

## **Report of the Synod Vice President 2023 Synod Assembly**

“May grace and peace be yours in abundance, in the knowledge of God and of Jesus, our Lord.” (2 Peter 1:2)

As I come to the end of my first 4-year term as Vice President of the Southeast Michigan Synod, I am filled with gratitude; for the confidence expressed by the Synod Assembly in electing me to this role in 2019, for the wonderful people who have given of their time to serve on and to support the Synod Council, and for the unending grace of God which has sustained me throughout these four years. It has been four years, hasn't it? I mean, it almost seems like I lost a year or two in there somewhere. Oh, wait...

The primary role of the Synod Vice President is to chair the meetings of the Synod Council. In that respect, I am filled with gratitude for the time and talents of those who serve on the Council. The roster of the Synod Council changes every year at the Synod Assembly, as some members end their terms of service and others are elected. Each person brings unique gifts and experiences to the work of the Council, and I am deeply grateful for each one. Over many years of service in leadership roles across the church, I have found that, when one faithful, dedicated servant of the Lord concludes their work in an area of ministry, another faithful, dedicated servant steps up to fill the role. That is certainly true of the Synod Council. You will hear and see their names elsewhere in the Assembly materials, but I am compelled to name and thank them again.

- JoEllyn Bernardin: All Saints, Hartland
- Pr. Matthew Bode: Zion, Ferndale
- Michelle Carlson: Pilgrim, Marysville
- Pr. Andrew Chavanak: Holy Trinity, Livonia
- Pr. Elizabeth Friedman: Lord of Light/Lutheran Campus Ministry, Ann Arbor
- Pr. Michael Johnson: Love Rising, Detroit
- Shavaughn Joyce: Revelation, Detroit
- Jakob LeBlanc: Hope, Dearborn
- Beth Paulo: King of Kings, Shelby Township
- Maggie Priestaf: St. Paul, Dearborn
- Pr. Nik Schillack, Beautiful Savior, Bloomfield Hills
- Monique Taylor-McCants: Zion, Ann Arbor
- Gerry Udell: First English, Grosse Pointe Farms
- Rusty Ward: Christ, Monroe
- John Wohl: Love Rising, Detroit
- Synod Treasurer, Daryl Hurley: Genesis, Detroit
- Synod Secretary, Sonja Markwart: All Saints, Hartland
- Bishop Donald Kreiss

I am grateful for all that the Synod Council has accomplished in the past four years. It has been a pleasure to work with these siblings and to have their support as I've grown into this leadership position. At the end of this term (and with a willingness to be nominated for a 2<sup>nd</sup> term), I realize there are a few unfinished items on the list of goals I set for myself four years ago. Given a chance to continue my service, I pledge to you my efforts to:

- Create a Synod Council orientation manual to assist those newly elected to the Council.
- Working with Synod Staff, find a more efficient method of sharing documents for Synod Council meetings.
- Work with Synod Council members to ensure our meetings are seen as a safe place for every member to share their thoughts, concerns, and questions.
- To continue to use a portion of our meeting time to highlight special ministries within the Synod, inviting guests to give presentations.
- To continue to work on my skills as a meeting chair.

The work of the Synod Council would be difficult – if not impossible – without the support of and interaction with the members of the Synod Staff, not just in receiving their written reports at every meeting, but in working as a team to ensure the ministries of the Synod are effective and coordinated. On a personal level, it has been a blessing to become better acquainted with each of them during my service, and I now have an even greater appreciation for their dedicated, tireless efforts in service to the church. My personal thanks to:

- Bishop Kreiss
- Beth Fisher
- Robin McCants
- Rev. Jen Kiefer
- Rev. Sean Ewbank

An important part of my annual report to the Synod Assembly is to give an accounting of the Synod Council's response to Resolutions from the previous year's Assembly. The response to Resolutions from 2022 (and a long-delayed response to a Resolution from 2019) are appended to the end of this report.

A few additional words of gratitude:

- To Pr. Scott Seeke and the good folks at Holy Cross, Livonia for opening up their building as a regular location for Synod Council meetings. Holy Cross is centrally located, has a beautiful facility with good meeting space, and, perhaps most importantly, has a strong, reliable wi-fi signal!

- To Pr. Albert LeBlanc and the good folks at Hope, Dearborn (my home congregation) for supporting me in my service in the Synod, even though it takes me away from opportunities to serve back home.
- To my wife, Caryn, whose love, support, encouragement, and understanding truly keep me going. At this point in our marriage, when I tell Caryn of another upcoming Synod meeting or event that I have to attend, she doesn't even roll her eyes, anymore. I'm not sure if that's acceptance or resignation, but I appreciate it.

