

# Minutes of the 2016 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly June 2, 2016

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## **Thursday, June 2, 2016**

The 2016 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly took place from Thursday, June 2, 2016 through Saturday, June 4, 2016 at Carthage College at 2001 Alford Park Drive, Kenosha, Wisconsin.

### **Plenary I**

#### **Call to Order**

Bishop Jeff Barrow called the Assembly to order at 7:39 pm, with the Order for the Opening of Assembly having been included in worship in the Siebert Chapel. The session began with music by Ms. Heather Stoskopf. The bishop then introduced Rev. Logan Vang, speaking on the Assembly theme of “Claimed to be”.

#### **Rev. Logan Vang**

Beginning with a greeting in Hmong, Rev. Logan Vang asked how those listening felt to hear his message in another language, and went on to ask how they feel when someone not like them buys a house in their block, walks into their church, sits in their pew, or joins their congregation. “How,” he asked, “do you build community if everyone is the same? There would be no diversity; no fun.”

He spoke of being claimed, walking the trail of his life and faith journey for the Assembly.

He came to America at age 11, going from Laos to Thailand to Selma, Alabama in 1978. He spoke of there being no choice but for his family to leave in the aftermath of the Vietnam war, since the CIA had recruited many Hmong to assist the American war effort.

His family had already accepted Christ, and joined the migration to the United States, which now includes 49,000 Hmong people in Wisconsin, 12,000 of them in Milwaukee.

When he arrived in Milwaukee in 1983 he became part of Ascension Lutheran Church, where there 74 Hmong members when they arrived. There was also a growing Latino ministry at Ascension, and both Hmong and Spanish-language services were put in place in the sanctuary.

The growth of those ministries, and Rev. Vang’s opportunity to serve, came about in part because the leadership structure at Ascension was made more inclusive, with a new leadership council, equally divided between members who were white, Hmong and Latino. This was, he said, “allowing people to be at the table as leaders.”

With the need for a new Hmong pastor at Ascension, Rev. Vang received the opportunity to attend seminary, and was ordained by Bishop Jeff Barrow when he completed his studies. He has now been claimed as a pastor, reaching the community of which he is a part. He is also one of only five ELCA pastors who are Hmong.

His claims, moving from welcome to the community to the opportunity to serve, have been part of the success of growing the church for Milwaukee’s Hmong community, with more than 300 Hmong members now at Ascension.

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We need to do more of this type of program, Rev. Vang said: Having lay people moving to ordination. The steps include welcoming someone new to your congregation; greeting them as brothers and sisters in Christ. Invite to God's table, he concluded, and then to your table.

### **Introduction of Visitors and Assembly Planning Team**

Following a brief video on the ELCA Capital Campaign, Bishop Jeff Barrow welcomed special guests and speakers, including Rev. Wyvetta Bullock, Assistant to the Presiding Bishop, Executive for Administration of the ELCA; and Ms. Jessica Fairfax, Mission Advancement, ELCA.

Included as guests are seven ELCA bishops; Bishop Michael Burk and his wife Diane, Bishop Mary Stumme Froiland, South-Central Synod of Wisconsin; Bishop James Arends, LaCrosse Area Synod; Bishop Gerald Mansholt, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin; Bishop Steven Ullestad, Northeastern Iowa Synod, and his wife Ruth; Bishop Wayne Miller, Metropolitan Chicago Synod; and Bishop Richard Hoyme, Northwest Synod of Wisconsin.

The bishop also introduced and thanked the Synod Assembly Planning Team, consisting of Rev. Bill Beyer, Rev. Jen Kuhnert, Rev. Carol Hegland, Ms. Diane Roznowski, Mr. Casey Sugden, Ms. Judy Kolstad, Ms. Melissa Bissina and Rev. Tom Pietz.

He ended his introductions with Ms. Jennifer Prinz, Portico Benefit Services' Regional Representative for ELCA Region 5.

### **Portico Health Care Welcome – Jennifer Prinz**

Noting that Portico is a ministry of the ELCA, Ms. Prinz called this "an interesting and challenging time to be the church," a time requiring all involved to be flexible and resilient. She presented a video showing the impact of Portico's services in the areas of health and personal finance. Following the video, she spoke of wanting to partner with all leaders, urging attendees to visit her table for information on Portico's services, especially their call for a wellness reformation in the ELCA.

