

Friday, May 29, 2015

The 2015 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly is taking place on Friday, May 29, 2015 and Saturday, May 30, 2015 at Carthage College at 2001 Alford Park Drive, Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Plenary I

Call to Order

Bishop Jeff Barrow called the Assembly to order at 11:00 am, with the Order for the Opening of Assembly having been included in morning worship in the Siebert Chapel. He welcomed special guests and speakers, including Rev. Linda Norman, Treasurer of the ELCA; Gregory Woodward, President of Carthage College; Margie Kissner, Director for Quality of Portico Benefits Services; Kara Baylor, Campus Pastor at Carthage College; and Cynthia Crane of the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin. He noted that Rev. Norman preached at Sunday's Carthage College commencement, and that she was "amazing."

The bishop also introduced and thanked the Synod Assembly Planning Team, made up of Rev. Jim Stein, Rev. Tom Pietz, Rev. David Dragseth, Casey Sugden, Rev. Suellen Myers, Rhonda Hill, Rev. Jim Bickel, Rev. Barb Rasmussen, Stephanie Luedtke and Sarah Christiaansen. Also recognized were the sound and tech team consisting of Bob Bohlmann, Andy Matter, Andy Heiele, Sanman and Ron S., and the Carthage College team, including Kevin Slonac, Michael Michaud, Sarah Vanags and Diane Hoffman.

Carthage Welcome – Dr. Gregory S. Woodward, President

Bishop Barrow introduced Dr. Gregory Woodward, who said that he is "so happy we're here. This is just fantastic . . . doing everything we can to uphold the Lutheran tradition." He went on to describe Rev. Baylor's "wonderful, authentic and powerful" work, including new events that she arranges, with people telling their stories. He went on to say that "everyone is invited to our table," adding that the "campus is more powerful than ever, with the largest incoming class at 771. "We are flourishing." With that, Dr. Woodward said that the synod is "invited to come back every year."

Synod Assembly 101 Video

This first video included reminders and pointers about the mechanics of the Assembly, and introductions of several Assembly leaders. It promised a great lunch.

Portico Health Care Welcome – Ms. Margie Kissner

Portico's Director of Quality, Margie Kissner, said that she had asked to be at this Assembly, since her family is from Racine. She introduced Portico as a ministry of ELCA which seeks to strengthen leaders for ministry with cost-effective benefits for financial, emotional and physical well-being. Their goal is for the ELCA to have healthy, resilient leaders, echoing Jesus' call to abundant life. She urged those attending the Assembly, both clergy and lay, to get information from the Portico table, including lists of ways that leaders and congregations can promote a culture of healthy leadership. She added that the church deserves leaders who are rested, resilient and confident.

Lutheran World Relief Video

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The impact of Lutheran World Relief's work was shown in images of people working, living and eating. Bishop Barrow noted after the video that LWR's work was about empowering, not just feeding people.

Synod Plant

Heather May was the first Synod Plant, from St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Greendale. Her plant was a thank-you to youth leaders meeting with Stephanie Luedtke about Cross+Generation ministry.

Report of the Credentials Committee

Bishop Barrow called upon Mr. David Groenewold, chair of the Credentials Committee, to give the committee's report.

Mr. Groenewold reported that in attendance at the opening of the Assembly on Friday, May 29, 2015, were 140 rostered persons and 182 lay people, for a total voting membership of 322. Also present were 23 visitors for a total attendance of 345. A quorum of voting members was present.

Electronic Voting Tutorial

There was a brief tutorial on the electronic voting system, using test questions. Most respondents were mistaken in believing the bishop graduated from Augustana College in 1972.

Adoption of Agenda

Bishop Barrow then asked the Assembly to approve the agenda as recommended by the Synod Council and printed in the Synod Assembly Supplement (hereinafter "Supplement").

Assembly Action

SA15.05.01. Adoption of Agenda

The Assembly voted to adopt the agenda as printed in the Supplement.

Bishop Barrow declared the agenda adopted.

Appointments

Bishop Barrow asked for approval of appointments to the Credentials, Elections, Nominating, and Reference and Counsel Committees, and of Synod Secretary Mr. Matthew Brockmeier as Parliamentarian, as published in the Supplement.

Assembly Action

SA15.05.02. Ratification of Appointments

The Assembly voted to ratify the appointments as printed in the Supplement.

Approval of Rules and Procedures

Bishop Barrow asked the Assembly to approve the proposed Rules and Procedures of the Assembly, as recommended by the Synod Council and printed in the Supplement.

