

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
May 16, 2019

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
303 Green Bay Road, Thiensville

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. Kristin Nielsen, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations in Mission; Rev. Matthew Short, Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission; Mike Ward, Gronlund Sayther Brunkow; Rev. John Bischoff, Jr., Outreach for Hope; Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse, Lutheran Campus Ministry; Rev. Bill Beyer, Reconciling in Christ and host pastor; Maripat Monahan, Advancement Director, Outreach for Hope; Rev. Jessica Short, Lutheran Campus Ministry; and Cynthia Halverson, Chair, Outreach for Hope.

Devotions

Rev. Bill Beyer shared devotions based on the Book of Revelation, the story of which, he said, is that "God wins."

Consent Agenda

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 regular Synod Council meeting on March 21, 2019 and of the minutes from the special electronic Synod Council meeting conducted on March 31 and April 1, 2019; approval of on retired status for Rev. Mary (Molly) Doreza, effective June 1, 2019; and acceptance of the April 2019 financial statements.

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Findings from Feasibility Study – Michael Ward

The Council heard from Michael Ward, consultant, who provided an overview of the feasibility study he and a colleague have prepared.

The final work on the study was to conduct 47 interviews in early May, with a separate survey sent to voting members of the Synod Assembly. Seventy-eight surveys were returned.

The level of response, and the commitment of most of those interviewed to congregational life, provided confidence, in Mr. Ward's opinion, in the ability of the synod to launch a major fundraising effort. Key areas of interest were the quality of programs and ministry of congregations and the synod, an assessment of needs most valued by respondents, and opinions about the capability of the synod to conduct such a campaign. Overall, respondents expressed a high level of trust and confidence in synod leadership, an important factor in recommending that this project move forward.

The role of the synod was an important part of these discussions, with a sense by some respondents that the synod should prioritize support for existing leaders over support for seminarians, for example, and needs to better communicate its work to avoid further movement away from the synod by congregations pursuing their own ministry partnerships outside of the context of the synod.

Using a major campaign simply to fund ongoing operations by ministries like Outreach for Hope or Lutheran Campus Ministry were not strongly supported. What was supported was the concept of innovation, which could feed back into Outreach for Hope or Lutheran Campus Ministry, as well as other ministries and activities.

Innovation was one of three main themes explored in the research. The other two, compassion and leadership, did not garner the same level of support as innovation.

In terms of timing, Mr. Ward emphasized that, with relatively strong support for the concept of the campaign, and with the opportunity to use preparation for a campaign to clarify synodical priorities, it is important to act now. He said that the opportunity would likely pass, and a campaign like this not be as likely to succeed in several years.

While there was decent support for the campaign, somewhat lower than ideal willingness by those interviewed to either take leadership roles or to make significant gifts is a cautionary factor. These responses were not absent, just not as strong as would be optimal. One thing that impressed the consultants was the level of engagement by retired clergy, who had a keen interest in the well-being of current rostered leaders.

Possible outcomes from this process could include an increased emphasis on partnerships, and additional supports for existing leaders.

The need for improved communication by ministries and the Synod Council was emphasized. Part of this is to clearly articulate stories that provide a better view of the role played by the synod. Also important is clarity in the possible use of funds, keeping in mind the desire by respondents to fund innovative work, and not simply filling the coffers for annual funds.

The order of magnitude for the level of funding possible through this campaign is \$2 million to \$2 ½ million.

Next steps include working with the pastors' advisory council that was created for this review to develop the case, and for the synod to review and revamp its communications strategy to begin developing a strong narrative about its work.

Questions from Council members and others addressed how ministries might fit into the plan, what effect a campaign might have on other fundraising efforts, and whether the results of the interviews were consistent across different parts of the population.

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The Council was cautioned not to make a campaign sound like a laundry list, but to focus on innovation and on the leaders of the synod.

With agreement that the questions of case refinement and communications should proceed quickly, the Council agreed that the fine-tuned plan would be brought back in the fall, probably for the November Council meeting, following action by the Synod Assembly to approve continued work.

Mike Ward, who will make a brief presentation at the Assembly, was thanked for his work.

One question was whether voting members of the Assembly would know enough about what the funds would be used for to take action (this was answered by saying there would be explanatory remarks addressing the need to move forward with review and planning).

Another question was how quickly a new communications strategy could be developed.

Council Action

Recommendation to Synod Assembly

The Council voted to recommend that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly approve the continued development of a synod-wide mission appeal, seeking to raise up to \$2.5 million dedicated to priorities articulated in a case statement that will be refined by fall of 2019 and approved by Synod Council.

Vice President's Report

Vice President Joyce Caldwell submitted a written report. In brief remarks she called attention to encouraging mission support, with ideas included in the written report, and asking that members communicate these ideas in their own congregations, bringing attention to the idea that we all are the larger church. She also reminded members whose terms are ending this year that they will be recognized at about 11 o'clock on Saturday, June 1st at the Synod Assembly.

Bishop's Report

Bishop Paul Erickson also submitted a written report. He said that he is very pleased with the Vision/Mission/Values/Practices statement following good input through the process. He noted that there are now close to 400 registrants for the Synod Assembly, with 33 youth and young adults, 15 of whom were elected to extra spots made possible through the changes made in last year's continuing resolution allowing additional youth and young adult voting members. Finally, he brought attention to the ongoing ministry of David Rebey, serving Redemption Lutheran Church in an internship arrangement that will carry over into a second year.

Old Business

Report from Churchwide Assembly Local Arrangements Committee

Vice President Caldwell reported that Rev. Lindsay Jordan, who was unable to attend this evening, asked her to request that congregations encourage people to volunteer. A handout, in business card format, was provided to lead people to detailed information about volunteering. One idea floated was to encourage congregations to come as a group, perhaps carpooling, for a day of volunteering.

Bishop Erickson added that the mission site visits, originally planned for Saturday afternoon after the end of the Churchwide Assembly, had been moved to Monday morning before the opening session to better accommodate those travelling from other cities. These will take place between 8:30 am and noon, with out-of-town voting members having first priority in reserving spaces, followed on June 1st by local participants.

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Discussion and Recommendation of Synod Mission, Vision, Values, Practices

The Council reviewed Draft 3 of the Mission/Vision/Values/Practices document. There are, Bishop Erickson noted, a few significant differences in this draft, based on responses received since the second draft was distributed. Good comments, he said, that informed the revisions.

The intent is to present to the Synod Assembly for a vote, with a yes vote to approve, or, if the vote is against, to return to the Synod Council for revision.

After reviewing some of the major changes, the bishop said that the goal is to “find ways to keep this in front of people as a living document.” He said that this can feed into the innovation campaign.

Council Action

Action to Recommend

The Council voted to recommend that the Synod Assembly approve the Synod Mission, Vision, Values, Practices statement as presented.

New Business

Approval of Board Roster for Lutheran Campus Ministry

Council Action

Approval of Board Members

The Council voted to approve the election of three members of the Lutheran Campus Ministry Board of Directors; Marissa Knopick, Christ the Servant Lutheran Church, Waukesha to serve as a student member through January 2020; Seth Kiefer of Lake Park Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, to continue in his second term through January 2021; and Rev. Carolyn Sellers-Rizzo, Kingo, Shorewood, to serve through January 2022.

Approval of Submission of Grant Request by Lutheran Campus Ministry

Council Action

Approval of Grant Submission

The Council voted to approve submission of a grant request by Lutheran Campus Ministry to the Siebert Lutheran Foundation for funds totaling \$24,250 for the 2019-2020 school year: including \$9,600 in Peer Ministry Stipends for Campus Ministry at Marquette University; \$11,200 in Peer Ministry Stipends for Campus Ministry at UWM; and \$3,450 for retreat costs, including \$1,250 for house rental, \$300 for food, and \$1,900 for facilitator fees.

Appointment of Replacement Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

While a possible Voting Member has been identified, the nominating form has not yet been submitted. Action to approve will be in an electronic meeting when the form is in hand.

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Nomination for Synod Secretary

Council Action

Nomination for Synod Secretary

The Council voted to nominate Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse to serve as synod secretary for a term beginning September 1, 2019 and continuing through August 31, 2023, with the nomination to be presented to the 2019 Synod Assembly.

Nomination for Synod Council

No one has yet been identified to serve a two-year term as a youth representative on the Council. Nominations may be made from the floor of the Synod Assembly.

Review of Nominating Status

Most open positions do not have nominees. There are openings for Synod Council and for the Consultation Committee.

Review of Resolutions and Memorials for the 2019 Synod Assembly

Work was concluded today on the five resolutions submitted by the deadline. The resolutions and the report of the Reference & Counsel Committee are posted with Assembly materials online.

Synod Assembly Items of Note

The bishop reported that, with the addition of a stronger youth and young adult contingent, the required balance between lay and rostered members of the Synod Assembly was being met. He was also encouraged by strong registration for the orientation session for voting members scheduled for Friday afternoon.

He also mentioned the possibility of protesters outside the Assembly site, and asked that if there were protesters members of the synod either ignore them or be gracious, hospitable and kind.

Reports

Evangelical Mission – A written report was submitted. Rev. Short highlighted appreciation for what we heard tonight, giving communication a higher priority.

Congregations in Mission – A written report was submitted. Rev. Nielsen echoed the idea of finding ways to lift up stories, but with the limitation that much of her work with congregations is confidential. She called this “a good challenge.”

Missional Leadership – A written report was submitted, highlighting events. Vice President Caldwell mentioned her upcoming workshop with Rev. Marilyn Miller, on deconstructing racism, innovating and building partnerships. About 20 people due to attend.

Lutheran Campus Ministry – A written report was submitted for the UWM site.

Reconciling in Christ – No written report was presented. Rev. Bill Beyer of the RIC ministry team reported that there are now 27 congregations and two specialized ministries that have attained RIC status. Six congregations are currently in process, and three more would like to begin this work. He also told the Council that his congregation, Grace in Thiensville, provided a \$2,000 grant toward the workshop being conducted by Austen Hartke in September. This workshop is part of the work called for in a resolution adopted by the 2018 Synod Assembly. He ended his report by saying that RIC would be well-represented at Pridefest in Milwaukee in June.

Anti-Racism Team – No report was presented.

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Women of the ELCA – No report was presented.

Outreach for Hope – No written report was presented. Bob Reinders reported on Tim Larson's resignation as Executive Director when he accepted a position at Luther Seminary in St. Paul. His last day was May 15th. An exit interview will be conducted next week. The OFH executive committee will be meeting with the bishop to discuss leadership options and next steps. A fundraising challenge grant of 50K has had some success.

Sonja Wolfe, Church Council Representative – No report was presented

Final Notes

Bishop Erickson reported on the case of Betty Rendón, who was arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at her home in Chicago. He had recently approved her for Synodically Authorized Minister status, something that was reported to the Council in March.

She had been preaching at Emaús Evangelical Lutheran Church in Racine, and is now being held at the ICE detention facility in Kenosha, where a prayer vigil was held last evening. Her case is being taken up by the National Immigrant Justice Center, which is petitioning for her deportation order to be stayed. The bishop wrote a letter of support for her case, as well as speaking at last night's vigil.

He ended by urging members to send cards or letters to Ms. Rendón to let her know she is not alone.

Next Council Meeting Thursday, July 18, 2019

Bishop Erickson's house 3072 S. 47th Street, Milwaukee

Future Meetings and Events

- Friday, May 31 – Saturday, June 1, 2019 – Synod Assembly – Italian Community Center, 631 East Chicago 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