

Minutes of the 2016 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly June 2-4, 2016

Friday, June 3, 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 III

Bishop Barrow called the Assembly to order at 3:02 pm, following music by the Rev. Tom Pietz Band.

Announcements

Bishop Jeff Barrow introduced Mr. Karl Erickson, Executive Director of the ELCA Outreach Center in Kenosha, who reported that 156 personal care kits were prepared from materials contributed for the Assembly.

Address by Bishop Mary Stumme-Froiland

Bishop Mary Stumme-Froiland of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin addressed the Assembly, with the theme Claimed to be Together. What do people enjoy about synod assemblies? she asked. A sense of being part of something more, something bigger or broader than any single congregation. So many people together, so many voices. Amazing to understand themselves as part of the larger church. A glimpse of being together in something bigger.

This can create a sense of wonder; a new appreciation for who we are. "Claimed to be Together – that's a good thing." At a time when the presidential election campaign is holding up a mirror that is a reflection of something ugly.

Being together is a rare commodity in our world, and is becoming rarer. We increasingly tend to seek people who are more like us, becoming more and more sorted into our own enclaves. More and more certain of our own correctness. We are splintered and divided, and it is destroying us, and destroying God's world. God claims us for an alternate reality. To live and speak in a way counter to what prevails. Calls us to be together.

The Body of Christ, bound together in baptism. "We should be all over this. God's very self is expressed in community." Jesus prayed that his followers would be one. When you don't know what to do, do this. Love each other, serve each other.

The seeds of hatred and fear and mistrust are so widespread, but this church has a different story to tell. We are the Body of Christ. When we don't know anything else to do, we come together. Together, we live a different reality.

Video

A video was presented with more about what the synod does for congregations. Working together for consolidation, and for consideration. Direct to resources. "Healthy leaders, healthy congregations."

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 was no change from his previous

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report, but that registration was still open. A second report will follow before the next vote for bishop.

Review Voting Process

Rev. Wyvetta Bullock presented the process for the third ballot for bishop, when seven nominees will appear, with a two-thirds vote required for election. Before the vote, all seven nominees will address the Assembly for five minutes.

Address by Nominees for Bishop

Rev. Wyvetta Bullock introduced Harvard Stephens as first speaker.

Point of Order

Rev. Patrick Keen – called for prayer before the addresses. Rev. Bullock, noting that prayer was always in order, gave a prayer.

Nominee Addresses

Rev. Harvard Stephens (*Dean of the Chapel and Pastor to the Community, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago*)

“Scripture is very important to me.” Rev. Stephens found consolation for grieving parents; found comfort in scripture. We need to “be the church of Jesus Christ for such a time as this.” He said that he has been led into candidacy for such a day as this, for the cross and resurrection, for seasons of plenty and want. He spoke of the energizing Word; “not what we have, but what we’ve been promised and what we will receive.”

Rev. Stephens reminded the Assembly why Black Lives Matter by telling his story. He said he can serve the whole people of God in this territory.

Rev. Joy Mortensen-Wiebe (*Interim Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Mayville*)

Rev. Mortensen-Wiebe described herself as “a passionate lover of Jesus Christ, called to go out and tell that story. I have no other choice.” She said she shares this story with whomever she encounters. She spoke of her experience, with 24 years of ordained ministry, a history of ministry. “I Love the synod life, because of the uniqueness of that expression.” The old way of being church really doesn’t work anymore, she said, even though once they worked well. “We need to be brave enough to be in conversation – the Gospel is the same, but things change.” That conversation includes asking what is the best way to be forming faith. Rev. Mortensen-Wiebe described her vision as stepping “forward with this kind of missional focus.” It’s not, she said, the synod office showing up when we are in transition or conflict, but building up faith and lay leadership. “We share the same Jesus Christ. Ministry is inclusive and diverse.”

Rev. Lindsay Paul Jordan (*Pastor, Christ the King Lutheran Church, Delafield*)

Rev. Jordan framed his remarks with the Assembly theme of Claimed to be Together, built on his work as Senior Pastor at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Delafield. The questions to answer included “what sparked your conviction that God is calling you to be bishop?” A call came from a colleague to pose the question, followed by discernment and prayer, and finally agreeing to stand for election. In this, he said, he “stands as one of us, a child of God. God is still calling us forward. How we will move is not certain, but that we are called is certain.” He spoke of service in urban, suburban, small town and

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rural settings, with the additional work of having served on councils in three synods. “A synod needs to be together. We need each other in our ministry. A synod is only as strong as the relationships between churches, pastors and people.” He said he has a “high priority to build relationships. I love the church. We are called to be a synod together.”