Assembly Action

SA15.05.03. Approval of 2015 Assembly Rules and Procedures

The Assembly voted to adopt the 2015 Assembly Rules and Procedures as presented.

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The bishop declared the Rules adopted.

God's Work, Our Hands Video

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton's video presentation on God's Work, Our Hands Sunday (September 13, 2015) featured stories from individuals on what they did for this event in past years. There was, she said, "no shortage of need." Information is available at <http://www.elca.org/dayofservice>.

Synod Plant

Rev. Grant Quever gave thanks for partnerships; speaking of serving on the synod's stewardship committee, "which has resources to help us change the world for the better. Thank you for your ministries."

Nominating Committee Report

Bishop Barrow invited Nominating Committee Chair Rev. Fred Thomas-Breitfeld to present the committee's report. Members of the Assembly were invited to make nominations from the floor for all positions except those nominated by clusters.

Nominated for 2016 Churchwide Assembly (one position each)

At Large – Clergy

Rev. Dr. Lindsay Paul Jordan – Nominating Committee Nomination

Rev. Matthew Short – Nominating Committee Nomination

No floor nominations

At Large – Lay Female

Ms. Loretta Brockmeier – Nominating Committee Nomination

No floor nominations

At Large – Lay Male

Mr. Dave Groenewold – Nominating Committee Nomination

No floor nominations

At Large – Youth or Young Adult Layperson of Color or Whose Primary Language is Other than English

Mr. Trevor Williams – Nominating Committee Nomination

No floor nominations

At Large – Lay Male Person of Color or Whose Primary Language is Other than English

No Nominee from Committee

Mr. Benhi Khabeb – Floor Nomination

At Large – Lay Female Youth or Young Adult

Ms. Kimberly Kramer – Nominating Committee Nomination

No floor nominations

Kenosha/West Racine Cluster – Lay Male of Color or Whose Primary Language is Other than English

Mr. Dayvin Hallman – Cluster Nomination

Lake Country Cluster – Lay Female

Ms. Susan Daniels, AIM – Cluster Nomination

Milwaukee Cluster 1 – Clergy

No Nominee

Milwaukee Cluster 2 – Lay Female Youth or Young Adult

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Ms. Sabryna Davis – Cluster Nomination
Milwaukee Cluster 3 – Lay Male
Mr. Todd Beutin – Cluster Nomination
Milwaukee Cluster 4 – Clergy
Rev. Matthew Kruse – Cluster Nomination
Northern Lakeshore Cluster – Lay Male
Mr. Eric Hackert – Cluster Nomination
Northwest Cluster – Clergy
Rev. Ben Groth – Cluster Nomination
Racine Cluster – Lay Female
Ms. Margaret A. Robinson – Cluster Nomination
Waukesha Cluster – Lay Male
No Nominee

Nominated for the Consultation Committee

Clergy – Full Terms (2): September 2015 through August 2021
Rev. Tom Kent – Nominating Committee Nomination
No Second Nominee
No floor nominations
Lay Female – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2021
No Nominee
No floor nominations
Lay Male – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2021
Mr. Byron Johnson – Nominating Committee Nomination
No floor nominations

Nominated for Synod Council

At Large – Clergy – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2019
Rev. Dr. Lindsay Paul Jordan – Nominating Committee Nomination
No floor nominations
At Large – Lay Female – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2019
No Nominee
No floor nominations
At Large – Lay Male – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2019
Mr. Steven Hruska – Nominating Committee Nomination
No floor nominations
Lake Country Cluster
No Nominee
Milwaukee Cluster 3 – Lay Female – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2019
Ms. Claire Zautke
Milwaukee Cluster 4 – Clergy – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2019
No Nominee
Waukesha Cluster – Clergy – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2019
Rev. Angela Khabeb – Cluster Nomination
Youth Representative – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2017
Ms. Sarah Muller – Synod Council Nomination

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No floor nominations

Nominated for Synod Secretary

Full Term: September 2015 through August 2019

Mr. Matthew Brockmeier – Synod Council Nomination

No floor nominations

Report of the Reference and Counsel Committee

Mr. David Falk, chair of the Reference and Counsel Committee, was asked to give the committee's report. The committee held a meeting by teleconference on Tuesday, May 19th to review all properly submitted resolutions and memorials. Members of the Committee were listed in the Committee's report in the Supplement.

Mr. Falk reported that one resolution was submitted and reviewed. The text of this resolution, which was read by Mr. Falk, was included in the Supplement, and will appear in these minutes as it is considered.

