

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
Summary of the Synod Council Meeting
March 15, 2012

Holy Cross Lutheran Church
W156 N8131 Pilgrim Road, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin

Ignited by God's love, Burning for Justice, We embrace the world

Attendance

Name	Cluster/Position	Term Ends 8/31
The Rev. Eric Silberschmidt	Kenosha/West Racine	2013
The Rev. Steve Blyth	Lake Country	2015
Mr. Gus Barnes	Milwaukee 1	2013
Mr. Michael Herold	Milwaukee 2	2013
The Rev. Carolyn Fredriksen	Milwaukee 3	2015
Mr. Al Van Lith	Milwaukee 4	2015
Ms. Esther Rusch	Northern Lakeshore	2013
Ms. Beth Dorsey	Northwest	2013
The Rev. Warren Williams	Racine	2013
The Rev. Sherrie Lorbeck	Waukesha	2015
The Rev. Gary Grindeland	At Large	2015
Ms. Debra Taylor	At Large	2015
Mr. John Gruber	At Large	2015
Ms. Susan Cyr	Vice President	2013 (2)
Mr. Matthew Brockmeier	Secretary	2015 (1)
Mr. Lee Johnston	Treasurer	2013 (1)
The Rev. Jeff Barrow	Bishop	2016 (1)
Vacant	Youth Representative	2013
Vacant	Young Adult Rep.	

Prior to the call to order, fellowship and a meal were enjoyed by members and guests.

Synod staff members Rev. Chuck Brummond, Rev. Sandy Chrostowski, Mr. Dave Groenewold, and Ms. Mary Meyer were in attendance; along with Mr. Jerry Key, representing the Anti-Racism Task Force; Ms. Aleta Chossek and Mr. Jerry Schmidt, representing the Meru Partnership Committee; Rev. June Eastvold, representing the New Wind Folk School; David Schneider, representing Synod Reconciling in Christ; and Ms. Better Warber, President of the Synod Women's Organization.

Opening devotions were shared by Bishop Barrow, expanding on the idea of holy ground from Exodus 3 as an introduction to the underpinnings of this year's Synod Assembly, and reinforcing the central idea that this work, like our other work, is about who God is, not who we are.

In remarks following his devotions, the bishop announced that Bishop Peter Rogness will represent the ELCA at this year's Synod Assembly, possibly to be joined at the Assembly by former Greater Milwaukee Synod Bishop Paul Stumme-Diers, in celebration of Mary Meyer's extraordinary service to the synod.

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Reconciling in Christ

Dave Schneider, the new representative from the Reconciling in Christ ministry, was welcomed to the meeting. RIC will have a presence at the Congregational Leaders Event on March 24th, and will present an Anti-Bullying Workshop on May 19th.

Meru Partnership Committee

Mr. Jerry Schmidt and Ms. Aleta Chossek of the Meru Partnership Committee presented a proposal for the synod to facilitate grant-seeking activities by the committee in support of a Student Hostels Project, which is designed to create student housing at Makumira University College of Tumaini University of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. The Student Hostels Project is part of a larger, long-term effort to develop a range of on-campus housing options for students, who are faced with both logistical and safety issues with current off-campus housing arrangements.

Discussion of this request included practical matters such as the need for staff support, and questions regarding the need for any special accounts and potential liability to funders for the synod in what would be its role as fiscal agent for grants. It is anticipated that this fundraising effort may extend approximately five years. The Council approved having the synod serve as fiscal agent for grants in support of this housing initiative.

New Wind Folk School

Rev. June Eastvold presented information on the New Wind Folk School, which will take place in Port Washington from August 5 - 11, 2012, with Christ the King Lutheran Church in Port Washington serving as the event's host. The Folk School's two-fold mission is to serve as "a visionary school that advocates for social justice, a sustainable world, and a future with compassion and hope" and to "equip people of all ages for action that will transform the heart, mind and soul for justice and behavior that will sustain life and society." Rev. Eastvold is urging congregations to build New Wind Folk School kites to spread the word and spirit of the event.

Council Actions

The Council voted to ratify action taken in an electronic meeting in February to approve an additional payment of \$44,000 to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, representing two percent of the Synod's general revenues during fiscal year 2011-2012.

Bishop's Report

The Council voted to approve an open-ended Synod Call to the Rev. Kris Totzke for synod interim ministry.

The Council voted to approve the roster of Clergy and Associates in Ministry on Leave from Call as revised.

The bishop elaborated on his written report, dealing first with staffing in light of Mary Meyer's pending retirement. A realignment of duties for remaining staff will be the primary initial change following her departure. Questions were posed regarding staffing level for the office, given the need to conserve resources while maintaining a high level of service. The personnel committee will continue reviewing these changes.

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Synod programming may have been stretched too thin in some cases, with attendance not always sufficient to support events, according to the bishop. Future events will be reviewed to assure success, taking into account the ongoing need to provide congregational support.

The 50/50 This is Not a Raffle, addressed next, is meant, in large measure, to highlight important ministries. To the extent that it succeeds and continues in future years, it may reduce the need for separate fund drives for individual ministries. This, though, is in the context of continuing declines in synod benevolence. The receipt of a Macedonia grant will allow the synod to continue a discussion with congregations on the topic.

Bishop Barrow ended his report by reiterating the central role of strengthening leaders and congregations in the work of the synod.

Executive Committee

The Council voted to approve the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of March 7, 2012 as presented. This meeting dealt with the agenda for the March 15th Council meeting.

Finance

2012-2013 Current Budget Revisions

Synod Director of Finance Dave Groenewold presented proposed revisions to the current (2012-2013) synod budget, based on an anticipated shortfall of approximately \$100,000 in support from congregations. Reductions in some expenditure line items will partially offset this income shortfall, with partnership ministries and staff salaries the primary categories adjusted downward. Support for seminaries will remain unchanged. The realignment of staff duties with Mary Meyer's retirement will allow some latitude in staffing costs.

These changes will result in an increased deficit for the fiscal year (\$31,820), though Mr. Groenewold said that this deficit would be covered by existing reserve funds.

The Council voted to approve changes to the 2012-2013 budget recommended by the Finance Committee to reduce projected income by \$100,000 and expenses by \$79,320.

2013-2014 Proposed Budget

Treasurer Lee Johnston presented the proposed budget for fiscal year 2013-2014. Key assumptions include a further \$50,000 reduction in synod benevolence from the newly revised 2012-2013 budget, with additional spending reductions following the same general pattern as the current year reductions just approved. This plan also results in a deficit, but again that deficit should be covered by the synod's cash reserves.

The Council voted to recommend the Draft 2013-2014 Budget as presented to the 2012 Synod Assembly for the Assembly's approval.

The Council reviewed the status of general fund cash reserves, currently at just over the upper limit of \$200,000 established by previous Council action. It was agreed that, because of the small amount over the limit, there was no need to act at this time. Mr. Jerry Key questioned whether sufficient consideration had been given to the biblical importance of not maintaining excessive fund balances when the original target range for cash reserves was set, and asked for clarification on the assumptions used in arriving at the target range.

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Mission Reports

- A. **Director of Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted. Director for Evangelical Mission Sandy Chrostowski augmented the written report with detail on the Macedonia Project grant received to develop stewardship. This two-year, \$12,000 grant will be used in part for a series of stewardship dinners designed to engage congregational leaders in gaining a better understanding of resources and issues involved in stewardship, with additional activities including a Stewardship Milestone Ministry Event on October 20, 2012 led by Vibrant Faith focusing on youth workers and those who work with children and youth.
- B. **Director of Discipleship** – No report submitted.
- C. **Director of Rostered Leadership** – Rev. Chuck Brummond, the synod's Director of Rostered Leadership, provided an oral report, with a review of the status of current activity by congregations involved in the call process. There are currently 22 congregations in transition, which Rev. Brummond described as typical, with 20% to 25% of congregations generally in this process. He went on to describe a situation where there are more rostered leaders available than open positions, leaving a number of well-qualified and experienced pastors without call. Many congregations are facing financial situations where they are unable to extend calls to these more experienced pastors. He also mentioned that pastors are undertaking wider-ranging searches, looking well beyond their home synods for possible new calls. Beyond active clergy, Rev. Brummond said that there is anxiety among retired pastors because of reductions in pension benefits. All of these realities mean, he said, that his role often is to listen, with attention and concern, but without immediate answers. When answers arise, they are often creative, less conventional answers.
- D. **Youth and Family Network** – A written report was submitted. There was discussion on a resolution submitted by Youth and Family to allow and encourage increased participation by youth and young adults at the Synod Assembly.
The Council voted to approve the Youth and Family Network's resolution inviting each congregation to send one youth or young adult as a full-time visitor to the 2012 Synod Assembly, with all such visitors having voice but not vote, and with a reduced fee of \$100 for these visitors.
The discussion on this resolution introduced the idea of providing financial support for some youth and young adult participants.
The Council voted to approve a motion to make known that there are limited scholarships available for youth and young adult visitors whose participation in the 2012 Synod Assembly was approved in the Youth and Family Network's resolution.
- E. **Lutheran Campus Ministry** – Mr. Lee Johnston, in his role as Synod Council representative on the Lutheran Campus Ministry Board, reported that all twelve board positions had now been filled, including two student representatives each from Marquette and UWM. He said that having full representation and full voice was energizing the board. Ms. Esther Rusch questioned why the Lutheran Campus Ministry Sunday and the Meru Day of Prayer were scheduled for back-to-back weeks, stating that this meant that congregations, including hers, effectively needed to choose one or the other to support. The bishop reiterated the idea that the 50/50 Not a Raffle, as a unified fund-raising tool, might help limit situations like this.
- F. **Deans** – No report submitted.

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- G. **Anti-Racism Team** – A written report was submitted. Mr. Jerry Key added that the two Anti-Racism Team-sponsored showings of *The Help* had been very successful, and asked that members watch for future events.
- H. **WELCA** – A written report was submitted.
- I. **Outreach for Hope** – A written report was submitted.

Nominating Committee

Mr. Matthew Brockmeier, chair of the Nominating Committee, reported that, with the exception of a nomination for lay female member of the Discipline Committee, there was at least one nomination for each at-large Churchwide Assembly voting member and Discipline Committee position to be elected at the Synod Assembly. He urged members to encourage nominations, especially for the remaining open position, before the March 30th deadline for nomination. He also reported that two individuals had agreed to serve on the Nominating Committee in at-large positions to be filled by the Synod Council.

The Council voted to appoint Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman as a lay female member of the Nominating Committee, to serve through the 2015 Synod Assembly; and Mr. John Gruber as a lay male member of the Nominating Committee, to serve through the 2013 Synod Assembly.

Synod Assembly – May 31-June 2, 2012

The Council voted to recommend the 2012 Assembly Rules for Elections and Procedures, as presented, to the 2012 Synod Assembly for the Assembly's approval.

The Council voted to recommend the Agenda for "Holy Ground," the 2012 Synod Assembly, as presented, to the 2012 Synod Assembly for the Assembly's approval.

The Council voted to approve the use of offerings received during the two worship services at the 2012 Synod Assembly to support, in equal measure, Outreach for Hope and the ELCA's Malaria Campaign.

Greater Milwaukee Synod Logo

There was brief discussion on changing the synod's logo to the ELCA's Brand Mark in accord with the ELCA's *Graphic Standards Manual*, prompted by concern over the existing logo's possible interpretation as a burning cross. Further discussion and possible action was deferred to the next regular Council meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Matthew Brockmeier
Synod Secretary