Rev. Jennifer Thomas (*Gift Officer, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago*)

“I love the church.” A graduate of Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, she said that she grew up in a Lutheran culture. “Lutherans like food. We are called to set a table.” But this is a time to change the narrative in our church. She said that she believes in the resurrection, and believes that God is calling people to create a new church. We need, she said, to be about Black Lives Matter and to live out a policy of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender concerns mattering. “The bishop and staff can set the table and build strategy.” She called for an urban strategy, but not just for Milwaukee, and a rural strategy. She is looking at the death and resurrection of congregations, and looking forward to rolling up sleeves and working hard. The synod also needs, she added, to “look at where various self-interests reside, then get together.” She is excited about the church, and wants to “bring everybody to the table – I want to walk with you.”

Rev. Dr. Paul Erickson (*Director, Agora, St. Paul, Minnesota*)

Rev. Erickson began by explaining his work with lay leaders for immigrant and multi-cultural communities in Minnesota and South Dakota in the context of the Walk to Emmaus. The Walk explains how God’s plan is unfolding, with eyes opening and people filled with hope. This is, he said, the promise and the challenge that lies with us. “How do we proclaim the power of love in a community filled with fear? How do we walk the Easter road together?” The answers lie, Rev. Erickson said, in getting to know our neighbors, building relationships, listening to new voices, praying and loving. We need to walk together and apply what we know to our own communities. “Lift up new leaders for communities of radical inclusion and hope. Make God’s love real. This is an Easter road that we walk.” We cannot hold on to what we have, but must let it go. Bring about God’s reign of justice. “Walk the road together, with Christ in our midst.”

Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland (*Pastor, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Milwaukee*)

Beginning by noting the call for change in the church in the late 1940s, Rev. Bates-Froiland said that it was daunting. She went on to say that it is different now, but every bit as urgent. “People still need the church. Ministry does not exist to maintain itself – but to share Jesus.” God sent Jesus, giving life abundantly. Good news for people who have been used up. We must notice, she said, and respond sacrificially. We must also be kinder to other people; “that’s sharing Jesus, and we call it Grace.” She cautioned that congregations can grow inward, but spoke of the many gifts in the synod. Looking to her approach, she called for a lean and smart-working synod staff. She looks to reduce costs, to create a greater sense of value by congregations. She also called for an emphasis on excellent preaching. She showed her ordination shoes, which she now wears for Reformation and Pentecost, likening them to Bishop Barrow’s hiking boots, to

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wear them on paths untrodden. Jesus was willing to take the Cross, showing His love for a broken world and a broken people. “Find life – a different life, and a blessed life.”

Rev. David Dragseth (*Pastor, Lake Park Evangelical Lutheran Church, Milwaukee*)

Rev. Dragseth began with the image of being out most mornings rowing at the confluence of Milwaukee’s rivers, a gathering place of waters. All the liquid energy, he said, coming from all corners of the synod. “It’s really wavy . . . and it’s scary.” He went on to say that with all of us, it stops being scary, and becomes exhilarating, fun even. We care about so much, ecology, justice, the poor, Anti-Racism Training and Black Lives Matter. “Sometimes we get stuck in the confluence. We get the feeling that our institutional structures are not good enough to meet those challenges.” In our midst, the talented to lead into the future. Everything we need is in our midst. “The current moves and carries us out of the confluence – to the grand infinity pool of possibility. Be the church, not for our self, but to be the servant of the world.” This is, he said, the mighty river of the future.

Applause for All Nominees

Report of the Credentials Committee

Mr. David Groenewold gave the report of the Credentials Committee, reporting that at 3:30 pm, the close of registration prior to the third ballot for bishop, there were 166 clergy and 253 lay people, for a total voting membership of 419. Also present were 61 visitors for a total attendance of 480. A quorum was present, with more than 60% of voting members being lay.

Devotions

Rev. Gabriel Marcano prayed with the Assembly the Lord’s Prayer – “we are living stones.”

Third Ballot for Bishop

Rev. Wyvetta Bullock conducted the third ballot for bishop, with voting closing at 4:06 pm.

A video presentation followed the end of voting.

Breaking the Chains Church

Ms. Mary Mortenson, Executive Director of Prison Congregations of America (PCA), based in South Dakota. Ms. Mortenson brought greetings from the South Dakota Synod, which is in assembly today. She also congratulated our synod on its new baby, the new prison ministry at Felmers O. Chaney Correctional Center in Milwaukee. This is a congregation of prisoners, led by a pastor from the outside, and is called Breaking the Chains Church. She said that soon a pastor will be called: there is a job description in information packets.

Ms. Mortenson reported that PCA has 29 ministries in 13 states. The PCA model is for partnerships between a prison church and outside churches. This, she said, is critical. The work is to visit, to get speakers, and to pray. She referred attendees to those people wearing paper chains, who have more information.

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Of the model, she said that “this is a two-way street. There is no them and us. It is only us, all loved by a God who is so radical that none can separate us. Blessings flowing are just beginning. You will change the church and the world; Claimed to be Authentic servants.”

