

# Greater Milwaukee Synod Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting held 17 November 2022

Meeting held via Zoom Technologies.

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**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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## Meeting Attendance

Name	Conference/Position	Term Ends 8/31	Present	Absent	Anti-Racism
OPEN	North	2025			
Jerry Key	Central	2025	X		Pending
Vickie Stretz	West	2023		X	3/2021
The Rev. Matthew James	South	2025	X		11/2021
Edwin Aparicio	West Central	2023	X		10/2019
The Rev. Denise Mbise	South Central	2023			4/2019
Amber Davis	At Large	2023		X	Pending
The Rev. Kevin Kretzmann Farrar	At Large	2023	X		4/2019
José Andrés Guerrero	At Large	2023		X	Pending
The Rev. Kevin Beebe	At Large	2025	X		11/2020
Rose Dotson	At Large	2025	X		11/2021
Steven Hartfield	At Large	2025	X		11/2021
Joyce Caldwell	Vice President	2025 (2)	X		11/2018
The Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse	Secretary	2023 (1)		X	Pending
The Rev. Karen Pahl	Treasurer	2025 (1)	X		11/2021
The Rev. Paul Erickson	Bishop	2028 (2)	X		3/2021
Lucas Short	Youth Representative	2023		X	Pending
Jacob Guerrero	Young Adult Rep.	2025		X	Pending

## Guests and Synod Staff

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Others present included: **The Rev. Char Guiliani (Incarnation, Milwaukee)**, Reconciling in Christ Ministry Team; **The Rev. Kristin Nielsen**, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations in Mission; and **Bob Reinders**, Acting Synod Treasurer appointee.

*\*In compliance with new guidance regarding the recording of Actions from the Office of the Secretary, numbering for Synod Council Actions does not reset at the onset of each month, but continues throughout the year.*

*Thus, SC22.01.16. may be followed by SC22.03.17., not SC22.03.01.\**

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## **Call to Order**

**Vice President Caldwell** called the meeting to order at 6:18 p.m.

## **Devotions**

**Bishop Erickson** led the Council in devotions, reflecting on Philippians 4:4-9 and gratitude. Noting that fear and gratitude cannot co-exist within us, he noted Paul's exhortation to be grateful as an antidote to fear. He led the council in prayer.

## **I. Consent Agenda**

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 22.11.68. Approval of Consent Agenda**

The Council voted to approve 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 22 September 2022; approval of retroactive On Leave from Call Status for **The Rev. Joshua Graber**, dating from 1 January—8 March 2020 (correcting an end-of-call date error); approval of Retired Status for **The Rev. Robert Suhr**, effective 1 January 2023 and **The Rev. Paula Ramcke-Wilke**, effective 1 December 2022; and ratified the appointment of **Deacon Douglas Krekling** to a four-year term on the Candidacy Committee, effective 1 December 2022.

## **II. Synod Calls**

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 22.11.69. Approval of Synod Call**

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call for **The Rev. Jennifer Arnold**, called to Interim Ministry at **Galilee, Pewaukee**; effective 7 November 2022.

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 22.11.70. Approval of Synod Call**

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call for **The Rev. Karen Pahl**, called to Interim Ministry as Financial Administrator of the Greater Milwaukee Synod, effective 1 November 2022.

*The Rev. Karen Pahl abstained from voting.*

**Council Action**

**SC 22.11.70. Approval of Synod Call**

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call for **The Rev. Eric Silberschmidt**, called to Interim Ministry at **Trinity, Kenosha**; effective 1 July 2022.

**Council Action**

**SC 22.11.71. Approval of Synod Call**

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call for **The Rev. David Rebey**, called to specialized ministry as Pastor, **Breaking the Chains Congregation**, effective 1 January 2023.

**Council Action**

**SC 22.11.72. Approval of Synod Call**

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call for **The Rev. Dean Willich**, called to Interim Ministry at **Lakeside, Kenosha**; effective 1 November 2022.

### III. Vice President's Report

**Vice President Caldwell** led the Council in discussion of what it means that our Synod embraces the identities Anti-Racist and Reconciling in Christ, asking how council members hope that might look differently in 2023. She noted that **Bishop Erickson's** letter encouraging rostered minister participation in Anti-Racism training yielded higher clergy participation than 2021.

Hopes shared included an increase in BIPOC rostered and lay leadership; increasing RIC congregations in suburban areas; more discomfort among white folks in our synod, and more integration of the Latin(x) mission table and Spanish-language congregations.

### IV. Bishop's Report

**Bishop Erickson** lifted up the specialized call and extraordinary amount of extra work offered by **The Rev. Karen Pahl** during the transition time after **Lee Johnston** left the synod staff as financial administrator. He is hopeful a regular replacement can be in place by April 2023.

**Bishop Erickson** also announced to the Council the hiring of **The Rev. Afi Dobbins-Mays**, an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church, as the Assistant to the Bishop for Authentic Diversity. He is very pleased with her qualifications and is excited to bring her onto the Synod Staff. Her formal appointment will be announced in the coming weeks; her service begins on 5 December 2022. More information on the Authentic Diversity Audit will be shared at the January Synod Council Meeting.

The Bishop's report also included updates on property issues in congregations, plans for the 2023 Synod Assembly (June 2-3, 2023), and Holy Closure processes.

**Council Action**

**SC 22.11.73. Approval of Invitation to Extended Service**

The Council voted to approve an Invitation to Extended Service to **The Rev. Afi Dobbins-Mays**, called to Synod Ministry as the Assistant to the Bishop for Authentic Diversity; effective 5 December 2022.

**V. Treasurer's Report**

**The Rev. Pahl** presented the financial reports. She noted that **Bob Reinders**, who formerly served as acting Treasurer, is willing to return as Acting Synod Treasurer on an interim basis. **Pahl** cannot serve as both paid synod staff and a Synod Officer.

**The Rev. Pahl** noted some unusual increases in the reports to date due to benefit changes with new staffing. She will seek further clarification with Portico Benefit Services.

While congregational mission support remains behind budgeted levels, **Pahl** noted caution in any panic or challenge, noting that with regular year-over-year cash flow, things are “not as bad as it looks.” The Synod has yet to dip into financial reserves in order to make payroll or other expenses. She also noted that the Synod has moved to an online platform of QuickBooks, replacing a desktop version.

**The Revered Pahl** noted that **Alice's Garden, a ministry of The Table, Breaking the Chains Church, and the Equipping the Saints Mission Appeal** all received Siebert Lutheran Foundation Grants in 2022; these funds are maintained and kept through the Synod.

**Council Action**

**SC 22.11.74. Reception of Financial Reports**

The Council voted to receive the financial reports through 31 October 2022 as presented.

**VI. Old Business**

**A. Update and Next Steps on Mission Appeal: “Equipping the Saints”**

**Vice President Caldwell**, presenting as the Campaign Manager, reported the Synod is approaching \$1 million in gifts and pledges. A higher percentage of gifts have been received than remain in outstanding pledges to date. She encouraged Synod Council members to encourage participation in Leader Training, especially congregation members involved in Stewardship. The process for distributing grants continues in planning stages and will be addressed at Synod Council meetings in 2023.

**B. Updates on Authentic Diversity Audit**

**Bishop Erickson** and **Vice President Caldwell** shared updates on the Authentic Diversity Audit. More than 500 individuals responded to the survey conducted this fall. The Council received and discussed the preliminary “Climate Assessment Results” from **Gold Enterprises, LLC.**, which highlighted the participation levels, demographics, and number of respondents to the survey in Fall 2022. An analysis of these surveys will be forthcoming.

## C. Updates on Congregational Building Issues

**Bishop Erickson** referred to the notes in his report and updated the Council on properties that have needed or will need Council Action in the future.

1. **Capitol Drive Lutheran Church** has now closed; the lease agreement with **The Table, Milwaukee**, is finalized and the property's insurance is held under the Synod's policy.
2. Work to conclude issues with **St. Peter Lutheran Church, Milwaukee** remains ongoing with the Synod attorney. Reclaiming the property is the hoped-for outcome, with part of the property being separated and assigned to **Venice Williams**. There will likely be a liability insurance premium.
3. **Peace Lutheran Church's** former building, was accessed, but congregational record books were not found in offices there. There is effort underway to contact the new building owners to request these records if they were to be found on the property.
4. **Redemption Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, and St. John, West Milwaukee**, have reached agreements to close. **St. John's** has found a buyer for their property. Both congregations have made financial distribution plans which include the Synod, and may require Synod Council action for distribution.

## D. Discussion of Administration and Synod Preservation of Property

The Council discussed the possibility of needing to invoke provisions of the Constitution related to Synod Administration (S13.25.) or Synod Administration (S13.24.) for **Wellington Park, Milwaukee**.

**Bishop Erickson** highlighted the years-long process and context of the congregation's discernment, including pastoral vacancies, lay leadership, and possible viability of the congregation. **The Rev. Matthew Short** has been the point person leading conversations with their leaders, which is inconsistent. He suggested that to steward the assets of the synod, it may be necessary to take action and help the congregation close. **Bishop Erickson** presented the options of Administration or Preservation of Property, by which the Synod could legally take control of the capital assets. The congregation would retain a right to appeal any decision at the Synod Assembly.

The Council discussed these possibilities, what defines viability (legally, missionally, and energy), and sought more investigation and research into possibilities in this regard.

## VII. New Business

### A. Appointment of Interim Synod Treasurer

#### **Council Action**

#### **SC 22.11.75. Appointment of Interim Synod Treasurer**

The Council voted to appoint **Robert Reinders** as Interim Synod Treasurer, effective 17 November 2022.

## **B. Open Synod Council Seat**

The North Conference seat on Synod Council remains open after the resignation of **Jenny Brandt**. There has been communication with North Conference Dean **Alexis Twito**, but no appointment has yet been made.

## **C. Approval of 2023 Staff Housing Allowances**

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 22.11.76. Approval of 2023 Synod Staff Housing Allowances**

The Council voted to approve the designation of the following amounts of salary for Rostered Leaders as Housing Allowance, as allowed under IRS Guidelines: **The Rev. Paul Erickson**, \$36,000; **The Rev. Kristin Nielsen**, \$30,000; **The Rev. Karen Pahl**, \$22,000; **The Rev. David Rebey**, \$12,075.66; and **The Rev. Afi Dobbins-Mays**, \$15,540.

## **D. Future Synod Council Meeting Locations**

The Council discussed meeting locations for upcoming Synod Council meetings, with the aim of returning to in-person meetings.

## **IX. Reports**

- A. Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted.
- B. Congregations in Mission** – A written report was submitted, consisting of the update of congregations in transition.
- C. Lutheran Campus Ministry** – A written report was submitted, noting the challenges of connecting with younger students.
- D. Reconciling in Christ** – An oral report was provided by **The Rev. Guiliani**, who noted the RIC Retreat was successful.
- E. Anti-Racism Team** – No report submitted.
- F. Women of the ELCA**- No report submitted.
- G. Outreach for Hope** – No report submitted.
- H. Latino Strategy Table**—An oral report was shared by **Aparicio**, who invited participation in the celebration of Las Posadas and 16-17 December.
- I.** It was noted that **Sonja Wolfe (Lord of Life, Kenosha)** has completed her term on the ELCA Church Council. **Bishop Erickson** noted action was taken on the “Commission for a New Lutheran Church,” with a nominations process opening in 2023.
- J. Endowment Committee**- No report submitted.
- K. Healing Faith Network**- No report submitted.

## **X. Adjournment**

**Council Action**

**SC 22.11.77. Adjournment**

The council, reaching the end of its agenda of business, adjourned with prayer at 8:03 p.m.

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**Next Meeting: Thursday, January 19, 2023. Location to be determined.  
Dinner at 5:30; Meeting at 6:15**

Unless otherwise published in advance, all meetings begin at 6:15 pm.

Submitted,

The Rev. Kevin Kretzmann Farrar, acting secretary