

# Minutes of the 2018 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly May 31-June 2, 2018

The 2018 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly took place from Thursday, May 31, 2018 through Saturday, June 2, 2018 at the [Country Springs Hotel](#) & Waterpark at 2810 Golf Road, Pewaukee, Wisconsin. Thursday's agenda included a keynote address by Reggie Jackson, Head Griot of [America's Black Holocaust Museum](#) in Milwaukee, and worship including the Order for the Opening of Assembly, but no plenary sessions.

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## **Friday, June 1, 2018**

### **Plenary I**

#### **Call to Order**

Bishop Paul Erickson called the Assembly to order at 8:45 am. Pastors Steve Bogie and Delaney Schlake-Kruse, Deacon Susan Daniels, and Benhi Khabeb led the Assembly in singing "Christ, Be Our Light."

#### **Welcome and Introductory Remarks**

Bishop Erickson welcomed those attending and presented the Assembly theme of "Trusting the Winds of the Spirit: curiosity, courage, and compassion." Goal that those attending leave the Assembly energized, connected and hopeful.

He reported the results of the worship offering from Thursday evening, a total of \$2,243.93, including \$285 through the text-to-give option. He challenged the Assembly to exceed the \$620 on text-to-give collected by the [Minneapolis Area Synod](#) at their recent assembly.

The bishop then introduced Bishop Elias Kitoi Nasari, Diocese of Meru of the [Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania](#), who shared devotions. The bishop noted that he will attend a conference in Tanzania in August.

#### **Devotions**

Bishop Kitoi shared a reading from Joshua, calling upon the reader to be strong and courageous, not afraid or discouraged. Joshua, he said, is afraid. Moses is ailing, and Joshua, a great army commander, is being called to something new. Joshua had been watching from a distance but is now being called to take over from Moses. Even with his strengths and his experience, he is afraid, facing a new leadership role in fighting not armies but Satan. Joshua is called to embrace God's commandment, and to read the Book frequently, so that he knows he is not alone. Joshua is called to share; "sharing is the best way of caring."

For all of us, Bishop Kitoi continued, there is a little bit of trembling when we are called. But we are not called for our own business, rather for God's business. The bishop said that he was scared when he was installed – so many people came – but they came to comfort him, because this was a great undertaking. "I was so relieved. God's wind whispering to you – do not be afraid." Ministry can be hard, he said, "but I hope you hear God's voice saying do not be afraid. This is a call to prayer." The only secret to a successful ministry is to eat the word, and to keep on praying, to pray constantly. "I am with you." When the wind of God blows over us, we are never the same. Prayers move us closer to God. Prayers make us stronger. So much for which to pray, both in America and in Tanzania.

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Last year, Bishop Kitoi continued, was a very bad year in Tanzania, it was very dry. We prayed for rain – it rained. But this year that rain has continued pouring, to the point of destruction.

Let us remember to pray, to pray consistently, because God hears our prayers. The Assembly joined in prayer, responding the Harambee (meaning all pulling together). Devotions ended with a presentation, “in the spirit of unity,” of a sculpture to Bishop Erickson.

## **Introduction of Planning Team and Special Guests**

Bishop Erickson then introduced the Synod Assembly Planning Team, consisting of Assembly manager, Mary Romskog, and Char Giuliani, Tom Shaffer, Pastors Matthew Schlake-Kruse, David Dragseth, Delaney Schlake-Kruse, Lisa Bates Froiland, Tom Pietz, and Bill Beyer.

Introduced guests included Kim Charlston, [Mission Investment Fund](#); Greg Truax, [ELCA Federal Credit Union](#); Rev. Sandy Chrostowski, ELCA Director for DEM Relationships; Kerri Parker, Executive Director of the [Wisconsin Council of Churches](#); [Héctor Colón](#), Executive Director of [Lutheran Social Services in Wisconsin and Upper Michigan](#); and Rev. Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld, Bishop-elect of the [South-Central Synod of Wisconsin](#).

The bishop noted that Judith Roberts, ELCA Program Director for Racial Justice, who is serving as the ELCA Churchwide Representative, will address the Assembly later in this session.

Other introductions included Assembly Parliamentarian Stephen Knowles, Synod Secretary Matthew Brockmeier, and Synod Vice President Joyce Caldwell.

There were several housekeeping notes, including mention of the Together in Mission event the second Saturday of February, followed by the introduction of the ELCA Credit Union’s Greg Truax.

