

Greater Milwaukee Synod Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting held 20 July 2023

Meeting held at Faith Lutheran Church, N35 W6621 Wilson St, Cedarburg, WI 53012

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
Linda Grosser	North	2025	X		Pending
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

Newly-elected Synod Council members (whose terms will begin in September 2023) in attendance at this transitional meeting included: **Todd Beutin (St. Luke's, Greendale); The Rev. Kimberly Jordan (LC of Resurrection, Pewaukee); Missy Schober (Christ the Servant, Waukesha);** and **The Rev. Sarah Stobie (Bay Shore, Whitefish Bay).**

Others present included: **The Rev. Afi Dobbins-Mays**, Assistant to the Bishop for Authentic Diversity and Leadership; **The Rev. Chris Manke**, Outreach for Hope; **The Rev. Aida Muñiz (Redeemer, Hartford)**, Anti-Racism Team Co-Chair; **The Rev. John Norquist (Faith, Cedarburg)**; **The Rev. Karen Pahl**, Interim Synod Financial Administrator; and **Karina Ward (Kingo, Shorewood)**, Anti-Racism Team Co-Chair.

**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. **

Call to Order

Vice President Caldwell called the meeting to order at 6:17 p.m.

Devotions

Secretary Schlake-Kruse led the Council in devotions, reflecting on the embedded theology present in prairie lands. Connecting the text of the Magnificat (Luke 1), prairie fires, and winds of the Spirit, he invited Council members to reflect on what parts of our personal prairies are in need of seed-spreading, clearing, and where we are noticing interdependent growth. He led the Council in prayer, especially lifting up the recent death of **Vice President Caldwell's** spouse, Mike.

I. Consent Agenda

Council Action

SC 23.07.47. Approval of Consent Agenda

The Council voted to approve the following 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 meetings of 11 May 2023; approval of Retired Roster status for **The Rev. Greg Van Dunk**, effective 1 August, 2023; and review of the Retired Roster for those ministers whose last names fall between J and R.

II. Synod Calls

Council Action

SC 23.07.48. Approval of Synod Call

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call for **The Rev. Nikkeya Berryhill**, called to ecumenical ministry at **Bethel Bethany United Church of Christ, Milwaukee**, effective 22 May 2023.

A letter of invitation to Extended Service for The Rev. Berryhill was issued by the United Church of Christ.

III. Ministry Highlight: Faith Lutheran Prairie

The Rev. John Norquist welcomed the Council to the outdoor meeting space in the Faith Lutheran Prairie. Together with **Caldwell**, they reflected on the work of the Holy Spirit in connecting the church with its neighbors, the partnerships arising from the creation of the project, and the unexpected blessings of having a passive sacred space for folks to enter with curiosity.

IV. Vice President's Report

Vice President Caldwell invited incoming, outgoing, and continuing Council members to reflect on the role of the Synod Council and to share insights into what has made the experience valuable.

V. Bishop's Report

Bishop Erickson provided oral highlights from his written report, informing the council that he gave approval to the relocation request from **Spirit Alive!, Kenosha**, as granted by **SC.23.05.38**. He lifted up the congregation's process as being an excellent example of collaboration as the congregation leaders dialogued with other Kenosha area congregations as a main part of their relocation process.

Bishop Erickson updated the Council on delays in the full transition to the outsourced financial reporting, now loosely hoped to be fully in place by August-September. He also noted his busy summer schedule, taking part in four ordinations (with one or two more coming soon) and seven funerals for Rostered Ministers and congregational leaders.

Bishop Erickson took time to update the Council on internal staff conversations coming before the Council in September related to the timing, schedule, and structure of the Synod Assembly. Early feedback was mixed on extending the business portion earlier into Friday during the 2023 Assembly.

The Council received written and oral updates on the Synod's application for a Lilly Endowment "Thriving Congregations Initiative Grant." **The Rev. Chris Manke**, Outreach for Hope Executive Director, became aware of this grant through collaboration with Marquette University's **Dr. Susan Mountin**. Together with a small team of writers, including **Dr. Rose Dotson**, a thorough application was completed and submitted. If selected, the Synod would receive \$1.25 million over 5 years.

Bishop Erickson's report concluded with updates on congregational closures and property issues; information on the redevelopment process at **LC of the Great Spirit, Milwaukee**, a partnership with the ELCA's Office of Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations; and details related to upcoming conversations involving the Synod Council regarding accountability and transparency in contested changes to the Call Status of Rostered Ministers.

VI. Treasurer's Report

Financial Administrator Pahl presented the financial reports. June mission support was down significantly year-over-year, with \$98,000 received (\$20-30,000 below average June income). Expenses remain under budget nearly \$50,000. **Pahl** also reported on the transition to new financial administration with Supporting Strategies and highlighted changes to the Synod's invoice and reimbursement protocols.

Council Action

SC 23.07.49. Reception of Financial Reports

The Council voted to receive the financial reports through 30 June 2023 as presented.

VII. Old Business

A. Update on Equipping the Saints Mission Appeal

Vice President Caldwell, presenting as the Campaign Manager, noted \$1.249 million has been committed to the Equipping the Saints Campaign. This now exceeds 50% of the campaign goal. A few congregations will be starting appeals.

B. Synod Staff Personnel Policy Review

The Council discussed proposed amendments and revisions to the Synod Staff Personnel Policy; this will be acted upon at the September Council meeting.

VIII. New Business

A. Review Authentic Diversity Strategic Planning Task Force

The Rev. Dobbins-Mays presented a written overview and oral summary of the second phase of the Synod's Authentic Diversity Audit, completed in partnership with Gold Enterprises, LLC. The second phase will begin by forming an intentional team to help the process of implementation and change making across the Synod. Gold will help to facilitate this stage of the process and help kickstart this work.