### **Carthage Welcome – Gregory Woodward, President**

Bishop Barrow introduced Gregory Woodward, President of Carthage College, who welcomed the Assembly back to the Carthage campus.

He spoke of pride in Carthage's Lutheran heritage, with approximately 25% of the student body being Lutheran, and more than three-quarters being protestant. Among other high points, President Woodward mentioned that the incoming class will be the largest freshman class in Carthage's history, and talked about a new urban education major. He also spoke about Carthage's motto of practicing radical hospitality – inviting everyone to the Carthage family.

President Woodward and Bishop Miller, who has served on Carthage's Board of Trustees along with Bishop Barrow, presented Bishop Barrow with a Carthage rocking chair.

### **Bishop Barrow Note**

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Bishop Barrow directed the attention of the Assembly to Ms. Vonda Drees, who created the artwork for the Assembly.

### **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 Assembly at 8:00 pm on Friday, Thursday, June 2, 2016, were 144 clergy and 226 lay people, for a total voting membership of 370. Also present were 56 visitors for a total attendance of 426. A quorum of voting members was present, and lay members comprised more than the required 60% of voting members.

### **Robert's Rules Tutorial**

Synod Secretary Mr. Matthew Brockmeier gave a brief overview of Robert's Rules of Order.

### **Electronic Voting Tutorial**

There was a brief tutorial on the electronic voting system, using test questions.

### **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**

##### **SA16.06.01. 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**

##### **SA16.06.02. 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**

##### **SA16.06.03. Approval of 2016 Assembly Rules and Procedures**

The Assembly voted to adopt the 2016 Assembly Rules and Procedures as presented.

The bishop declared the Rules adopted.

### **Introduction of the Elections Committee**

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Bishop Barrow introduced members of the Elections Committee, whose names appear in the Supplement, and introduced chair Ms. Esther Rusch.

### **Report of the Elections Committee**

Ms. Rusch provided an overview of the committee's report, dealing with the process, including the pre-nomination sessions held throughout the synod. She noted that more than 300 individuals attended these sessions. She also thanked her committee and others who aided their work.

### **Review Voting Process**

Bishop Barrow turned the chair over to Rev. Bullock, who said she was honored to be with us, and looking forward to being part of this Assembly.

As we gather, she said, voting members will engage in a very important decision-making process, but not just about making a decision, but really making a call. Calling a pastor for ministry and service to the Greater Milwaukee Synod. She asked the Assembly to reflect on what this means, noting that call committees engage in prayer, reflection, Bible study, and conversation.

She tied this work in with what a congregation does, calling a pastor to be a leader in the work we will do together. She went on to cite references in the synod's governing documents to the wide range of work done by the bishop. This includes preaching, teaching and administering the sacraments; acting as a diligent servant leader who coordinates the use of the synod's resources.

The bishop provides advice and counsel to institutions and congregations, works on calls to service, and is an evangelist who calls us individually and as congregations.

In all of this the bishop reminds us of the unity we share in the larger church, fostering support for the mission of the ELCA, engaging in discussion with other synods and the national church, and guarding and protecting the teachings of the church.

The bishop is a CEO with the power to ordain, someone who must lead by example.

And the work of the Assembly, she reiterated, is to prayerfully reflect on all these aspects, on the synod and its ministries, and seek the guidance of the Spirit in making the choice, committing also to support the person chosen as bishop.

Rev. Bullock then reviewed the process used, describing thresholds for election on each ballot, with additional notes on times the nominees will address the Assembly.

There were no questions from the Assembly following her remarks.

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

Mr. Groenewold, returned to the podium to report that, because of the temporary closing of registration, there was no change from the first figures reported.

### **Devotions**

Mr. Steve Bogie, vicar at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Menomonee Falls, read from Exodus, expanding on the story of Moses, his flock, and the burning bush. God, he said, sees the circumstances of our lives, and comes into our lives. Serving God does not

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lead to immediate solutions, but God sees, hears and knows – things will happen in our lives when we turn to prayer.

### **First Ballot for Bishop**

Rev. Wyvetta Bullock called for the first vote, ballots having been distributed by the elections committee.

### **Lutheran Campus Ministry Report**

Bishop Barrow, upon retaking the podium, called on Rev. Rachel Young Binter to present Lutheran Campus Ministry to the Assembly. She in turn introduced a video, created by the LumIn Network, which gave a glimpse of very diverse college campuses all over the United States, showing places to grow in faith and service to the world.

Casey, a student living at the Corner House at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, spoke after the video, saying that Lutheran Campus Ministry is a way of involving her generation in the church. “It is how we reach out to millennials in the church.” For her, she added, Lutheran Campus Ministry is a home, with people who are family, receiving love and support in a faith community. They can, she said, see and feel God’s love for them. Her own story is that the pursuit of faith has become more important than other possibilities.

Rev. Jessica Short gave birthday greetings to Rev. Young Binter, thanking her for “prayer, presence and support.” This was followed by another brief video featuring a student from Marquette University.

### **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.

### **Nominated for ELCA Church Council**

Two Nominees Needed - Lay Female – Full Term: End of Churchwide Assembly 2016 through Churchwide Assembly 2022

Ms. Carolyn Jewett

No Second Nominee

No floor nominations

### **Nominated for the Discipline Committee**

Clergy – Full Terms (2): September 2016 through August 2022

Rev. Nancy J. Eggert – Nominating Committee Nomination

Rev. Tim Tahtinen - Floor Nomination

Lay Female – Full Term: September 2016 through August 2022

Ms. Laura B. Dessereau – Nominating Committee Nomination

No floor nominations

Lay Male – Full Term: September 2016 through August 2022

Mr. Jerry Key - Floor Nomination

### **Nominated for Synod Council**

At Large – Lay Female – Partial Term: Election through August 2019

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Ms. Betty Warber – Nominating Committee Nomination  
Ms. Cari Matter – Floor Nomination  
Ms. Ericka Jones – Floor Nomination  
Ms. Amber Davis – Floor Nomination  
Ms. Alaine Schwartz – Floor Nomination

**Report of the Reference and Counsel Committee**

Rev. Tim Tahtinen, chair of the Reference and Counsel Committee, was asked to give the committee's report. The committee met on Wednesday, May 11<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.

Rev. Tahtinen highlighted this report, reading the titles of all six resolutions presented and stating that the Reference and Counsel Committee had recommended approval of all six resolutions.

**Report of Synod Council Vice President**

Vice President Mr. Scott Manske thanked his colleagues and especially Bishop Barrow for their hard work in making the synod work for congregations in need of support for transitions and other events. He also thanked the members of the Synod Assembly, lifting up the first-time members and the young for special notice.

His report covered the many ways the synod engages with congregations, and the resources it provides.

**Deferral of Agenda Items**

Without objection, Bishop Barrow announced that, due to synod Treasurer Mr. Lee Johnston being called away, the budget presentation scheduled for this evening would be deferred until Plenary 2, Friday morning.

**Report of First Ballot for Bishop**

Rev. Wyvetta Bullock reported the results of the first ballot for bishop. With no name receiving at least 75% of the vote, this served as a nominating ballot.

Rev. Bullock reported that there were 352 votes cast, with 20 of those ruled illegal ballots, leaving 332 legal votes cast. The number needed for election on the first ballot would thus have been 249. The results of this ballot appear below. Rev. Bullock noted that the results would be posted, and that anyone whose name appeared would have until 8:00 am on Friday to remove their name from consideration should they not wish to proceed.

Results are shown in descending order of votes received:

Paul Erickson	68
Lisa Bates-Froiland	59
Harvard Stephens	40
David Dragseth	36
Joy Mortensen-Wiebe	29
Lindsay Paul Jordan	24
Jennifer Thomas	24
Sandra Chrostowski	6

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John Horner-Ibler	4
Steve Jerbi	4
Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld	4
Marilyn Miller	3
Greg van Dunk	3
Kacey Hahn	2
Jon Jacobs	2
Mary Martha Kannass	2
Bill Knapp	2
Michelle Townsend de Lopez	2
Jennifer Arnold	1
Meredith Bedker Musaus	1
Arthur Bergen	1
William Beyer	1
James Bickel	1
Carolyn Fredriksen	1
Mary Janz	1
Patrick Keene	1
Peter Marty	1
Michael McAllister	1
Jay McDivitt	1
Kristin Nielsen	1
Elizabeth Rawlings	1
Amy Reumann	1
Matt Short	1
Robert Suhm	1
Fred Thomas-Breitfeld	1
Wendy Wirth-Brock	1

Following music and prayer, the bishop announced, without objection, that the Assembly was in recess at 9:56 pm, to resume on Friday morning.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Brockmeier  
Secretary  
Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA