

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA  
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting  
March 21, 2019

St. John's Lutheran Church  
20275 Davidson Road, Brookfield

**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. Bob Reinders	Belle City	2021	X		10/2015
Mr. Joshua Kuehn	Kenosha/West Racine	2021	X		Pending
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		11/2018
Rev. Elizabeth Jaeger	Northern Lakeshore	2021	X		Pending
Mr. Mark Christiaansen	Northwest	2021	X		Pending
Rev. Kevin Kretzmann Farrar	Waukesha	2019	X		Pending
Rev. Lindsay Jordan	At Large	2019	X		2/2016
Mr. Jerry Key	At Large	2019		X	11/2018
Ms. Amber Davis	At Large	2019		X	Pending
Ms. Joyce Caldwell	Vice President	2021 (1)	X		11/2018
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; and Rev. Kristin Nielsen, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations in Mission.

**Devotions**

Ms. Anja Logan shared devotions.

**Appointment to Synod Council to Fill Vacancy**

**Council Action**

**SC 19.03.01. Appointment to Council**

The Council voted to appoint Mr. Joshua Kuehn to the Synod Council to fill a cluster-nominated vacancy for the Kenosha/West Racine Cluster, created by the resignation of Mr. George Sorenson, for a term ending August 31, 2021.

**Consent Agenda**

Items on the consent agenda included adoption of the agenda for this meeting; approval of minutes from the regular Synod Council meeting on January 17, 2019; approval of on leave from call status for Rev. Jay McDivitt, effective February 1, 2019, for the standard three-year leave period; approval of the current On Leave from Call Roster; and approval of the Retired Roster A-1.

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## **Council Action**

### **SC 19.03.02. Approval of Consent Agenda**

The Council voted to approve all items from the consent agenda as presented, including adoption of the agenda for this meeting, approval of minutes from the regular Synod Council meeting on January 17, 2019; approval of on leave from call status for Rev. Jay McDivitt, effective February 1, 2019, for the standard three-year leave period; approval of the current On Leave from Call Roster; and approval of the Retired Roster A-1.

## **Approval of Synod Calls**

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 19.03.03. Approval of Synod Call**

The Council voted to approve a synod call to Rev. Steve Clingman to Interim Ministry at Christ the Servant Lutheran Church, Waukesha, effective February 1, 2019.

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 19.03.04. Approval of Synod Call**

The Council voted to approve a synod call to Rev. James D. Holmberg to Interim Ministry at Christ the King Lutheran Church, Delafield, effective January 7, 2019.

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 19.03.05. Approval of Synod Call**

The Council voted to approve a synod call to Rev. Cynthia Aasen to Interim Ministry at Spirit Alive Lutheran Church, Kenosha, effective October 1, 2018.

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 19.03.06. Approval of Synod Call**

The Council voted to approve a synod call to Rev. Jonathan M. Breimeier to Interim Ministry at Living Christ Lutheran Church, Germantown, effective March 14, 2019.

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 19.03.07. Approval of Synod Call**

The Council voted to approve a synod call to Rev. Elizabeth Baires to Interim Ministry at St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Waukesha, effective December 20, 2018.

## **Vice President's Report**

Vice President Joyce Caldwell addressed two issues, Reconciling in Christ and Anti-Racism. The dinner speaker at the Synod Assembly, Rev. Emmy Kegler, will provide her perspective on LGBTQ+ issues and the church as an openly gay woman called to ordained ministry.

Council members Rev. Elizabeth Jaeger and Rev. Kevin Kretzmann Farrar will attend Anti-Racism Training next month. The annual fall Crossroads Training has been set for Thursday, October 24 through Saturday, October 26. Additional training opportunities and resources for congregations are being developed. Invitations will be issued to congregations which have shown interest for a session on May 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> using materials based in those of the former Lutheran Human Relations Association. The training is titled Learning and Telling the Story: Deconstructing Racism.

Vice President Caldwell then asked for sharing by members of the Council to understand what is important to each about their service, followed by a series of questions that can be posed to congregations about members' relationships to the synod that illustrate the importance of mission support. She noted that many of these relationships, from using ELCA curricula and worship materials to drinking Mt. Meru coffee are in plain view, but often not perceived as coming from the larger

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church. She ended by saying that we “get back more than we give by being part of the larger church.”

### **Bishop’s Report**

Bishop Paul Erickson noted his report in the Council’s materials in the Dropbox file, highlighting the staff retreat. Staff met in Milwaukee, shared their work and created a statement, which is included in the report.

He urged members of the Council to register as Voting Members of the Synod Assembly. The synod covers registration fees for all Council members.

He also reported that he has granted Synodically Authorized Minister status to Betty Rendon, who has been approved for ordination, for her work at Emaús Evangelical Lutheran Church in Racine.

### **Treasurer’s Report**

Treasurer Tom Gauthier reported that the fiscal year which ended on January 31, 2019 had general mission support income more than \$180,000 below budget. The impact on expenditures was that the ELCA, which receives 55% of mission support income, received less than was budgeted, as did several other synod-related ministries whose support is figured as a percentage of income.

The positive part of the picture is that expenses were below budget, with medical and dental benefits almost \$40,000 under budget. The bottom line was a fiscal year-end deficit of about \$84,000, less than the budgeted deficit for the year. Despite being favorable to the planned deficit, this is not a sustainable track for synod finances.

There was a question about a Siebert grant item, which included carry-over from the previous year’s receipts. It was noted that these are unaudited statements.

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 19.03.08. Acceptance of Financial Statements**

The Council voted to accept the financial reports for Fiscal Year 2019 as presented.

Financial discussion continued with a review of the current year fiscal year (ending January 31, 2020) budget. Based on last year’s results and current indications from congregations, a \$100,000 decrease in income from the budgeted level is expected. This will lead to corresponding decreases again in payments to the ELCA, Campus Ministry and other recipients of synod support. At the same time, the favorable situation with health insurance premiums is expected to continue.

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 19.03.09. Amendment of Budget**

The Council voted to amend the budget for the current (2019-2020) fiscal year, as recommended, decreasing anticipated income by \$100,000 (to \$1,900,000), with decreases in ELCA Mission Support and support for other ministries whose allocations are determined by percentage of synodical mission support received.

Discussion moved on to general giving trends by synods (a 49% average allocation to ELCA Mission Support) and within the synod by congregations. Congregations are giving more, but not sending it to the synod, instead sending funds to other ministries.

Bishop Erickson emphasized the need for sufficient cash reserves to support cash flow needs through the year as the Council considered three options for the 2020-2021 budget, with the primary difference being the level of ELCA Mission Support, ranging from the current 55% of mission sup-

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port received by the synod down to a low of 50% of mission support. Also discussed were possibilities within these options, with reductions in staff and in funding for campus ministry if ELCA Mission Support is maintained at the current level.

Tom Gauthier moved the finance committee's recommendation to reduce ELCA Mission Support to 52.5% of synod mission support received. This option would not reduce staffing or support for campus ministry.

Discussion revolved around questions of maintaining key expenditure lines, considering whether congregational giving could be expected to increase, and looking at whether the capital campaign might offer some relief by providing support to campus ministry. Informing this discussion was the additional consideration in changes in how congregations disperse their funds.

Bob Reinders offered a motion to amend the current motion, reducing ELCA Mission Support to 50%.

Discussion on the motion to amend included a reminder that, whatever level of support is chosen, this will remain a recommendation until the Synod Assembly acts. The bishop stated that it will be much better to give the Assembly one recommendation, rather than having them select from three options. Consideration was also given to the fact that the synod is well-run, and to not making promises to the ELCA that cannot be met if the \$1.9 million goal is not hit. Final comments were that more funds can be directed to the ELCA if we have a better than expected year, and that if there is a problem with funding the Council can revisit the budget, as it did for the current year's budget.

