

**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.

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The Greater Milwaukee Synod Council met via Zoom Technologies on Thursday, July 16<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020. These are highlights of those meetings: Detailed summaries of the Council's meetings will be available on the synod's website at <https://milwaukeesynod.org/who-we-are/synod-council/>. These highlights are not official minutes of the proceedings.

### **Actions**

- Approved the minutes from the Synod Council meetings on 21 May and 16 July 2020;
- Appointed José Andrés Guerrero (Ascension, Milwaukee) to fill the open at-large Council seat with term concluding 31 August 2023.
- Approved On Leave from Call status for **The Rev. Amanda Christensen**, effective 25 May 2020; **The Rev. Harvard Stephens**, effective 1 June 2020; **The Rev. Richard Suero**, effective 1 July 2020; **The Rev. Paul Ihlenfeld**, effective 17 August 2020; and **The Rev. Elizabeth Jaeger**, effective 1 September 2020;
- Approved Retired status for **The Rev. Jon Breimeier**, effective 1 August 2020; and **The Rev. Wendy Wirth-Brock**, effective 1 August 2020.
- Approved a Synod Call to **The Rev. Christopher Manke**, serving as Executive Director of Outreach for Hope, effective 1 August 2020.
- Elected **Amber Anderson, Vickie Stretz, and Mark Christiaansen** to serve one-year terms on the Synod Council Executive Committee, effective 1 September 2020.
- Ratified the election of the following individuals to the Board of the Mt. Meru Coffee Project to terms through 2023: **Ron Bohrer (All Saints, Wales); Janet McMahon (Martin Luther, Milwaukee); Victoria Mallak (Martin Luther, Milwaukee); Andy Peterson (St. John's, Brookfield).**
- Ratified the election of the following individuals as Officers and Executive Committee Members of the Mt. Meru Coffee Project for one-year terms, effective 14 July 2020: **Walter Chosseck (Kingo, Shorewood), President; Rick Frowein (Ascension, Waukesha), Vice President of Operations; Ron Bohrer (All Saints, Wales), Vice President of Sales and Marketing; Victoria Mallak (Martin Luther, Milwaukee), Treasurer; Janet McMahon (Martin Luther, Milwaukee), Secretary; and Andy Peterson (St John's, Brookfield), Financial Secretary.**

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- Approved a *revised* request of Lutheran Campus Ministry in Greater Milwaukee to request grant funding from the Siebert Lutheran Foundation, to support the peer ministry programs and retreats as follows for the 2020-21 academic year.
- Adopted an updated and revised continuing resolution, S6.03.A20, to replace S6.03.A88, regarding anti-discrimination practices.
- Approved the 2021 Compensation Guidelines with an added 2% cost-of-living increase for Ministers of Word and Service and a 1% cost-of-living increase for Ministers of Word and Sacrament.
- Directed the Synod Secretary and Synod Staff responsible for Rostered Leaders communicate with congregational leaders to strongly encourage all Rostered ministers be paid up to guidelines for years of experience and to consider all factors listed in the Compensation Guidelines document.
- Directed the Synod Vice President to appoint a task force exploring compensation guidelines for lay support personnel, with a report due by the September 2021 Synod Council meeting.
- Appointed the following individuals to 6-year terms on the Discipline Committee due to the cancellation of the 2020 Synod Assembly: appointed **Sharon Gallagher (St. Matthew's, Wauwatosa)**; **The Rev. Tyler Rasmussen (Mt. Zion, Wauwatosa)**; **The Rev. Kristin Berglund (St. Peter's, Sheboygan)**; and **Mark Voelz (St. Paul's, Milwaukee)**.
- Approved the relocation of **Redemption Lutheran Church** to the building of **Martin Luther Lutheran Church, Milwaukee**, per †S13.20. of the Synod Constitution.
- Approved sharing \$5000 from the Good Shepherd/St. Andrew's designated funds to support Latinx Ministry through **Ascension, Waukesha**; and approved allowing monies from these restricted accounts to be continued toward Latinx ministries in Waukesha at the direction of Synod Staff. (Due to a conflict of interest, **Edwin Aparicio** abstained from voting on this action).

