

# Minutes of the 2015 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly May 29-30, 2015

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## **Friday, May 29, 2015**

The 2015 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly took place from Friday, May 29, 2015 through 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.

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## **Lutheran World Relief Video**

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

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Milwaukee Cluster 2 – Lay Female Youth or Young Adult

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 Person of Color – 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

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Youth Representative – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2017  
Ms. Sarah Muller – Synod Council Nomination  
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 19<sup>th</sup> 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. Ericksen spoke of hope for a broken world, using text from Hebrews 11:1 and Micah 6:8. Asking what

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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 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

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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. 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,” including 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 500<sup>th</sup> 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.

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Vote by electronic voting machine:

**2016 Churchwide Assembly Voting Member**

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

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Lay Male – Full Term: September 2015 through August 2021  
Mr. Byron Johnson

## **Synod Council**

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

Rev. Dr. Lindsay Paul Jordan

At Large – Lay Male Person of Color – 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

## **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.

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 Brockmeier presented the "Discernment and Election Process for the Selection of a

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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.

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.

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

The bishop announced, without objection, that the Assembly was in recess at 3:55 pm, to resume on Saturday morning.

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## **Saturday, May 30, 2015**

### **Plenary III**

Bishop Barrow called the Assembly to order at 8:36 am.

#### **Partnership Video – Redeemer Lutheran Church, Milwaukee**

Pastor Lisa Bates-Froiland highlighted the hundreds of people coming through the church's doors every week for meals, support and discussion. Following a survey to determine needs in the community, the congregation was able to use an ELCA partnership grant to address some of those needs.

#### **Devotions**

Devotions were led by Rev. Larry Harpster, Dr. Martin Luther, Oconomowoc, who spoke of hands being hope for a broken world. With words from John 14, Psalm 23 and the writings of Paul Rev. Harpster asked whether our hands have been the instrument of God, returning to the hope we get from Jesus. The devotions were followed by prayers for individuals associated with the Assembly.

#### **Synod Plant**

Ms. Shelly Schulteis gave thanks for meetings of congregational discipleship coordinators, including at synod assemblies, and for learning about causes in which the synod is involved. She also gave thanks for the annual conference at Green Lake, which "helps me grow. Thank you Greater Milwaukee Synod!"

#### **Report of the Credentials Committee**

Mr. David Groenewold, chair of the Credentials Committee, reported that in attendance prior to the third plenary, on Saturday, May 30, 2015, were 148 rostered persons and

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196 lay people, for a total voting membership of 344. Also present were 23 visitors for a total attendance of 367. A quorum was present.

Mr. Groenewold also reported that offerings at worship the previous day, which are to be divided between Lutheran Campus Ministry and the ELCA's Malaria Project, were \$2,023.53.

### **Synod Constitution and Bylaw Changes**

Bishop Barrow called on Secretary Brockmeier to present an overview of the proposed changes to the synod's governing documents. These changes were recommended to the Assembly by Council action in September 2014, and included two revisions recommended by the ELCA in action at the Churchwide Assembly in 2013, one revision to convert a bylaw to a continuing resolution to allow easier ongoing updates, and a change in the bylaw regarding required notice for a special meeting of the Synod Council.

### **Proposed Changes to Synod Constitutional Provisions S7.23. and S7.26.**

**The Synod Council, in action SC14.09.25. on September 18, 2014, recommends that the 2015 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly amend the Synod's Constitution to reflect changes adopted by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly to provisions which are not required (amendments as allowed in †S18.12. )**

**S7.23.** The presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and such other official representatives of this church as may be designated from time to time by the Church Council shall ~~also~~ have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly. Like privileges shall be accorded to those additional persons whom the Synod Assembly or the Synod Council shall from time to time designate.

**S7.26.** This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit representatives of ~~mission settings formed with the intent of becoming recognized~~ congregations under development and authorized worshipping communities of the synod, which have been authorized under ELCA bylaw 10.02.03., to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †S7.21.

