

## **Report to the Synod Assembly on 2014 Resolution 2 on Synod Assembly Timing, Funding and Voting Member Diversification**

The 2014 Synod Assembly took a proposed resolution, and forwarded it to the Synod Council for consideration and review. The goal of the resolution was to look at the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assemblies. The goal was to look at

1. A different fee structure for the assembly
2. Proposing a free fee assembly, paid through Synod annual operating revenues
3. Moving the assembly to weekends
4. Encouraging congregations to send different lay voting members each year
5. Requesting that congregations send a full slate of members.

### **Overview of Synod Assembly Costs, Revenues, Rates and Structure:**

Planning for the Synod Assembly begins over one year prior to the Assembly. The Synod Assembly is planned each year by the Synod Assembly planning team, with the assistance of the Synod Office Staff. This group will determine the agenda, fees, location, and special events planner. The Synod Council receives a near final agenda for approval prior to the assembly.

The length of the assembly is determined by the events needed to be voted on by the assembly. Thus the 2016 synod assembly was two and a half days due to the bishop election process, which began on Thursday evening, with the final vote occurring on Saturday morning. The 2017 synod assembly is scheduled for 1 and a half days (Friday thru Saturday) due to a much smaller agenda, along with a limited number of items for discussion. A Thursday event is planned, which will conclude with the opening of the assembly.

The Synod Assembly is not funded through the budget, but through its dedicated fees charged to participants. The Synod Assembly fees are used to pay for the costs of the Synod Assembly, and are maintained in their own fund. By being in its own fund, if there are any surplus of revenues over expenditures for the Synod Assembly for the year, these surplus funds carry over to the subsequent year.

The 2013 Synod Assembly cost was \$76,000, with collected fees of a similar \$76,000. The 2016 Synod Assembly was located at Carthage College in Kenosha and cost \$82,000. A surplus of funds was generated in 2016, which was applied to the prior year accumulated fund balance. The surplus was created by having 80-100 registrations more than a typical assembly. The current surplus in the Synod Assembly fund balance is \$16,000. The funds are available to pay any down-payments for future Synod Assemblies or to help control any unexpected costs, or revenue shortfalls in future assemblies.

The following table shows the rates that have been charged for the last four years of the Synod Assemblies and the rates that are being used for the 2017 Synod Assembly. These rates are established based on the estimated costs of the assembly.

Year	Location	City	Rate Early	Rate Late	Youth Ret Early	Youth Ret Late	Meals Included	Housing
2014	Country Springs Hotel	Waukesha	\$ 200.00	\$ 225.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 125.00		\$109 per night
2015	Carthage College	Kenosha	\$ 175.00	\$ 200.00	\$ 80.00	\$ 105.00	5	\$60 first night/\$40 second night
2016	Carthage College	Kenosha	\$ 205.00	\$ 225.00	\$ 105.00	\$ 125.00	6	\$60 first night/\$40 second night
2017	Country Springs Hotel	Waukesha	\$ 170.00	\$ 200.00	\$ 85.00	\$ 100.00	5	\$109 per night

Meals and coffee break snacks are included in the fee for the assembly. The fee rates for 2017 assembly were dropped from the prior year due to the shortened length of the assembly and fewer meals being provided during the assembly. Housing is not part of the fees.

A comparison has been made to other local synod's fees for assemblies to see how the Greater Milwaukee cost structure compares. A table of this comparison is shown below.

2016 Synod Assembly Rates and Fees								
Synod	Duration	Location	Early bird price	Late Registration fee	Retired Rostered Leader Fee	Meals	Lodging	Notes
Greater Milwaukee	2.5 days	college	\$205	\$225	105/\$125	6 included	\$60 first night/\$40 second night	
East Central	2 days	hotel/conference center	\$145	\$190	\$80	3 included	\$110/night	
NE Iowa	2.5 days	college	\$190	\$215	NA	5 included	includes housing	non voting members pay slightly less
Metro Chicago	2 days	hotel/conference center	\$175	\$200	NA	1 included	\$125/night	
La Crosse	2.5 days	college	\$100			None included. 5 meals are \$50; 4 meals are \$43	\$25/night	
Minneapolis	2 days	church	\$120	\$135	\$50	no information	no information probably not offered	Youth pay \$60; visitors pay \$50 for one day or \$90 for two days
South Central	2 days	hotel/conference center	\$180	\$210	\$95	3 meals included	\$112/night	

The table is a comparison to the 2016 Synod Assemblies of the various synods. The cost for the Greater Milwaukee Synod was higher due to the length of the assembly and the number of meals included. If compared to the 2017 GMS assembly rate of \$170 for Rostered and Lay registration with four meals the

rates are even more comparable. Youth, for the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly, are charged the same rate as the Retired Rostered Leaders who attend the assembly.

Since the 2014 Synod Assembly, the Greater Milwaukee Synod is keeping better statistics on attendance at the assembly including information by church, cluster, lay and rostered. The following tables provide statistics for 2015 and 2016 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assemblies.

