

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA  
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting  
**March 17, 2016**

Ascension Lutheran Church  
1415 Dopp Street, Waukesha

*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	10/2015
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 Khabeab	Waukesha	2019	X		10/2015
The Rev. Lindsay Jordan	At Large	2019	X		Pending
Mr. Steven Hruska	At Large	2019		X	Pending
Ms. Betty Warber	At Large	6/2016	X		Pending
Mr. Scott Manske	Vice President	2017 (1)	X		10/2015
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. Jim Bickel, Executive Director, Outreach for Hope; Rev. Sandy Chrostowski, Director of Evangelical Mission; Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman, Chair, GMS Reconciling in Christ Ministry Team; Mr. Jerry Key, Anti-Racism Team Representative; and Rev. Kristin Nielsen, Director of Rostered Leadership.

**Vice President's Remarks**

Mr. Manske spoke about the bishop election, with information on the work of the Elections Committee, the dates for prospective nominee forums, and the deadline for prospective nominees to confirm their participation. He also gave information on the development of the Synod Assembly agenda. Secretary Mr. Matthew Brockmeier added information on registration blackout periods during the Assembly and the need for registering lay voting members. Mr. Manske also called on members of the Council to serve as counters or to accompany nominees during the election process.

**Bishop's Report**

**Council Action**

**Approval of On Leave from Call Status**

The Council voted to approve On Leave from Call Status for Rev. Alexis A. Twito, effective February 1, 2016; and On Leave from Call Study Status for Rev. Kerstin Hedlund from regular On Leave from Call Status.

# Greater Milwaukee Synod Council March 17, 2016 Meeting Summary

## **Council Action**

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

The Council voted to renew On Leave from Call Status for Rev. Jane E. Fryda, first granted February 1, 2015; Rev. Ann Williams, first granted May 15, 2014; Rev. Maren M. Hooper, first granted October 16, 2011; Ms. Stephanie K. Luedtke, first granted September 1, 2015; and Rev. Amy R. Becker Perez, first granted September 19, 2013.

There was discussion on the nature of non-stipendiary calls, with questions on where the proposed call would take place, and how it differs from other similar initiatives. Bishop Jeff Barrow addressed these questions, in particular outlining the proposed work of the Wayfarers Faith Collective, and addressing the need for a supervisory framework for the call, perhaps through Spirit of Peace Lutheran Church in Milwaukee.

## **Council Action**

### **Approval of Non-Stipendiary Call**

The Council voted to approve a non-stipendiary call for Rev. Michael McAllister, subject to supervision.

Bishop Jeff Barrow announced that two strong candidates for ministry had been assigned to the synod; one is Delaney Schlake and the other is Jonathan Barker, currently a member of the Synod Council.

The bishop asked for the Council's reaction to the idea of having Mary Romskog work full-time, representing an increase from her current 30 hours per work. His primary concern was doing this late in his tenure, with no assurance that the new bishop would want to continue this staffing model. The Council had no concerns with this move, noting that the idea that Ms. Romskog works only 30 hours per week appears to be a fiction in any event.

He went on to address the increase in synod benevolence, saying that even though it was a small amount, is a good thing in a shrinking church. This is, he said, the first time in nine years there has been an increase in income. "While not all funds need to go through synod, the \$2 million mark is a sign of health." He reiterated that he is very thankful this happened this year, adding that there is a reason for having a collective pool for funds, to accomplish more than individual ministries. He hopes the synod can keep this energy going with a new person.

Next Bishop Barrow noted the surplus of about \$15,000 from the just-completed fiscal year. Speaking briefly about the existing reserve account for staff expenses, he recommended the Council act to approve the addition of these funds to reserves to assist with the transition to a new bishop.

The bishop expressed some frustration with being kept at a distance from the process leading up to the selection of his successor, saying that he feared the process being viewed as closed and was sorry not to be in a position to provide counsel to those considering participation in the pre-election process. He recommends that future processes lower the "firewall", especially when the incumbent bishop is not returning. He also would have preferred direct involvement by the clusters in putting forth names of prospective nominees, saying that the existing system allows more room for something akin to self-nomination. He would like to have been viewed as an asset rather than an obstacle in the process.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Mr. Lee Johnston said it was a great year for the synod financially between meeting the budget and beating the previous year's numbers. Income over expense was \$15,245.09, primarily

## Greater Milwaukee Synod Council March 17, 2016 Meeting Summary

because of staff positions unfilled at times during the year. He reported that most expenses were as expected.

### **Council Action**

#### **Acceptance of Financial Statements**

The Council voted to accept the synod's financial statements as of January 31, 2016 as presented.

### **Action Items – Old Business**

- A. Disbursement of Funds from Good Shepherd Closing** – No action related to this tonight; Rev. Sandy Chrostowski reported that there is still \$30,000 allocated to one project that has not been disbursed.
- B. Review of Standard Rate for Supply Pastors in the Synod** – Mr. Manske stated that the current recommendation to congregations is that they pay supply pastors \$100 for a single service, with other synods typically recommending higher numbers, up to \$150 or \$175. Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland asked whether any of the surveyed synods recommended the same or less than our current recommended rate, with Mr. Manske responding that none were found. Mr. Johnston suggested that he and Mr. Manske review more synods and bring results to the next Council meeting.
- C. Rogers Street Property** – Following the failure of Iglesia El Nuevo Pacto to secure financing before the end of their land contract with the synod, a new short-term agreement has been reached. The congregation will have through June 1<sup>st</sup> to secure financing, with the synod's attorney's fees added to the \$80,000 due. There is concern about the building becoming vacant if they remain unsuccessful in financing the sale.
- D. Approval of Use of Urban Internships from Immanuel Lutheran based on Recommendation from the Synod Endowment Fund** – Discussion, with background information, on the gift from Immanuel Lutheran in Milwaukee upon their closing, to support urban internships. The Synod Endowment Fund recommends that first-year funding from this gift go to Ascension Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, based in part on the role played by Ascension in assuring this gift, and in part on their readiness to host an intern in the current cycle. The Endowment Fund will seek additional applicants for these funds in coming years. There was some discussion on the unusual nature of this particular gift, leading to a funding recommendation that differs from the Endowment Fund's usual policies.

### **Council Action**

#### **Approval of Disbursement of Endowment Funds**

The Council voted to approve a one-time disbursement of up to \$28,000.00 to Ascension Lutheran Church in Milwaukee for internship support for the period of August 2016 through July 2017 from the Immanuel Lutheran Trust for Urban Internship, based on the recommendation of the Synod Endowment Committee.

### **Action Items – New Business**

- A. Lay Female Church Council Nominations by Synod** – Brief background provided on opening and process, which calls for synod to have two candidates, with one elected by the Synod Assembly to serve on the ELCA Church Council.
- B. Lutheran Social Services Sunday Resolution** – The Council acted on a request to submit a resolution to the 2016 Synod Assembly in support of establishing an annual Lutheran Social Services Sunday.

# Greater Milwaukee Synod Council March 17, 2016 Meeting Summary

## **Council Action**

### **Submission of Resolution for Synod Assembly**

The Council voted to submit a Resolution to Establish an Annual Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan Sunday to the 2016 Synod Assembly, as follows:

**Resolution Summary:** This resolution encourages each congregation of the synod to hold an annual LSS Sunday in order to highlight this ministry and better serve and love our neighbor.

### **Establishment of an Annual Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan Sunday**

**Whereas**, the constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Chapter Four, STATEMENT OF PURPOSE, states that: “to participate in God’s mission, this church shall... Establish, support, and recognize institutions and agencies that minister to people in spiritual and temporal needs” (C4.03.m) and

**Whereas**, Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan (LSS) traces its origin to 1882, when Pastor E. J. Homme opened a home for orphaned children in Wittenberg, Wisconsin; and

**Whereas**, LSS currently operates over 260 programs in 115 communities throughout Wisconsin and Upper Michigan; and

**Whereas**, in the Greater Milwaukee Synod, LSS offers many programs, including refugee resettlement, counseling, adoption and pregnancy services, birth to three program, housing services, residential treatment for addictions, day time drop-in shelters for individuals with mental illness, clothing distribution for children who are homeless, Connections (IRIS consulting services), mental health crisis residential stabilization, half-way house (Department of Corrections); and

**Whereas**, the partnership between congregations of this synod and LSS, as exhibited through prayer, volunteers, in-kind donations of space and resources, and financial support, is invaluable in meeting the needs of the over 100,000 people impacted by LSS each year; therefore be it

**Resolved**, That congregations of this synod are encouraged to observe an annual Lutheran Social Services Sunday where this ministry of the church is remembered in prayer, information on the breadth and scope of services shared, and an opportunity for financial support made available.

## **C. Request from Synod Endowment Fund –**

### **a. Change in Synod Endowment Fund Investment Options**

#### **Council Action**

#### **Amendment of Endowment Fund Investment Option**

The Council voted to amend a portion of provision VI. of the governing documents of the Endowment Fund, as follows:

Liquid assets of the FUND shall be invested with either the Endowment Pooled Trust Fund of the ELCA or the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA.

### **b. Approval of New Synod Endowment Committee Members**

It was noted for the record that “this is council; there is no humor.”

#### **Council Action**

#### **Approval of New Endowment Fund Committee Members**

The Council voted to approve the addition of Rev. Sandra Chrostowski and Rev. Larry Westfield to the Synod Endowment Committee for terms ending June 30, 2019.

## Greater Milwaukee Synod Council March 17, 2016 Meeting Summary

Following this action, there was discussion about the original concern that the Endowment Fund Committee have a diverse group of people. Jim Bickel especially encouraged increased diversity as a consideration when the final opening is filled.

- D. Transition Plan for Synod Staff** – Discussion on the proposed transition plan, with concern over lack of clarity on which employees are covered. Additional research will take place before the May Council meeting, with Mr. Manske to meet with staff to assure good communication and to address any possible concerns.
- E. Recommend 2017-2018 Budget to 2016 Synod Assembly** – Mr. Johnston gave background on the Finance Committee's approach to the proposed budget, noting that the staffing model for the new bishop is an unknown, and thus keeping the overall financial plan the same as it has been. Two items received additional attention: an increase in funding for leadership support events based on a new Siebert Foundation grant, and how to sufficiently support the Anti-Racism Training program to which the synod has committed. On the latter point, it was reported that there are reserve funds available for Anti-Racism Training, but it was not clear whether these would be sufficient to support training both in the current and next fiscal years without increasing the 2017-2018 line item. Finally, Mr. Johnston and Mr. Manske noted that the synod's existing general fund reserve of about \$200,000 is sufficient to cover anticipated deficits in this and next year's budgets.

### **Council Action**

#### **Recommendation of Budget**

The Council voted to recommend approval of the proposed 2017-2018 synod budget to the 2016 Synod Assembly.

- F. Recommend Synod Assembly Agenda to 2016 Synod Assembly** – The proposed agenda was revised late today by Mary Romskog, following a meeting with Mr. Manske and Mr. Brockmeier.

### **Council Action**

#### **Recommendation of Synod Assembly Agenda**

The Council voted to recommend approval of the Agenda for the 2016 Synod Assembly, as presented, to the 2016 Synod Assembly, with the Synod Assembly Planning Team authorized to make minor adjustments as needed.

- G. Use of Surplus Funds from 2015-2016 Fiscal Year** –

### **Council Action**

#### **Approval of Allocation of Surplus Funds**

The Council voted to approve placing surplus funds from the 2015-2016 fiscal year, totaling approximately \$15,245.09, in the unrestricted general fund reserve, with instruction that it be available for use for expenses related to the transition to a new bishop.

- H. Use of Offerings from 2016 Synod Assembly Worship** –

### **Council Action**

#### **Approval of Use of Assembly Offerings**

The Synod Council voted to distribute offerings from the 2016 Synod Assembly equally to ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Campus Ministry.

## **Reports**

- A. Director of Evangelical Mission** – A written report was presented. Rev. Chrostowski noted that two stewardship initiatives listed in her report are similar programs teaching holistic

## Greater Milwaukee Synod Council March 17, 2016 Meeting Summary

stewardship. Both are two years, and both work with a small group of congregations to help member giving and mission support. She is excited about the potential for both. She went on to provide an update on Rev. Gabriel Marcano's status. The synod's financial commitment ends on August 31<sup>st</sup>, and his visa expires on November 1<sup>st</sup>. The immigration attorney working with the synod recommends that the synod remain his fiscal agent through the expiration of his visa, but with Emmaus/Emaús reimbursing the synod for part of his compensation after the financial commitment ends. Rev. Marcano must be employed by a single fiscal agent for minimum 35 hours/week, thus work in addition to that provided by Emmaus/Emaús will likely need to be addressed as subcontracting. The final phases of this process will probably need to come back through Council, probably in May.

- B. **Director of Discipleship** – No report submitted.
- C. **Director of Rostered Leadership** – A written report was presented. Rev. Kristin Nielsen added that much current consideration is going to transformational ministry issues, including training and tools, and how best to share with interim pastors. The focus will need, she said, to be in rethinking how the synod helps support and guide congregations in times of transition, with a more creative approach to address the reality that many congregations can no longer afford full-time pastors. There is, she added, “a lot of potential for how we understand our connectivity and how we do church.” In the meantime, she said, there is potential for “a lot of blame and pain in the process. . . . [w]e need to be mindful of grief and fear and angst,” for which there is a lot of potential, and “need to have grace for each other. Push and have grace.”
- D. **Cross+Generational Ministry** – No formal report submitted, but there was a written report on the recent youth retreat. Ms. Sarah Muller, who attended the retreat, elaborated by saying that it was “a good time” which she really enjoyed. Highlights included the prayer stations, and the fact that there were separate and appropriate tracks for middle and high school students. She singled out Rev. Steve Jerbi's presentation as being “really fantastic.”
- E. **Lutheran Campus Ministry** – No report submitted.
- F. **Reconciling in Christ** – A written report was presented. Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman noted as a highlight that Church of the Resurrection in Pewaukee is a new affiliate, bringing the number to 28 congregations.
- G. **Anti-Racism Team** – A written report was presented. Mr. Jerry Key noted that the Anti-Racism Team offers many different avenues to engage in discussion before problems occur, adding that there is a presentation available for confirmation classes.
- H. **Women of the ELCA** – No report submitted.
- I. **Outreach for Hope** – No written report submitted. Rev. Jim Bickel outlined plans to increase Outreach for Hope's reserve fund from \$4 million to \$10 million over the next ten years, and grants from \$325,000 to \$500,000 over the next five years. Outreach for Hope is also seeking a full-time advancement director, with the position to be posted in April and a goal of having the new person in place by the end of summer. Finally, he thanked Rev. Lindsay Jordan, with whom they are working on doing cottage meetings in a congregational context, with Christ the King Lutheran Church in Delafield being the first, on April 28<sup>th</sup>.

### Old Business

- A. **ELCA Capital Campaign** – No report or action.

Greater Milwaukee Synod Council  
March 17, 2016 Meeting Summary

B. **2014 Synod Assembly Resolution 2** – Mr. Manske noted that he is working with Mary Romskog to finish up, and intends to present at the May Council meeting.

C. **Cluster Task Force** – It was agreed to defer further action until the new bishop takes office.

**Next Meeting**

**Thursday, May 12, 2016 – 5:30 Dinner; 6:15 Meeting *(Please note change of date!!!)***

St. Paul's Lutheran, 705 Grand Ave, Random Lake

**Future Meetings**

- 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