### **Assembly Action**

#### **SA15.05.07. Approval of Amendments to Synod Constitution**

The Assembly voted to amend provisions S7.23. and S7.26. of the Greater Milwaukee Synod Constitution to conform to changes adopted by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly, as follows:

**S7.23.** The presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and such other official representatives of this church as may be designated from time to time by the Church Council shall have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly. Like privileges shall be accorded to those additional persons whom the Synod Assembly or the Synod Council shall from time to time designate.

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**S7.26.** This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit representatives of congregations under development and authorized worshipping communities of the synod, which have been authorized under ELCA bylaw 10.02.03., to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †S7.21.

*These amendments were approved on a voice vote.*

**Proposed Conversion of Bylaw to Continuing Resolution**

**The Synod Council, in action SC14.09.25. on September 18, 2014, recommends to the 2015 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly that Bylaw S6.03.01. be converted to Continuing Resolution S6.03.B15.**

~~S6.03.01.~~ S6.03.B15. In order to foster liaison between this synod and the synodical women's organization:

- a. The president of the synodical women's organization (or her designee) shall from time to time be invited to attend meetings of the Synod Council and to report on the activities of the organization to the Synod Council and the Synod Assembly; and
- b. The bishop (or his or her designee) shall from time to time arrange to attend the organization's board meetings and conventions and to report on the activities of the synod to the organization.

**Assembly Action**

**SA15.05.08. Conversion of Bylaw to Continuing Resolution**

The Assembly voted to convert bylaw S6.03.01. to continuing resolution S6.03.B15., as follows:

**S6.03.B15.** In order to foster liaison between this synod and the synodical women's organization:

- a. The president of the synodical women's organization (or her designee) shall from time to time be invited to attend meetings of the Synod Council and to report on the activities of the organization to the Synod Council and the Synod Assembly; and
- b. The bishop (or his or her designee) shall from time to time arrange to attend the organization's board meetings and conventions and to report on the activities of the synod to the organization.

*The vote on conversion of the bylaw to a continuing resolution was 225 in favor, 4 against.*

**Amendment to Shorten Notice Period for Special Synod Council Meetings**

**The Synod Council, in action SC14.09.25. on September 18, 2014, recommends to the 2015 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly that Bylaw S10.07.01. be amended to change the timing of special meeting notices**

**S10.07.01.** The Synod Council shall hold regular meetings at least three times each year. Special meetings may be called by the bishop, by the Executive Committee, or by a majority of the members of the Synod Council. The secretary

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shall cause notice of any meeting to be given to the members of the Synod Council stating the day, place, and hour of the meeting, and in the case of a special meeting, the purpose or purposes for which the meeting is called. No business shall be transacted at a special meeting which does not relate to the purpose or purposes for which the meeting was called as stated in the notice of the meeting. Notice of a regular meeting shall be given in writing and shall be personally delivered or mailed to the members of the Synod Council at least 10 days prior to the meeting. Notice of a special meeting may be given in writing or by telephone and shall be given at least one day ~~five days~~ prior to the meeting. Any notice mailed shall be deemed to be given when deposited in the United States mail, with postage thereon prepaid, and addressed to the member entitled to notice. To the extent permitted by state law, meetings of the Synod Council and its committees may be held electronically, or by telephone conference, and notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.

Discussion of this proposal centered on concern about one day notice, as proposed, and about use of the mail to deliver notice. The first action was to change the proposed notice period.

### **Motion to Amend**

#### **Assembly Action**

##### **SA15.05.09. Motion to Amend**

The Assembly voted to replace “one day” with “two days” in the proposed change to bylaw S10.07.01.

*The vote on the motion to amend was 176 in favor, 50 opposed.*

Discussion then moved to the question of removing the sentence calling for mailing notices, beginning “Any notice mailed.” The use of mail was seen as inconsistent with a shorter notice period.

#### **Assembly Action**

##### **SA15.05.10. Move the Previous Question**

The Assembly voted to end debate on removal of the sentence on mail from bylaw S10.07.01. by moving the previous question.

*The vote on the motion to end debate was 213 in favor, 19 against.*

Mr. Jerry Key, on a Point of Order, questioned the status of the motion, which was then voted.

### **Motion to Amend**

#### **Assembly Action**

##### **SA15.05.11. Motion to Amend**

The Assembly voted to remove the sentence “Any notice mailed shall be deemed to be given when deposited in the United States mail, with postage thereon prepaid, and addressed to the member entitled to notice.” from the proposed change to bylaw S10.07.01.

*The vote on the motion to amend was 123 in favor, 104 opposed.*

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A motion followed to end debate on the original question.

## **Assembly Action**

### **SA15.05.12. Move the Previous Question**

The Assembly voted to end debate on revisions to bylaw S10.07.01. by moving the previous question.

*The vote on the motion to end debate was 204 in favor, 25 against.*

## **Assembly Action**

### **SA15.05.13. Approval of Bylaw Revisions**

The Assembly voted to amend Synod Bylaw S10.07.01. to read as follows:

**S10.07.01.** *The Synod Council shall hold regular meetings at least three times each year. Special meetings may be called by the bishop, by the Executive Committee, or by a majority of the members of the Synod Council. The secretary shall cause notice of any meeting to be given to the members of the Synod Council stating the day, place, and hour of the meeting, and in the case of a special meeting, the purpose or purposes for which the meeting is called. No business shall be transacted at a special meeting which does not relate to the purpose or purposes for which the meeting was called as stated in the notice of the meeting. Notice of a regular meeting shall be given in writing and shall be personally delivered or mailed to the members of the Synod Council at least 10 days prior to the meeting. Notice of a special meeting may be given in writing or by telephone and shall be given at least two days prior to the meeting. To the extent permitted by state law, meetings of the Synod Council and its committees may be held electronically, or by telephone conference, and notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.*

*The vote on the motion to approve the bylaw revisions was 189 in favor, 37 against.*

## **Synod Plant**

Rev. Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld expressed gratitude that we as a synod can talk about race. She spoke of the formation of the Anti-Racism Team in 1998, how anti-racism work is now included in the budget as a line item, and how rostered and other leaders are required to take Anti-Racism Training. The message for her is that, in this synod, all are brothers and sisters together, for which she is thankful.

## **Report of the Bishop – Bishop Jeff Barrow**

Vice President Manske introduced Bishop Jeff Barrow, noting all of the varied things that come up on a Google search for him. He expressed appreciation for the gifts the bishop brings to the synod.

Responding to the introduction by noting that Google searches for himself also bring up a world-class canoeist from Missouri. He shared the list of transitions of rostered leaders with the Assembly, adding that Rev. Kristin Nielsen had moved from serving as pastor of Good Shepherd Trinity in Milwaukee to new service as the Director of Rostered Leadership for the synod. He noted with disappointment the fact that the

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delegation from the Meru Diocese was unable to travel to Milwaukee because of visa issues, but asked Rev. Fred Thomas-Breitfeld to act as a Synod Plant on their behalf.

### **Synod Plant**

Rev. Thomas-Breitfeld took the podium to toss out packets of Mt. Meru decaf while he extolled the synod's global partnership focus. He spoke of the vibrant ministry in Tanzania, and of the wells dug with funds from the sale of Good Shepherd's property in the synod's granting program. He hopes, he said, to be able to visit Meru later this year.

### **Report of the Bishop - Continued**

The bishop noted that there is already so much being talked about at this Assembly, moving quickly to his belief "in a place called hope." He said that "hope for a weary world is still the most important thing we offer," also highlighting the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Outreach for Hope.

"We live," he said, "in a world of violence," which is "not far from our churches." The children dying are our children; the soldiers and law enforcement officers are our children. "We must," he added, "learn from our global partnerships, look at things differently. People coming across our borders [are] no longer faceless people, but our people."

Bad things come from the world's hopelessness, and "we must proclaim connection to the world in so many ways." We "cannot separate the Gospel from what we do in the world," where "dignity and empowerment" are critical. Our work, he said, is to help individuals thrive, not just survive; for congregations are not just safe havens, but where people are met with dignity.

"Offering hope in a violent world is a bi-partisan effort. Historically the ELCA has spanned the spectrum, with all at the same table of grace, sent into the world with hearts of compassion." The bishop said we must "stop mindless separation into little cubicles, [when we] can offer hope to a fractured political system."

He spoke of how the synod spends wellness money, in part in situations that bring people together in reaction to how "the world has become so terribly isolated." He added that "most of us believed in ourselves" growing up, but now he sees a "society awash in individualism" where the power of being connected to each other is lost. That power becomes apparent with "glimpses at an Assembly like this."

"As a synod," he said, "we will do everything we can to provide safe places to gather," encouraging civil discourse. Congregations must, in turn, "commit to the rebuilding of the common good that we have so easily dismissed." They can "offer signs of hope to the world around us."

The bishop gave "thanks for the many things happening in our church today – everyday relationships that make a difference in the world – bringing light to the communities in which congregations are planted."

He spoke of the progress made in what had been Youth and Family and is now known as Cross+Generational Ministry, and of the continuing need to be sure that children are "not the sideshow, but the heart and soul, the main thing."

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Citing problems facing the church, he said that congregations are in some cases “taking bigger risks than ever before,” including looking at the possibility of selling buildings as they look to do ministry in new ways. One example he gave of a new way of doing ministry is the effort to create a federated Lutheran-Presbyterian congregation, Good Shepherd Trinity Church in Milwaukee. The “church and the world demands that we find ways to work together.”

Again mentioning isolation, he spoke of the need to rebuild the cluster system.

Other examples he gave of new approaches included a Moravian pastor working with Spirit of Peace to develop a new ministry; Venice Williams’ new worshipping community, The Table; an exploration of Florist Avenue Lutheran Church working with All People’s Church on a new partnership; and the creation of a new prison ministry.

The prison ministry can work to help break the cycle of incarceration in the “most incarcerating state in the most incarcerating country” by “accompanying people at a very delicate and important time in their journey.”

He gave thanks for those who created and those who are supporting the new synod endowment fund, and returned to his belief in hope in a disheveled world.

### **Unity Lutheran Church Video – Part 1**

Grant money from ELCA for renewal has brought a focus on discipleship, with a renewed sense of mission articulated in exploring the meaning of the congregation’s mission statement. Activities include discipleship coaching, Journey groups, and a network of fellowship in members’ homes. The fellowship invites people “who might be going through a dark moment and could use the opportunity to share in life, in dinner, in friendship, in an extended family.” Making disciples; equipping them to share with others.

### **Consideration of Resolutions**

Bishop Barrow invited Mr. David Falk, chair of the Reference and Counsel Committee, to return to the podium to present the pending resolution.

**Resolution 1 – Resolution on Social Justice and Ministry**, which was submitted by St. Matthew’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wauwatosa, was presented to the Assembly for its consideration:

WHEREAS, the prophet Isaiah (1:17) encourages us to "learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, and plead for the widow"; and

WHEREAS, our Lord Jesus Christ ministered to the outcasts of society and proclaimed God's love and grace to all who believe; and

WHEREAS, in baptism we are called to work for social justice and peace; and

WHEREAS, we are witnessing great injustices in our communities, state, nation and world that, as Christians we are compelled to stand witness against; and

WHEREAS, Bishop Eaton is calling upon Lutheran Churches to be a “place where the deep, honest, even painful conversation about race can take place so people feel they have been heard, and change and healing can happen”; and

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WHEREAS, many congregations in the Greater Milwaukee Synod have identified addressing social injustice as a priority, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that we call upon the Greater Milwaukee Synod to dedicate efforts towards promoting social justice and ministry efforts in member congregations and provide the requisite guidance and facilitation to address such issues.

**Motion to Amend**

Discussion began with a motion to amend the Resolved section, as follows:

Call upon congregations of the GMS to promote social justice by encouraging all congregational members to contact members of the Legislative Joint Finance Committee by June 10 2015 and demand the 5 million dollars in the State proposed budget to incarcerate more people be reallocated for treatment instead of prison.

**Motion to Amend**

A further amendment was offered, to strike “Legislative Joint Finance Committee” and replace it with “Senate and State Assembly.”

**Assembly Action**

**SA15.05.14. Amendment to Pending Amendment**

The Assembly voted to amend the pending motion to read “Call upon congregations of the GMS to promote social justice by encouraging all congregational members to contact members of the ~~Legislative Joint Finance Committee~~ Senate and State Assembly by June 10 2015 and demand the 5 million dollars in the State proposed budget to incarcerate more people be reallocated for treatment instead of prison.”

*The vote on the motion to amend the amendment was 195 in favor, 33 against.*

**Motion to Amend**

A motion and seconded to amend the proposal as follows:

RESOLVED, that the Synod Council in partnership with the justice teams of the Synod continue to hold justice issues as a high priority.

RESOLVED, that the synod council in partnership with the justice teams of the synod develop materials, forums, and guidance for engagement and action around social issues challenging individuals and congregations to rededicate themselves to engagement on social issues more faithfully in their context.

**Assembly Action**

**SA15.05.15. Move the Previous Question**

The Assembly voted to end debate by moving the previous question.

*The vote on the motion to end debate was 184 in favor, 43 against.*

**Assembly Action**

**SA15.05.16. Amend the Amendment to the Pending Motion**

The Assembly voted to amend the proposed text, as follows:

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RESOLVED, that the Synod Council in partnership with the justice teams of the Synod continue to hold justice issues as a high priority.

RESOLVED, that the synod council in partnership with the justice teams of the synod develop materials, forums, and guidance for engagement and action around social issues challenging individuals and congregations to rededicate themselves to engagement on social issues more faithfully in their context.

*The vote on this motion to amend was 120 in favor, 111 opposed.*

**Motion to Amend Wording**

**Assembly Action**

**SA15.05.17. Motion to Amend**

The Assembly voted to add the word “recognized” before “justice teams” in both Resolved statements.

*The vote on the motion to amend to include “recognized” was 130 in favor, 84 opposed.*

**Action on Amendment**

**Assembly Action**

**SA15.05.18. Motion to Amend**

The Assembly voted to approve the motion to amend the Resolved statements as follows:

RESOLVED, that the Synod Council in partnership with the recognized justice teams of the Synod continue to hold justice issues as a high priority.

RESOLVED, that the synod council in partnership with the recognized justice teams of the synod develop materials, forums, and guidance for engagement and action around social issues challenging individuals and congregations to rededicate themselves to engagement on social issues more faithfully in their context.

*The vote on the motion to amend was 170 in favor, 51 opposed.*

**Proposed Amendment to Add a Resolved Statement – Jerry Key**

Mr. Jerry Key proposed the addition of the following Resolved statement:

RESOLVED, that the synod call upon congregations of the GMS to promote social justice by encouraging all congregational members to contact members of the Senate and State Assembly by June 10 2015 and demand the 5 million dollars in the State proposed budget to incarcerate more people be reallocated for treatment instead of prison.

Rev. Patrick Keen of Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, asked for the resolution to speak directly to the use of the proposed \$5 million to address issues including education and housing, before the bishop ended discussion to allow the planned worship service to proceed. Consideration of Resolution 1 will continue when the Assembly reconvenes for Plenary IV at 1:15 pm.

The bishop announced that the Assembly was in recess at 10:57 am.

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**Plenary IV**

Bishop Barrow called the Assembly to order at 1:15 pm.

**Resolution 1 – Continued Consideration**

Mr. Mark Thompson spoke in favor of the proposed new Resolved statement, noting that this creates a focus on specific action. Rev. Jay McDivitt reinforced this sentiment in brief remarks.

An amendment was made and seconded to replace the word “demand” with the word “request” in the pending amendment. This was based on the belief that a church is not in a position to demand of the state, and that the children of God are not demanders, but are sufferers, and was accompanied by a call for prayer groups.

Mr. Jerry Key responded that Jesus was not asking when he overturned the tables in the temple. Rev. Matt Kruse also spoke against the amendment, noting that as a public church we must be engaged in calling our government leaders to respond, and that a demand was appropriate.

**Assembly Action**

**SA15.05.19. Motion to Amend**

The Assembly voted against replacing the word “demand” with the word “request” in the pending motion to amend Resolution 1.

*The vote on the motion to amend was 61 in favor, 103 opposed.*

Rev. Fred Thomas-Breitfeld moved to change “treatment” to “Treatment, Alternatives and Diversions” to provide clarity about the specific program being supported in the proposed additional Resolved statement.

**Assembly Action**

**SA15.05.20. Motion to Amend**

The Assembly voted to replace the word “treatment” with the words “Treatment, Alternatives and Diversions” as follows:

RESOLVED, that the synod call upon congregations of the GMS to promote social justice by encouraging all congregational members to contact members of the Senate and State Assembly by June 10 2015 and demand the 5 million dollars in the State proposed budget to incarcerate more people be reallocated for ~~treatment~~ Treatment, Alternatives and Diversions instead of prison.

*The vote on the motion to amend was 145 in favor, 17 opposed.*

A motion was made to move the previous question.

**Assembly Action**

**SA15.05.21. Move the Previous Question**

The Assembly voted to end debate by moving the previous question.

*The vote on the motion to end debate was 162 in favor, 4 against.*

Vote to add third resolved statement.

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**Assembly Action**

**SA15.05.22. Approval of Additional Resolved Statement**

The Assembly voted to add the third resolved statement, as amended, to the proposed Resolution 1, as follows:

RESOLVED, that the synod call upon congregations of the GMS to promote social justice by encouraging all congregational members to contact members of the Senate and State Assembly by June 10 2015 and demand the 5 million dollars in the State proposed budget to incarcerate more people be reallocated for Treatment, Alternatives and Diversions instead of prison.

*The vote on the motion to add the third Resolved statement was 147 in favor, 18 opposed.*

Discussion on Resolution 1 as amended included opposition based on the complexity and timing of the question, with the suggestion that resolutions like this be planned in advance. In response, Rev. Patrick Keen quoted Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in asking "if not now, when; if not us, who?," adding that the church must be in the vanguard of such action or be seen as lacking integrity.

A motion was made to move the previous question.

**Assembly Action**

**SA15.05.23. Move the Previous Question**

The Assembly voted to end debate by moving the previous question.

*The vote on the motion to end debate was 141 in favor, 20 against.*

**Assembly Action**

**SA15.05.24. Adoption of Resolution**

The Assembly voted to adopt Resolution 1, Resolution on Social Justice and Ministry, as amended, as follows:

WHEREAS, the prophet Isaiah (1:17) encourages us to "learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, and plead for the widow"; and

WHEREAS, our Lord Jesus Christ ministered to the outcasts of society and proclaimed God's love and grace to all who believe; and

WHEREAS, in baptism we are called to work for social justice and peace; and

WHEREAS, we are witnessing great injustices in our communities, state, nation and world that, as Christians we are compelled to stand witness against; and

WHEREAS, Bishop Eaton is calling upon Lutheran Churches to be a "place where the deep, honest, even painful conversation about race can take place so people feel they have been heard, and change and healing can happen"; and

WHEREAS, many congregations in the Greater Milwaukee Synod have identified addressing social injustice as a priority, therefore be it

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RESOLVED, that the Synod Council in partnership with the recognized justice teams of the Synod continue to hold justice issues as a high priority, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the synod council in partnership with the recognized justice teams of the synod develop materials, forums, and guidance for engagement and action around social issues challenging individuals and congregations to rededicate themselves to engagement on social issues more faithfully in their context, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the synod call upon congregations of the GMS to promote social justice by encouraging all congregational members to contact members of the Senate and State Assembly by June 10 2015 and demand the 5 million dollars in the State proposed budget to incarcerate more people be reallocated for Treatment, Alternatives and Diversions instead of prison.

*The vote on the motion to adopt Resolution 1 as amended was 139 in favor, 25 against.*

### **Synod Plant**

Casey Sugden, echoing last night, said he is still not Eddie Lacy, but today is a synod plant, thanking the synod for the Lenten devotions and for being willing to try new and different things, like the Eddie Lacy event. "Thanks. Happy to be here this year."

### **Unity Lutheran Church Partnership Grant Video, Part 2**

A discussion on faith mentoring and discipleship within the church, including little Bible studies in places like a bar or a coffee shop, as Unity seeks to work outside the walls of the church and to "find God in our lives and in the lives of others."

### **Closing of Assembly**

Bishop Barrow concluded with the Order for Closing of a Synod Assembly.

The Assembly adjourned by unanimous consent at 1:51 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Brockmeier  
Secretary  
Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA