

# Greater Milwaukee Synod Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting Held on 20 May 2021

**Meeting held virtually via Zoom Technologies due to COVID-19 pandemic.**

**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	Cluster/Position	Term Ends 8/31	Present	Absent	Anti-Racism
Temporarily Open	Belle City	2021			
Temporarily Open	Kenosha/West Racine	2021			
Vickie Stretz	Lake Country	2023	X		10/2020
The Rev. Sarah Stobie	Milwaukee 1	2021	X		10/2020
Janet Wunrow	Milwaukee 2	2021	X		3/2021
The Rev. Denise Mbise	Milwaukee 3	2023	X		3/2021
Amber Anderson	Milwaukee 4	2023	X		10/2019
The Rev. Elizabeth Jaeger	Northern Lakeshore	2021	X		4/2019
Mark Christiaansen	Northwest	2021	X		Pending
Edwin Aparicio	Waukesha	2023	X		Pending
The Rev. Kevin Kretzmann Farrar	At Large	2023	X		4/2019
José Andrés Guerrero	At Large	2023	X		Pending
Amber Davis	At Large	2023	X		Pending
Joyce Caldwell	Vice President	2021 (1)	X		11/2018
The Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse	Secretary	2023 (1)	X		Pending
Bob Reinders	Acting Treasurer	2021 (1)	X		10/2015
The Rev. Paul Erickson	Bishop	2022 (1)	X		3/2021
Sara Booher	Youth Representative	2021		X	Pending
Aliliywa Mbise	Young Adult Rep.	2021	X		10/2017

## **Guests and Synod Staff**

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Others present included: **The Rev. Bill Beyer**, RIC Ministry Committee; **The Rev. Kristin Nielsen**, Assistant to the Bishop; **The Rev. Kelly Nieman Anderson**, Synod Immigration and Refugee Task Force Chair; **Mary Romskog**, Synod Assembly Manager; **Sue Seidemann**, Women of the ELCA; **The Rev. Matt Short**, Assistant to the Bishop.

## **Call to Order**

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

## **Devotions**

**The Rev. Kelly Nieman Anderson** led the Council in devotions. She led the Council in the “Romero Prayer,” a prayer attributed to and rooted in the writings of the martyred Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero. Her devotion invited Council participation and reflection on the themes of the Kingdom of God, the hope of emerging seedlings, and the impact of liberation.

## **I. Consent Agenda**

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 21.05.01. Approval of Consent Agenda**

The Council voted to approve all 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 18 March and 27-28 April 2021; approval of On-Leave from Call Status for **The Rev. Diane Olson**, effective 30 April 2021 and **The Rev. Mark Thompson**, effective 30 April 2021; and approval of Retired Status for **The Rev. Tom Kent**, effective 1 July 2021.

## **II. Approval of Synod Calls**

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 21.05.02. Approval of Synod Call**

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call to **The Rev. Sheila Rawn**, serving in interim ministry at **St. Matthew’s, Wauwatosa**, effective 1 May 2021.

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 21.05.03. Approval of Synod Call**

The Council voted to approve a Synod Call to **The Rev. Kathy Brown**, serving in interim ministry at **St. Luke’s Greendale**, effective 17 May 2021.

## **III. Ministry Highlight – Immigration and Refugee Task Force**

**The Rev. Kelly Nieman Anderson (LC of the Resurrection, Racine)** presented a ministry highlight on behalf of the Synod's Immigration and Refugee Task Force. She has been chairing the group over the past few years, taking over from **The Rev. Jim Holmberg**, who had chaired while serving a call at Lutheran Social Services. The Task Force was established through a Synod Assembly Resolution which called for assistance in implementing a more coordinated effort to welcome immigrants and refugees throughout the Synod.

2017 brought a number of changes to U.S. Immigration and Refugee policies and lower numbers of refugees to Milwaukee. These changes shifted the Task Force's goals and mission from organizing and assisting with refugee resettlement toward empowering congregations to engage in service, education, and advocacy in response to the needs of immigrant and refugee communities. Lutheran Social Services now functions as the primary contact for congregations engaging in resettlement. The 2019 Churchwide Assembly in Milwaukee, which declared the ELCA a Sanctuary Denomination, participated in a march toward the Department of Homeland Security offices, coordinated by the Task Force, the ELCA AMMPARO strategy team, (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities), and Voces de la Frontera.

**The Rev. Nieman Anderson** noted that the strategy of the Task Force is evolving, focusing more on helping congregations throughout the wider church heed and recognize the call to support refugees and migrants from a theological perspective. She lifted up **Bishop Erickson's** partnership and work with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services and the Conference of Bishops' Ready Bench; the insights of ELCA AMMPARO coordinator **Mary Campbell (Redeemer, Milwaukee)**, and other direct advocacy efforts.

Thirty-five synod congregations indicated current participation in or interest in participating in greater ways with regards to immigration and refugees. **The Rev. Nieman Anderson** thanked the Synod Council and Synod staff for their support and encouragement, noting the Synod has been an early adopter and example for other synods in how to do this work effectively. She noted the ELCA Church Council recently adopted new guidelines for what it means to live into our designation as a Sanctuary Denomination, which will impact the Task Force's work going forward.

In response to questions from the Council, **The Rev. Nieman Anderson** noted continued need to work on intersectionality, a desire to have greater connection with the Synod El Salvador Committee, and engaging with those on the margins.

#### **IV. Vice President's Report**

**Vice President Caldwell** shared reflections on the transition of more than half of the Synod Council and her vision for looking ahead to the next year and beyond. She is working to plan a fall Synod Council retreat for goal-setting, noting the intersectional natures of many issues, including those raised by the 2021 Synod Assembly Resolutions (RIC, anti-racism, Equipping the Saints outcomes, etc.). A recent survey was sent to rostered ministers to get a sense of where congregations are on the anti-racism journey. Survey responses were low, so **Caldwell** shared her hopes of a broader survey this fall to also look at where congregations are on the RIC journey. The survey could help inform a Siebert Lutheran Foundation grant request related to *Equipping the Saints* priorities.

**Caldwell** also noted that 2022 will be a Bishop's Election year; it will be a primary role of the Synod Council—in July and going forward—to invest time in pondering how to best engage the Synod to prepare for the election process. There have been conversations about how to carry out a modified sort of Mission Exploration Process for the Synod as a part of the election process. She noted that the goal would focus not on individual personalities, or to evaluate the work of the bishop, but to explore and expand upon the Mission, Values, Practices statement.

**Caldwell** also encouraged the Council to discern how the new conference structure might be most useful to these processes and to consider the dynamics which will allow for meaningful and productive discussions.

## V. Bishop's Report

**Bishop Erickson** submitted a full written report. He shared the hopeful news that all members of the Synod staff are fully vaccinated and have returned to the office for work. He also shared that Synod Staff, along with lay leaders and **Bishop Jeff Clements (Northern Illinois Synod)** participated in a refresher course on best practices for receiving notice of sexual misconduct.

Ahead of his sabbatical, **Bishop Erickson** thanked the Synod Council for its support and sabbatical policy. He noted one plan upon his return is to work on providing greater administrative clarity as to the variety of synod committees, ministry teams, and task forces, some of which are operating as described in our governing documents, some of which are not operating as we describe, and some of which are simply not described anywhere but have sprung up from the grass roots. The Bishop attends many of these meetings *ex officio*.

**Bishop Erickson** also provided notice of his intent to renew the status of Synod-Authorized Ministers to preside at the sacraments in specific settings: **Rony Reyes (Faith/Santa Fe, Milwaukee); Venice Williams (The Table, Milwaukee); Edwin Aparicio (Ascension, Waukesha); Germán Novelli, (Ascension, Milwaukee).**

## VI. Treasurer's Report

**Acting Treasurer Bob Reinders** presented the Treasurer's report. Three months into the current budget year, the Synod is in a stable financial position. Congregational support for 2021 is currently \$30,000 ahead of 2020. Some of these variations may be COVID-related; another factor in year-over-year comparison is the delay of many offerings due to a mail delivery issue in 2020. 87% of budgeted revenues to date have been received, a value also ahead of 2020. Benevolence to the ELCA is currently \$18,000 ahead of budget; the shortfall is lesser than predicted due to lower-than-budgeted expenses (\$49,000).

**Reinders** noted that the Synod has received a \$10,000 Churchwide Grant to support Synods beyond the budgeted Evangelical Mission funding. He also noted that it has been protocol not to budget additional income, interest, and dividends, which have a positive impact on the budget for the first quarter of the Synod's fiscal year.

