

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
September 20, 2018

Jackson Park Lutheran Church
4535 West Oklahoma Avenue, Milwaukee

This Summary does not constitute official minutes of this meeting.
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Attendance

Name	Cluster/Position	Term Ends 8/31	Present	Absent	Anti- Racism
Mr. Bob Reinders	Belle City	2021	X		10/2015
Vacant – Lay Male	Kenosha/West Racine	2021			
Mr. George Monis	Lake Country	2019	X		Pending
Rev. Tim Tahtinen	Milwaukee 1	2021		X	10/2016
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
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 Ms. Mary Beth Nowak, Director, Meeting Management, ELCA; Ms. Gail Schroeder, Manager of Meetings and Events, ELCA; Rev. Jennifer Arnold, Assistant to the Bishop for Missional Leadership; Rev. Kristin Nielsen, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations in Mission; Rev. Matthew Short, Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission; Rev. Bill Beyer, Reconciling in Christ Representative; Ms. Suzanne Seidemann, Women of the ELCA; and Rev. Fred Thomas-Breitfeld, Anti-Racism Team.

Churchwide Assembly Presentation

Mary Beth Nowak and Gail Schroeder, key ELCA staff for the Churchwide Assembly, gave a presentation and answered questions about next summer's Churchwide Assembly in Milwaukee. They informed the Council that the Assembly, which runs from August 5th through 10th, will take place at the Wisconsin Center District Convention Center, with blocks of rooms for attendees at the Hilton Milwaukee City Center, the Hyatt Regency Milwaukee, and the Spring Hill Suites. They were upbeat on what has happened in downtown Milwaukee in recent years.

The schedule will not be finalized until closer to the Assembly, since decisions made by the Conference of Bishops, the Church Council and by next spring's synod assemblies will influence the agenda. They noted that even when the schedule is set, it is still subject to change at the Assembly, since the "Assembly belongs to the Voting Members."

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Among the items that will be on the agenda are the election of the ELCA's presiding bishop and secretary. Current Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton will seek re-election, while incumbent Secretary Chris Boerger will not.

The focus of their presentation, though, was the need for volunteers from the synod. They are looking for co-chairs for the host committee, with a goal of having them in place by mid-November so that they can travel to Chicago to meet with ELCA staff. "Most of this is about recruiting volunteers; need a lot of volunteers." Staff will provide a typical volunteer structure, which ends up being tweaked at every Assembly. The goal, they said, "is to make sure everybody knows the direction we want to go." Mary Romskog will be the point person on synod staff.

Total attendance will likely be between 1,800 and 2,000, with close to 1,000 of attendees serving as Voting Members.

One of the efforts will be to create gift bags, with items related to ministries, and children's participation.

Among the roles to be filled are ushers, hospitality (coming up with local restaurants and other attractions), and greeters at the airport and at hotels. At the convention center there will be a need for people to give directions, to help people with special needs, to staff registration tables to hand out bags and name badges, and to serve as microphone pages. There will also need to be technology volunteers, who will be trained by ELCA staff, to address a range of issues, especially targeting problems when things don't go right. The tech volunteers will also help with material distribution if needed. There is special interest in recruiting youth volunteers.

There will probably be three local arrangement committee meetings, to be sure that everyone knows what is going on at the Assembly, and who is responsible for what. "We are all there to support each other."

The advance team of three staff members includes Gail Schroeder; Ms. Michala Mahoney, Senior Meeting Planner, who serves as registrar; and Rosa Perez, Meeting Planner. The CWA planning team is responsible for compiling the agenda.

One of the noteworthy things is that there are increasing numbers of ecumenical partners involved with the Assembly.

Bishop Erickson asked whether there would be any time for participants to visit ministry sites. Among the sites mentioned were the beehives on the roof of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Alice's Garden, and the gardens at All People's Lutheran Church. This may be possible for nearby sites, especially if visits can be arranged following the close of the Assembly on Saturday morning for voting members. There may be more opportunity for Assembly visitors to go to the sites.

There will be no Grace Gathering at this Assembly. Grace Gathering was an event at the 2016 New Orleans Assembly that engaged people who were not Voting Members in prayer and study while the Assembly was in session.

Devotions

Rev. Thomas-Breitfeld led devotions. Talked about wound-care device, likening it to carrying the extra weight of guilt. The weight is lifted by God. In removing bad stuff, having that sucked out, there is a new beginning. He carried this into the idea of what happens with the power of forgiveness, each Sunday. His devotions concluded with a Litany shared by all.

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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 July 19, 2018; approval of on leave from call status for Rev. Steven Clingman, effective September 10, 2018, for the standard three-year leave period; and approval of retired status for Rev. Dean Natterstad, effective October 1, 2018.

Council Action

Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a synod call to serve as Director of Pastoral Care at Luther Manor to Rev. Laura B. Gerstl-Beukema, effective October 1, 2018.

Vice President's Report

Vice President Caldwell spoke first about building capacity for anti-racism teams in synods. She and Rev. Marilyn Miller conducted sessions in Chicago, focusing their efforts on 15 synods with new or newer anti-racism efforts.

She described this work as deeply engaging, and elaborated on the relationship between the themes the Council has dealt with in recent months; curiosity, compassion and courage; and the themes of the training; diversity, inclusion and equity. She said that curiosity lines up with diversity, compassion with inclusion, and courage “comes to the place of equity.”

Her call to the Council was, between now and the November retreat, to ponder these words, and to look at the things where we need to take action, to die to implicit biases and structures of racism. This, she said, was not a matter of looking at where we've been, but of looking at new directions and possibilities, listening to new voices.

Beyond the Council, she spoke of work that was done to look at pathways for congregations and synods to move to different places. “What does this mean for change, and for our congregations?”

She urged members of the Council to attend the three-day Anti-Racism Training at the beginning of November. Pastors Arnold and Short from synod staff will attend. She called participation a good lead-in to the retreat, looking at how we examine our culture. The bishop added that participation in the three-day Anti-Racism Training is not just requested, but is a commitment that comes with serving on the Council.

“Diversity, inclusion and equity” she concluded, saying that diversity is who is in the room, equity responds to who is trying to get in but can't, and inclusion asks that everyone's ideas be heard. Finally, there is justice, knowing whose ideas won't be taken seriously because they are in a minority.

Bishop's Report

Bishop Erickson asked for an executive session, with only voting members of the Council present, to discuss a roster matter.

When returning to open session, the bishop told the Council that a letter following up on Synod Assembly resolutions was sent to congregations. The letter encourages support for Reconciling in Christ and for the Breaking the Chains prison ministry.

Another letter, with an accompanying list of Frequently Asked Questions, on sacramental leadership was be sent out soon. The key question was who can preside at the Eucharist, with the bishop saying that he is sworn to follow the precepts of the church. This means there are limited situations where

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having a lay person leading communion is appropriate. When this is done, it must be licensed by the bishop for a particular worship setting, and must be renewed every year.

In other action, the bishop sent a letter recognizing Rev. Pedro Zaragoza as a Synodically authorized minister. Rev. Zaragoza has been working at Emaús ELCA in Racine since September 1st.

He encouraged participation in Fed for the Journey events, asking that all Synod Council members participate in at least one of the five events. They are meant to remind people why we are church together. Next year, he added, he will be asking Council members and staff to conduct every-congregation visits, with each visitor going to two congregations, after being trained in late summer.

The bishop ended his report with a video taken during his visit to Tanzania in August highlighting the water project supported by a grant from the synod, telling the Council that these are “real people whose lives are touched and changed by the decisions you make here.”

Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Tom Gauthier reported that giving is behind expectations by about \$160,000, and behind last year’s level by about \$70,000. “I still have faith” he said “that we are going to do it.” He said he is confident for the long run. A mitigating factor is that expenses are down. One-third of congregations are behind in their giving, with nine not having given yet this fiscal year.

He also presented the synod’s financial audit, noting that this is the first year that the audit has included Outreach for Hope and Lutheran Campus Ministry. Not included was the Mount Meru Coffee Project, which will be included in future audits. Also missing was a cost basis for the Corner House, which was donated to LCM in 1957, but for which no cost or donation value records have been found.

