

Greater Milwaukee Synod Council Meeting Summary
 September 19, 2019
 ELCA Churchwide Offices—The Lutheran Center, Chicago, Illinois

God's Vision: A world that embodies the fullness of life: justice, peace, equity, hope and love for everyone, including all races, genders, identities, abilities, and social status.

Our Mission: We follow Jesus, form communities, love all.

Meeting Attendance

Name	Cluster/Position	Term Ends 8/31	Present	Absent
Mr. Bob Reinders	Belle City	2021	X (E)	
Mr. Joshua Kuehn	Kenosha/West Racine	2021		X
Ms. Vickie Stretz	Lake Country	2023	X	
OPEN	Milwaukee 1	2021		
Ms. Janet Wunrow	Milwaukee 2	2021		X
The Rev. Denise Mbise	Milwaukee 3	2023	X	
Ms. Amber Anderson	Milwaukee 4	2023	X	
The Rev. Elizabeth Jaeger	Northern Lakeshore	2021		X
Mr. Mark Christiaansen	Northwest	2021	X	
Mr. Edwin Aparicio	Waukesha	2023		X
The Rev. Kevin Kretzmann Farrar	At Large	2023	X	
Mr. José Andrés Guerrero	At Large	2023	X	
Ms. Amber Davis	At Large	2023	X	
Ms. Joyce Caldwell	Vice President	2021 (1)	X	
The Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse	Secretary	2023 (1)	X	
Mr. Tom Gauthier	Treasurer	2021 (1)	X	
The Rev. Paul Erickson	Bishop	2022 (1)	X	
Ms. Sarah Booher	Youth Representative	2021	X	
Ms. Aliliywa Mbise	Young Adult Rep.	2021	X	

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Guests and Synod Staff

The Council received welcome and remarks prior to the business meeting from **ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton**; **The Rev. Roger Willer**, Director of Theological Ethics, Office of the Presiding Bishop, Churchwide Organization; **Ms. Judith Roberts**, Program Director for Racial Justice, Office of the Presiding Bishop; and **Deacon Sue Rothmeyer**, ELCA Secretary-elect.

Others present included: **The Rev. Matthew Short**, Director for Evangelical Mission; **The Rev. Kristin Nielsen**, Synod Staff; **Ms. Sonja Wolfe**, ELCA Church Council; **The Rev. Fred Thomas-Breitfeld**, Synod Anti-Racism Team; and **The Rev. Jennifer Arnold**, Synod Staff (Electronically).

Call to Order

Vice President Caldwell called the meeting to order at 12:48 p.m., Thursday September 19, 2019, in the conference rooms of the ELCA Churchwide Offices, Chicago, Illinois, with others connected via Zoom Technologies.

Devotions

The Rev. Short and **Ms. Mbise** led the council in devotions. Discussion focused on the questions posed in the Synod's "Vision, Mission, Values, and Practices" Document and asked about the practice of Invitation, referring to John 6, where Jesus invites all who hunger to partake of himself, the bread of life. **The Rev. Short** noted the new language in our synod Vision, Mission, Values, and Practices Statement: "We actively invite others into deeper relationships with Jesus; welcoming them into communities shaped by unconditional love and acceptance." **Aliliywa Mbise** asked for groups to process the following questions and a brief group processing of responses: How are we already modeling God's invitation? What are ways we can grow in inviting people into relationship with Jesus?

I. 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 agenda for this meeting; approval of minutes from the Synod Council meeting of 18 July 2019; approval of On-Leave-From-Call Status for **Deacon Douglas Krekling**, effective 1 September 2019 (standard 3-year leave); approval of On-Leave-From-Call Status for **the Rev. Adam Moreno**, effective 30 September 2019 (standard 3-year leave); approval of On-Leave-From-Call Status for **Deacon Jeanne Solik**, effective 1 September 2019 (standard 3-year leave); and approval of On-Leave-From-Call Status for **the Rev. Dean Willich**, effective 1 October 2019.

II. Approval of Synod Call

Council Action

Approval of Synod Call

The council voted to approve a synod call to serve as Chaplain at Zilber Hospice Residence to **the Rev. Jake Werkheiser**, effective immediately.

III. Vice President's Report

Vice President Caldwell shared her vision of the work of the Greater Milwaukee Synod as “Connecting People and Building Community.” She asked the council how we might deepen our relationships with each other for the sake of the work we do. Noting the meeting location at Churchwide offices and an exchange with a recent driver en route to the meeting, she suggested the work of the ELCA “creates gratitude among those we may not expect.” **Caldwell** invited Council members to share where their great passions might intersect with the greatest needs of the world; then, to take the next step, to consider in dyads how and where that work relates to the deliberations we do in our work as Synod Council members.

IV. Bishop's Report

Bishop Erickson submitted a full written report; in addition, he updated the Council on his appointments of Synod Authorized Ministers, people in specific contexts and in communities with specific needs authorized to preside over the sacraments, for a period of up to one year, renewable as needed. The Bishop has authorized Synod Authorized Minister Status for the following individuals: **Pastor Germán Novelli**, Ascension, Milwaukee; **Mr. Edwin Aparicio**, Ascension, Waukesha; **Mr. Duane Swenson**, Christ, Jackson; and **Ms. Venice Williams**, The Table, Milwaukee. **Ms. Williams** name was not included in the names presented in the Bishop's written report; yet, her status had been re-authorized by Bishop Erickson.

V. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Gauthier gave a brief overview of the roles of the Synod Treasurer and informed the Council on a few points of interest from the full financial reports. He shared that when the last budget was passed by the Synod Assembly, budgeted expected income was \$1.9 million; commitments received from congregations came in below that budget at \$1.82 million. He noted that the last budget did pass at the Synod Assembly with an anticipated shortfall in income. Numbers through August 2019 are tracking at expected levels.

As of the end of August, the Synod had received 52% of its commitments. This is not off-track for this point in the fiscal year—in 2018, 40 congregations were behind intended giving amounts, in 2019, that number was 30 congregations. 5 of those congregations behind are typically once-yearly donors to the Synod's Mission Support.

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Gauthier highlighted a few lines with large variance from budget, including Congregational Assistance, some of which will be reimbursed by congregations and is expected to finish the year in balance; Staff Travel and Hospitality, over budget because of expenses of hosting the Churchwide Assembly; and Purchased Services, which is over budget due to increased legal fees, Vanco Payment Systems Fees and Payroll Fees. These fee increases will be addressed in the next budgeting process.

Gauthier noted the synod's budget is under budget in Expenses, which helps lessen the deficit; **Bishop Erickson** also noted many parts of the underspending in the Synod Budget are controlled by percentage giving lines, where a number of outflows are tied to the amount of mission support received.

Council Action

Acceptance of Financial Statements

The Council voted to accept the financial statements for August 2019 as presented.

VI. Old Business

A. Update on Mission Appeal: Equipping the Saints

Vice President Caldwell and Bishop Erickson shared an update on the past history of the Synod's Mission Appeal, its planning process and the feasibility study as carries to the present. The tentative new title for the campaign, based on themes lifted up in the feasibility study, is "Equipping the Saints." Subthemes of the appeal will focus on Innovation, Collaboration, and Leadership.

The Synod Assembly called upon the Synod Council and leaders to refine the "case statement" first presented, and it will come before the Council for approval when it is ready. The draft is nearing completion and will be sent to Council members in early October for reading, review, and revision.

Discussion ensued and consensus was reached that a holding special October Synod Council Meeting with Zoom may be a helpful tool in completing this approval process.

B. Working Group on Structure of Clusters and Representational Principles

Secretary Schlake-Kruse presented the Council with proposed bylaw changes and structural change possibilities regarding the creation of a new group of electoral conferences from which the Synod Council and ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Members would be selected. Mission Clusters throughout the synod vary in their levels of functioning and there have been challenges in past years in filling electoral slates from many clusters. A working group including **Schlake-Kruse, Bishop Erickson, Vice President Caldwell, and Mr. Christiaansen** met in August to put forth a first draft and new geographic regions so they might gain feedback from deans, the Synod Council, and Synod Staff.

The presented bylaw changes would hope to address the following issues: a) Maintain Clusters as mission groupings and loosen their definition to allow for flexibility and

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freedom in formation and administration of clusters; b) create new electoral conferences whose sole purpose would be for meeting yearly to nominate leaders to serve in synod positions as mandated by the Synod Constitution and bylaws; c) to create new groups for this process and address some of the systemic challenges, including diversity and maintaining Rostered/Lay balance in representation. The Bishop will also present this draft to the Deans at their upcoming meeting.