Consideration of Resolutions

Bishop Barrow returned the Assembly’s attention to Resolution 3 - Memorial to the Churchwide Assembly on Black Lives Matter.

Point of Order – Greg Johnson of Christ Lutheran Church, Mequon, entered a request for more information from the Reference and Counsel chair regarding how the committee arrived at its decision to support adoption of this resolution, given the extensive nature of the ten-point policy campaign.

Rev. Tim Tahtinen, Reference and Counsel chair, responded that the committee sought to encourage dialogue on the floor, without the undue influence against the resolution that could have resulted from a neutral recommendation. He suggested the resolution’s authors might be able to shed more light on the ten-point policy.

Rev. Alexis Twito, addressing the Assembly in her role as Dean of Milwaukee Cluster 1, and noting that the resolution was submitted by Milwaukee Clusters 1 and 2, began by describing nationally known issues regarding police departments. She addressed a range of issues included in the ten-point plan, including approaches to broken-window policing, communication, limits on use of lethal force and how often it is used, the response to the use of lethal force, prosecutions and independent investigations, use of body cams for officers, police dealing with cases involving mental illness, profits in the legal system and union contracts. She noted that she works closely with police as the chaplain coordinator in Milwaukee, saying that there are places for improvement, and that the ten points provide a framework for working together.

Bill Schalk of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Racine spoke in opposition. While agreeing that Black lives do matter, he cited his experience as a prosecutor to note what he termed holes in the ten-point plan. Specifically, he mentioned the approach to broken windows policing, and rules on the use of force which are reasonable based on a situation. He added that he thought some of the ten points were bogus. That coupled with what he termed a lack of clarity meant that he cannot support the resolution. He moved to amend the resolution to strike items two and three from the Resolved statement.

This amendment was seconded and presented for debate.

Rev. David Schoob rose to offer an amendment to the amendment, which would replace the existing language, rather than remove it as proposed in the original amendment.

Proposed Amendment to the Amendment

2. To request that the ELCA ~~support the~~ follow the spirit of the 10-point policy solutions of Campaign Zero in calling for accountability of how enforcement institutions to the black neighborhoods that they are called to serve. (an

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advocacy effort of activists, protesters and researchers) as a faithful expression of public church and advocacy;¹

- 3 To request that the ELCA ~~encourage all congregations to engage the 10 point policy solutions in education, lobbying, and direct action~~ and its congregations engage the 10 point policy as a tool to develop education, lobbying and direct action toward accountability of law enforcement to the black neighborhoods that they are called to serve.

Rev. Schoob offered the amendment, he said, so as not to lose the idea of accountability and to retain the spirit of the ten-point policy, which he called important. He spoke of the lack of accountability in racism, and opined that this amendment could offer a way to come together over this issue.

Rev. Ben Groth, Associate Pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Menomonee Falls, spoke against the amendment to the amendment. He said that it was important for this issue to be addressed.

Rev. Patrick Keen, Pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, spoke to the racism he had encountered, with a conversation in Mequon where he was told by an attorney that "we don't like black people in Ozaukee County." What we are asking, he said, is either for you to tell yourselves a lie, or to confess the truth. To say that Black Lives Matter may be a lie. "We need to think differently. If not now, when?"

Point of Order – Objection that Rev. Keen has taken more than two minutes for his remarks.

In addressing the point of order, Bishop Barrow asked for civility, promising that this resolution would be discussed and voted on.

Another speaker seeks to not have amendments, based on the history of racism in Milwaukee.

Mr. Dayvin Hallmon, a Kenosha County Board Supervisor, called for the resolution not to be amended, to leave the wording as it is.

Ms. Stephanie Luedtke also spoke against the amendment to amendment, saying that the original wording was actionable and that we need to do something. "We can't say it matters, and do nothing."

Rev. David Schoob, with the agreement of the seconder of the amendment to the amendment, requested to withdraw the motion. The request was granted by the chair.

Report of Third Ballot for Bishop

Rev. Wyvetta Bullock reported the results of the third ballot for bishop. There were 397 votes cast, with one invalid, leaving 396 legal votes. With 75% of the votes cast required for election on this ballot, 297 votes would have been necessary. No nominee reached that threshold, so no one was elected.

The vote totals for the third ballot for bishop were as follows:

Lisa Bates-Froiland	90
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Harvard Stephens	84
Paul Erickson	76
Joy Mortensen-Wiebe	49
David Dragseth	43
Jennifer Thomas	41
Lindsay Paul Jordan	13

Rev. Tom Pietz returned to the podium with music and prayer to close the third plenary session.

The bishop announced, without objection, that the Assembly was in recess at 4:06 pm, to resume at 6:30 on Friday evening.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Brockmeier
Secretary
Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA