

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
September 24, 2015

ELCA Churchwide Offices
8765 Higgins Road, Chicago, Illinois

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Attendance

Name	Cluster/Position	Term Ends 8/31	Present	Absent	Anti-Racism
Ms. Sue Schmidt-Decker	Kenosha/West Racine	2017	X		Pending
Vacant	Lake Country	2019			
Ms. Ar Lee	Milwaukee 1	2017		X	10/2014
The Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland	Milwaukee 2	2017	X		1/2011
Ms. Claire Zautke	Milwaukee 3	2019	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. Angela Khabeb	Waukesha	2019	X		Pending
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
Ms. Sarah Muller	Youth Representative	2017		X	Pending
Mr. Jonathan Barker	Young Adult Rep.	2017	X		9/2013

Also present were Rev. Sandy Chrostowski, Director of Evangelical Mission; Ms. Rhonda Hill, Director of Discipleship; Mr. Jerry Key, Anti-Racism Team Representative; Rev. Kristin Nielsen, GMS Director of Rostered Leadership; Ms. Betty Warber, President, Synod Women's Organization

ELCA Presentations

Prior to the beginning of the Council's business meeting, two representatives of the ELCA met with the Council for introductions to their work and the work of the churchwide organization.

Rev. Wm. Chris Boerger, ELCA Secretary, welcomed those attending. In outlining his work, he said that the Office of the Secretary is first and foremost concerned with the missional documents of the church, including its constitution, bylaws and continuing resolutions, which his office interprets. Other key duties include being keeper of the church's rosters, providing legal support to bishops and the churchwide organization, and event planning, including the Churchwide Assembly. The secretary is also responsible for the synod's archives and its art collection. He noted that the bishop of each synod is responsible for appointing a synod attorney.

He also spoke of the importance of congregations' governing documents, mentioning especially changes to the section on discipline [Chapter 15 of the Model Constitution] because of the complete change in responsibilities of synods and congregations adopted in 2013. His admonition was to make sure rules were in place "before we are in a mess."

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In terms of the larger picture, Secretary Boerger's opinion is that the ELCA is structured in a way that brings together elements of the standard notions of congregational (governed by congregations), presbytery (governed by a group of elders) and episcopal (governed by bishops) models. The current candidacy process, which is under review, represents this multi-faceted model, with congregations raising up future leaders, standards being set by the churchwide organization, and synods implementing these standards through candidacy committees.

The church is also currently looking at a way to unify rosters, which will be discussed in more detail during an afternoon presentation. In addition to the election of a vice president, the 2016 Churchwide Assembly will probably address this Word and Service Ministry proposal.

The secretary noted that the Greater Milwaukee Synod will have an election for bishop next year, and strongly encouraged the synod to adopt a standing rule to allow a representative of the churchwide organization to serve as head of the process at the 2016 Synod Assembly, in order to raise the threshold for amendment on the question of churchwide involvement.

Regarding the 2016 Churchwide Assembly, he reported that key issues emerging for consideration are memorials having to do with the divestiture of fossil fuel holdings, how possible changes to Word and Sacrament and Word and Service ministries may affect the 40/60 rule for clergy/lay representation in ELCA bodies, and reframing the original ELCA goal of having membership of at least 10% people of color or whose primary language is other than English. Of the latter, he said that the emphasis will likely be on changes to encourage the church better reflecting the communities in which we live.

Secretary Boerger's term began in 2013, and continues through October 31, 2019. Bishop Barrow noted that the Office of the Secretary is the part of the ELCA's administration with which the synod has the most contact.

Rev. M. Wyvetta Bullock, Assistant to the Presiding Bishop/Executive for Administration, described her history with the church, which began doing budgeting and personnel work in 1987 as the ELCA was being formed. She continued in that area, advancing to its executive director, then moving into the Office of the Presiding Bishop during Bishop Mark Hanson's tenure, remaining in her role when Bishop Eaton took office. While most of her day-to-day work is "like a COO in a for-profit," she also attends synod assemblies and works from time to time on leadership and other issues with synods, which keeps her "grounded" in her work.

Among issues she is currently addressing are concerns about debt when new pastors finish seminary, including looking at ways to bring down debt loads and provide incentives for saving for retirement. Related to this are issues about helping congregations talk about their financial health, and creating more financial literacy for pastors (for both personal and congregational issues). In this context she mentioned Charles Lane's book "Ask, Thank, Tell" as a strong tool.

Rev. Bullock works on budgets for the national church, which have now moved to a triennial cycle because of the change in frequency of Churchwide Assemblies.

While she does not travel much, instead focusing on the church's operations, she will be doing a Bible study in Tanzania. She also mentioned a Lutheran bishop's conference, with partners from Europe and elsewhere, with the topic being "Women in God's Service." While not all participants ordain women, there is respectful but encouraging and challenging dialogue.

On the question of raising up leaders of color, she said that she "would not grade ourselves as high as we would like to. We have not become a more multicultural church over the last 25 years." In all areas, including seminaries and rostered leaders, "we have work to do."

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“Some students encounter issues of race. There are still challenges in our society, in our institution, in our church. When we think that “it will happen” it just doesn’t. It has to be a focus, an intentional plan. . . . We’ve got work to do. Room for a lot more.”

Among tools under development are the Fund for Leaders, with \$40 million dedicated to full scholarships, along with the work on debt prevention. There are also efforts to reach the people who have been missed – to look for leaders who have the potential to serve.

Concerns from Council members addressed to Rev. Bullock included a lack of structure and a strategy for bringing leaders into the church, decreased avenues for communication from the ELCA in the wake of budget cutbacks, and the difficulty of accessing information through the ELCA website or other related sources.

Vice President’s Remarks

Mr. Manske spoke about the process to develop the Elections Committee. Eleven individuals have agreed to serve, which is the desired size of the Committee. Four are clergy and seven are lay, the desired mix. Mr. Manske noted that there is relative diversity in the list, with the exception of geographic distribution.

Council Action

Appointments to Elections Committee

The Council voted to appoint Rev. Arthur Bergren, Rev. Elizabeth Davis, Mr. Robert Gee, Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman, Ms. Ericka Jones, Ms. Barb Loberg, Mr. Thomas Natalini, Rev. Kristin Rice, Ms. Esther Rusch, Rev. Jacob Werkheiser, and Ms. Mary Lou Zuege to the 2016 Elections Committee.

Bishop’s Report

Council Action

Approval of Retired Status

The Council voted to approve retired status for Rev. Sharon D. Georgi, effective September 1, 2015 and for Rev. Mark M. Belknap, effective September 15, 2015.

Council Action

Approval of One Leave from Call Status

The Council voted to approve On Leave from Call Status for Ms. Stephanie K. Luedtke, effective September 1, 2015 and for Rev. Kerstin L. Hedlund, effective August 23, 2015; and to recommend a two-year extension for On Leave from Call Status for Rev. Carol R. Baumgartner.

There were questions regarding the creation of synod calls for chaplaincy. The basic issue is that these are calls to serve in institutions which are not affiliated with the church, leaving them in the hands of the synod.

Council Action

Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a synod call to Rev. Arlen P. Solem for chaplaincy at Aurora Healthcare Hospice, effective June 15, 2015.

Bishop Barrow spoke about staff updates.

Stephanie Luedtke wanted a full-time job, and moved to take advantage of an opportunity to teach full-time, for which she needed to decide quickly. The bishop said that the pattern of turnovers in

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synod staff had often been part-time employees going to full-time positions with other organizations. Discussions have begun to find a replacement, who will be hired in an interim capacity, to give the new bishop latitude in forming their staff. He said the need is for someone to connect all the dots, and that most events are already in place for the next year. He expects to have an announcement by the next meeting.

He also reported that Phil Smith has come on staff, beginning in August, and that Rhonda is now part-time, after getting a full scholarship to attend the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, for which Bishop Barrow is very happy.

Regarding his decision not to seek re-election, Bishop Barrow said that, while he has appreciated this call tremendously, he feels it is a good time to hand it off, as he reaches age 65. He said that while this decision has been made he does not plan to “coast” during his last year as bishop, and wants to “prepare the campsite to be as clean and livable as possible” for the next bishop. He went on to say that while the synod has faced financial challenges in a time of declining revenue, the synod has made its budget (though decreasing) nearly every year of his tenure.

He added that “there is a point, when you are always worried about paying the bills, it begins to suck some of the ministry out of the congregation.” He framed part of his goal for the next year as working hard “to make sure that there is some freedom for the next staff to make some decisions about ministry for the whole church.”

Two priorities were put forth for the coming year: keeping mission support for the synod above \$2 million, in order to continue support for the national church and for good local projects and opportunities; and finding ways to re-engage lay people in the life of the church, especially at the cluster level. This while also tending to the ongoing work of the synod office and staff.

In answer to questions and comments from the Council, the bishop said “I love coming to work every day, the people, going to church in a different place on Sundays and feeling the connection” while saying that “isolation is still the biggest challenge that we have.” He also noted the need for increasing skill with social media as the synod staff evolves under a new bishop, while also pointing out the essential role of conferences and other gatherings to maintain and enhance “face-to-face connection.” “I think it’s time for a new day for all of us.”

Synod Compensation Guidelines

Vice President Manske provided a recap of his work comparing the synod’s compensation policies with those of other synods, noting the original finding two years ago that the Greater Milwaukee Synod has higher recommended pay than other Region 5 synods for more experienced pastors, but lower pay for early-career pastors. The decision at that time, which was carried through the current year’s guidelines, and now is being recommended for the 2016 guidelines, is to move gradually to address these differences by providing a higher level in recommended steps for newer pastors, with very little change at the high end. All of this is done in the context of a compensation package that for clergy includes salary, housing allowance, pension and health care.

At the same time, health care costs are going up, with average age-step increases of 1 ½% per year, and a general premium increase across all categories of about 7%, with added cost pressure created by the decrease in the Portico discount from 2% to 1%.

Discussion also was prompted by someone from the Sheboygan area who was concerned about differences in housing costs from the general costs in the Milwaukee area, though Mr. Manske found there was actually very little difference in available published figures. He noted that the annual increase in the price of housing (5.6% per year from 1970 to 2010) outstripped the general inflation

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rate (1.3% per year for the same period). At the same time, the percentage of families spending more than 30% of income for housing, the recommended limit, has increased. Some synods thus now use a 35% benchmark for the housing allowance, while the Metropolitan Chicago Synod has a base housing allowance of \$19,000.

Mr. Manske noted that the desire is to approve the proposed plan for 2016, and then to have additional revisions for the 2017 guidelines.

Questions included how the cost of insurance premiums are shared by congregations and pastors, whether guidelines for health insurance are requirements or suggestions, and whether covenant forms for continuing education are still available. On the latter question the answer was no, with the reference being to an old program from the now defunct Lutheran Brotherhood.

Council Action

Amendment to Clergy Compensation Guidelines

The Council voted to amend PART III B. of the 2016 Compensation Guidelines for Clergy by deleting “Pastors are encouraged to work with their congregation to develop a covenant – an annual plan that includes at least 25 hours of continuing education. The ELCA provides Continuing Education Covenant forms to be worked out by clergy and congregational leadership, signed by them, and filed with the synod office.”

Council Action

Amendment to Clergy Compensation Guidelines

The Council voted to amend PART III B. of the 2016 Compensation Guidelines for Clergy by replacing “A provision allowing the pastor to accumulate continuing education dollars and time up to a maximum of 3 years may provide for a more structured study opportunity” with “Congregations should consider allowing the pastor to accumulate continuing education dollars and time up to a maximum of 3 years to provide for a more structured study opportunity.”

Council Action

Amendment to Clergy Compensation Guidelines

The Council voted to amend PART III B. of the 2016 Compensation Guidelines for Clergy by deleting “Another form of continuing education may be the sabbatical leave.”

Council Action

Approval of Clergy Compensation Guidelines

The Council voted to approve the 2016 Compensation Guidelines for Clergy as amended.

Council Action

Amendment to AIM, Diaconal and Lay Compensation Guidelines

The Council voted to amend PART III B. of the 2016 Compensation Guidelines for Associates in Ministry, Diaconal Ministers and Lay Professionals by deleting “Employees are encouraged to work with their congregation to develop a cooperative annual plan that includes at least 25 hours of continuing education. Another form of continuing education may be the sabbatical leave” and replacing “A provision allowing the pastor to accumulate continuing education dollars and time up to a maximum of 3 years may provide for a more structured study opportunity” with “Congregations should consider allowing the employee to accumulate continuing education dollars and time up to a maximum of 3 years to provide for a more structured study opportunity.”

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Council Action

Amendment to AIM, Diaconal and Lay Compensation Guidelines

The Council voted to amend PART III B. of the 2016 Compensation Guidelines for Associates in Ministry, Diaconal Ministers and Lay Professionals by replacing Appendix A, Part II with Appendix A, Part II of the Clergy Compensation Guidelines and adding “**Fall Theological Conference***” [bold face with asterisk indicating required item] to Appendix A, Part III.

A motion to copy language from the clergy to the lay guidelines regarding the Fall Theological Conference died for lack of a second, with agreement to reframe the question.

Council Action

Amendment to AIM, Diaconal and Lay Compensation Guidelines

The Council voted to add PART III F. to the 2016 Compensation Guidelines for Associates in Ministry, Diaconal Ministers and Lay Professionals “Fees and time for the Fall Theological Conference will be covered by the congregation separate from continuing education support.”

Council Action

Approval of AIM, Diaconal and Lay Compensation Guidelines

The Council voted to approve the 2016 Compensation Guidelines for Associates in Ministry, Diaconal Ministers and Lay Professionals as amended.

Council Action

Motion to Reconsider Approval of Clergy Compensation Guidelines

The Council voted to reconsider Approval of Clergy Compensation Guidelines (SC 15.09.11.).

Council Action

Amendment to Clergy Compensation Guidelines

The Council voted to add PART III F. to the 2016 Compensation Guidelines for Clergy “Fees and time for the Fall Theological Conference will be covered by the congregation separate from continuing education support.”

Council Action

Approval of Clergy Compensation Guidelines

The Council voted to approve the 2016 Compensation Guidelines for Clergy as amended.

Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Mr. Lee Johnston reported on the profit and loss statements for February through August, 2015, telling the Council that actual results to date are very well in line with what was anticipated for the year. He said that he is “pleased to be where we thought we would be at this point.” He pointed out that expenses related to compensation for Rev. Gabriel Marcano are higher than anticipated, as are legal fees. Secretary Matthew Brockmeier asked whether the higher than expected costs for Rev. Marcano mean that the synod will still be within the \$57,000 two-year budget for his work that was approved by the Council in September 2014. Mr. Johnston will check on this. (The synod is acting as fiscal agent for Rev. Marcano while he acquires his green card.)

Mr. Johnston offered to set up a treasurer’s seminar for new members if desired.

Council Action

Approval of Financial Statements

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

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Action Items – Old Business

Funding Policy Task Force – Mr. Manske had reported that he has had discussions with Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland on the proposed policy, making changes as a result of their discussions. The policy draft will be returned to the task force that developed the original document for additional work. Copies will be distributed when ready, probably in advance of the November Council meeting.

Increase in Siebert Grant Authorization

Council Action

Approval of Revision to Grant Application Submission

The Synod Council voted to revise the amount approved for submission of a grant request to the Siebert Lutheran Foundation in Action SC 15.07.09. on July 9, 2015 from \$30,000 to \$55,000 to support clergy and lay leadership development in the areas of emotional intelligence, facilitation of healthy conversations and the cultivation of youth leadership.

Change in Date for Campus Ministry Fundraising Event

Council Action

Change in Event Date

The Synod Council voted to revise the dates approved for a fundraising event for Lutheran Campus Ministry in Action SC 15.01.04. on January 22, 2015 from October 24, 2015 to January 29-31, 2016.

Action Items – New Business

Council Action

Election to Executive Committee

The Synod Council voted to elect by acclamation Ms. Sue Schmidt-Decker, Rev. Angela Khabeb and Rev. Lindsay Jordan as non-officer members of the synod executive committee for terms through August 2016.

Council Action

Approval of Meeting Schedule

The Synod Council voted to approve meetings on November 19, 2015 at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Delafield; on January 21, 2016 at Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Kenosha; on March 17, 2016 at Ascension Lutheran Church in Waukesha; on May 19, 2016 at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Random Lake; on July 21, 2016 at the bishop's home in Racine; and on September 15, 2016 at Fox Point Evangelical Lutheran Church in Fox Point.

Council Action

Approval of Synod Office Lease Extension

The Synod Council voted to approve an extension of the synod office lease through September 30, 2016, with a 1.25% (\$27.50 per month) rent increase, to a total of \$2,235 per month.

Approval of All About Living Spiritual Recovery Ministry

A request from the new All About Living Spiritual Ministry at Mount Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wauwatosa for recognition and access to synodical publicity channels was considered. Given the sense of the Council that most publicity channels were already available through Mt. Zion, and concerns about setting precedent for endorsing specific ministries within or affiliated with GMS member congregations, the Council decided to take no action, other than encouraging the ministry to use available channels. Brief discussion centered on the possibility of creating a policy on partnerships, though this was not pursued.

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Filling Synod Council Vacancies

There are currently no candidates to fill existing vacancies for a lay male from the Lake Country Cluster and an at-large lay female.

Resolution on The Emergency Food Assistance Program

Secretary Matthew Brockmeier gave a brief informational statement on a resolution submitted by his congregation, St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Random Lake, opposing new requirements for presentation of identification by people seeking food assistance through the federal commodities program administered by the state. This resolution is for consideration by the 2016 Synod Assembly.

ELCA Presentations

Rev. Gregory Villalón, ELCA Director, Leadership for Mission/Candidacy gave an overview of the work of the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit of the church. There are seven teams that together are responsible for all leadership programs in the ELCA, ranging from Pre-K programs through seminaries, colleges, universities, continuing education and the candidacy process to the churchwide assignment process, chaplaincies, and overseeing the misconduct process. "Part of our role is to help people know about the good things that are happening."

Current work includes reworking the entire candidacy process, reviewing the "educational ecology in this church" including the financial difficulties facing seminaries and opportunities to make their material more widely available through technology, considering how leadership is defined across the church, and attempting to spread more information more widely through the assignment process.

Rev. Villalón addressed a request from the bishop to elaborate on the role of the synod in calling chaplains, responding that most chaplaincies are now synod calls, in part because all institutions are limited by current law to hiring chaplains endorsed by denominations. He anticipates an increase in call activity to respond to this new requirement.

There was additional discussion with ELCA staff about the idea under consideration of merging the rosters of diaconal ministers, deaconesses, and Associates in Ministry into a single roster of Word and Service. This will likely be considered by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly, based on recommendations from a Word and Service Task Force.

While this is the 45th anniversary year for the ordination of women in the ELCA, the focus for celebration will be on the 50th anniversary, with groundwork currently being laid.

Some discussion also on avenues to engage youth in exploring the possibility of ministry, and of working to avoid jargon so as to better serve synods and congregations in accessible language.

Reports

Director of Evangelical Mission – A written report was presented. Rev. Sandy Chrostowski added two things in her verbal report; an effort to expand stewardship resources, and an effort to build missional capacity. In both instances three to five congregations will be targeted in pilot programs, with funding support sought from the Siebert Foundation.

Council Action

Approval of Grant Application Submission

The Synod Council voted to approve submission of a grant request to the Siebert Lutheran Foundation for up to \$50,000 for the Congregational Vitality Initiative.

Director of Discipleship – A written report was presented.

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Director of Rostered Leadership – No report submitted. Rev. Kristen Nielsen asked whether there is something in particular the Council would like to know as she works into her new role, especially data related to transitions. Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland suggested reports on trends across the synod.

Cross+Generational Ministry – No report submitted.

Lutheran Campus Ministry – No report submitted.

Reconciling in Christ – A written report was presented.

Anti-Racism Team – A written report was presented. Mr. Jerry Key added that it is too late to register for training, “a good problem to have.” He urged members to look for future events, including Justice Statement presentations, with a roll out by November. The “White People” screening included 14 people from one congregation; 26 total. He encouraged participation in these events as a good way to have discussion without confrontation.

Women of the ELCA – A written report was presented. Betty Warber thanked everyone for help with the backpack project. While it fell short, it was interesting.

Outreach for Hope – A written report was presented. Working with consultants with a goal to raise the reserve fund to \$10 million from the current \$4.5 million. Outreach for Hope is also working to increase the number of board members, and celebrating a good turnout for the bike ride fundraiser.

Next Meeting

Thursday, November 19, 2015 – 5:30 Dinner; 6:15 Meeting

Christ the King Lutheran Church, 1600 Genesee St, Delafield

Future Meetings

- Thursday, January 21, 2016 – Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5601 Washington Ave, Kenosha
- Thursday, March 17, 2016 – Ascension Lutheran Church, 1415 Dopp St, Waukesha
- Thursday, May 19, 2016 – St. Paul’s Lutheran, 705 Grand Ave, Random Lake
- Thursday, July 21, 2016 – Bishop Barrow’s Home, Racine
- Thursday, September 15, 2016 – Fox Point Evangelical Lutheran Church, 7510 N Santa Monica Blvd, Fox Point

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