### Reports and Discussion

- **Vice President Joyce Caldwell** lifted up the work continuing across the Synod focused on racial equity over the summer and into the fall. She noted that public events have “immersed us in a changing awareness of the depth of white supremacy and systemic racism.” **Caldwell** proposed considering a resolution calling for Racial Equity at a future meeting, stepping into the silence, using the Council's voice, and calling for action with more concrete measures, reporting, and accountability. She also highlighted upcoming anti-racism virtual events she is leading with **The Rev. Marilyn Miller (Reformation, Milwaukee)**. *There is an expectation that Synod Council members participate in regular anti-racism training.*
- **Bishop Paul Erickson's** report included thanksgiving for the continued support of leaders throughout the synod and financial mission support in these unusual COVID times. He also updated the Council on the Synod and Synod staff's responses to racism

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and commitment to anti-racism work; pandemic communication with rostered ministers and congregational leaders; digital worship offerings; return-to-office plans for Synod Staff; and possible avenues for approving changes to the cluster/conference structure. He also noted the planned sabbatical for **The Rev. Kristin Nielsen** and informed the Council of his own plans for sabbatical in 2021, which was approved by the Executive Committee and is scheduled from 15 May—15 August 2021.

- **The Bishop announced the formation of an Anti-Racism Advisory Group**, consisting of six individuals, who will begin meeting regularly with the synod staff to suggest resources (books, videos, articles, etc.) for the Synod staff to explore and then conduct conversations to discuss together. Additionally, the group will take time to walk with the synod staff as they review the various ways they engage in our work to hold the synod staff accountable to operating from an anti-racist perspective. This will include work with candidates for ministry, conducting the call process, and stewarding the resources of the synod (financial, people, mission, etc.). Members include **The Rev. Kara Baylor (Carthage College); Sonya Wolfe (Lord of Life, Kenosha); Esther Rusch (Faith, Cedarburg), The Rev. Mark Jaramillo (Norway, Wind Lake); MaryBeth Hoffman (All Peoples, Milwaukee), and Miguel de Jesús (formerly Our Savior’s, Milwaukee).**
- In his written report, it was noted that Bishop Erickson authorized **Pastor Germán Novelli Machado (Ascension, Milwaukee); The Rev. Rony Reyes (American Baptist Churches) (Faith/Santa Fé, Milwaukee); Duane Swenson (Christ, Jackson); and Venice Williams (The Table, Milwaukee)** as Synod-Authorized Ministers. He also celebrated and presided over the ordinations of **The Rev. Tony Acompañado (Ascension, Waukesha); The Rev. John Anderson (Vernon, Mukwonago); and The Rev. David Rebey (Redemption, Wauwatosa)** in August and September.
- The Council heard updates in a presentation from the Mt. Meru Partnership Committee regarding the relations and challenges of the global relationship in times of pandemic. They noted the significant impact of COVID-19 on the synod’s partners: lost tourism dollars lost; decreased attendance and giving in parishes due to the pandemic and fears of contagion; the loss of American and other global partner churches who were forced to postpone ministry visits. It was also noted there is much political tension throughout Tanzania related to the reality of the pandemic and public health statements.

The partnership committee shared the values of learning and implementing the ELCA’s process for accompaniment, meaning the response of our synod and its congregations is to “be good listeners” and not to say, “this is what you need.” In response to the delegation visit last fall, the committee has broadened the definitions of emergency relief to give the local Tanzanian parishes the discretion to use aid dollars as they deem most urgent.

The Mt. Meru Partnership Committee is re-evaluating its funding approaches as needs and requests for funding are multiplying; a part of those efforts include a more focused approach for congregational support.

