

Council Members present:

Council Officers: Rev. Laurie Skow-Anderson, Al Arndt, Rev. Julie Brenden, Rev. Peter Muschinske

Conference Representatives:

Apple River: Matt Keenan, Karalyn Littlefield

Chequamegon: Rev. Amy Heinz

Chippewa Valley: Julie Carr, Rev. Karen Behling

Dairyland: Linda Talford

Heart of the North: Janelle Thompson, Ted Hakala

Lake Superior: Mary Meierotto, Matt Dietsche, Rev. Rachel Sieja

St. Croix Valley: Marcia Lindseth

Persons of Color: Deacon Lidixe Montoya

Council Members absent:

Apple River: Rev. Margaret Grant

Chequamegon: Carol Leikes, Lyle Roe

Chippewa Valley: Arvin Solsaa

Dairyland: Rev. JonPaul Dragseth, Matt Hatleli

Heart of the North: Rev. Joel Bacon

St. Croix Valley: Rev. Annie Ladnier, Jacob Summerville

Ex-Officio Representatives present

Bishop's Staff: Elizabeth Bartsch, Rev. Sara Bishop, Rev. Diane House

Guests: Rev. Greg Kaufmann, Rev. Phil Ruge-Jones

Vice President Al Arndt called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm without a quorum. Arndt also led the Land Acknowledgement.

Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson led devotions, Philippians 2:3-8, with a focus on A Simpler, Humbler, Bolder Church following the Church of England Vision Document. She noted from 2015-2022 there has been 14% decline in church membership of the synod, a 35% decrease in active participation, and 35% decrease in baptisms. During this period the financial numbers have not changed. The council broke into small group discussions. The devotions ended with Isaiah 43:15-21.

The book studies scheduled in the synod were noted: *When Church Stops Working*, *The Sparrow*, *Abuelita's Faith*. Other dates of events were noted: February 17 – Walking Together; April 6 – EcoFaith Summit; April 13 – Middle School Youth Gathering; late April – Synod Assembly Forums; June 7-8 – Synod Assembly; summer – ELCA Youth Gathering.

Guests to the council reported on the Lay School's 30th Anniversary. Rev. Greg Kaufmann noted how the idea from Rev. Dick Bruesehoff to gather people from around the synod to learn about faith grew into a reality. Rev. Phil Ruge-Jones told of the hybrid model of instruction for the year which includes in person instruction in fall and spring with the use of zoom in the winter. He noted 23 people in the first-year class, 8 in the second-year class, and 45 in continuing education.

Al Arndt returned to the business items on the agenda with a quorum of members.

Bishop's Election Committee update – the group is meeting about once a month, they have prepared the Conference Deans. All meetings to elect candidates are this week on Thursday. Names will be forwarded to Al Arndt. There will be a workshop at Walking Together, and questions for synod assembly are drafted. Information on candidates will be on the Synod website.

Motion to establish La Mesa de Vecinos – a board of directors for Neighbor to Neighbor Ministry.

Action: Hakala/Behling. Approved.

Motion to approve current SAM's serving as leaders in a ministry setting to be voting members at Synod Assembly.

Action: Muschinske/Meierotto. Approved.

Motion to approve Synod Calls and On Leave listed below. Synod Calls for Rev. Julie Brenden, bridge pastor at Trinity, Hammond; Justin Arnold, SAM, at English, Bateman and St. James, Fall Creek; Jodi Lorenz, Deacon and SAM, at Bone Lake, Luck.

On Leave: Rev. Erin Nelson, year two; Rev. Mikayla Kopp, year two; Rev. Kari Burke Romarheim, family-final year; Rev. Peter Muschinske, year two.

Synod Calls and On Leave voted en bloc. Action: Meierotto/Talford, Abstain: Brenden, Muschinske.

Lutheran Campus Ministry Report

River Falls location is currently vacant.

Rev. Lori Ruge-Jones at UW-EC – have students from various synods and denominations and classes, they collaborate with other campus groups. Please keep campus ministry in your prayers. The strength of ELCA ministry is its nature of being welcoming and theologically true.

Sara Reed at UW- Stout, a video report, Monday night dinner and discussions, 10-15 students; fellowship events.

Motion to approve minutes from November 2023. Action: Talford/Keenan. Approved.

Treasurer's Report – Liz Bartsch commenting on numbers.

Benevolence, books will close on February 10. At this time Mission Support received in \$38,233.00 behind the same time last year; \$49,391.00 behind for the month.

The 2023-2024 Budget is amended upon Rev. Kaufmann's retirement and Rev. Bishops salary adjustments. This also affects benefits. There will be upcoming significant repair to synod vehicles in new administration.

Motion to increase Rev. Sara Bishop and Deacon Laura Ramlow to years of experience, including subsequent changes in Pension and Health in 2023-2024 budget; also to approve amendments to 2024-2025 budget – increase to Region 5, an increase to general office costs, and adjusting salary and benefits costs due to increase in 2023-2024 budget. Action: Hakala/Heinz. Approved.

Motion to recommend to Synod Assembly Salary Standards increase of 3.2% for 2025 Minimum Standards for Compensation and Benefits. Action: Dietsche/Muschinske. Approved.

Motion for Synod Assembly Offering to be divided between Neighbor to Neighbor and Synod Endowment Fund.

Action: Hakala/Meierotto. Approved.

Ministry Reports attached were noted. Verbal additions are as follows:

Rev. Bishop: The synod RIC team has met.

Deacon Montoya: created scholarships for students at CVTC in addition to UW-EC.

The next meeting of the council is scheduled for Friday, June 7 at 12 Noon at the Davies Center on the UW-EC campus.

The installation of the new bishop is set for September 15.

Motion to adjourn. Action: Sieja/Hakala. Approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Julie A. Brenden