## **Council Action**

### **SC 21.05.04. Acceptance of Financial Statements**

The Council voted to accept the financial statements through 30 April 2021 as presented.

## **VII. Old Business**

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

**Vice President Caldwell** presented in her role as Campaign Manager for the Equipping the Saints Appeal. She recommended viewing and sharing the promotional video with **The Rev. Marilyn Miller** and **Bishop Erickson** which premiered at the Synod Assembly.

To date, the Appeal has received \$228,000 in receipts and pledges, nudging ever closer to the goal of 10%. Since March, further gatherings requesting support were held with the Lutheran Campus Ministry Board, Current and Former Synod Staff. Next steps include the receipt of nominations for possible major donors and seeking congregational and other endowments that may align with the appeal.

Caldwell noted that “First-round” congregations who seek to participate will receive training in how to lead a capital campaign from **The Rev. Mike Ward** and GSB. Those sessions are scheduled to begin in early January.

## **VIII. New Business**

### **A. Report and Review of 2021 Synod Assembly**

**Mary Romskog**, Synod Assembly manager, provided a brief review and report on the 2021 Virtual Synod Assembly. Approaching the Assembly knowing it would be fully remote provided for a great amount of uncertainty and required extra work and coordination. **Romskog** reflected the Assembly was a technological success and was well received by participants, based on evaluations and feedback. Use of Lumi was expensive, but it functioned well. Using AV Milwaukee Tech was a worthwhile use of funds and allowed for Synod staff to focus on other important aspects of the Assembly, compared to the Special January Assembly.

From a budgetary perspective, the Assembly was \$500 above break-even. **Romskog** noted the importance of having registration fees cover the cost of technology while remaining low and accessible for voting members. She thanked the host site, **Holy Cross, Menomonee Falls, Deacon Ellie Schmidtke**, and worship leaders from **St. Luke’s Waukesha**, coordinated by **Michael Schaner**.

The 2022 Assembly will be (tentatively) held in-person at the Italian Community Center. The ICC has pushed nearly \$34,000 in deposits from 2020 and 2021 Assemblies, which were canceled due to the pandemic forward to cover 2022 costs, meaning the Synod lost no funds due to the pandemic cancelling assembly events.

## **B. Amendments to Synod Election Procedures**

**Secretary Schlake-Kruse** presented three items related to the Synod Assembly voting process to the Council. During the 2021 Synod Assembly, **The Rev. Kevin Beebe (Spirit Alive!, Kenosha)** raised the issue that the voting process already completed had unintentionally segregated persons of color to their own ballot, where only one individual could be elected without having the ability to run for an at-large seat for which they would have also qualified. He presented new continuing resolutions to the Synod Council for consideration.

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 21.05.05. Appointment of Alternate Churchwide Assembly Voting Members**

The Council voted to appoint **Youa Reinicker (St. Matthew's, Wauwatosa)** and **Joshua Lee (Cross, Burlington)** as alternate voting members, should any eligible seats be vacated for the 2022 Churchwide Assembly.

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 21.05.06. Approval of Continuing Resolution S9.01.01.A21.**

The Council voted to enact Continuing Resolution S9.01.01.A21., which states, *The election of youth and/or young adult positions shall be completed before balloting for at-large positions begins. Nominees not elected to the youth/young adult positions shall be added to the at-large ballots.*

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 21.05.07. Approval of Continuing Resolution S9.01.01.B21.**

The Council voted to enact Continuing Resolution S9.01.01.B21., which states, *The election of persons of color/persons whose primary language is other-than-English to specific positions shall be completed before balloting for at-large positions begins. Nominees not elected to these specific positions shall be added to the at-large ballots.*

## **C. Appointment of Youth Synod Council Member**

**Vice President Caldwell** noted there is still a need for a Youth member (under age 18 at time of appointment) to serve on the Synod Council.

## **D. Appointment of Young Adult Synod Council Member**

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 21.05.08. Appointment of Synod Council Young Adult Member**

The Council, following up on the business of the 2021 Synod Assembly, voted to appoint **Jacob Guerrero (Ascension, Milwaukee)** as Young Adult voting member of the Synod Council, to a four-year term, 1 September 2021—31 August 2025.