The Reference and Counsel Committee made no recommendation for action, based on the vagueness of the call to action and a lack of clarity of intent in the resolution.

Malaria Video

A key point of this video is that "together we've raised \$14 million, along with encouragement to join what has become a global effort to eradicate malaria.

Report of Synod Council Vice President

Without objection, the bishop moved this report to the second plenary session.

Budget Presentation

Mr. Lee Johnston, Synod Treasurer, drew attention to the current and proposed budgets as published in the Supplement, and described the change in method proposed for determining the level of mission support from the synod to the ELCA. Central to this change is that, while keeping the contribution rate at 55% of synod mission support income, the ELCA's portion would be capped when total income reaches \$2 million. Tied to this central change would be making support for Lutheran Campus Ministry, formerly a flat \$135,000 per year, also function as a percentage of mission support income. The benchmark for this item would be \$135,000 at \$2 million in income, with proportional decreases if total giving is less than \$2 million. The synod will make an effort, hopefully augmented by discussion by voting members in their home congregations, to increase the overall level of mission support in order to at least stabilize this support at approximately \$2 million.

Bishop Barrow announced that the Assembly was in recess at 12:02 pm, in order to facilitate participation in the Outreach for Hope Assembly Banquet.

Plenary II

Bishop Barrow called the Assembly to order, with devotions shared by Rev. Gary Erickson, Vice Chair of the Outreach for Hope Board of Directors. Rev. Erickson spoke of hope for a broken world, using text from Hebrews 11:1 and Micah 6:8. Asking what hope looks like, he said answers range from simple logistics, like getting home and finding that place of belonging, to a boatful of refugees, with the hope that some country

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will open the door to the God-given right to food and shelter, to someone coping with cancer. Citing other examples, Rev. Ericksen said that hope is a manifestation of faith, and urged attendees to “use the Assembly as a time for reflection.” He ended by returning to the text from Micah, noting that kindness is an important word in that verse. “Can we,” he asked, “simply be kind to one another?”

Announcements

Announcements by Bishop Barrow included the availability of stewardship DVDs for each congregation, the opportunity for photos with a free 8” x 10”, the need to run workshops in a timely fashion to facilitate dinner, the need to return voting machines and room keys when leaving, and the blood drive sponsored by the Women of the ELCA today.

Synod Assembly 201 Video

A second animated video featuring afternoon procedures.

Synod Plant

Rhonda Hill, with sound equipment assistance by Josiah, thanked those in the synod who showed kindness to her during her illness. “This synod demonstrated kindness and caring – kind, caring and showing great hospitality when the need arises – you guys are there. Love you guys so much.”

Report of the Credentials Committee

Mr. David Groenewold gave the report of the Credentials Committee, reporting that at the beginning of the second plenary session there were 145 rostered persons and 190 lay people, for a total voting membership of 335. Also present were 23 visitors for a total attendance of 358. A quorum was present.

Report of Synod Council Vice President

Vice President Mr. Scott Manske, making a presentation with informational slides, spoke about the synod and the Synod Council, with reference to Romans 12:6 and I Peter 4:10. Recognizing the gift of self of those serving on the Council, Mr. Manske asked members to stand. He then spoke of the central role played by the synod as one of the three expressions of the ELCA (congregations, synods and national church). Offering examples of the work of synod staff, he elaborated on the many missions of the synod, including equipping leaders for congregations, supporting ELCA ministries, and providing funds that will, in part, come back to serve other ministries in our area.

World Hunger Video

Using a Milwaukee story, this video followed someone who went from success to despair, but found the tools to work back to being a valued contributor to society through a program supported by ELCA World Hunger. The bishop, stating his belief that “bishops must major in something,” reiterated his support for work to address hunger following the video presentation.

ELCA Representative Report

Rev. Linda Norman, Treasurer of the ELCA, presented the ELCA Representative Report. She said that she is proud, not just of the words, but of the ministry we do together. Noting that the unlikely apostles found voice to share the good news, Rev. Norman said that people “have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus,” thanking the synod.

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She said that the ELCA has its eyes on GMS, noting All People's Lutheran Church Pastor Steve Jerbi's appearance on the cover of the current edition of The Lutheran and the work they do with a feeding program and other ministries. She spoke more of stories of ministry in the synod, and then added that Bishop Barrow "does so much. We ask a lot of our bishops, doing work on behalf of the world." The bishop's participation in the Women and Justice Task Force, a gender-based violence task force with Rev. Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld, and Rev. Thomas-Breitfeld's work on the Mission Investment Fund board.

There are so many ways, she said, that we are connected. Bishop Eaton speaks of how we are the church together. She added that "we are not a poor church," saying that generosity in stewardship releases us "to give room to the spirit to do what the spirit will do."

"God is providing for us – we are church," a church made up of 4 million Lutherans in the ELCA, but 72 million in the Lutheran World Federation. Many of the fastest-growing Lutheran church bodies are in Africa, a manifestation of "Lutherans reclaiming the joy – speak it loudly and proudly and understanding what a growing Lutheran church looks like." We can, she noted, "do more together than alone," adding that this is "also a statement of our connectedness in the spirit – we are already connected as one body in Christ – church for the sake of the world, something beyond ourselves."

The Presiding Bishop's video reinforced the idea that "we are church" with the idea that the ELCA is "not a service organization with sacraments" where "Jesus has almost become wallpaper." The message concluded with the idea that "the heart of what we do as church is worship – sacramental life keeps us coming back, keeps us focused."

Rev. Norman thanked the synod for continuing strong support, despite declines in mission support, with the rate of contribution to the national church, 55%, "still among the highest rates of sharing" in the ELCA.

A brief recap of the range of the church's activity concluded her remarks. Among items mentioned were the Malaria campaign, this summer's Youth Gathering in Detroit, the approaching 500th anniversary of the reformation, new mission starts, scholarships for seminarians, young adults receiving global service scholarships, ELCA World Hunger, and ELCA Disaster Relief. "We are excited about what this church can do, with a goal."

Synod Plant

Jaime Larson-McLoone of Mt. Carmel Lutheran Church in Milwaukee expressed gratitude for the synod offering the diakonia program, asking diakonia participants to stand. Many did.

First Ballot

Bishop Barrow called for the first ballot for those nominated for positions in the synod. Without objection the bishop announced that only the contested position for At Large Clergy Voting Member of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly would be a tallied vote; all other positions would be elected in a single action by voice vote.

Vote by electronic voting machine:

Nominated for 2016 Churchwide Assembly

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At Large – Clergy (one position)

Rev. Matthew Short* 139 votes (elected)

Rev. Lindsay Paul Jordan 92 votes

Vote by single action, voice vote:

Assembly Action

SA15.05.04. Election of Nominees

The Assembly voted to elect all following nominees:

2016 Churchwide Assembly Voting Members

At Large – Lay Female

Ms. Loretta Brockmeier

At Large – Lay Male

Mr. Dave Groenewold

At Large – Youth or Young Adult Layperson of Color or Whose Primary Language is Other than English

Mr. Trevor Williams

At Large – Lay Male Person of Color or Whose Primary Language is Other than English

Mr. Benhi Khabeb

At Large – Lay Female Youth or Young Adult

Ms. Kimberly Kramer

Kenosha/West Racine Cluster – Lay Male of Color or Whose Primary Language is Other than English

Mr. Dayvin Hallman

Lake Country Cluster – Lay Female

Ms. Susan Daniels, AIM

Milwaukee Cluster 2 – Lay Female Youth or Young Adult

Ms. Sabryna Davis

Milwaukee Cluster 3 – Lay Male

Mr. Todd Beutin

Milwaukee Cluster 4 – Clergy

Rev. Matthew Kruse

Northern Lakeshore Cluster – Lay Male

Mr. Eric Hackert

Northwest Cluster – Clergy

Rev. Ben Groth

Racine Cluster – Lay Female

Ms. Margaret A. Robinson

Synod Consultation Committee

Clergy – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2021

Rev. Tom Kent

Lay Male – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2021

Mr. Byron Johnson

Synod Council

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At Large – Clergy – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2019

Rev. Dr. Lindsay Paul Jordan

At Large – Lay Male – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2019

Mr. Steven Hruska

Milwaukee Cluster 3 – Lay Female – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2019

Ms. Claire Zautke

Waukesha Cluster – Clergy – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2019

Rev. Angela Khabeb

Youth Representative – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2017

Ms. Sarah Muller

Nominated for Synod Secretary

Full Term: September 2015 through August 2019

Mr. Matthew Brockmeier

Required Reports

Bishop Barrow introduced the required reports, based on direction from previous Synod Assemblies for the Synod Council to report and/or provide items for action by the Assembly.

The first item was a report on the status of 2014 Synod Assembly Resolution 2: Encouraging Voting Member Diversity and Participation. Vice President Manske reported that the Assembly planning team took into account concerns expressed in this resolution and worked to integrate feasible changes into this year's planning process. The current plan is to conduct a detailed review of this year's participation results to see if those concerns are being successfully addressed. He noted in his report that in 2013 108 congregations, out of a total of 130, sent voting members to the Assembly, and that those attending were an even balance of male (158) and female (159). He also reported on the funding mechanism for the Assembly (from a designated fund from Assembly fees) and the general cost (\$65,000-\$75,000 a year).

Rev. Jay McDivitt, chair of the task force considering the question of Called Interim Ministry brought forward by 2014 Synod Assembly Resolution 3, reported that the realm of discussion had expanded, including exploration of the issue with the Presbyterian church and other resources. Acute transitions (e.g. long-term pastors leaving or problems leading to departures are the focus of these discussions. The task force is not prepared to present concrete recommendations, but Rev. McDivitt invited anyone interested to contact him to join the discussion.

Review of resolution 3, 2014 – asked to consider an idea of 4 full-time ministers. Intent – conversation much more broad-reaching. Presbyterian Church discussion, and other resources. Acute transitions are the focus. Pool from which we draw could be broadened. Not prepared to present any concrete recommendations. Pastor Jay – we are an open group.

2009 Synod Assembly Resolution 4 called for an “Advance Process for Identifying Potential Nominees for Bishop,” with a requirement that the Synod Council present a plan to the Assembly the year before a scheduled election for bishop. Secretary

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Brockmeier presented the “Discernment and Election Process for the Selection of a Bishop” approved by the Synod Council in a special meeting on May 27, 2015. He provided an overview of the key provisions of this process, including identification of prospective nominees by any voting member of a congregation in the synod, and a series of four forums for prospective nominees. An appointed Elections Committee will manage the process, independently of synod staff, and with the Synod Council have oversight of but not active participation in the work of the Committee. The policy includes detailed timelines for the 2016 process.

Rev. John Horner-Ibler spoke to express thanks to the Council for their work in preparing this policy.

Assembly Action

SA15.05.05. Approval of Bishop Election Policy

The Assembly voted to approve the “Discernment and Election Process for the Selection of a Bishop – 2016.”

The vote on this question was 259 in favor and 8 opposed.

Following the vote Rev. Ronald Matter asked as a point of clarification whether this policy would result in the elimination of the ecclesiastical ballot called for in the synod’s constitution, with the bishop responding that there would be no change to the ballot procedure.

Vice President Manske addressed the 2013 Synod Assembly Resolution on the Use of Funds from the Sale of Greater Milwaukee Synod Church Properties, saying that “it’s not soup yet.” While a task force has been working on this in the aftermath of the granting program stemming from the sale of the Good Shepherd congregation property several years ago, their report has not been finalized. Mr. Manske noted that one of the major problems the task force was addressing was how to incorporate smaller congregations in any future granting process.

Since the Options for Missional Closing document is tied to and in part relies on the Use of Funds question, there was no report, though the document has largely been drafted.

Without objection, Bishop Barrow called for action on the budget to precede constitution and bylaw changes.

Action on the Budget

Treasurer Mr. Lee Johnston reiterated how the budget ties in to what the synod does and how it helps congregations and other ministries to accomplish their objectives. He spoke of the “success stories made possible because of congregational support that goes to the synod.”

After a motion and second to approve the budget, questions included why campus ministry had been shifted to a percentage-based rather than an absolute amount of support. The bishop noted that the fall in mission support to the synod meant some choices and changes were necessary, and that were mission support to continue falling the support structure for ministries funded by the synod would begin to fail.

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There was also support for devising an enhanced evangelism strategy. The bishop urged those interested to contact Rev. Sandy Chrostowski on synod staff in this regard.

Other questions dealt with the role played by ELCA Region 5 funding, a request for clarification on which partner ministries were budgeted as a percentage and which as absolute amounts, why more was not budgeted for legal fees last year (the budget was based on average expectations for a variable category), and requesting clarification on a shift from position support to program support for items funded by the Siebert Foundation. Rev. Richard Warber called on those present to take a message back to their congregations, pastors and other leaders to work to increase support for the work of the synod and the ELCA.

Assembly Action

SA15.05.06. Approval of Budget

The Assembly voted to approve synodical budget for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2017 as presented, with total contributions and support of \$2,095,500 and total ministries (expenses) of \$2,119,320.

The vote on the budget was 259 in favor and 15 opposed.

Announcements

Announcements included information on workshop sessions from 4:00 to 5:00 pm, and the fact that dinner ends at 6:00 pm.

Recess

The bishop announced that the Assembly was in recess at 3:55 pm, to resume on Saturday morning.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Brockmeier
Secretary
Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA