

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
July 9, 2015

Bishop Jeff Barrow's Home
5715 Evarit Drive, Racine, 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
Vacant	Lake Country	2019			
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
Ms. Claire Zautke	Milwaukee 3	2019	X		Pending
Mr. Al Van Lith	Milwaukee 4	2015		X	Pending
The Rev. Bill Knapp	Milwaukee 4	2019		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. Angela Khabeab	Waukesha	2019	X		Pending
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
The Rev. Lindsay Jordan	At Large	2019	X		Pending
Mr. Steven Hruska	At Large	2019	X		Pending
Vacant	At Large	2019			
Mr. Scott Manske	Vice President	2017 (1)	X		Pending
Mr. Matthew Brockmeier	Secretary	2019 (2)	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
Ms. Sarah Muller	Youth Representative	2017	X		Pending
Mr. Jonathan Barker	Young Adult Rep.	2017	X		9/2013

Also present were Ms. Stephanie Luedtke, GMS Director of Cross+Generational Ministry; and Ms. Betty Warber, President, Synod Women's Organization; and Ms. Kelly Schaer.

Vice President's Remarks

Mr. Manske spoke briefly about this year's Synod Assembly, reserving time at the end of the meeting to present plaques recognizing the service of departing Council members. He noted that one resolution was approved at the Assembly, with information about that resolution included as an information item on the agenda. Financial results for the Assembly were "okay;" a review of attendance details is underway, including the number of congregations participating. Final information will be distributed when it is available.

He said that there was some difficulty in the transition to Carthage College as a new venue, but that the synod is considering returning next year. Respondents to the Voting Member survey indicated they felt rushed with the shorter (day and a half) Assembly, with new Voting Members saying they

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did not get a clear sense of the work of the synod. Those feeling rushed tended to be lay members, with pastors generally fine with the format. Comments in discussion included the perception by Mr. Jerry Key that there were few People of Color participating, with additional comments on the amount of walking from place to place on campus, and the need for better maps, more signage, and more carts for transport.

Bishop's Report

Council Action

The Council voted to approve a synod call to Rev. Wendy Wirth-Brock for interim ministry for a term of one year, contingent upon placement in a suitable interim position.

The bishop noted after this action that the Council will need to review previous synodical term calls to assure that all are current.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve retired status for Rev. Gary J. Liedtke, Rev. Carol N. Creitz and Rev. Margaret R. Schoewe, all effective July 1, 2015; for Rev. Joan E. Jacobson-Wolf, effective August 1, 2015; and for Rev. Suellen F. Myers, effective September 1, 2015.

Bishop Barrow stated his main objective for tonight was providing dinner, with profuse thanks for Mary Romskog going beyond providing recipes for three summer salads to actually preparing them. On a more serious note, he told the Council that "a lot of congregations have hit the omega point," with others still viable, but not able to afford a full-time call. He cited the recent closure of Florist Avenue Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, which deeded all assets to All Peoples Lutheran Church, also in Milwaukee. Immanuel Lutheran, Milwaukee, will also close, and will give their assets to the Greater Milwaukee Synod Endowment Fund to support urban internships.

The bishop went on to say that half of all calls now are less than full-time. Included are Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Menomonee Falls, which at one point almost left the synod but are "coming back," with Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church in Sussex supervising a deployed intern. He urged all congregations to "look at who your neighbors are." He said there are "tremendous assets in some churches," adding that some may be able to combine staff and administrative functions. In response to some of these trends, Trinity Seminary is now offering a two-year terminal internship, which might be an option for some smaller congregations.

Regarding staff, the bishop joked that with all the changes facing congregations it sometimes seems that law school might have been better preparation, but that he and other staff working through these issues, especially Rev. Sandy Chrostowski and Rev. Kristin Nielsen, pray often. He told the Council that Rev. Nielsen "is a quick study and helpful." She is gone this month, something pre-arranged when she came on staff.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Mr. Lee Johnston reported that April and May were pretty good months for the synod, referring members to the profit and loss form, which showed actual income very close to budgeted income (approximately 99%). Expenses have been kept down, he said, leaving approximately an \$18,000 deficit for the fiscal year to date, about \$8,500 better than budget. He cautioned that June, July and August are the low point of giving for the year.

In response to a question regarding mission support, Mr. Manske explained the structure of the current year's budget and changes made to that structure for next year's budget.

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There will be an effort to encourage more giving to mission support. The synod's balance sheet is good, with a number of reserves available, some of which will be used this year.

Council Action

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

Action Items – Old Business

- A. **Funding Policy Task Force** – Mr. Manske spoke of the alternative document presented by Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland, telling the Council that he will reconvene the Task Force to work on integrating suggestions into a new draft, which will be followed by an invitation to the Council for a workgroup discussion. He provided a brief synopsis of the process history. Bishop Barrow noted that prior to closing a congregation can do whatever they wish with their assets [limited only by laws regarding nonprofit assets].
- B. **Good Shepherd Trinity Federation Agreement** – Secretary Mr. Matthew Brockmeier recapped the issue regarding the Federation Agreement and Constitution to facilitate the merger of Good Shepherd Lutheran and Trinity Presbyterian churches. He told the Council that he, Bishop Barrow and Rev. Chrostowski met with their Presbyterian counterparts in response to concerns raised by the Council at the May meeting and by Synod Attorney Stephen Knowles. Agreement was reached on how to address the disposition of congregational property and how to structure the congregation's discipline process, along with minor editorial changes to the documents. Mr. Brockmeier asked the Council to approve the amended documents as presented.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the Plan of Agreement and Constitution of Good Shepherd Trinity Church as a Federated Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as revised and agreed by the Greater Milwaukee Synod and The Presbytery of Milwaukee.

Action Items – New Business

- A. **Approve Submission of Grant Proposal for Discipleship** – The proposed grant is primarily for Director of Discipleship Rhonda Hill's area. This had been position funding, but moved to programmatic funding with a change in funding priorities by the Siebert Lutheran Foundation. Mr. Key asked for information on specifics of what will be supported. Ms. Stephanie Luedtke responded that funded activities will include more emotional intelligence training, which, she noted, is expensive but valuable and funding for the youth leadership model that had no other funding sources available.

Council Action

The Synod Council voted to approve submission of a grant request to the Siebert Lutheran Foundation for \$30,000 to support clergy and lay leadership development in the areas of emotional intelligence, facilitation of healthy conversations and the cultivation of youth leadership.

- B. **Authorize Prison Congregations of America as a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community** – Discussion included the source of funds (ELCA funds through the Director of Evangelical Missions, Rev. Sandy Chrostowski) and background on prison ministry work (including work done by Hephatha Lutheran, Cross Lutheran and Reformation Lutheran centered on the 53206 zip code, which, according to Bishop Barrow is the most heavily incarcerated in the state. The Felmers Chaney Correctional Center, where this ministry will take place, is a pre-release center, representing a vulnerable time for inmates.

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Council Action

The Synod Council voted to designate the prison ministry of Hephatha, Reformation and Cross Lutheran churches as a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community of the Greater Milwaukee Synod.

- C. **Approve Submission of Grant Proposal for Campus Ministry** – The Council was given background on campus ministry at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Marquette University. These two programs each have a $\frac{3}{4}$ time pastor, with the UWM program having a permanent house. The Marquette program has had more difficulty finding a home. This grant, in addition to direct support from the synod, helps these programs to continue operating.

Council Action

The Synod Council voted to approve submission of a grant request to the Siebert Lutheran Foundation for \$20,000 to support peer ministry at the Marquette University and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee campuses, including stipends totaling \$16,000 and funding for training retreats totaling \$4,000.

- D. **Appointment of Cluster Nominees for the 2016 Churchwide Assembly** – The two clusters which had not previously nominated individuals to serve as Voting Members at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

Council Action

The Synod Council voted, upon the recommendation of Milwaukee Cluster 1, to appoint Rev. Alexis Twito, and, upon the recommendation of the Waukesha Cluster, to appoint Mr. Steven Mueller, as Voting Members of the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

- E. **Appointment to Fill Synod Council Vacancies** – A nomination for one of the remaining vacancies on the Synod Council was received from Milwaukee Cluster 4. Two additional vacancies remain. Discussion included possible nominees for the remaining at-large (lay female) position.

Council Action

The Synod Council voted, upon the recommendation of Milwaukee Cluster 4, to appoint Rev. D. William Knapp, Jr. to the Synod Council to fill a cluster-nominated vacancy for a term ending August 31, 2019.

- F. **Approval of Subcommittee to Recommend Members of the 2016 Elections Committee** – There was no action on this item.

- G. **Information on 2015 Resolution 1** – Mr. Manske recapped what had been done to promote advocacy based on Resolution 1, including a letter to legislators and distribution of information on Listserve. Rev. Matt Kruse, who helped sponsor the resolution, is continuing work to shepherd related issues. Rev. David Schoob volunteered to compile a list of justice ministries.

- H. **Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Electronic Synod Council Meetings** – Following the April electronic meeting, which generated “a lot of email,” the question was raised by Rev. Jay McDivitt as to when it is appropriate to use electronic meetings. It was noted that electronic meetings can be useful, but only for really simple, straightforward issues. Discussion included the idea of moving to refer to the executive committee rather than continuing when an electronic meeting has become unwieldy. A lack of regular e-mail access was also cited as a concern by Mr. Jerry Key. Additional discussion reviewed possible options for a policy, with action taken to empower the executive committee to act in place of the full Council in most instances where

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quick action is needed. Exceptions would primarily be cases where action by the full Council is a requirement.

Council Action

The Synod Council voted to authorize the Executive Committee to act in its place when decisions are required between regularly scheduled Council meetings.

Reports

- A. **Director of Evangelical Mission** – No report was submitted.
- B. **Director of Discipleship** – A written report was presented.
- C. **Director of Rostered Leadership** – A written report was presented.
- D. **Cross+Generational Ministry** – A written report was presented. There were no questions for Ms. Luedtke.
- E. **Lutheran Campus Ministry** – No report submitted.
- F. **Reconciling in Christ** – No report was submitted.
- G. **Anti-Racism Team** – A written report was presented. Verbal highlights were given, including the next ART movie night on July 23rd at Jackson Park Lutheran Church, which is meant to give an opportunity for discussion without conflict. Members of the Council were reminded that Anti-Racism Training, which will next be presented from October 1st through 3rd, is required. Rev. Lindsay Jordan asked whether this training was ever offered in daytime sessions. It was recommended that members who cannot work with the Anti-Racism Team's schedule could receive the training at other times from Crossroads in Chicago.
- H. **Women of the ELCA** – A written report was presented. Ms. Betty Warber highlighted the need for congregations to help fill backpacks for students. The Women of the ELCA received \$250 from Thrivent to buy backpacks. Ms. Luedtke reported that the Gathering participants had received \$1,000 from Women of the ELCA for diapers, enough to purchase 19 cases.
- I. **Outreach for Hope** – No report was submitted.

Vice President Manske spoke about how the synod and the Council need people sharing of their gifts of time and talent, with appreciation to new members for joining and sharing, and for departing members for what they have done. He said that "you all offer something to this; always ask questions; if you are not sure, ask." Plaques were presented to Mr. Jerry Key, Rev. Steve Blyth, Rev. Jay McDivitt, Rev. Sherrie Lorbeck and Mr. Jack Walch in appreciation for their service.

Members were given brief details about the next scheduled Council meeting, in Chicago in September.

Rev. Blyth offered a closing prayer, followed by the Lord's Prayer.

Next Meeting

Thursday, September 24, 2015 – 9:00 am – 3:00 pm Synod Council Meeting

The Lutheran Center, Chicago

Future Meetings

- Thursday, November 19, 2015 – Location TBA
- Thursday, January 21, 2016 – Location TBA
- Thursday, March 17, 2016 – Location TBA

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- Thursday, May 19, 2016 – Location TBA
- Thursday, July 21, 2016 – Location TBA
- Thursday, September 15, 2016 – Location TBA

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