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- The Council heard updates on the Breaking the Chains Congregation from its pastor, **The Rev. Mark Thompson**. The Synod-Authorized Worshipping Community, which he has led since its founding in 2016. The ministry serves men in the low-security Felmers Chaney Corrections Facility and works to bridge partnerships with congregations around re-entry and incarceration issues across the Greater Milwaukee Synod. **Thompson** noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively and strongly impacted the ministry and the men have been kept in solitary confinement. he noted that in every congregational visit he has made, at least one congregation member has spoken to him about a family member or relative incarcerated in the criminal justice system. He thanked the Council for their support and asked for their continued prayers for both the ministry and all in the Wisconsin Department of Corrections System.
- **Joyce Caldwell**, Mission Appeal Campaign Manager, presented updates and revisions to the Mission Appeal prospectus, which will be approved by the Council later this fall. She expressed thanks for the legacy team of **Our Savior's, Milwaukee**, who offered a lead gift of the appeal. Edits are being finalized by the Steering Team, both to respond to COVID and the pandemic and to add the lens of racial equity to the document and asks. The appeal remains at \$2.3 million and focused on Innovation, Collaboration, and Leadership Support.
- **The Rev. Jennifer Arnold** reported on changes and virtualization of fall events, including Boundaries Workshops, Anti-racism trainings, and the Fall Leadership Conference; She, along with **The Rev. Molly Doreza** provided updates and work done by the Task Force on Opioid and Substance Use Disorders. **Drew Brooks** of *Faith Partners*, a non-profit focusing on addiction care in faith communities will lead training for lay leaders to building a congregation-centered framework for developing long-term strength in supporting prevention, intervention, referral assistance, recovery support, for those with opioid and substance use disorders and their families.
- **Greg Truex** of the ELCA Federal Credit Union made a brief presentation about the ministry of the credit union and the impact of its products for synods, congregations, and individuals. The ELCA FCU provided PPP Loan funding to 8 Synod Congregations totaling \$238,563.
- A public statement from the Lutheran Campus Ministry Board was shared with the Council regarding changes to the ministry structure and relationship between LCM and Marquette University. The university terminated the Affiliated Ministry Agreement with the LCM Board earlier in 2020. **The Rev. Jessica Short** was joined by LCM students who shared the value of Lutheran Campus Ministry on the Marquette Campus and reflected on the impact of the University's decisions regarding LCM on their faith journeys.
- Other reports included: updates on Stewardship for All Seasons; mobility updates; status reports on the *Diakonia* program, which is taking a year of sabbath for local and national review; Women of the ELCA; Outreach for Hope;

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### Finances

- **Treasurer Tom Gauthier** gave an update on financial state of the Synod, noting his thanks and pleasure at the strength of congregational mission support to date. June was the best year-over-year June for offerings in many years; the pandemic continues to provide lower expenses and higher financial support. The Synod's deficit budget remains ahead of projections to date.
- **Gauthier** noted that the 2021-2022 Budget would have been approved by the cancelled 2020 Synod Assembly; that work now falls to the Synod Council. He recommended waiting until November to the end of the fiscal year to approve the budget for 2021-22 because of the "moving goalposts" of the pandemic. The Finance Committee continues to work and monitor the budget.
- As of 31 July 2020, the Greater Milwaukee Synod is the lienholder on the building note previously held by **Our Savior's, Milwaukee**, who voted to sell their building and dissolve. The congregation developed a legacy plan to distribute their assets. The terms of the building sale leave a portion of the sale price to be paid by the purchaser in installments over the next three years. With the congregation ceasing to exist, the Synod becomes the steward of those funds and is charged to follow the legacy plan in distribution of assets received.
- The COVID grant/Project Lunchbox campaign resulted in \$83,000 of gifts received from throughout the Synod.
- The Council approved the financial reports as presented.

### Upcoming Synod Council meetings for 2019-2020

Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>

Thursday, January 21<sup>st</sup>

Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup>

Friday-Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup>—May 1<sup>st</sup>: Synod Assembly

Thursday, May 20<sup>th</sup>

Thursday, July 15<sup>th</sup>

Thursday, September 16<sup>th</sup>

Unless otherwise published in advance, all meetings begin on Zoom at 6:15 pm. Links to the meeting can be provided by the Synod Office, specifically Mary Romskog.

Submitted,

The Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse, Synod Secretary

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