meeting.

Council Action

Appointment to Synod Council

The Council voted to appoint Ms. Lynn Hooper to fill a Synod Council vacancy for the Racine Cluster nominated position, for the remainder of the term ending August 31, 2017.

Vice President's Remarks

Mr. Manske reported in brief comments on the issue of clergy pay scales and benefits, including the impact of changes in health insurance, with a goal of looking at guidelines for the total compensation package. He said that he received e-mails from someone from Sheboygan County regarding cost of living differential, and will meet with that person to further explore the issue. He has also reviewed guidelines from the Metropolitan Chicago and Northern Illinois synods. Secretary Matthew Brockmeier urged inclusion of compensation for part-time clergy as part of the review.

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Bishop's Report

Bishop Barrow provided staff updates, noting that the office has been very empty this week, with Mary Romskog on vacation and Kristin Nielsen has not officially started yet. He said that Rhonda Hill, who has been out ill, stopped in today, but her recovery has been slow. The bishop has been doing mobility work, which he enjoys (but not the paperwork part). Sandy Chrostowski is at a bishops assistants' meeting in Chicago. He said that these absences "make you realize that everybody brings something to the table."

Council Action

Approval of On Leave from Call Status

The Council voted to approve a continuation of On Leave from Call status for Rev. Carol R. Baumgartner, Rev. Cheri M. Johnson, Rev. Maren M. Hooper, Mr. Michael J. McAllister, Rev. Amy R. Becker Perez, Rev. Ann E. Williams, Rev. Earnest E. Tate and Rev. Wendy J. Wirth-Brock.

Council Action

Approval of LSTC Board Representation

The Council voted to appoint Mr. Dale Landgren as a member of the Board of Directors of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago for a second full term, through September 30, 2018.

Council Action

Approval of Retired Status

The Council voted to approve retired status for Rev. Clifford J. Schmidt, effective August 2, 2014.

In continuing his report, the bishop asked the Council to note especially the proposed action plan by Outreach for Hope, especially the intent to hire a full-time Advancement Officer. Their plan is to increase investment assets from \$4 million to \$10 million over ten years and grants from \$350,000 to \$500,000 a year in five years in response to strong ongoing need for support by congregations and the perceived inadequate level of assets for long-term stability. He added that an important aspect of this is going after money that has not been committed to other entities, especially in estate planning.

The bishop also highlighted the report from Rev. Sandy Chrostowski regarding the ministry that is proposed as The Table. He gave a brief history of the ministries that have led to this point, emphasizing that Venice Williams "has penetrated the heart of the community better than so many others." He said that she has brought some of the groups in the community together for Word and Sacrament in a way that is "really exciting." No synod funding is required this year, but there may be a need for support in coming years.

Bishop Barrow spoke of the planned appearance by Eddie Lacy of the Green Bay Packers on the Friday evening of the Synod Assembly, as part of the celebration of Outreach for Hope's 20th anniversary. Despite some hesitation because of the cost of his appearance, the decision was made to go ahead. The Carthage College athletic department will help promote his event, which the bishop said was "a way to get the name OFH in places that it is not today." Fee will come from Assembly restricted fund reserve, though with other sponsors sought. The bishop added that Eddie Lacy was displaced in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina when he was a teenager, and has a compelling story to share.

Two related issues addressed by the bishop are the increasing number of part-time calls and the number of congregations reaching the point at which they are not viable.

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Regarding part-time calls, the bishop said that the key challenge is to put together calls that will “hold together for our rostered leaders.” In short, part-time calls may not always be workable in allowing pastors to make a living.

The larger issue are congregations facing either closure or a new configuration, sometimes in conjunction with other congregations. He noted that he had held three discussions with congregations facing the end of independent ministry just this week. While he continues to strongly support the decision of some very small congregations to keep worshipping as long as they can, his focus is on the question of “when you are done with this place, how do you bless the church?” in making possible other ministries. This, he said, meant there need to be “a lot of hard conversations with churches,” particularly those that have fallen to perhaps 30 to 50 worshipping, and no prospect for increased membership.

One example he gave was Immanuel Lutheran Church on Lapham Street in Milwaukee, which has voted to close on either Reformation or All Saints Sunday. He talked with them about what the church has meant, and about their plans to use their assets to fund an urban internship program. They’ve had three interns, all good experiences he added, moving them to their decision. This represented, he said, a “move from being an old church building, to [being] an asset to bless new life in the synod. That trend is likely to continue. Now it’s time.”

Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Mr. Lee Johnston told the Council that the preliminary year-end numbers show an operating deficit of about \$7,100. “Giving continues its downward trend” with full staffing contributing to the net deficit. Questions regarding how to proceed will be addressed in the budget discussion.

Mr. Manske noted that a number of items in the budget, including support to the ELCA, are proportional to income. “Even with drops in those items, we ended up with a deficit,” partly due to salaries, and partly to other expenses. Rev. David Schoob questioned the status of reserve funds, with Mr. Manske promising to gather additional details on their intended purposes for future review by the Council, something he would like to see repeated on an annual or semi-annual basis.

Council Action

Approval of Financial Statements

The Council voted to approve the synod’s financial statements as of January 31, 2015 as presented.

Action Items – Old Business

Conversion of Continuing Resolution S10.07.A14 to Bylaw S10.07.02. – This item was again deferred, to be brought back to the Council at the Call of the Chair.

Action Items – New Business

Discussion of Lease and/or Sale of Iglesia “El Nuevo Pacto” (Rogers Street Property) – Mr. Manske reported that the tenants have requested an extension until May to make a purchase offer on the property. The current status is that rent payments of about \$1,000 a month continue, with approximately \$11,000 in a reserve fund. This fund has been used for some sewer repairs, and for support of Rev. Gabriel Marcano’s ministry.

Designation of The Table as a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community – Bishop Jeff brought forward the recommendation of the Greater Milwaukee Synod to designate The Table as a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community. This will, he said, get them started,

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with the need to flesh out and implement a plan for sustainability. Initial funding of \$10,000, representing only part of the cost of this ministry, will come from the Director of Evangelical Mission's budget, which is not part of the synod's funds. The bishop also reported that he has licensed Venice Williams to perform the Sacraments at The Table. There may be modest funding from Outreach for Hope in the first year, and an evaluation process has been built into the project proposal. Some additional future funding may be available from the DEM's budget, and future requests to the synod for funding may occur. There are no commitments by the synod for such support.

Council Action

Designation of Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community

The Council voted, upon the recommendation of the Greater Milwaukee Evangelism/Outreach Team, to designate The Table as a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community of the Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA and to designate Ms. Venice Williams as their servant leader.

Resolution on Safe Haven Guidelines for the Greater Milwaukee Synod – Ms. Stephanie Luedtke presented a request from Cross+Generational Ministry for presentation of a resolution to the 2015 Synod Assembly. The proposed resolution is designed to provide guidelines and a synod policy to bolster protection of vulnerable individuals, including children, the elderly and people with disabilities, in church settings. This follows Ms. Luedtke's findings that documentation for these protections does not exist in the synod, and that some congregations are finding a need for some guidance. The name Safe Haven is based on action by the 1999 Churchwide Assembly, with the particulars of this proposal modeled on guidelines adopted by the Rocky Mountain Synod in 2010. She noted that this will not cost money, but would require a task force or similar group to draft guidelines. Questions from members included the need for legal review to avoid possible liability for the synod in providing recommendations to congregations, the appropriateness of the name in light of the use of "safe havens" for victims of domestic violence, and the phrasing and sequence of the resolved statements. Mr. Manske encouraged the recommendation of this resolution as a means to provide additional value to congregations.

Council Action

Approval of Submission of Resolution

The Synod Council voted to approve the submission of the resolution presented by Cross+Generational Ministry regarding the creation of the Safe Haven Guidelines to the 2015 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly, subject to review by the Synod Attorney:

RESOLUTION: Safe Haven Guidelines for Children, Youth, and Adults within Each Congregation in the Greater Milwaukee Synod

WHEREAS, in Baptism the congregation promises to support and pray for the baptized in a new life in Christ: and

WHEREAS, through Baptism we are entrusted with the great responsibility to live together as God's faithful people; and

WHEREAS, God calls us to be a cross+generational community of faith and because God entrusts us to one another's care, therefore it is vital to our ministry within congregations, outreach to our neighbors, and our testimony to the wider church and world that the church takes seriously its responsibility to protect its children, youth, vulnerable adults, and the adults who care for them so all may flourish physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually; and

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WHEREAS, 2.9 million cases of child abuse are reported in the United States every year, abused seniors are three times more likely to die prematurely, and people with disabilities are three times more likely to be victims of crime; and

WHEREAS, the 1999 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America resolved to urge congregations to “work toward a Christ-centered, positive environment for children in families, congregations and communities” through measures including declaring “our congregations as ‘safe havens’ for all children”; and

WHEREAS, each congregation lives out its faith in a unique context and a unique community, and no two contexts will require identical policies;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that each congregation will be encouraged to create a Safe Haven Team and to establish Safe Haven guidelines, unique to each congregation's context and ministry, by the date of the 2017 Greater Milwaukee Synod assembly; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod will create basic but thorough Safe Haven guidelines, including topics such as training, background checks, behavioral guidelines, social media, overnight travel, and reporting practices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod will use the guidelines established to guide synodical activities concerning children, youth, and vulnerable adults; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, each congregation will be encouraged to develop Safe Haven guidelines of their own and like no other,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that each congregation will be encouraged to train the adults who work with children and the vulnerable in their midst to abide by their congregation's Safe Haven guidelines strictly; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that each congregation will be encouraged to hold youth, young adults and adults accountable to the Safe Haven guidelines created by that congregation and unique to that congregation's context and ministry; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that each congregation will be encouraged to seek out ways to support families and educate new members related to the Safe Haven guidelines established by that congregation.

Establishment of 2015 Synod Anti-Racism Training Schedule – Efforts continue to find a suitable set of dates, probably in October, for the Crossroads Anti-Racism Training. Mr. Brockmeier asked the Anti-Racism Team to consider alternatives to the standard 2 ½ day training, since a number of Council members have not participated. Among the suggestions he made was incorporating Anti-Racism Training into an all-day session for the Council, including a regular meeting. Ms. Luedtke suggested sending letters to the homes of people who need training, rather than simply relying on mass-distribution vehicles like the newsletter or Listserve. Information will be provided when a decision is made.

Recommend 2016-2017 Budget to 2015 Synod Assembly – Overview of materials by Mr. Manske, with additional comments by Mr. Johnston on the finance committee's process and findings. Mr. Manske called for discussion, which broadly addressed the questions of the impact

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of any possible spending cuts on the synod and other ministries, and the desire by most Council members to promote a positive message of the synod's work in order to bolster revenues. Included in the discussion was concern about the diversion of mission support from synod's as congregations direct more of their giving to other programmatic areas. Options presented by Mr. Manske included approving the budget as it stands for Synod Assembly action, perhaps with a list of prioritized cuts to implement if needed; sending the budget back to the finance committee for additional review; making revisions at this meeting; or agreeing to fund the deficit from reserves (it was already suggested, without objection, that any current-year operating deficit be covered by existing reserves). It was agreed by consensus that an ad hoc group consisting of Mr. Manske, Mr. Johnston, Rev. Schoob, Rev. Fredriksen, Mr. Gauthier and Mr. Key would meet to review the budget, with additional review by the finance committee to follow, and a special meeting of the Council in April for final action.

Council Action

Recommendation of Synod Assembly Agenda

The Council voted to recommend approval of the Agenda for the 2015 Synod Assembly, as presented, to the 2015 Synod Assembly, with the Synod Assembly Planning Team authorized to make minor adjustments as needed.

Resolution to Allow Synod Assembly Planning Team to Establish Rates for Synod Assembly Attendance – In 2013 and 2014 the Synod Council set a reduced rate of \$100 for attendance at the Synod Assembly by youth and young adult visitors (SC14.03.18). In order to allow flexibility in setting these and other rates, the Council was asked to consider authorizing the Synod Assembly Planning Team to set rates for the 2015 and future Synod Assemblies.

Council Action

Authorization to Set Synod Assembly Fees

The Synod Council voted to authorize the Synod Assembly Planning Team, or its successor, to set rates for attendance at the Synod Assembly, beginning in 2015.

Council Action

Nomination for Synod Secretary

The Synod Council voted to nominate Mr. Matthew Brockmeier for a second four-year term as Synod Secretary, from September 1, 2015 through August 31, 2019.

Council Action

Nomination for Synod Council Youth Member

The Synod Council voted to nominate Ms. Sarah Muller for the position of Youth Member of the Synod Council for a two-year term, from September 1, 2015 through August 31, 2017.

Appointment of At-Large Members of the Nominating Committee – Since no names were submitted for these positions the Council took no action. Mr. Brockmeier called on members of the Council to seek individuals for this service.

Council Action

Appointment to Nominating Committee

The Synod Council voted, upon the recommendation of the Racine Cluster, to appoint Ms. Betty Warber to a three-year term on the Nominating Committee, from the end of the 2015 Synod Assembly through the end of the 2018 Synod Assembly.

Council Action

Approval of Housing Allowance

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The Council voted to approve a synod clergy staff housing allowance for 2015 of \$17,500 for Rev. Kristin Nielsen.

Reports

Director of Evangelical Mission – A written report was presented.

Director of Discipleship – No report was submitted.

Director of Rostered Leadership – No report was submitted.

Cross+Generational Ministry – A written report was presented.

Lutheran Campus Ministry – No report submitted.

Reconciling in Christ – A written report was presented.

Anti-Racism Team – A written report was presented. Rev. Schoob invited participation in the Bridges Anti-Racism event on April 24 & 25, noting that there is a registration form on the synod website.

Women of the ELCA – A verbal report was provided by Ms. Betty Warber, who encouraged participation in a blood drive at the Synod Assembly. The goal is to have at least 50 donors to support the ongoing daily need for 800 units of blood in the area. In an effort to support youth, Women of the ELCA in the synod will provide funding for \$1,000 worth of in-kind items, including diapers, for youth event in summer 2015.

Outreach for Hope – A written report was presented.

Old Business

Funding Policy Task Force Update – Mr. Manske reported that the task force has prepared a draft document that will be presented to the Council in May, in time for presentation to this year's Synod Assembly.

May 2014 Synod Assembly Resolution 2 – Voting Member Diversity and Participation – Mr. Manske noted that changes to the fee structure for the 2015 Assembly are part of an ongoing response to concerns raised by this resolution.

May 2014 Synod Assembly Resolution 3 – Intentional Interim Ministry – A written report was submitted.

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, May 7, 2015 – 5:30 pm Dinner; 6:15 pm Synod Council Meeting

St. Matthew Lutheran Church, 313 Main St., Palmyra

Future Meetings

- 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