

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
March 16, 2017

Greater Milwaukee Synod Office
1212 South Layton Boulevard, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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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		10/2015
Vacant	Lake Country	2019			-
Vacant	Milwaukee 1	2017			-
Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland	Milwaukee 2	2017	X		1/2011
Ms. Claire Zautke	Milwaukee 3	2019	X		Pending
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
Rev. Angela Khabeb	Waukesha	2019		X	10/2015
Rev. Lindsay Jordan	At Large	2019		X	2/2016
Mr. Jerry Key	At Large	6/2017	X		10/2016
Ms. Amber Davis	At Large	2019	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
Rev. Paul Erickson	Bishop	2022 (1)	X		Pending
Ms. Sarah Muller	Youth Representative	2017	X		Pending
Rev. Jonathan Barker	Young Adult Rep.	2017	X		9/2013

Also present were Mr. Dave Groenewold, Director of Finance; Rev. Kristin Nielsen, Director of Rostered Leadership; Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman, Chair, GMS Reconciling in Christ Ministry Team and Mr. Dale Landgren, Member of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago Board.

Devotions based on text from 2 Corinthians were offered by Rev. Jonathan Barker.

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago Presentation

Mr. Dale Landgren presented a written report, sharing highlights with the Council. Among the topics covered were the institution's current status, trends for ELCA seminaries generally and fundraising efforts. He called this a "dynamic, exciting and very challenging time for our seminaries."

Specific points made included that, as an institution with a strong presence of international students, there are concerns about current immigration issues. Financial concerns were also spelled out, especially the impossibility of relying on the ELCA or the synods for additional revenue. There had been, he said, a great improvement in financial systems, leading to a clean audit report for the most recent fiscal year.

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A number of key staff leaders are departing, posing a challenge for LSTC. A kindred concern is the fall-off in enrollment, with a 50% decrease in the number of Master of Divinity students across the ELCA's eight seminaries since 2006. Bishop Erickson noted that this decline meant that there are only about 160 graduates a year, far fewer than the number of retirements, and that only 38% of posted openings for new graduates were filled in the most recent year.

Mr. Landgren urged members to contact him in his role as liaison with the school.

Bishop's Report

Bishop Paul Erickson walked through the highlights of his written report. The Cluster Assembly was a personal highlight, with more than 230 attending. He also noted that 314 people attended the earlier listening events for clusters. Central to the process henceforth are the five themes that were presented at the Cluster Assembly, with congregations urged to use them to frame their own discussions.

Rev. Jonathan Barker called the event a great start to a cluster conversation.

The bishop continued by outlining plans for the Synod Assembly, with special attention to the Open Space conversations on Friday afternoon, which he termed an experiment. Another new element will be the Luther Lounge on Friday evening. In answer to a question from Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman, the bishop noted that this event will be open to all ages.

On Saturday morning, the focus will be on conversations around tables. These conversations will be open to anyone interested, not just voting members of the Assembly.

A logistical issue is the recently-imposed annual licensing fee for use of the voting machines purchased by the synod some years ago. The synod is attempting to determine how widespread smartphone use is among voting members, and will explore phone/tablet-based voting options. Mr. Jerry Key voiced concern about privacy issues using smartphone tie-ins, especially regarding personal information that must be disclosed for voting apps.

Also on the table for future consideration will be alternative sites and dates for the Assembly, with a goal of enhancing the ability of people to participate. The bishop anticipates bringing a proposal to the Council at the May meeting.

Bishop Erickson reported on the hiring of Rev. Matt Short as the new Director of Evangelical Missions (DEM) for the synod. He begins on May 1st, with the interim DEM, Dave Daubert, working with Pastor Matt on the transition through May. In other staff notes, the bishop noted that there has been a weak response so far to the position posting for a new Director of Finance. Distribution of information will be reviewed, with the goal remaining to have the new Director on board by the Synod Assembly. Mr. Dave Groenewold is retiring at the end of June.

The bishop provided a brief update on action by Good Shepherd Trinity Church to determine their future direction. A "second first vote" on the question of dissolving was held on Sunday, with rejection of the motion to close. The congregation has asked for the creation of an administrative commission to walk with the congregation. Since this is a federated congregation in relationship with both the Greater Milwaukee Synod and the Presbytery of Milwaukee, the commission will consist of four individuals, two clergy and two lay, from each tradition. The bishop asked the Council to approve the synod's representatives on this commission.

Council Action

Approval of Administrative Commission Members

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The Council voted to approve Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland, Rev. Carol Hegland, Mr. Matthew Brockmeier and Mr. Lee Johnston as members of the Administrative Commission for Good Shepherd Trinity, with Mr. Jerry Key as an alternate member entitled to voice, and with vote in the event of the absence of a member of the Commission.

Bishop Erickson's summer project (among others) will be a review and update of the call process manual.

Roster Matters

Rev. Jacob Werkheiser has just left a call in Sheboygan.

Council Action

Approval of On Leave from Call Status

The Council voted to approve On Leave from Call status for Rev. Jacob L. Werkheiser, effective March 1, 2017.

Rev. Elizabeth Davis is moving to Minnesota to accompany her husband, who has accepted a call in Duluth.

Council Action

Approval of On Leave from Call Status

The Council voted to approve On Leave from Call status for Rev. Elizabeth E. Davis, effective February 1, 2017.

Rev. John Holm has been at The Armstrong Group (TAG Consulting) in the Chicago suburbs. Rev. Sheila Rawn will remain as Associate Pastor at St. Mary's in Kenosha.

Council Action

Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a synod call to Interim Ministry for Rev. John A. Holm at St. Mary's, Kenosha, effective March 1, 2017.

Rev. Paul Ihlenfeld's call to Interim Ministry was approved with one member voting against.

Council Action

Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a synod call to Interim Ministry for Rev. Paul C. Ihlenfeld at St. Andrew, Sheboygan, effective February 6, 2017.

Journey in Faith in Racine is a newly-created merged congregation. Rev. Steve Clingman entered the process through a two-year term call, and will now continue as interim pastor for the merged congregation. There was brief discussion on whether efforts to consolidate congregations were accompanied by efforts to rethink their structures to assure better outcomes.

Council Action

Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a synod call to Interim Ministry for Rev. Steven D. Clingman at Journey in Faith, Racine, effective January 24, 2017.

Council Action

Approval of Study Leave

The Council voted to approve a change from On Leave from Call status to Study Leave for Rev. Kerstin L. Hedlund.

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Council Action

Approval of On Leave from Call Roster

The Council voted to approve the continuation of On Leave from Call status for Rev. Carol R Baumgartner, Rev. Amy Becker Perez, Rev. Kerstin L Hedlund, Deacon Stephanie K. Luedtke, Rev. Linda C. Hanus, Rev. Phetsamone C. Vannavong, Rev. Clifford R. Hanus, Rev. Alexis A Twito, Rev. Jennifer Kuhnert, Rev. Arlen P. Solem, Rev. Elizabeth E. Davis, and Rev. Jacob L. Werkheiser.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Lee Johnston and Director of Finance Dave Groenewold presented the profit and loss statement for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2017, which showed a deficit for the year of \$9,699.89. Their presentation included background on the shortfall in revenues for the year, which was offset in part by lower than budgeted expenses, including savings from unfilled synod staff positions. Funds to cover the deficit are available from the synod's cash reserves.

The treasurer and finance director then addressed concerns regarding the current budget (FY2018), which is based on the assumption of \$2,050,000 in support from congregations. Based on pledges for the year, Mr. Groenewold anticipates total income from congregations is unlikely to exceed \$2 million. He included in his calculations the percentage of pledges received by the synod annually over its history, since 1988. His strong recommendation was to revise the budget, which he said was no longer realistic.

Mr. Johnston framed the question in terms of the need to reduce the budget to \$2 million in congregational income and to decide which main option is best: to reduce the synod's percentage of giving to the ELCA; to look at staffing levels; or to make no change to expenditures, relying either on efforts to boost funding for the remainder of the year or to use additional reserve funds to cover the deficit.

The primary threads in discussion by the Council were to look at ways of promoting mission support, the possible impact on the work of the synod if funding for staffing was reduced, the awkwardness of approaching the ELCA about a reduction in percentage of giving in the wake of their agreement to cover all costs of the new DEM, and looking at the message the synod sends to congregations about sharing giving if the ELCA percentage is reduced.

Particular items mentioned included a video that is being prepared for congregations in advance of the Synod Assembly to bolster their understanding of the missions supported by their giving, the increasing number of congregations seeking involvement by the synod, the need to be more proactive in working with congregations, and fear of creating a cascading effect of falling revenue if the synod were to cut back on its commitments.

The idea that the synod needs to model good giving practices in its relationship with the ELCA came through in several comments.

Based on the discussion, Mr. Johnston moved the Finance Committee's recommended option to reduce income in the current year's budget without reducing any expense lines, though there remains the expectation that staffing will be underspent, at least slightly, even with the increase to three full-time equivalent assistant positions.

Council Action

Approval of Budget Modification

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The Council voted to approve a reduction in Congregational Contributions/Support from \$2,050,000 to \$2,000,000 in the budget for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2018.

The Council then addressed the allocation of funds to cover the deficit from the last fiscal year.

Council Action

Approval of Allocation of Funds

The Council voted to approve the use of unrestricted reserve funds to cover the \$9,699.89 deficit for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2017.

Discussion turned to the proposed budget for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2019 (item IX.A. from the agenda), which will be presented to the 2017 Synod Assembly for final approval. There was action to make one adjustment from the draft presented, to incorporate income from the ELCA to cover expenses for the DEM.

Council Action

Amendment to Budget Draft

The Council voted to add an income line item for \$10,000.00 for funding of DEM expenses to the draft budget for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2019.

Themes discussed for the proposed budget echoed the discussion regarding revision of the current year's budget, with additional emphasis on the ideas that engaging with the Living God in moving the synod in appropriate directions is critical, that transparency is central, that modeling giving must be part of the equation, and that the synod must continue to review efficacy of its activities to avoid keeping unquestioned sacred cows.

Council Action

Recommendation of Budget

The Council voted to recommend approval of the proposed budget for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2019 to the 2017 Synod Assembly.

Old Business – Action Items

Open Positions

Council Action

Appointments to Nominating Committee

The Council voted to appoint Ms. Susan Daniels, as an at-large lay female member of the Nominating Committee, and Rev. Kristin Berglund, as a clergy member from the Northern Lakeshore Cluster, to the Nominating Committee, to serve through the end of the 2018 Synod Assembly.

New Business – Action Items

Approval of Voice and Vote at Synod Assembly for Rev. Paula Harris

Council Action

Approval of Voice and Vote

The Council voted to approve granting of voice and vote at the 2017 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly to Rev. Paula Harris under provision S7.27. of the Greater Milwaukee Synod's constitution.

Approval of Distribution of Synod Endowment Fund Proceeds – The Synod Endowment Committee has recommended a distribution of \$4,629 to All People's Lutheran Church in Milwaukee to complete funding for a current year internship for which an unfunded commitment was made by the synod. Additional support for this internship has come from the congregation and the ELCA. There was brief discussion about the need that all congregations interested in and

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eligible for funding from the Immanuel Lutheran Trust for Urban Internship be made aware of its availability and offered the opportunity to apply for these funds, in keeping with the Synod Council's previous instructions to the Synod Endowment Committee.

Council Action

Approval of Disbursement of Endowment Funds

The Council voted to approve a one-time disbursement of \$4,629.00 to All People's Lutheran Church in Milwaukee for internship support for the period through July 2017 from the Immanuel Lutheran Trust for Urban Internship, based on the recommendation of the Synod Endowment Committee.

2017 Synod Assembly Rules and Procedures

Council Action

Recommendation of Synod Assembly Rules and Procedures

The Council voted to recommend the 2017 Synod Assembly Rules and Procedures as presented for approval by the 2017 Synod Assembly.

2017 Synod Assembly Agenda – The agenda for the Synod Assembly was presented, with the motion to recommend including a modification to accept new congregations as the first order of business in Plenary Session 1.

Council Action

Amendment to Synod Assembly Agenda

The Council voted to amend the recommended 2017 Synod Assembly Agenda to include final action on the proposed budget for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2019 during Plenary Session 3.

Council Action

Recommendation of Synod Assembly Agenda

The Council voted to recommend the 2017 Synod Assembly Agenda as modified for approval by the 2017 Synod Assembly.

Approval of Use of Synod Assembly Offering – Noting that it was both a timely issue and a way of honoring the work of Rev. David Larson, who is retiring as head of Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, the Council approved the use of the offerings from the Thursday worship service at the 2017 Synod Assembly to LSS's Refugee Resettlement program in Milwaukee.

Council Action

Approval of Use of Offering

The Council voted to allocate the offering from the worship service at the 2017 Synod Assembly to Refugee Resettlement-Milwaukee, a program of Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan.

Approval of a Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Committee

Council Action

Approval of Committee

The Council voted to approve the establishment of a Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Committee, which has previously been known as the Refugee Resettlement Task Force.

Memorials and Resolutions – The Council was asked to consider a proposed resolution honoring the retiring head of Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. A resolution to this effect is being considered by all Wisconsin synods, as recommended by their bishops.

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Consideration of this resolution by the Council was the only means available to bring it to the Synod Assembly, since LSS does not have standing to submit resolutions.

Council Action

Submission of Resolution to Synod Assembly

The Council voted to submit a Resolution in Recognition of Rev. David Larson's Service to Lutheran Social Services to the 2017 Synod Assembly, as follows:

Resolution in Recognition of Rev. David Larson's Service to Lutheran Social Services

Whereas, Rev. David N. Larson has provided distinguished leadership as President and Chief Executive Officer of Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan since July 2002, and prior to that served as Vice President of Resource Development; and

Whereas, Rev. Larson served as a synod representative to the LSS Board of Directors for six years; and

Whereas, Rev. Larson has tirelessly encouraged a strong commitment to the social ministry of the church, reminding us that "When people are at their worst, we need to be at our best"; and

Whereas, Rev. Larson has been a leading voice of inspiration and challenge to fulfill the mission of LSS, "Motivated by the compassion of Christ, we help people improve the quality of their lives"; and

Whereas, Rev. Larson will retire in 2018 from a career of dedicated service as a Lutheran pastor and social services leader; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Greater Milwaukee Synod recognize, affirm and celebrate Rev. David N. Larson for his service to the church and the thousands of lives that have been changed because of his passionate and committed leadership.

Reports

Director of Evangelical Mission – Position Vacant – No report submitted.

Director of Discipleship – A verbal report was provided by Ms. Rhonda Hill. She spoke of her work to facilitate synod events, including the Lead and Learn event this weekend, the April 25th Healthy Boundaries Training, and the Fall Theological Conference in Green Lake on September 18th through 20th. She noted that the boundaries training is open to congregational staff as well as rostered leaders, and that the Fall Theological Conference will feature an address by Christina Cleveland, an African-American theologian and author, who will talk about race and faith. There will also be a showing of "53206," a documentary about the crisis of mass incarceration, which focuses on one area of Milwaukee., followed by a series of planned conversations on the topic. Ms. Hill then shared her excitement about a process to have periodic check-ins with pastors in new ministry settings that is designed to keep active conversations between pastors and congregations through the first 18 months of a call. This initiative reinforces the idea of being proactive rather than reactive; possibly diminishing the likelihood of crises. Finally, she reported on a training event she attended in advance of the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston.

Director of Rostered Leadership – In a verbal report, Rev. Kristin Nielsen referred to the synod website for information on transition status for congregations. She reported that there will be more retirements coming up. Her work has an emphasis on funding candidates to accompany congregations in times of transition.

Cross+Generational Ministry – Position Vacant – No report submitted.

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Lutheran Campus Ministry – No report submitted.

Reconciling in Christ – A written report was presented.

Anti-Racism Team – A written report was presented. Items highlighted verbally included the effort to move forward from Synod Council retreat to look at best approach to address issues of racism. The next Crossroads Training will be in October.

Women of the ELCA – No report submitted.

Outreach for Hope – A written report was presented.

Items on Hold

Vice President Manske reported on discussions with Pastor Jon Jacobs on questions related to 2016 Resolution 4 on investment in the Holy Land. He will prepare a more detailed report for the Council.

Next Meeting

Thursday, May 18, 2017 – 5:30 Dinner; 6:15 Meeting

Martin Luther Lutheran Church, 9235 West Bluemound Road, Milwaukee

Future Meetings

- Thursday, July 20, 2017 – Bishop Erickson’s Home, 3072 S 47th Street, Milwaukee
- Thursday, September 21, 2017 – The Lutheran Center, 8765 W Higgins Rd, Chicago*

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

*The Lutheran Center meeting in September 2017 will be an all-day session.

Submitted,

Mr. Matthew Brockmeier
Synod Secretary