## **E. Appointment of Consultation Committee Member**

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 21.05.09. Appointment to Consultation Committee**

The Council voted to appoint **Todd Beutin (St. Luke's, Greendale)** to fill an unexpired term on the Consultation Committee effective immediately through August 2025.

## **F. Addressing 2021 Synod Assembly Resolutions**

The Council discussed next steps and processes to address actionable items from Resolutions 1 and 2 from the 2021 Synod Assembly. **The Rev. Jennifer Arnold** will be serving as the Synod Staff liaison for both these resolutions. She also serves as the liaison to the Anti-Racism and Reconciling in Christ committees.

## **G. Withdrawal of SAWC Status**

**The Rev. Matt Short** presented the Council with a request to withdraw Synod-Authorized Worshipping Community (SAWC) status for **San Lucas, Racine**. Continuing conversations with leaders has indicated that members who had sought to form their own community were impacted by the pandemic, and that individuals have found other congregations in which to worship.

### **Council Action**

#### **SC 21.05.10. Withdrawal of SAWC Status**

The Council voted to withdraw the Synod-Authorized Worshipping Community Status for **San Lucas, Racine**, effective immediately.

## **IX. Reports**

**A. Evangelical Mission** – A written report was submitted. **The Rev. Short** noted his work on a Churchwide effort to develop an evangelism landing page on elca.org. He included attachments on the “Building a Culture of Generosity” program beginning in August. He noted that 1/3 of Synod ministries applied for a “Digital Reformation”

grant as a part of the granting process in partnership with the Siebert Lutheran Foundation.

- B. Congregations in Mission** – A written report was submitted. **The Rev. Nielsen** highlighted a surge in mobility. As availability of COVID-19 vaccines has increased over the past few months, the number of Rostered Ministers ready to explore the possibility of a new call has increased. This, along with some retirements coming in the next few months means there will be increased need for accompanying congregations through times of leadership transition.

She noted the staff continues to work with interim pastors and councils as they lead their congregations in gathering information about their history, strengths and challenges related to mission and ministry.

**The Rev. Nielsen** indicated she continues in the ELCA's Systems Academy, gaining skills and insights into the process of leading through transition and conflict. She also noted that **The Rev. Krista Zimmerman (Mt. Pleasant, Racine)** will again serve as the ELCA Youth Gathering coordinator for the Synod. During **Zimmerman's** sabbatical this summer, **The Rev. Kelly Nieman Anderson** will serve as acting coordinator.

- C. Missional Leadership** – A written report was submitted. **The Rev. Arnold** noted the Fall Leadership Conference is being planned in person 11-13 October 2021 at the Lake Lawn Resort.

**The Rev. Arnold** also presented an update on mini-sabbatical grants. Grants of up to \$500 will be given to those who apply by 1 June. So far, 15 grant requests have been received.

- D. Lutheran Campus Ministry** – Written report submitted.

- E. Reconciling in Christ** – **The Rev. Bill Beyer** noted the RIC team is returning to a "Cruising altitude." The Synod RIC service is being planned for October to coincide with National Coming-Out Day. Fall programming is being planned to begin on Zoom.

- F. Anti-Racism Team** – Written report submitted. **Caldwell** noted that **The Rev. Denise Mbise** is now a member of the Anti-Racism team.

- G. Women of the ELCA**- Written report submitted. The Fall Convention will be held 9 October 2021 at **Mt. Zion, Wauwatosa** under the theme "It's all about Love." **The Rev. Char Giuliani (Incarnation, Milwaukee)** will be the presiding pastor.

- H. Outreach for Hope** – Written report submitted. **Reinders** noted the board is highly engaged at present. A new Synod Council representative will be needed as **Reinders** term on the Synod Council ends.

- I. ELCA Church Council** – No report submitted.

- J. Opioid and Other Substance Abuse Task Force**- Written report submitted.

## X. Adjournment



**Council Action**

**SC 21.03.19. Adjournment**

The council, reaching the end of its agenda of business, adjourned with a prayer by **The Rev. Bill Beyer** at 7:54 p.m.

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**Next Meeting: Thursday, July 15th,  
Faith Lutheran Prairie, Cedarburg  
Dinner and Fellowship at 5:30 p.m.; Meeting at 6:15 p.m.**

**Scheduled 2020-2021 Council Meetings:**

Thursday, September 16th

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

Signed,

The Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse, Synod Secretary