Discussion at the meeting addressed questions of whether or not the newly proposed Conferences would actually increase diversity or maintain the status quo; what other possibilities might look like for creating conferences of congregations in many contexts; what aspects of diversity and collegiality were most important for these structural divisions; there was mainly agreement that the move toward Conferences was good in principle;

The task force was asked to try to create new groupings of congregations and present possibilities at either a special Council meeting in October or before the November Synod Council Meeting. The Council is mandated by the bylaws to recommend changes to the Synod Assembly no later than the November meeting.

C. Report on Progress for Fall “Every Congregation Visits”

The Rev. Short reported that after training sessions in September, nearly every Synod congregation has received a volunteer “communicator/partner” to ask to join and share and listen to the congregation council at an upcoming meeting. Per **Short**, there seems to be both good feedback from communicators and congregations as these meetings are beginning to be scheduled and occur.

D. Update on Synod Assembly Resolutions

- i. Opioid Task Force (2019 Resolution 2)

Bishop Erickson updated the Council that the Synod Opioid Task Force has been formed and is meeting; **Mr. Joshua Kuehn** is the Synod Council liaison; **the Rev. Jennifer Arnold** is the staff liaison to the Task Force.

VII. New Business

A. Appointment of Synod Attorney

Council Action

Appointment of Synod Attorney

The Council approved appointing Ms. Laurie Meyer as Synod Attorney, effective 1 October 2019.

B. Election of Executive Committee Members

Three members of the Council agreed to serve one-year terms as members of the Executive Committee.

Council Action

Election of Executive Committee At-Large Members

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The Council elected Mr. Mark Christiaansen, Ms. Vickie Stretz, and Ms. Amber Anderson to serve as at-large members the Synod Executive Committee, for a one-year term.

C. Presentation and Discussion of Substance Abuse Guidelines

Bishop Erickson presented the Synod's new Substance Abuse Guidelines for review and discussion. The guideline document began as a response to several situations in the past few years where Rostered Ministers are facing substance abuse issues and/or addiction. Other synods have had more formalized policies.

In coordination and consult with Rostered Ministers who have experience offering compassion to those in recovery, Rostered Ministers in recovery, Rostered Ministers with life experience in mental health and therapy settings, the Bishop worked to draft this policy. The policy has been reviewed by both the Synod Attorney and Churchwide Legal Offices.

Bishop Erickson noted this policy is seen as descriptive, not prescriptive, and leaves leeway for discretion when Rostered Ministers are dealing with or confronted with issues related to addictive behaviors. The Bishop holds the right to veer from the policy when necessary.

Council discussion included questions as to how gambling and sexual addiction might fit within the policy and clarification that the Substance Abuse Policy is intended to be inclusive of most all addictive behaviors. Some issues may also fall under the synod's sexual misconduct policy.

Council Action

Approval of Synod Substance Abuse Guidelines

The Council approved the Greater Milwaukee Synod Addiction and Substance Abuse Guidelines for Rostered Ministers.

D. Approval of 2020 Compensation Guidelines

The Rev. Jennifer Arnold presented the 2020 Compensation Guidelines for approval to the Synod Council.

The Rev. Arnold noted this year's guidelines include the parental leave policy changes as approved at the Synod Assembly, a 2% Cost-Of-Living (COLA) increase for Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament, and a 4% COLA for Rostered Ministers of Word and Service.

Historically, compensations guidelines for deacons have been 30% lower than Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament because Deacons do not receive the tax benefit of Housing Allowance. The 30% difference was calculated previously because of Housing Allowance alone; this year the question was raised whether that was the most just way of approaching compensation for Deacons. Bishop Erickson shared the long-term goal is to lower the pay gap and aim for a 20% difference between those rosters.

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The Council discussed whether the adjustment increases would be a yearly occurrence or a stair-step approach to close the pay gap between Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministers of Word and Service. **Bishop Erickson** shared information that deacon compensation varies greatly across the ELCA; the council discussed the justice of the discrepancy, especially given the shared need of higher education and strong sense of call on both rosters. There was additional discussion about guidelines for lay non-ordained ministry staff, the gender balance of deacons in the Greater Milwaukee Synod, and the candidacy process for deacons.

Council Action

Approval of 2020 Compensation Guidelines

The Council approved Compensation Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament with a 2% COLA increase as presented.

Approval of 2020 Compensation Guidelines

The Council approved Compensation Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Service with a 4% COLA increase as presented.

E. Approval of Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community

The Rev. Short explained to the Council the ministry and outreach of the Wayfarer's Faith Collective, which has been a Synodically-Authorized Worshipping Community--Exploration. **The Rev. Michael McAllister** has led the community as they attempt to unite a "dinner church" model with a "house church." He has identified groups both in Port Washington and Milwaukee who gather regularly and live out that mission. The Synod Council is asked to approve their Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community status to align the paperwork with Churchwide offices and to maintain liability protection.

Council Action

Approval of Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community

The Council approved the Wayfarer's Faith Collective status as a Synodically-Authorized Worshipping Community, effective 19 September 2019.

F. Recruitment of Synod Council Representatives to Synod Ministries

Vice President Caldwell asked Council members to consider serving as Synod Council Representatives on the boards/committees of Synod Ministries. **Bob Reinders** will serve as Outreach for Hope, **Vickie Stretz** on the Mt. Meru Coffee Project, and **José Andrés Guerrero** will discern and consider the Lutheran Campus Ministry Board. **Vice President Caldwell** will follow up for Council approval at a future meeting.

G. Synod Council Upcoming Events

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Vice President Caldwell encouraged Council participation in the upcoming One People of God Events: Walking with our LGTBQIA+ Siblings and in the upcoming October Crossroads Anti-Racism Training at St. Mary's, Kenosha.

H. Upcoming Meeting Sign-up

The Council briefly discussed host locations for upcoming synod council meetings.

VIII. Reports

- A. **Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted.
- B. **Congregations in Mission** – A written report was submitted following the meeting. The report is 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 Rev. Nielsen** shared that over the previous 5 years, all **but** 39 congregations in our synod have been in transition. The amount of high transition over the past few years has brought much new leadership throughout the synod. Nielsen noted this significant turnover in leadership and energy is a great time to consider the new mission, vision, purposes statement, and innovation with Mission Support Campaign;
- C. **Missional Leadership** – A written report was submitted, with additional highlights by the Rev. Arnold, who reported on the high commitment level of the Opioid Task Force. The Parental Leave Task Force has just been convened to address language for congregations to use with regard to parental leave policies. She noted the upcoming Anti-Racism training.
- D. **Lutheran Campus Ministry** – No report submitted.
- E. **Reconciling in Christ** – No report submitted.
- F. **Anti-Racism Team** – No report submitted.
- G. **Women of the ELCA** – No report submitted.
- H. **Outreach for Hope** – A written summary of the Bike Ride Fundraiser was submitted in writing. **Bishop Erickson** noted the Executive Director position is still in transition and there is no news to report yet on that front;
- I. **ELCA Church Council** – No report submitted.
- J. **Endowment Committee**- Bishop Erickson shared an oral reporting of the Greater Milwaukee Synod Endowment Committee, who request and recommend Council Action to distribute grant funding for Urban Interns. There is approximately \$210,000 available to fund urban internships for candidates in the City of Milwaukee; Congregations receive funds from both the Synod and Outreach for Hope. Each congregation also funds a portion of their intern's cost as well.

Council Action

Distribution of Endowment Funds

The Council approved distribution of grant funding from the Immanuel Urban Internship Fund to Cross Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, in the amount of \$13,720; and to Redeemer Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, in the amount of \$4,660.

IX. Adjournment

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Council Action

Adjournment

The council adjourned with the Lord's Prayer at 3:01 p.m.

Next Meeting: November 21, 2019, St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, 1615 N. Wauwatosa Avenue, Wauwatosa

Upcoming Synod Council meetings for 2019-2020

- November 21, 2019: St. Matthew's, Wauwatosa
- January 16, 2020: Lord of Life, Kenosha
- March 19, 2020: Trinity, South Milwaukee
- May 21, 2020: St. Olaf, Rubicon
- July 16, 2020: Bishop Erickson's Home
- September 17, 2020: TBD

Unless otherwise published in advance, all meetings begin with dinner at 5:30 pm followed by the meeting beginning at 6:15 pm.

Submitted,

The Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse, Synod Secretary