In service to Christ,

Paul G. Archer,  
Synod Vice President

## **Response to 2022 Synod Assembly Resolutions**

### **Resolution 1: Regarding Living Water Ministries Welcome to All**

**RESOLVED**, that the Southeast Michigan Synod approve Living Water Ministries to enter the process to become a Reconciling in Christ organization. This would result in Living Water Ministries discerning and seeking this designation, publicly declaring its intent and ability to provide safe space for all constituents, including those who are members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and formally revising policies and procedures as necessary to do so.

**Response:** The 2022 Synod Assembly adopted this Resolution. It required no further action on the part of the Synod Council.

### **Resolution 2: Regarding Compensation Equity**

**RESOLVED**, that the Synod Council be directed to develop equitable compensation policies that address pay equity by the 2023 Synod Assembly and within the 2024 budget. Development of these policies will be informed by outside consultants (e.g. Paychex), research from others synods in the ELCA, pay equity policies in other organizations particularly in the nonprofit sector and input of the BRRICK Team and Diversity Task Force; and

**RESOLVED**, that compensation equity be established as policy in this synod regardless of lay or rostered status, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, race, age, class, ability, disability and other marginal identities. The compensation equity policy shall establish criteria such as years of service and experience, professional skills without regard to clergy or rostered status; and

**RESOLVED**, that the Synod Council will establish a task force to develop principals, resources and recommendations to help congregations address compensation equity as part of their practice and public witness.

**Response:** The 2022 Synod Assembly adopted this Resolution. In response, the Synod Council formed the Compensation Equity Task Force, with Council members Shavaughn Joyce and Pr. Matthew Bode serving as co-chairs. Other Task Force members were:

- Rev. Jen Kiefer
- Ms. Monique Taylor-McCants
- Mr. Anthony Moleski
- Ms. Barbara Morris
- Ms. Erin Shelton
- Rev. Dr. Nik Schillack

The Task Force presented a proposal to the Synod Council in December and the Council adopted the Task Force’s recommendations in February. The proposed changes in compensation for Synod Staff members have been incorporated into the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2025. The full report of the Task Force can be found elsewhere in the pre-Assembly materials.

In 2019, the Synod Assembly adopted, among others, Resolution 4 on the topic of Sexual Misconduct. (included below). In response, the Council began working on a revised Synod Sexual Misconduct Policy, under the direction of Assistant to the Bishop, Rev. Lauren Kirsh-Carr. During that process – and fairly close to conclusion – Rev. Kirsh-Carr was diagnosed with cancer, a diagnosis which led to debilitating treatment and an extended leave from her duties in the Synod Office, until her untimely death in April, 2022. Amidst the challenges of Lauren’s illness and absence, the Sexual Misconduct Policy got, for lack of a better description, lost in the shuffle. The Council has revived the effort to finalize this Policy, now under the leadership of Rev. Elizabeth Friedman. It will be completed in the very near future, I assure you.

#### **Resolution 4: Regarding Increased Accountability in Cases of Sexual Misconduct**

**Resolved**, that the Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) clearly and explicitly renounces sexism and sexual misconduct in all its forms. Further, we acknowledge all the ways in which we have been complicit, either explicitly or implicitly, in acts of sexual misconduct.

**Resolved**, that the Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly call upon the Southeast Michigan Synod Council to commit to creating safe spaces for victims to be heard and believed without fear of recrimination. We also call upon the synod council to recommit to standards of accountability for perpetrators of sexual misconduct which are in line with “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline,” and appropriate in relation to the offense.

Be it further **resolved** that the Southeast Michigan Synod Council is directed to update protocols for reporting incidents of sexual misconduct, which will be made available to Rostered Ministers and congregations, and be accessible on the synod website, by the 2020 Synod Assembly.

Response: It is the position of the Synod Council that all points raised in this Resolution will be appropriately addressed by updating the Synod Sexual Misconduct Policy and by making that policy readily available on the Synod website. In addition, the Council requested that an accompanying document be created – one that provides an “at-a-glance” guide to the steps one would take to report an incident of misconduct. At the time of this Assembly, both documents are under final review and edit by the Council and Synod staff. Once finalized and approved by the Synod Council, they will be uploaded to the Synod website under the heading “Congregation Resources”.