

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
 Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
March 15, 2018

Ascension Lutheran Church
 1415 Dopp Street, Waukesha

This Summary does not constitute official minutes of this meeting.

Ignited by God's love, Burning for Justice, We embrace the world

Attendance

Name	Cluster/Position	Term Ends 8/31	Present	Absent	Anti- Racism
Mr. George Sorenson	Kenosha/West Racine	2021	X		Pending
Mr. George Monis	Lake Country	2019	X		Pending
Rev. Tim Tahtinen	Milwaukee 1	2021	X		Pending
Ms. Janet Wunrow	Milwaukee 2	2021		X	Pending
Ms. Claire Zautke	Milwaukee 3	2019	X		Pending
Rev. Bill Knapp	Milwaukee 4	2019		X	Pending
Rev. Elizabeth Jaeger	Northern Lakeshore	2021		X	Pending
Mr. Mark Christiaansen	Northwest	2021	X		Pending
Mr. Bob Reinders	Racine	2021	X		10/2015
Rev. Angela Khabebe	Waukesha	2019	X		10/2015
Rev. Lindsay Jordan	At Large	2019	X		2/2016
Mr. Jerry Key	At Large	2019	X		10/2017
Ms. Amber Davis	At Large	2019		X	Pending
Ms. Joyce Caldwell	Vice President	2021 (1)	X		Pending
Mr. Matthew Brockmeier	Secretary	2019 (2)		X	10/2017
Mr. Tom Gauthier	Treasurer	2021 (1)	X		10/2017
Rev. Paul Erickson	Bishop	2022 (1)	X		10/2017
Ms. Anja Logan	Youth Representative	6/2018	X		Pending
Ms. Aliliywa Mbise	Young Adult Rep.	2021		X	10/2017

Also present were Elaine Monis, Rev. Kristin Nielsen, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations in Mission; and Rev. Fred Thomas-Breitfeld, Anti-Racism Team.

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago Report

Mr. Dale Landgren presented his annual report to the Council on the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. He serves on the LSTC Board as a representative of the synod.

Mr. Landgren reported that enrollment is stable and/or slightly increasing, depending on the program being considered. There continue to be changes happening in the ELCA and at LSTC in the area of seminary education. The seminary is investing in new faculty, creating efficiencies through new positions and emphases. In the past five years, LSTC has invested almost \$8 million in capital improvements.

LSTC's Board approved a new strategic plan November 2017, *A Community to Form Leaders to Form Community*. LSTC is committed to being a residential community, standing in contrast to other ELCA seminaries, which are investing heavily in online learning. Enrollment continues to be a challenge for LSTC. Financial concerns weigh upon LSTC and these concerns have led the Higher Learning Commission to place LSTC on probationary status. The seminary is fully accredited by the Association of Theological Schools and Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, but the probationary status is of concern.

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Following his report, action was taken to re-appoint Mr. Landgren to the LSTC Board for a third three-year term.

Council Action

The Council voted to appoint Mr. Dale Landgren to a third term on the Board of Directors of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, through September 30, 2021.

Consent Agenda

Items on the consent agenda included approval of voice for visitors; approval of Rev. Lindsay Jordan as acting secretary for this meeting; approval of the agenda for this meeting; approval of minutes from the Synod Council meeting on January 25, 2018; annual approval of continuing on leave from call status for Rev. Amy Becker-Perez, family leave began September 19, 2013; Rev. Kelly Taylor-Schaus, family leave began September 26, 2014; Rev. Kerstin Hedlund, study leave began August 23, 2015; Rev. Phetsamone Vannavong, standard leave began December 31, 2015; Rev. Arlen Solem, standard leave began August 13, 2016; Rev. Jacob Werkheiser, standard leave began March 1, 2017; Rev. Vicki Watkins, standard leave began July 1, 2017; Rev. Wendy Wirth-Brock, standard leave began August 5, 2017; and Rev. Jennifer Carlson, standard leave began September 24, 2017; approval of on leave from call status for Rev. Kristin Rice, effective April 1, 2018; and approval of retired status for Deacon Janice Navarro, effective June 1, 2018 and Rev. Warren Williams, effective May 1, 2018.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve all items in the consent agenda as presented.

Approval of Synod Calls

Council Action

The Council voted to approve a synod call for Rev. Tim McIntosh to serve as chaplain to Vitas Hospice, effective February 19, 2018.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve a synod call for Rev. Molly Doreza to serve as Interim Pastor at Bayshore Lutheran Church, effective March 19, 2018.

Removed or Resigned from the Roster

Bishop Paul Erickson reported that Carol Baumgartner was removed from the roster due to expired on leave from call status, effective January 1, 2018; and Harold Epply resigned from the roster, effective February 20, 2018.

Vice President's Report

Vice President Caldwell reflected on *Together in Mission*, the February event for congregations of the synod. She called on the council to think about what this phrase means for us as we think about events in our future. She asked the council to think of three words, lifted up by Bishop Erickson: *Curiosity*, *Courage*, and *Compassion*. She called the council to reflect on the question: what do we need to be curious about in order to be a synod that is in mission together. The themes of Courage and Compassion will be reflected upon in future meetings.

Responses included:

- What helps bring people into the church; why do people leave; and what are those messages that say, "come, but not really?"

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- How healthy are the churches of our synod and how does the health of our churches compare to churches in other synods? Why do we have a shortage of pastors to fill pastoral roles? Are things that we should do as the synod council to help attract younger or older people to the ministry?
- How curiosity can be a good or bad thing. It can lead you down the wrong path if it is for ill intent. It can also lead you down paths of service, if it is based on concern for the neighbor. Bishop Erickson: “What does it mean to be curious, but not creepy?”
- What might the church look like 20 years from now? Will we still be in buildings? Might there be more home church models? What should we be doing/thinking about to move into the future?
- The saying: “Curiosity killed the cat.” It reminds that there is a risk to learn something new and/or different. It may mean that something has to be let go or put to death because new information is taking its place. In the church we learn to be curious again. We want to seek out the new again, though we often want to seek the comfortable.
- How do we stay connected with rostered and lay leaders and check in with how they are doing? How do we lift up the unspoken stressors they face? How do we live into our statements of welcome in the same way that Christ does?

Vice President Caldwell concluded by challenging us to keep thinking about the questions.

Bishop’s Report

Bishop Erickson reported that a letter is being sent out to all rostered ministers (as well as to all council presidents) about leaving well. The goal is to help departing pastors leave well so that there is room for the rostered minister who follows to function well in their role. Bishops have at their discretion the ability to remove retired rostered ministers from the roster.

Bishop Erickson also spoke about congregations in transition and conflict. St. Andrew’s in Sheboygan has decided to initiate a process of holy closure. Other congregations are in or soon to be in similar conversations.

Synod Assembly planning is underway. Bishop also provided notes from the Conference of Bishop Meeting recently concluded. A draft ELCA policy statement “A Declaration of Our Inter-Religious Commitment” has been released for public review and comment. The draft of the ELCA Social Statement, “Women and Justice” is available for public comment until September 30, 2018.

Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Tom Gauthier reported that the 2017 fiscal year, ending January 31, 2017, finished with actual income exceeding actual expenses by \$21,419. Total income for the year was \$2,111,726. Total expenses for the year were below budgeted expenses by \$79,788.

Also noted:

- Congregations have committed more than \$2 million in mission support for the coming year.
- January’s mission support was the highest it has been in many years.

Treasurer Gauthier presented a proposed 2019 budget and noted the following:

- The budget is very similar to that approved for 2018-2019.

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- We are fully staffed in the synod office.
- Showing a deficit of just under \$58,000.

Bishop Erickson reported that churchwide mission support was unofficially capped at 55% of \$2 million in congregational mission support and that after \$2 million was received through congregational mission support, no more was given to churchwide mission support. This was an implied policy, never put in place by the council or assembly. Bishop requested and the council approved a recommendation to the Synod Assembly to remove this cap.

Bishop reminded the council that the proposed budget appears to be zeroing out funding for cross-generational ministry. The reality is that there is a restricted fund (line 1191-01 in Restricted Fund Balances) in which money is set aside to support cross generational programs.

Options were discussed for how to allocate surplus funds for fiscal year ending January 31, 2018. Ideas on the table:

- Forward to the ELCA as churchwide mission support
- Do nothing and leave it in undesignated reserves to revisit it at a future meeting, which would result in the undesignated reserves exceeding its cap of \$200,000
- Place in a designated fund so that it is mindfully placed in a fund reflecting mission and ministry.

The council didn't have a good sense of how to allocate the funds. Instead, it asked Bishop Erickson to work with his staff and to come back to the board with recommendations.

Council Action

The Council voted to accept the 2018 financial statements as presented.

Council Action

The Council voted to amend the proposed budget by adding \$10,000 to other income and adding \$10,000 to the Cross+Generational program expense line.

Council Action

The Council voted to recommend approval of the amended proposed budget for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2020 to the 2018 Synod Assembly.

Council Action

The council voted to recommend to the Synod Assembly that churchwide mission support be set at 55% of all mission support received from the congregations of our synod.

New Business

A. Recommendation of Synod Assembly Rules

Council Action

The Council voted to recommend the 2018 Synod Assembly Rules and Procedures as presented for approval by the 2018 Synod Assembly.

Council Action

The Council voted to extend voice and vote at the Synod Assembly to: Pastor Debra Traekel, serving as interim Pastor at the Advent, Cedarburg; and to Pastor Muriel Otto, serving as pastor at Unity, Brookfield under an Invitation to Extended Service; and to extend voice only to Pastor Jay Thorson, serving as interim pastor under contract at Capitol Drive, Milwaukee.

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B. Recommendation of Synod Assembly Agenda

Council Action

The Council voted to recommend the 2018 Synod Assembly Agenda as presented for approval by the 2018 Synod Assembly, subject to necessary adjustments prior to the Assembly.

C. Recommendation on Designation of Offering

The council considered recommendations for offering designations at Synod Assembly. Options were presented by the Synod Assembly Planning Team. Historically the offering is two to three thousand dollars.

Council Action

The Council voted to recommend to the 2018 Synod Assembly that the offering collected during assembly worship be designated to support Anti-Racism Training in celebration of twenty years of anti-racism work in the synod.

D. Discussion of Draft 2019 Assembly Agenda

Vice President Caldwell called attention to a draft agenda for the 2019 Synod Assembly. It will be a more streamlined assembly, beginning on a Friday afternoon, ending Saturday afternoon. The goal is to make it easier for younger people to attend. There may be a cost-saving feature to this plan, as well. Bishop challenged us to think about how a shorter assembly might result in people leaving energized, connected and hopeful. The dates of the assembly were approved,

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the dates of the 2019 Synod Assembly as May 31 to June 1, 2019.

E. Recommendation for Appointment to Church Council

Following the resignation for health reasons of Ms. Carolyn Jewett from the ELCA's Church Council, the ELCA requested that the Synod Council recommend a lay female to be considered for appointment by the Church Council to fill the remainder of Ms. Jewett's term, which runs through the 2022 Churchwide Assembly.

Council Action

The Council voted to recommend Ms. Sonja Wolfe for appointment to the ELCA Church Council to fill the vacancy created by Ms. Carolyn Jewett's resignation, for the remainder of a term ending at the conclusion of the 2022 Churchwide Assembly.

F. Actions on Good Shepherd Trinity Church

Vice President Caldwell reported on the status of the federated congregation of Good Shepherd Trinity. The synod had four members serving as representatives on the administrative commission. The work of the administrative commission has come to an end. Bishop Erickson provided a written report on the congregation and its plan to sell the Good Shepherd property.

Good Shepherd Trinity wishes to sell the former Good Shepherd building on 48th Street, and has received approval from The Presbytery of Milwaukee (PCUSA) for the sale, which now requires approval by the synod, since all congregation property is treated as being in trust for the synod and the Presbytery under the agreement created this federated Lutheran and Presbyterian congregation.

Council Action

The Council voted to approve the sale by Good Shepherd Trinity Church of the Good Shepherd church building located at 3617 North 48th Street, Milwaukee, as required under provision *C7.02.

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of the Good Shepherd Trinity Constitution and provision E. of the Good Shepherd Trinity Plan of Agreement.

Council Action

The Council voted to terminate the synod's participation in the Good Shepherd Trinity Administrative Commission, effective April 30, 2018.

Reports

- A. Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted.
- B. Congregations in Mission** – A written report was submitted.
- C. Missional Leadership** – A written report was submitted.
- D. Lutheran Campus Ministry** – No report submitted.
- E. Reconciling in Christ** – A written report was submitted.
- F. Anti-Racism Team** – Fred Thomas-Breitfeld reported that the team has been working with confirmation groups and is planning the next training session.
- G. Women of the ELCA** – No report submitted.
- H. Outreach for Hope** – Bob Reinders reported that Tim Larsen is working hard to meet people as he settles into his new role as executive director.

Next Meeting

Thursday, May 17, 2018

St. Olaf's Lutheran Church, W653 Roosevelt Road, Rubicon; George Monis will provide devotions.

Future Meetings

- Thursday, May 31 – Saturday, June 2, 2018 – Synod Assembly – Country Springs Hotel, Pewaukee
- Thursday, July 19, 2018 – Bishop Erickson's Home, 3072 South 47th Street, Milwaukee
- Thursday, September 20, 2018 – Jackson Park Lutheran Church, 4535 West Oklahoma Avenue, Milwaukee

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

Prepared by:

Rev. Lindsay Jordan
Acting Synod Secretary

and

Matthew Brockmeier
Synod Secretary