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 19.03.10. Motion to Amend**

The Council voted to reject an amendment to the main motion on recommendation of the budget which would have reduced the synod's contributions to ELCA Mission Support to 50% of synodical mission support received.

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 19.03.11. Recommendation of Budget**

The Council voted to recommend approval of the proposed budget for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2021 to the 2019 Synod Assembly, based on budget option 2 as presented, with ELCA Mission Support reduced to 52.5% of overall mission support received.

### **Old Business**

#### **Report from Churchwide Assembly Local Arrangements Committee**

Rev. Lindsay Jordan reported that, with the synod playing host to the Churchwide Assembly, 600 volunteers are needed. As of Monday, 47 were signed up. He said this will be a great five-day period. Among the first priorities are solidifying leadership in hospitality and worship support (looking for coordinators). Further information will be available in the form of a press packet for congregations to use in recruitment.

Vice President Joyce Caldwell reminded members that this is a place to see the larger church at work. The final note was a reminder for congregations that took bags to decorate to return them to the Synod Assembly.

#### **Coordination of Synod Council member attendance at Crossroads Training April 25-27, LSTC**

Previously addressed.

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## **Next Steps in Discussion of Synod Mission, Vision, Values**

### **Summarize feedback on Draft 1**

Extensive feedback was received from the website posting.

### **Review proposed revisions for Draft 2**

The bishop told the Council that the immediate goal is to put Draft 2 onto the website for comment as soon as possible.

The Council broke into four discussion groups, each reviewing one section of the draft statement. Discussion on particulars following group discussions, with general agreement on changes to be worked into the draft.

### **Approve Draft 2 to present to synod for feedback by May 1**

## **Council Action**

### **SC 19.03.12. Action to Table**

The Council voted to table consideration of Draft 2 of the Mission, Vision, Values statement until an electronic meeting can be held following completion of the draft.

## **Update on Appeal Campaign Development**

The bishop reported on work being done with consultant Mike Ward and a small group including Joyce Caldwell and Tim Larson, director of Outreach for Hope, to see if people are receptive to the idea of the campaign. This will include discussion with a pastors' advisory cabinet, and between 45 and 55 individuals to be interviewed by Mr. Ward and one of his associates in early May. Questions to be addressed are whether individuals are excited by the prospect of the campaign, and whether it is coming at the right time. Synod Assembly registrants will also receive a link to a survey.

Results of this work will be presented to the Council at its next regular meeting on May 16<sup>th</sup>. There will be time in that agenda to hear the report and to decide what to do next. Also included will be an overview of the elements of the fund by Bishop Erickson.

## **New Business**

### **Appointment of Replacement Churchwide Assembly Voting Members**

Following the resignations of three Voting Members of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly elected by the 2018 Synod Assembly, the Council acted to fill two of the resulting vacancies. Those resigning were Ms. Aliliywa Mbise, lay youth/young adult person of color or whose primary language is other than English; Mr. Matt Nelson, lay male youth/young adult from the Belle City Cluster; and Ms. Nanette Smith as the lay female from the Northwest Cluster.

## **Council Action**

### **SC 19.03.13. Appointment of Churchwide Assembly Voting Members**

The Council voted to appoint Mr. Kou Thao to replace Ms. Aliliywa Mbise as an at-large Churchwide Assembly Voting Member who is a lay youth/young adult person of color or whose primary language is other than English and to appoint Ms. Maria Liedtke to replace Ms. Nanette Smith as the lay female Churchwide Assembly Voting Member from the Northwest Cluster.

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**Action to Recommend 2019 Synod Assembly Rules**

**Council Action**

**SC 19.03.14. Recommendation of Rules and Procedures**

The Council voted to recommend the 2019 Synod Assembly Rules and Procedures as presented for approval by the 2019 Synod Assembly.