These two omissions led to a qualified opinion, though aside from them there were no other concerns expressed by the auditors. Mr. Gauthier said that the synod should get a clean audit for next year. He added that internal controls are in compliance and procedures in the synod are excellent. “Things done the way they are supposed to be done.”

Old Business

Working Group on Structure of Clusters and Representational Principles

The working group, consisting of Matthew Brockmeier, chair, Bishop Erickson, Joyce Caldwell, Mark Christiaansen, Jerry Key and Claire Zautke has not met, but will work to schedule a meeting following the Council meeting.

Synod Council Open Positions

Bishop Erickson reported on the status of efforts to fill vacant Council positions. Current vacancies are lay male for the Kenosha/West Racine Cluster, and clergy for the Waukesha cluster. The bishop has been in contact with the cluster deans, who have contacted leaders in their clusters, but there are no results yet.

Update on Synod Council Retreat for Saturday, November 17, 2018

The Council’s November 17th retreat will be at Christ Church in Mequon, from approximately 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. There will be an outside facilitator for the day. Lunch will be provided. Vice President Caldwell opined that it would be an interactive and fun engagement, looking at who we are, our mission, where are we moving.

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Proposed Continuing Resolution to Increase Lay Member Representation at the Synod Assembly

A plan to increase lay voting member representation for the Synod Assembly was presented. This plan was developed as an alternative approach to the bylaw amendment considered by the Assembly, and referred to the Council for further study.

Questions in discussion included the definition of youth and young adult (not yet 18 at time of election, and 18 through 30 at the time of election, respectively), whether there are enough people who would do this (the bishop noted changes to the Assembly schedule for 2019), and who is responsible for paying for youth or young adults attending (congregations should pay for all Voting Members, though some scholarship support is available).

There was additional discussion on ways to better engage youth and young adults, including possible breakout sessions. Ideas should be forwarded to Mary Romskog for consideration by the Assembly planning team.

Means of notifying congregations were discussed.

Council Action

Approval of Continuing Resolution

The Council voted to approve Continuing Resolutions S7.21.A18. and S7.21.B18., replacing Continuing Resolution S7.21.A13., as follows:

S7.21.A18.13. All congregations may elect at least ~~three two~~ lay voting members of the Synod Assembly. Congregations having 750 to 1,249 baptized members may elect a ~~fourth third~~ lay voting member. Thereafter an additional lay voting member may be added for each additional 500 baptized members of the congregation (e.g. at 1,250 members, 1,750 members, etc.).

S7.21.B18. If more than two lay voting members of the Synod Assembly are elected under provision S7.21.A18. above, at least one shall be a youth or young adult.

New Business

Request for Funding from the Immanuel Endowment Fund

The Endowment Committee provided a report including a recommendation for funding for one urban internship this year. This request is being handled under the old process; the new process will begin with next year's granting and internship cycle. The total request was for \$17,000, out of a total project cost of \$23,000 (\$6,000 will be provided by the congregation, Cross Lutheran Church in Milwaukee). The Endowment Committee and Outreach for Hope have agreed to a plan to split the grant equally between them, each contributing \$8,500.

The bishop informed the Council that Outreach for Hope currently has approximately \$80,000 available for urban internship support and the Immanuel Fund has approximately \$230,000 available. Outreach for Hope funds can be used in any urban setting in the synod, while the Immanuel Fund can only be used to fund internships in the City of Milwaukee.

Council Action

Approval of Endowment Fund Allocation

The Council voted to approve the recommendation of the GMS Endowment Committee to fund a semi-annual internship at Cross Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, in the amount of \$8,500.00.

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A larger discussion resulted in a request to have the Endowment Committee and Outreach for Hope work together, operating as one umbrella for the solicitation of major gifts for the synod. There will be a formal proposal forthcoming. This may require an amendment to the rules of the Endowment Committee. No action on this question is required from the Council yet.

There is also a request for the development of a seminary scholarship fund, supported by proceeds from the Estate of Harry G. Schaaf. The bishop said there were two ways to respond to this request, either through the ELCA Fund for Leadership (which has provided 50 full tuition scholarships; two this year) or the creation of a GMS Fund for Leaders. If the latter, the endowment committee would work with the candidacy committee to create a proposal for a suitable structure, for which they would need Council approval.