The Synod Council will be asked to appoint a Task Force in September and was asked to discern possible team members. **The Rev. Dobbins-Mays** noted the timeline is moving a bit slower than expected over the summer, and may be altered dependent on the details related to the Lilly Grant Application. She noted the importance of laying a solid foundation for this work going forward.

B. Review of Synod Assembly Resolutions

Secretary Schlake-Kruse led the Council through an overview of actions required by resolutions adopted at the 2023 Synod Assembly.

1. Resolution 1: Creation Care and ELCA Governing Documents

Secretary Schlake-Kruse presented a resolution to the ELCA Church Council as requested by the Synod Assembly Resolution, asking the Churchwide Expression to include creation care in various sections of the ELCA's governing documents.

Council Action

SC 23.07.50. Resolution to the ELCA Church Council

The Council voted to adopt a Resolution to the ELCA Church Council, “Including Creation Care,” adding “care for creation” to the purposes of this church and amending governing documents to reflect the addition of this purpose.

2. Resolution 2: Supporting Raise the Age Wisconsin Campaign

Bishop Erickson noted he will complete his requested communication and advocacy in response to this resolution no later than 30 November 2023.

3. Resolutions 3 & 4: Synod Compensation Guidelines & Continuing Education Guidelines

The Council discussed the timeline and need to appoint members to a Compensation Guidelines Task Force. It was noted that the timing of the Assembly Resolution and the timeline for publishing recommendations will result in any Task Force beginning its formal recommendations for the 2025 Compensation Guidelines.

4. Resolution 5: Children and Vulnerable Youth

Secretary Schlake-Kruse presented a resolution to the ELCA Church Council as requested by the Synod Assembly Resolution, asking the Churchwide Expression to include in various sections of the ELCA’s governing documents.

Per the request of **The Rev. Jordan**, **The Rev. Pahl** read the specific language of the resolution into the record, reflecting that amendments to the resolution made by the 2023 Synod Assembly were correct in this resolution.

Council Action

SC 23.07.51. Resolution to the ELCA Church Council

The Council voted to adopt a Resolution to the ELCA Church Council, “Including Creation Care,” adding “Supporting Vulnerable Youth” to the purposes of this church and amending governing documents to reflect the addition of this purpose.

C. Action Directing Synod Bishop Advocacy

The Council discussed a request from **The Rev. Dennis Jacobsen**, on behalf of **Hephatha, Milwaukee**, asking for support on legislation related to lead-related health issues and reducing lead exposure. The initial request came as a request for a Synod Council Resolution

Synod Parliamentarian Matthew Brockmeier noted this issue is likely able be addressed by the Synod Council under †S10.02. and S10.02.01., which “create a framework for the council to act on a timely topic where there is no question of coming into conflict with any previous actions of the Assembly.” Conversations between

Brockmeier, Vice President Caldwell, Secretary Schlake-Kruse, and Bishop Erickson discerned that a Council directive to the Synod Bishop would be a proper action and presented it as such to the Council for consideration.

Council Action

SC 23.07.52. Directive to Synod Bishop

The Council voted to direct the Synod Bishop to “Engage in and Support Efforts to Advocate for bipartisan, statewide legislation that will address the need to reduce lead exposure, and to inform and encourage rostered ministers and congregations to do likewise.”

D. Appointment of Synod Leaders

Council Action

SC 23.07.53. Appointment of At-Large Synod Council Member

The Council voted and appointed **The Rev. Joshua Gyson (St. Luke, Slinger)** to a four-year term as an at-large member of the Synod Council (Rostered Minister), effective 1 September 2023.

*Appointed by written ballot. Joshua Gyson 9 votes; The Rev. Doug Anderson 2 votes,
1 abstention*

Council Action

SC 23.07.54. Appointment to Consultation Committee

The Council voted to appoint **The Rev. Andrew Nyren (Redeemer, Milwaukee)** to a six-year term on the Consultation Committee, effective 1 September 2023.

Council Action

SC 23.07.55. Ratification of Mt. Meru Coffee Board Member

The Council voted to ratify the appointment of **Marty Manley** to the board of the Mount Meru Coffee Project.

IX. Reports

- A. Evangelical Mission** – No Report was submitted. **The Rev. Short** remains on Sabbatical leave.
- B. Congregations in Mission** – No report was submitted.
- C. Assistant to the Bishop for Authentic Diversity and Leadership** –A written report was submitted. **The Rev. Dobbins-Mays** noted these first months on Synod Staff have been a whirlwind, including reporting for the Thriving Congregations Application and Siebert Lutheran Foundation Grants, her first Synod Assembly, and

- work with the Anti-Racism Team. She has been shadowing other staff in mobility discussions and meetings with congregations in transition.
- D. Lutheran Campus Ministry-** Written report submitted.
 - E. Reconciling in Christ** –Written report submitted.
 - F. Anti-Racism Team** – An oral report was provided by **The Rev. Muñiz and Ward**. As co-chairs, they have been meeting to resolve unanswered questions and having 1-on-1s with team members.
 - G. Women of the ELCA-** No report submitted.
 - H. Outreach for Hope** – Written report submitted.
 - I. Latino Strategy Table**—No report submitted. The Council congratulated **The Rev. Edwin Aparicio** on his recent ordination.
 - J. Endowment Committee-** No report submitted.
 - K. Healing Faith Network-** No report submitted.

X. Adjournment

Council Action

SC 23.07.66. Adjournment

The council, reaching the end of its agenda of business, adjourned with prayer led by **Bishop Erickson** at 8:17 p.m.

Next Meetings:

Thursday September 21st, 2023

Location TBD

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings begin with dinner at 5:30 p.m. and formal business at 6:15.

Submitted,

The Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse, Synod Secretary