**Action to Allow Synod Assembly Participation**

**Council Action**

**SC 19.03.15. Approval of Participation in Synod Assembly**

The Council voted to extend voice and vote at the Synod Assembly to Pastor Debra Traekel, a pastor of the Episcopal Church, serving as interim Pastor at the Adoration Lutheran Church, Greenfield.

**Action to Recommend 2019 Synod Assembly Agenda**

**Council Action**

**SC 19.03.16. Action to Table**

The Council voted to table consideration of the 2019 Synod Assembly Agenda until an electronic meeting can be held following completion of the draft.

**Action to Recommend Designation of Synod Assembly Offering**

The Council received information on current balances for Reconciling in Christ (RIC) and Cross-Gen Ministry, and amounts allocated to each in the budget. Motion to designate Synod Assembly offering to RIC.

**Council Action**

**SC 19.03.17. Recommendation on Designation of Offering**

The Council voted to recommend to the 2019 Synod Assembly that the offering collected during assembly worship be designated to support Reconciling in Christ ministry and programs.

**Review 2018 Synod Assembly Resolution Status**

The Council received a status update on two resolutions approved at last year's Synod Assembly; on Reconciling in Christ, the other on prison ministries. Written reports on both will be presented to the 2019 Assembly.

**Resolutions and Memorials for the 2019 Synod Assembly**

Resolutions and memorials will come from a number of different places within the synod, with the Reference & Counsel Committee to review.

**September 19 Synod Council Meeting at ELCA Headquarters in Chicago**

The Council will meet at the ELCA building in Chicago (near O'Hare Airport) on September 19<sup>th</sup> in an all-day session.

**Nomination Needed**

Among other nominations for which the Synod Council is responsible is that for synod secretary. Nominations for this position are being sought.

**Reports**

**Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted.

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**Congregations in Mission** – A written report was submitted. Rev. Kristin Nielsen said that she is deeply grateful for working with Jennifer Arnold in the transition work with congregations, and that it is good to have congregations excited to have calls. She said the synod is working toward a normal range of about 25 transitions in progress.

**Missional Leadership** – A written report was submitted. Rev. Jennifer Arnold said that her report included events; “most of this was about giving information about what is going on.” She emphasized the final page of the report, featuring training and presentations by Austen Hartke on September 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Lutheran Campus Ministry** – No report was presented.

**Reconciling in Christ** – A written report was submitted.

**Anti-Racism Team** – No written report submitted. Jerry Key reported that ART is attempting to create an event for millennials toward the end of summer before the beginning of the new school year.

**Women of the ELCA** – No report was presented.

**Outreach for Hope** – No written report was presented. Bob Reinders said that OFH is at a fork in the road, as the current path of grantmaking is diminishing OFH’s fund balance. He said that investment income has not been sufficient to support the current level of expenditures. One possible path is to create a challenge grant of \$50,000 a year for three years with a match, with proceeds earmarked for expansion of OFH to hire an event coordinator. Another option is to have a third bike ride in Racine or Kenosha. There is discussion on whether this is the way to go with staffing, with a “go big or go home” philosophy. The proposed funding campaign could also help support OFH.

## Final Notes

- Jerry Key reported that there may be one more viewing of “Green Book” with discussion.
- Rev. Lindsay Jordan said that he was learning more about the Meru partnership at his new congregation, and wondered whether the synod’s partnerships should receive more attention by the Council. Bishop Erickson said that the executive committee would look at that question.

## Next Council Meeting

**Thursday, May 16, 2019**

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, 303 Green Bay Road, Thiensville

## Future Meetings and Events

- Friday, May 31 – Saturday, June 1, 2019 – Synod Assembly – Italian Community Center, 631 East Chicago Street, Milwaukee
- Thursday, July 18, 2019 – Synod Council Meeting – Bishop Erickson’s house 3072 S. 47th Street, Milwaukee
- Thursday, September 19, 2019 – Synod Council Meeting - ELCA Churchwide Ministries, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, Illinois (all-day, time 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