Council Action

Approval of Development of a Structure for a Seminary Fund

The Council voted to approve the development of a structure for a synod-based seminary fund to provide scholarships as a combined effort of the Endowment and Candidacy committees.

2019 Compensation Guidelines

Rev. Jennifer Arnold presented the completed 2019 Compensation Guidelines for Clergy and for Deacons, and the summary of changes. The process of developing this year's guidelines included a survey of congregational leaders, with Rev. Arnold saying there had been decent feedback.

Key points in the report include pay increases (in addition to step increases) of two percent, clarified housing allowance information, and updated language on parsonages, since those are now far less frequently used. Explanations of changes from prior year guidelines and unnecessary appendices were removed as part of an effort to generally clean up the documents. A compensation/benefits worksheet was added, similar to what synod staff uses. Rather than explaining Portico benefits, references to where that information can be obtained were included. Guidance on weekly time off was rewritten.

The bishop added that in setting guidelines we continue to look at what other nearby synods are doing.

A question was raised about how to compensate unusual situations. The answer from the bishop was that "we get creative."

Rev. Arnold mentioned that there is currently a paragraph providing special guidance for part-time calls, but that in future editions there may need to be further detail.

While most of the attention was on the clergy guidelines, there was also brief discussion on guidelines for deacons. Like clergy, a two percent general increase is included. It was noted that historically guidelines for deacons have called for compensation about 30% less than clergy, owing to the housing allowance for clergy. That may not make as much sense in the future. There are currently eight or nine active deacons in the synod.

The guidelines will go out on the website by the first of October.

Council Action

Approval of 2019 Compensation Guidelines

The Council voted to approve the 2019 Compensation Guidelines for Clergy and for Deacons as presented.

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Approve Health Insurance Gold Plus Plan for all Covered Synod Staff

The Council considered the benefit level for health insurance offered to synod staff for 2019, with the Executive Committee having recommended a continuation of the Gold Plus insurance level.

Council Action

Approval of Health Insurance Coverage Level for Staff

The Council voted to approve continuation of the Gold Plus Health Insurance Plan for all covered synod staff for 2019.

The bishop and Mr. Mark Christiaansen abstained from the vote due to conflicts of interest.

The Table's Constitution

Following action by The Table to recommend its new constitution to the synod, the Council considered approval. The synod acts to approve constitutions for Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities, something that congregations do on their own, with synodical review.

Council Action

Approval of SAWC Constitution

The Council voted to approve the constitution of The Table, a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community, as presented, with an effective date of September 20, 2018.

Rev. Short will review the status of governing documents for another SAWC, the Breaking the Chains ministry, and will report to the Council in November.

Election of At-Large Members of the Synod Council Executive Committee

Council Action

Election of Executive Committee Members

The Council voted to elect Ms. Amber Davis, Mr. Mark Christiaansen, and Ms. Anja Logan to serve on the Executive Committee through August 2019.

Sign up to Host January, March and May Synod Council Meetings

Brief discussion on sites for Council meetings in the first half of 2019. Joyce Caldwell will check on having the January meeting at Faith in Cedarburg, and Tom Gauthier on having the May meeting at Grace in Thiensville.

Notice of Review of Governance at November Council Meeting for Boards of Outreach for Hope and Mount Meru Coffee Project

Retiring Synod Attorney Stephen Knowles is expected to report on recommendations for revising governing documents for Outreach for Hope and the Mount Meru Coffee Project at the November meeting.

Action on Next Year's Synod Office Lease Rate

The bishop asked to postpone this item to the next meeting, when a more complete proposal will be available.

Reports

Evangelical Mission – A written report was submitted, to which Rev. Short added comments, including how the Breaking the Chains steering committee is very active and very organized. He attends most of the meetings, and is looking at how to coordinate resources. Other highlights included the six-synod training at Luther Seminary, and work with the synod mission table, “a very active

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spirit-led group.” There were ten or eleven missional consultants who volunteered at the Synod Assembly.

Congregations in Mission – Two written reports were submitted. The reports were color-coded, with one sorted by cluster so that differences between clusters were highlighted. The color key was also expanded to allow easy tracking not only of current and pending transitions, but also recent calls. The number of new calls has been increasing, with 16 in 2018, 12 in 2017, seven in 2016 and nine in 2015. With so much turnover, Rev. Nielsen wants members of the council to be aware of who is new in their clusters, so that they can be mindful of getting to know them. “It’s exciting that there are transitions, but it is also scary. Council members can help” by praying.

Missional Leadership – A written report was submitted, with additional highlights by Rev. Arnold. She reported on the Fall Theological Conference, which starts Sunday evening with around 80 registrations. There is a “great team working on this.” A new approach for the boundaries workshop will be shared at the conference. The communications event has about 50 registrations to date. “Learnings will be relevant for anyone working in a congregation.” Together in Mission has been moved from February 9th to February 16th. There was a conflict for the February 9th date with an every-other-year ELCA event. There is a survey out and open for input regarding Together in Mission. There will also be candidacy gatherings with first-call pastors.

Lutheran Campus Ministry – No report submitted.

Reconciling in Christ – A written report was provided. Rev. Beyer spoke about the October 13th Reconciling in Christ congregational summit. The hope is to talk about what it means to be RIC congregations in the synod and to begin working on how to work with resolution approved by this year’s Synod Assembly. Looking at a building process for RIC. Twenty-seven congregations are RIC, along with two other ministries. Four congregations are in the process of becoming RIC congregations.

Anti-Racism Team – A verbal report was presented, with Rev. Thomas-Breitfeld reporting that in addition to the Anti-Racism Training, Crossroads is working to rebuild the team. But the big thing remains the Anti-Racism Training.

Women of the ELCA – A written report was submitted. Suzanne Seidemann encouraged participation in WELCA’s convention in October. The bishop will be present for the luncheon and a workshop. Keynote speaker will be Rev. Kathy Jacobson, who has written four Christian novels. She will talk about her books and why she does that work. There will be other workshops, including on Lutheran Social Services, and Street Angels. Registration is \$60.

Outreach for Hope – A verbal report was presented by Mr. Bob Reinders. The annual bike ride has raised \$106,000 of the \$120,000 goal so far, with post-event fundraising continuing. There were 360 riders and 100 volunteers. Funds raised help cover administrative and operational expenses. The grant process timeline was also shared, with congregations submitting applications until the end of September, with decisions made in November.

Other Discussion

Twelve ministries in the synod’s area are applying for domestic hunger grants from the ELCA (not all of which are ELCA entities).

Mr. Tom Gauthier reported that Grace Lutheran Church in Kenosha raised \$1,600 to cover two months of their breakfast program, with Pr. Jonathan Barker shaving his head and beard.

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There was a question from Ms. Janet Wunrow on the sustainability of Latino ministries. Rev. Short responded that there is a plan to convene a summit in November to shape overall strategy, which will incorporate the needs of unique situations and larger goals.

The bishop expanded on the question to say that there were twelve active congregational vitality grants in the synod when Rev. Short took on his role on staff. Changes are pending to these efforts, and the bishop said that most congregations that have received partnership grants in the past will not continue to receive them in the same way. He is serving on a group reviewing congregational vitality issues; there will be two days in the middle of the Conference of Bishops devoted to working with ELCA staff to develop a longer view.

Rev. Short added that he believes the synod is well-positioned to take advantage of revised grants. Joyce Caldwell will attend the synod vice presidents' session at the ELCA.

Bishop Erickson reminded members to consider service as a co-chair for the Churchwide Assembly local coordinating committee. Anyone interested should call either the bishop or Vice President Caldwell.

Janet Wunrow will share devotions at the next Council meeting.

Next Council Meeting

Thursday, Thursday, November 15, 2018

Faith/Santa Fe Lutheran Church, 1000 South Layton Boulevard, Milwaukee

Future Meetings and Events

- Thursday, November 1 – Saturday, November 3, 2018 – Anti-Racism Training – Mt. Carmel Lutheran Church, 8424 West Center Street, Milwaukee
- Saturday, November 17, 2018 – Synod Council Retreat – Christ Church, 13460 North Port Washington Road, Mequon
- Thursday, January 17, 2019 – Location TBD
- Saturday, February 16, 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