

# Greater Milwaukee Synod Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting held 19 January 2023

Meeting held at the Greater Milwaukee Synod Office, 1212 S. Layton Blvd. Milwaukee, Wisconsin and concurrently via Zoom Technologies.

**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	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	X		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
Bob Reinders	Acting 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

Others present included: **The Rev. Afi Dobbins-Mays**, Assistant to the Bishop for Authentic Diversity and Leadership; **The Rev. Char Guiliani (Incarnation, Milwaukee)**, Reconciling in Christ Ministry Team; **The Rev. Allison Johnson**, South Conference Dean; **The Rev. Chris**

**Manke**, Outreach for Hope; **The Rev. Kristin Nielsen**, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations in Mission; **The Rev. Karen Pahl**, Interim Synod Financial Administrator; **The Rev. Matthew Short**, Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission;

In addition, presentations were made by the leaders of Gold Enterprises, LLC: **Dr. Shaunna Payne Gold**; **Dr. Lisa Ingarfield**; **Dra. Andréa Rodriguez**; and **Malika Clinkscales**.

*\*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 6:15 p.m.

## **Devotions**

**The Rev. Dobbins-Mays** led the Council in devotions, reflecting on Exodus 14:19-25. She shared about polarization and the seeking of peace, common ground, and collaboration. Noting that the Kin\_dome of God and its promises of community can often threaten to overwhelm us, the Council discussed the story of the Israelites and the reminder that God is working alongside us and that we are not standing before the mountain of oppression and its isms alone.

## **I. Consent Agenda**

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 23.01.01. 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 17 November 2022; approval of continuing On Leave from Call Status for **The Rev. David Dragseth**; **The Rev. Paul Ihlenfeld**; **The Rev. Adam Moreno**; **The Rev. Tom Smith**; **The Rev. Kelly Taylor-Schaus**; and **The Rev. Mark Thompson**; and approval for Bishop Erickson to request On Leave from Call extensions through the Conference of Bishops for **The Rev. Amanda Christensen**; **The Rev. Kirsten Hedlund**; **The Rev. Chad Kline**; and **The Rev. Richard Suero**.

## **II. Synod Calls**

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 23.01.02. Approval of Synod Call**

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call for **The Rev. Sheila Rawn**, called to Interim Ministry at **Mt. Pleasant, Racine**, effective 1 October 2022.

## Council Action

### SC 23.01.03. Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call for **The Rev. Sandy Chrostowski**, called to Interim Ministry at **Mt. Olive, Mukwonago**, effective 15 December 2022.

## III. Ministry Highlight

The Synod Council received a preliminary report on the Authentic Diversity Audit from Gold Enterprises, LLC. The progress update shared high-level understandings to date on findings and other takeaways.

**Dr. Shaunna Payne Gold** provided an overview of the assessment phase of the audit, including details of the Document Review of Synod materials, Assembly records, event evaluations, and Employee Handbooks. She noted major themes in the review included Racial Justice, Human Resources, Communication, Self-awareness, Synod Identity, and LGBTQ+ issues. She noted that LGBTQ+ issues arose as an identity them apart from larger questions of identities in the documents. Examples were provided to the Council as to where growth and change could happen based on the document review.

**Dr. Lisa Ingarfield** then provided an overview of the survey responses and participation levels as a part of the audit. She noted survey results skewed highly toward white, heterosexual, upper/middle class women over 45 years of age. 106 congregations had at least one individual respond. She presented findings from the survey, which will also be shared at the Together in Mission Event. Implications and next steps from the survey findings will also be included in the discussion and in the final report.

The Council sought clarification as to the incorporation of focus groups ongoing and beginning later in January 2023; Gold Enterprises also noted and led some discussion on the need for a review of Synod Staff and Synod Council personnel policies.

## IV. Vice President's Report

**Vice President Caldwell** ceded her report time to the Gold Enterprises team.

## V. Bishop's Report

**Bishop Erickson** briefed the Council on upcoming revisions to the Synod's Sabbatical policy regarding non-rostered staff members. He also noted the upcoming sabbatical for **The Rev. Matt Short** which will run from 4 June—4 September 2023. Other information from **Bishop Erickson** will pertain to later items on the agenda.

## VI. Treasurer's Report

**Acting Treasurer Reinders** presented the financial reports. Through the end of 2022 Income from Mission support is \$132,000 below budgeted projections. It was noted that expenses are also proportionally below budget but there will likely be a year-end deficit which will need to be made up through reserve funds. January, **Reinders** noted, is both the last month of the fiscal year and a fluid month with year-end transactions and end-of-year mission support fluctuating year-

over year. He thanked **Interim Financial Administrator Pahl** for her continued work on the reorganization of financial statements and charts of accounts.

**Council Action**

**SC 23.01.04. Reception of Financial Reports**

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

**VII. Old Business**

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

**Vice President Caldwell**, presenting as the Campaign Manager, reported the Synod has received \$980,000 in pledges and gifts, which is 42.6% of the campaign goal. More than \$700,000 of that total has been received. Work to engage the congregations of the Synod has been gaining steam slowly; 26 congregations have engaged with the campaign; 16 of those have gone through leader trainings with GSB leader **The Rev. Mike Ward**. Additional leader training sessions will be held over the next 4-6 weeks.

**B. Updates on Congregational Building Issues**

**Bishop Erickson** presented his recommendation that the Greater Milwaukee Synod initiate the process of reclaiming ownership of the building and property formerly owned by St. Peter’s Lutheran Church and the Kujichagulia Lutheran Center. The Council engaged in much discussion about the financial liability of taking this action. Liability insurance has been quoted at \$200 per year; the tax liability of the property is unknown and subjective to the City Assessor; if the Synod were to claim the property, the valuation may be increased.

The Council then had further discussion regarding the condition, inhabitability, and costs associated with bringing the church building into a decent state. **Reinders** noted his concerns that the condition of the church property compared to the parsonage may leave the Synod with an albatross of a building no one wants, or no one wants to pay to deal with. **The Rev. Guiliani** noted the church building has not been maintained since circa 2006. **The Rev. Short** noted these were important discussions and lifted the moral imperative of stewardship of the building is in tension with the financial risk.

**Council Action**

**SC 23.01.05. Initiation of Property Reclamation**

The Council voted to approve initiating the process of reclaiming ownership of the property formerly belonging to St. Peter’s Lutheran Church and the Kujichagulia Lutheran Center, having determined that the property is being used for purposes that are incompatible with the mission and purposes of the Synod.

*Motion carried by roll call vote; 7 in favor; Schlake-Kruse and Reinders opposed; Mbise and Dotson abstained.*

### **C. Synod Administration of Wellington Park Lutheran Church**

The Council received updates as to the beginning of the Synod Administration Process with **Wellington Park, Milwaukee**. The lay leaders of the congregation have expressed willingness to begin the process of Synod Administration with a goal of selling the congregation's properties and closing the congregation by the end of 2023. **Bishop Erickson** expressed gratitude for **The Rev. Kelly Taylor-Schaus's** leadership with the lay leaders. **The Rev. Taylor-Schaus** will likely serve on the Administrative Committee.

#### **Council Action**

##### **SC 23.01.06. Initiation of Synod Administration**

The Council voted to approve initiating the process of Synod Administration (under S13.25.) for Wellington Park Lutheran Church; appointing up to six trustees at a future meeting to administer the affairs of the congregation; and establishing a goal of selling the congregation's properties and closing by 31 December 2023.

### **VII. New Business**

#### **A. Increase for 2023 Staff Salaries**

#### **Council Action**

##### **SC 23.01.07. Increase of Synod Staff Salaries**

The Council voted to enact a 3% increase for all Synod Staff Salaries for 2023 (which falls within the approved 2023-2024 budget).

*Bishop Erickson abstained from voting.*

#### **B. Disbursement of Equipping the Saints Funds**

#### **Council Action**

##### **SC 23.01.08. Disbursement of Equipping the Saints Funds**

The Council voted to disburse the following funds from Equipping the Saints Campaign based on 2022-year-end giving: \$65,000 for Innovation Grants; \$65,000 for Outreach for Hope Collaboration Grants; \$35,000 for Lutheran Campus Ministry; \$35,000 for Leadership Grants for BIPOC/LGBTQIA+ individuals; \$55,000 for Rostered Minister Leadership Grants; and \$42,528.45 as a tithe to Lutheran Social Services; ELCA Innovations Fund; Diocese of Meru; and Lutheran Synod of El Salvador.

*Bishop Erickson abstained from voting.*

#### **C. Review and Approval of Granting Distribution Processes**

### **1. Innovation Grants**

The Council discussed and received the distribution process from **The Rev. Matt Short** for the ETS Innovation Grants. This work was done in consultation with members of the Mission Table. **Short** clarified that “innovation” is not just another word for a creative idea, but will involve a process of listening, experimentation, and theological reflection. Coaching will be a pre-requisite for congregations receiving innovation grants. This will be reviewed and presented at the next Council meeting.

### **2. Outreach for Hope Collaboration Grants**

**The Rev. Manke** highlighted the three focus points of collaboration grants: Providing grant-writing support and collaboration to encourage more mutual ministry among congregations in their outreach and neighborhood ministries; creating intentional retreat and relationship-building opportunities for urban and suburban congregations. **Caldwell** noted that the Executive Committee has also been in conversation with Outreach for Hope regarding the understanding of “partnership” and ways to improve those practices as part of the relationship development. Third, grant funds would be used to support collaboration activities between ministry partners and other agencies beyond churches; this would be led by the granting committee of Outreach for Hope.

### **3. Leadership Grants**

#### **Council Action**

##### **SC 23.01.09. Approval of ETS Granting Process**

The Council voted to approve the Innovation Grant Process for funds from the Equipping the Saints Appeal, as proposed and carried out through Outreach for Hope.

**Vice President Caldwell** presented the proposal shared by the Leadership Grant team of **Steve Hartfield, The Rev. Matt James; The Rev. Denise Mbise; and The Rev. Afi Dobbins-Mays**. The proposal includes financial support for candidates and rostered ministers who are persons of color and/or LGBTQIA+ through candidacy, seminary, and first call. Grants to rostered ministers to support professional development or financial wellness. Grants will be disbursed over a three-year period to recipients to pay down debt, pursue continuing education or sabbatical study, or prepare for retirement. They propose two categories of grants and an adaptive system of distribution that is proportional to the number of grants requested.

#### **Council Action**

##### **SC 23.01.10. Approval of ETS Granting Process**

The Council voted to approve the Leadership Grant Process for funds from Equipping the Saints Appeal as proposed by the Leadership Grant team.

## **D. Update of Personnel Policies Re: Sabbaticals**

**Bishop Erickson** presented a revised sabbatical policy for Synod Staff that includes offering sabbatical leave for non-rostered staff members. The Executive Committee discussed the specifics of the policy changes and recommends approval. The Council clarified that employees would be able to accrue their time up to this point as a part of the process. **Caldwell** noted that as a lay leader, this action lifts up how lay people are vital to the Synod and Synod Staff.

**Council Action**

**SC 23.01.11. Revision of Synod Personnel Policies**

The Council voted to update the Synod Personnel Policies to include sabbatical leave for non-rostered members of the Synod Staff.

*Bishop Erickson abstained from voting.*

**E. Synod Council Actions for 2023 Synod Assembly**

**Council Action**

**SC 23.01.12. Appointment of Synod Assembly Starting Time**

The Council voted to approve modifying the starting time of the 2023 Synod Assembly to 2:00 p.m. on 2 June 2023.

**Council Action**

**SC 23.01.13. Recommendation of Synod Assembly Deadlines**

The Council voted to approve recommending the deadline for all resolutions and memorials for consideration at the 2023 Synod Assembly as 31 March 2023.

**Council Action**

**SC 23.01.14. Recommendation of Synod Assembly Deadlines**

The Council voted to approve recommending the deadline for Synod Assembly registration as 12 noon on 19 May 2023.

**F. Notice of Renewed Lutheran Church Nomination Process**

**Vice President Caldwell** presented an overview of the nomination process for the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church. An open nomination process exists for any interested individuals; each synod is allowed to nominate two individuals; only some synod nominees will be chosen from within the wider Regions of the ELCA. The Commission is planned to have between 27-35 members. The Executive Committee will seek nominees and approve nominees due to the deadlines.

**G. Appointment of North Conference Synod Council Member**

**Vice President Caldwell** noted that the selection of a replacement Council member from the North Conference is still ongoing.

**H. Rescheduling of May 2023 Synod Council Meeting**

**Vice President Caldwell** sought consensus from the Council to move the May Synod Council meeting from 18 May to 11 May to complete necessary business with more time before the 2023 Synod Assembly. The Council mutually agreed to these changes.

## **I. Approval of Lutheran Campus Ministry Board Members**

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 23.01.15. Approval of Lutheran Campus Ministry Board Members**

The Council voted to approve the selection of the following individuals to positions on the board of Lutheran Campus Ministry: **Catherine Mode Eastham; Linda Isnard; The Rev. Carolyn Sellers-Rizzo; The Rev. Matt James; and Cory Wanek.**

*The Rev. Matt James abstained from voting.*

## **IX. Reports**

- A. Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted.
- B. Congregations in Mission** – A written report was submitted.
- C. Assistant to the Bishop for Authentic Diversity and Leadership** – An oral report was provided in addition to a written report.
- D. Lutheran Campus Ministry**- No report submitted.
- E. Reconciling in Christ** – An oral report was provided by **The Rev. Guiliani**, who noted several congregations are proceeding and close to votes about being designated RIC congregations.
- F. Anti-Racism Team** – No report submitted.
- G. Women of the ELCA**- Written report submitted.
- H. Outreach for Hope** – **The Rev. Manke** provided a brief oral report.
- I. Latino Strategy Table**—No report submitted.
- J. Endowment Committee**- No report submitted.
- K. Healing Faith Network**- No report submitted.

## **X. Adjournment**

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 23.01.16. Adjournment**

The council, reaching the end of its agenda of business, adjourned with prayer at 9:09 p.m.

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## **Next Meetings:**

**March 16, 2023: 5:30 dinner; 6:15 meeting**

**May 11, 2023: 5:30 dinner; 6:15 meeting**

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



Submitted,

The Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse, Synod Secretary