<b>2015 Synod Assembly</b>						
<b>Cluster</b>	<b>Congregations</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Lay Allowed</b>	<b>Lay Attended</b>	<b>Lay Short</b>	<b>Congregations not Attend</b>
Kenosha/West Racine	14	11	37	22	15	5
Lake Country	12	13	29	20	9	0
Milwaukee 1 and 2	24	17	49	30	19	8
Milwaukee 3	18	14	38	17	21	3
Milwaukee 4	9	7	27	10	17	3
Northern Lakeshore	17	20	39	27	12	2
Northwest	8	12	28	17	11	1
Racine	14	15	34	21	13	4
Waukesha	14	18	38	25	13	1
Total from Clusters	130	127	319	189	130	27
				59.2%		21%
<b>Select Cities</b>	<b>Congregations</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Lay Allowed</b>	<b>Lay Attended</b>	<b>Lay Short</b>	
Brookfield	5	7	14	7	-7	
Cedarburg	4	3	9	6	-3	
Kenosha	8	6	20	13	-7	
Milwaukee	30	21	66	37	-29	
Racine	14	15	34	21	-13	
Waukesha	4	6	13	11	-2	
Wauwatosa	4	3	12	3	-9	
West Allis	4	3	9	0	-9	

At a minimum, each congregation is allowed to send two lay members. Additional lay members are added based on size of the baptized membership. Each rostered leader may attend the assembly. The goal is to have at least a 60%/ 40% Lay to Rostered voting membership. The following table shows the number of congregations and the number of lay members that they are allowed to send based on their baptized membership size. Over 72% of the congregations, based on their size, are assigned the minimum lay member requirement of two.

Assembly in 2016		
Allowed Lay Membership	No of Congregations	Pcntg
2	92	72%
3	22	17%
4	6	5%
5	4	3%
6	3	2%
	127	

As noted in the 2015 Synod Assembly attendance table, 27 congregations did not send any lay members to the synod assembly for 2015. A similar statistic of 29 was noted for 2016. It is uncertain the reason for the congregations not to send members. It should be noted that the number of churches not sending members is from many different communities. In reviewing the list of congregations, certain of these congregations were in the midst of closing.

2016 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly Attendance							
Cluster	Baptized Members	Count	Rostered	Lay Allowed	Lay Registered	Lay Short	Congreg Did Not Attend
Kenosha/West Racine	8,856	14	14	36	22	14	5
Lake Country	7,754	12	14	29	16	13	3
Milwaukee 1 and 2	5,493	21	20	44	35	9	4
Milwaukee 3	8,057	18	14	38	18	20	7
Milwaukee 4	7,521	9	10	27	18	9	2
Northern Lakeshore	8,462	17	16	39	27	12	4
Northwest	8,747	8	8	27	17	10	2
Racine	7,605	15	15	34	29	5	1
Waukesha	10,346	14	15	38	28	10	1
	<b>72,841</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>29</b>
					67.3%		22.7%

Select Cities	Congregations	Clergy	Lay Allowed	Lay Attended	Lay Short	Did Not Attend
Brookfield	5	7	15	12	-3	1
Cedarburg	4	3	9	6	-3	1
Kenosha	8	8	20	13	-7	3
Milwaukee	26	26	59	43	-16	6
Racine	14	15	31	28	-3	1
Waukesha	4	6	13	11	-2	1
Wauwatosa	4	4	12	6	-6	2
West Allis	4	3	9	3	-6	2

Response to Specific Points in the Resolution:

1. *RESOLVED, that beginning in 2015, the Greater Milwaukee Synod schedule future Assemblies on weekend days and evenings.*

In a discussion of this resolved clause, scheduling conflicts of rostered leaders on Saturday's and Sunday's made it difficult for them to attend a full assembly scheduled for a weekend. As a result, it would still be held on at least a Friday, and Saturday, with an earlier start time on Thursday evening if needed. Considerations are being made for 2018 assembly to be done on Friday evening and all day Saturday.

2. *RESOLVED that all congregations be strongly encouraged to send a full slate of voting members to attend each assembly*

While requesting congregations to send a full slate of members, we have not noted any marked improvement in the number of congregations sending a full complement of lay members. We still have to do more research on the reasons for this lack of full participation. Assembly registration rates have been given as one reason for the lack of turn out or full participation. While the rate could be one reason, other reasons could include scheduling conflicts, length of the assembly, and possibly a lack of interest of certain congregations in Synod Assembly topics

3. *RESOLVED that congregations be further encouraged not to send the same people as voting members in consecutive years*

A comparison was made between the 2014 Synod Assembly lay members and the 2016 Synod Assembly lay members. There were 218 lay members who attended in 2016 and 198 lay members who attended in 2014. There were 38 lay members who were at both the 2014 and 2016 assemblies representing their congregations. This is approximately 19% of the total lay members who attended the assembly. We will continue to reach out to congregations to ask that they send new congregational members to each assembly. This provides a benefit to the congregation, and a great benefit to the Synod, as members learn more what the Synod does for them.

4. *RESOLVED that the Synod Council implement, as a part of the 2015 registration process, means by which substantial discounts of at least 25% be utilized to celebrate full slates (for the 3rd voter member per congregation and up) and the rotation of congregational representation (discount for anyone who did not serve the previous year). Funding for these discounts should come from General Synod revenue rather than increased fees for registration.*

As discussed by our Synod Council, Synod Assembly planning team and Synod Office it would be difficult to determine when congregations reached this third member, or if they have added new assembly members. Potentially, a first time lay member discount could be offered. Further, since 72% of the congregations are allotted the minimum of 2 members, providing a benefit to the larger congregations who have three or more members may be unfair.

As noted earlier, the funding of the Synod Assembly is independent of the annual budget of the Synod. The current Synod budget has seen declines in annual giving, which has required the synod to cut costs in many areas. Passing costs of the synod assembly to the annual budget of the Synod could be difficult.

5. *RESOLVED that the long-term goal of this Synod be to eliminate registration fees entirely through adjustments to the general Synod budget beginning in 2015 with the goal of achieving fee-free access to our own assembly as of 2017.*

Due to continuing tight budgets for the Synod, it would be difficult to provide a fee-free access to the Synod Assembly. The current costs of an assembly are approximately \$75,000, which is mainly to pay for use of a location, technology (audiovisual and sound) and meals. Production of documents are minimal. Fee-free access to a synod assembly would require either the elimination of one-position on synod staff or cutting back on funding of synod associated organizations.