

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
July 19, 2018

Bishop Erickson's Home
Milwaukee

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
Vacant – Lay Male	Kenosha/West Racine	2021			
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. Pamela Lange	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
Vacant – Clergy	Waukesha	2019			
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	2019	X		Pending
Ms. Aliliywa Mbise	Young Adult Rep.	2021		X	10/2017

Also present were Rev. Jennifer Arnold, Assistant to the Bishop for Missional Leadership; Ms. Elaine Monis; Rev. Kristin Nielsen, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations in Mission; Rev. Matthew Short, Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission; and Rev. Fred Thomas-Breitfeld, Anti-Racism Team.

Tom Gauthier offered devotions based on Robert Fulghum's book *It Was on Fire when I Lay Down on It* regarding the meaning of life. The story told was about the author meeting Alexandros Papaderos, who told a story about a fragment of a mirror that he used to reflect light into dark places. We aren't the source of the light, we reflect the light, we shine the light.

Council Action

Approval of Consent Agenda

The Council voted to approve all items from the consent agenda as presented, including approval of voice for visitors; adoption of the agenda for this meeting; approval of minutes from the Synod Council meeting on May 17, 2018; approval of minutes from the Synod Assembly on May 31-June 2, 2018; and approval of on leave from call status for Rev. Cynthia Aasen, effective June 3, 2018, for the standard three-year leave period.

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Approval of Synod Calls

Rev. Joshua Graber, rostered out of Ohio, who was described as having an entrepreneurial spirit, began a new start targeting young adults in community that did not move forward. He then wanted to be considered for work as an interim pastor.

Council Action

Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a synod call to Interim Ministry at Mt. Zion Lutheran Church, Wauwatosa, for Rev. Joshua Graber, effective May 29, 2018.

David Patterson, was director of pastoral care at Luther Manor, then went to another chaplaincy ministry, now he too is moving to interim ministry.

Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a synod call to Interim Ministry at Vernon Lutheran Church, Mukwonago, for Rev. Dave Patterson, effective August 1, 2018.

Vice President's Report

Vice President Caldwell recounted how at the Synod Assembly she invited people to engage in the development of a new mission statement. She has information from response cards collected at the Assembly and will do a deeper content analysis on those responses. She noted that worship and sacraments were not generally included, and assumes they were probably just taken as a given. A lot of comments, she said, flowed from Reggie Jackson's presentation.

Follow up will include work on values, mission and vision, which won't be part of the Council's work tonight, but be part of the September meeting, as well as at a Council retreat in November. Coming out of the retreat she hopes to have drafts of mission and vision statements to present at the Together in Mission event in February. Bishop Erickson added that the tie-in with the Together in Mission event is yet to be determined. (This event will be February 9, 2019 at St. John's Lutheran Church in Brookfield). Individuals who have experience leading processes like this are being sought for the retreat and are asked to contact Vice President Caldwell.

She continued by noting that at the last two Council meetings the focus had been on curiosity (a focus on the head) and compassion (a focus on the heart); knowing and having a heart in turn "lead us to courage." Speaking when needed in the hard times becomes the courage part of the equation. To put it another way, "take up your cross, your courage, and follow me."

Courage, she said, calls us to something more than who we are. This is where we shine the light. This is how we are called to speak and act with courage in our synod. It is what we are called to be courageous about. The Council took time to discuss courage in groups of two or three.

Comments from the small discussions included:

- The idea that courage is addressing the unpopular and dissenting opinions and that leadership requires courage, which can be as simple as speaking out against gossip in school or as complex as addressing more contentious issues.
- The courage to have hope: it takes courage to stand as a person with hope in a broken world like we have now.
- We can't just keep going downstream, but need the courage to go upstream, to face challenges, and to be different.

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- Picking up on Dorothy Day's autobiography with the idea that when you say "why doesn't somebody," the fact is that "you are somebody – have the courage."
- Mention of being in a different type of a call, which at times has felt like the first year in a call, and walking into a room where the message is difficult. "Just step into those moments and trust that God will give you the words that are needed and the silence that is needed."
- Finding the courage to ask for feedback when having felt scolded by Reggie Jackson's speech, with the idea that "we are charged to love one another." In this discussion finding a different way to look at Black Lives Matter.

Vice President Caldwell summed up her report by reinforcing the idea that we need to have the courage to speak up, which will be how we lead into mission.

Bishop's Report

Bishop Erickson referred to his written report. Among the highlights were the joy of having four ordinations in a month, after only two in the 19 months before that. He reported that the retired clergy issue, originally anticipated for discussion at this meeting, will be addressed in September. Regarding retiring clergy, he said that the synod is working on how to inform soon-to-be-retired rostered leaders of the process required in arranging retirement. He also said that he is looking forward to next year's Synod Assembly, with either the 2019 or 2020 Assembly focusing on this synod's long-neglected partnership with the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod, working with their leader, Bishop Kristen Kuempel. Also in view is the 50th anniversary of women in ministry in the ELCA.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Tom Gauthier noted that there were additional details in the online version of the current financial reports that were not included in the paper version.

He addressed a question he could not answer at the Synod Assembly regarding the large reported overage on the bank and credit card fee line, saying that this was actually an accounting item that was recategorized by the auditors to a miscellaneous file. He reported that the \$250 budget for bank and related fees is sufficient.

Mr. Gauthier and Bishop Erickson spoke about income being down from previous years but running in a fairly typical pattern. If pledges come through the fiscal year will be fine. Tom Gauthier said that there are many different patterns of giving by congregations, with some giving only once a year (usually in December). He expressed confidence that the synod is in good shape. In response to a question he said that just a few congregations are of concern as far as meeting their pledged amounts for the year. Another question had to do with the reduction in the budget item for travel, which should not have an impact.

Old Business

Working Group on Structure of Clusters

Bishop Erickson began discussion on the cluster structure and related issues by stating that not everyone would be eligible for a seat on the Synod Council with the representation cycle currently in effect for elections in 2019. Secretary Matthew Brockmeier provided additional details on the problems with cluster participation in the nominating process, which is uneven, where some clusters are generally unable to field nominees.

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It was noted that the cluster deans may have a role to play; they have been meeting regularly again for the last six months. The bishop posed the question of “what structure facilitates mission,” adding that the bottom line is that the point of all of this is the Gospel.

The task force named at the May meeting planned to meet briefly at the end of the Council meeting (this was postponed until a later date).

New Business

LOPPW Advisory Council Member

Council Action

Appointment

The Council voted to appoint Rev. Jim Lynch to the Advisory Council of the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin.

Synod Council Open Positions

Vice President Caldwell reported on two departures from the Synod Council: George Sorenson, who was serving a term through August 2021 representing the Kenosha/West Racine Cluster; and Rev. Angela Khabeb, whose term representing the Waukesha Cluster went through August 2019. Mr. Sorenson found that the Council’s focus on governance was not a good fit with his interests, while Rev. Khabeb left for a new call in Minnesota. The respective cluster deans will be asked to work with their clusters to find new representatives for the Council.

The Table’s Constitution

Rev. Matthew Short told the Council that the new constitution for The Table, as a Synodically Authorized Worshiping Community, must be approved by the Council following action by The Table. The Table should have completed their process in time for action at the September Council meeting. The constitution was prepared with the assistance of Secretary Brockmeier who, Rev. Short added, found an error in the ELCA’s Model Constitution for SAWCs which has been referred back to the ELCA.

Synod Assembly

The Council was presented with a report on the Synod Assembly with statistics and brief comments, with some discussion following.

There was praise for the bishop, with Rev. Lindsay Jordan calling this “a top-notch Synod Assembly,” though he noted that visibility in worship was limited because of the flat venue. The bishop in turn praised the Assembly planning team led by Mary Romskog of the synod staff.

The bishop continued by saying that financially the Assembly lost between \$7,000 and \$8,000, though this was by design, in order to make the event more affordable, and to bring the Assembly reserve balance down close to the target of approximately \$15,000.

He also spoke of the intent for the 2019 Assembly, which will be shorter, and will have a strong grounding in scripture.

As far as the resolutions approved at the Assembly, the bishop will prepare and issue a letter to congregations, encouraging their support for the ministries (Prison ministries and Reconciling in Christ) that were the focus of the two resolutions. He also said that Reconciling in Christ (RIC) will use their October meeting to discuss how to live into what was passed.

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Rev. Kristin Nielsen reported that pastors accompanying congregations in transition (new nomenclature for interim pastors) will have training to lead discussions on RIC with the congregations with which they are working. Rev. Debra Trakel, interim pastor at Advent in Cedarburg will work with Bill Beyer from RIC to develop resources for congregations. There is also interest in expanding such sessions beyond the interim pastors.

In recapping the Assembly debate on retired clergy voting, Jerry Key put forth concerns regarding what he called an act of privilege when a white male in a predominantly white church wanted to “claim his ability to make the case that the issue of clergy voting is the same as forced slavery.” Mr. Key said that the fact of these remarks “is a sign of how the church had stagnated in working toward being anti-racist. The church has said it will do something different, but that has not taken place.” There is, he said, a need for courage.

The discussion continued with information on the level proposed in the amendment, with the bishop saying that of about 130 retired clergy in the synod, 15 had registered as voting members, or just over the 10% threshold proposed. He said there is also a proposal to increase the number of lay voting members. “We have the freedom, synod by synod, to do what we wish” in this regard.

The proposal to increase was presented by Secretary Brockmeier. Its core is increasing the basic level of congregational representation from two voting members to three. Bishop Erickson had refined this proposal by adding the idea that a third voting member from a congregation would have to be a youth or young adult.

Discussion on that proposal included Rev. Jordan’s observation that there are congregations that do not send lay voting members, with a question about whether such congregations could have clergy representation dependent on having lay representation. The synod constitution, however, does not allow any limits on participation by active clergy.

This led to a wider discussion about whether members of congregations generally know what the synod is or does. Rev. Short spoke about having the bishop’s assistants go out to congregations, and the possibility of having the cluster deans focus on this issue. Vice President Caldwell opined that “when people come [to the Assembly] they get excited.” A list of congregations that have not sent voting members will be prepared to assist in the effort to expand participation.

Another suggestion was to have conversations about the role of the synod with clergy who are coming into the synod. This could also include expectations for participation as part of their calls.

Urban Internship Fund Proposal

The bishop provided background on the fund created by Immanuel Lutheran on the South Side of Milwaukee upon its closing to provide support for urban internships for seminarians. He said they had been beneficiaries of an internship program and, having found great value in those internships, and wanted part of the proceeds from the sale of their building to support a new fund to continue that work for other congregations in the City of Milwaukee. It was agreed that Outreach for Hope would take a lead role in identifying suitable placements. At the same time, Outreach for Hope received another gift for this purpose, with the major difference being that their funds are not limited to the City of Milwaukee but can be used in any urban setting in the synod. The Immanuel Fund currently has approximately \$220,000, and the Outreach for Hope fund another \$110,000.

The proposal lays out the timeline for applications, and the procedure for applicants to follow.

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Rev. Jordan asked whether changes to Luther Seminary's program would make a difference to this process. The bishop replied that he is not sure, and knows that things are changing for the seminaries, but that there is flexibility in this process to address future changes. He added that this program has so far funded internships for All People's, Ascension, Cross and Village churches in Milwaukee.

Council Action

Approval of Urban Internship Fund Proposal

The Council voted to approve the grant timeline, eligibility criteria and anticipated outcomes for the Urban Internship Fund as presented by Outreach for Hope.

Discussion of Synod Council Retreat for Saturday, November 17

Vice President Caldwell presented the idea of having a retreat, providing time to talk about mission, vision and values, along with some of the other issues that have been raised. It is intended to be an all-day retreat (possibly from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm) and would take place two days after a regular Council meeting. General agreement.

Reports

Evangelical Mission – A written report was submitted, with additional comments on a synod mission table meeting today. Rev. Short spoke of there being a lot of energy in general, and especially about renewal strategy. There will be training through the churchwide office. A team will be created to talk to congregations about re-engaging mission. “Really excited about it – a lot of energy on the team about it.” He stressed a need to let people know the synod is working on this. The September mission table meeting will address the creation of sessions for congregations.

Congregations in Mission – A written report was provided at the meeting. Rev. Nielsen pointed out highlights, including the fact that the list of congregations with candidates is getting longer. There is, she said, more action and progress for congregations in transition. She elaborated on work to assist pastors and congregations during the first 18 months of a new call. The framework would be to meet on a regular basis, including the call committee chair and congregation council president in discussions, probably at intervals of four to six months and ten to twelve months into the call. Where this has been done it has been well-received. These discussions usually look at what needs to be done in the next few months. There are also one-on-one meetings between the newly called pastor and the bishop, as well as meetings with synod staff. It is likely, Rev. Nielsen said, that a more formalized process will be presented to the Council at the September meeting.

Missional Leadership – A written report was submitted, Rev. Arnold reported on the Women and Justice hearings, with the May 31st session at the Synod Assembly site well-attended, but the second one cancelled when it had only two registrations. “What did not get communicated was that a hearing is to hear from people who have already read the document,” she said. Comments were recorded and turned in to the churchwide office. She went on to say that this was a reminder to “over-communicate” information, like the idea of reading the report in order to fully participate in a hearing. A communication workshop is pending. Rev. Arnold also reported on work on revised compensation guidelines, which will include a worksheet, one page, front and back. The bishop noted that the goal is to make the guidelines “simpler, shorter, fairer.”

Lutheran Campus Ministry – No report submitted.

Reconciling in Christ – A written report was provided. Rev. Bill Beyer could not attend.

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Anti-Racism Team – A verbal report was presented by Rev. Fred Thomas-Breitfeld, who thanked the Council and the synod for the generous offerings at the Assembly. Assisted by Crossroads, the team is discussing leadership and structure. Rev. Thomas-Breitfeld and Ms. Esther Rusch are co-conveners for the team. The annual three-day anti-racism training will be held Thursday through Saturday, November 1st through 3rd at Mt. Carmel Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. Registration forms will be available after the next team meeting on August 5th. Members of the Council who have not participated in this anti-racism training are reminded that Synod Continuing Resolution S10.07.A14. requires participation in this training within one year of the beginning of their terms. The bishop added that, as a result of action taken by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly, the churchwide organization will hold a session aimed primarily at synods that do not currently have anti-racism teams to help them chart a course. The two facilitators are both from the Greater Milwaukee Synod; Joyce Caldwell and Rev. Marilyn Miller.

Women of the ELCA – No report submitted.

Outreach for Hope – A written report was provided. It was noted that there are three new board members, and that emphases have been the bike ride and internship funding.

Next Council Meeting Thursday, September 20, 2018

Jackson Park Lutheran Church, 4535 West Oklahoma Avenue, Milwaukee

Future Meetings and Events

- Thursday, November 1 – Saturday, November 3, 2018 – Anti-Racism Training – Mt. Carmel Lutheran Church, 8424 West Center Street, Milwaukee
- Thursday, November 15, 2018 – Faith/Santa Fe Lutheran Church, 1000 South Layton Boulevard, Milwaukee
- Saturday, November 17, 2018 – Synod Retreat – Location TBD
- Thursday, January 17, 2019 – Location TBD
- Saturday, February 9, 2019 – Together in Mission – St. John’s Lutheran Church, 20275 Davidson Road, Brookfield
- Thursday, March 21, 2019 – Location TBD
- Thursday, May 16, 2019 – Location TBD
- Friday, May 31 – Saturday, June 1, 2019 – Synod Assembly – Italian Community Center, 631 East Chicago Street, Milwaukee
- Thursday, July 18, 2019 – Location TBD

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

Submitted,

Matthew Brockmeier
Synod Secretary