## **ELCA Federal Credit Union Welcome**

Greg Truax opened by saying that the ELCA Federal Credit Union “is young and mighty.” The process of creating the credit union began about six years ago, he said, noting that it celebrates its second anniversary on June 6<sup>th</sup>, with members in 49 states. There was a video presentation, presenting the credit union as a socially responsible banking solution, framed by a desire to help Lutherans be good stewards of what God has given them.

## **Report of the Credentials Committee**

Bishop Erickson called upon Lee Johnston, chair of the Credentials Committee, to give the committee’s report.

Mr. Johnston reported that in attendance at the Assembly at the opening of the first plenary session on Friday, June 1, 2018, were 103 clergy and 201 lay people, for a total voting membership of 304. Also present were 35 visitors for a total attendance of 339. A quorum of voting members was present, and lay members comprised more than the required 60% of voting members, as required by the ELCA.

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## **Adoption of Agenda**

Bishop Erickson then asked the Assembly to approve the agenda as recommended by the Synod Council and printed in the Synod Assembly Booklet (hereinafter “Booklet”), with the added reminder that, without objection, changes may be made in the order of business if required.

### **Assembly Action**

#### **SA18.06.01. Adoption of Agenda**

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

## **Appointments**

Bishop Erickson reported on appointments to the Credentials, Elections and Reference and Counsel Committees, and of Mr. Stephen Knowles as Parliamentarian, as published in the Booklet.

### **Assembly Action**

#### **SA18.06.02. Approval of Appointments**

The Assembly voted to approve appointments to the Credentials, Elections and Reference and Counsel Committees, and of the Assembly Parliamentarian, as printed in the Booklet.

## **Approval of Rules and Procedures**

In presenting the Assembly rules and procedures, Bishop Erickson asked “Why are we here?” answering that “we’re here to be the church.” In the ELCA it is understood that there are three expressions of the church; each of which is fully the church. We worship, we discuss, we take care of business. He provided a brief overview of Robert’s Rules of Order and other procedural issues, with special attention to a return to voting by voice or by colored paper held aloft. He then asked the Assembly to approve the proposed Rules and Procedures of the Assembly, as recommended by the Synod Council and printed in the Booklet.

### **Assembly Action**

#### **SA18.06.03. Approval of 2018 Assembly Rules and Procedures**

The Assembly voted to adopt the 2018 Assembly Rules and Procedures as printed in the Booklet.

## **Nominating Committee Report**

Bishop Erickson introduced Nominating Committee Chair Rev. Fred Thomas-Breitfeld, noting that any floor nominations needed to be followed by submission of nominating forms by 12:00 noon. Rev. Thomas-Breitfeld presented the names of those already nominated, with the bishop calling for nominations from the floor for each position, except for positions nominated by the clusters.

## **Nominated for [2019 Churchwide Assembly](#)**

### **At Large – Clergy**

Rev. Bill Beyer – Floor Nomination

Rev. Denise M. H. Mbise – Floor Nomination

Rev. Marilyn Miller – Floor Nomination

Rev. Rachel Young-Binter – Floor Nomination

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**Nominated for 2019 Churchwide Assembly**

At Large – Lay Female

Ms. Janet Blank – Floor Nomination

Ms. Debra Donovan – Nominating Committee Nomination

Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman – Floor Nomination

**Nominated for 2019 Churchwide Assembly**

At Large – Lay Male

Mr. Todd Beutin – Nominating Committee Nomination

Mr. Matthew Brockmeier – Nominating Committee Nomination

Mr. Scott Donovan – Nominating Committee Nomination

Mr. Joshua Hiatt – Floor Nomination

**Nominated for 2019 Churchwide Assembly**

At Large – Lay Female, PCL or ESL, Youth/Young Adult

Ms. Aliliywa Mbise – Floor Nomination

**Nominated for 2019 Churchwide Assembly**

At Large – Lay Male, Person of Color or English Not Primary Language

Mr. Jerry Key – Reformation, Milwaukee – Nominating Committee  
Nomination

No floor nominations

**Nominated for 2019 Churchwide Assembly**

Kenosha/West Racine Cluster – Clergy

Rev. Kara Baylor – Cluster Nomination

**Nominated for 2019 Churchwide Assembly**

Lake Country Cluster – Lay Male

Mr. Matt Stein – Cluster Nomination

**Nominated for 2019 Churchwide Assembly**

Milwaukee Cluster 1 – Lay Female, Youth/Young Adult

Ms. Charlotte Linberry – Cluster Nomination

**Nominated for 2019 Churchwide Assembly**

Milwaukee Cluster 2 – Lay Male

Mr. Jess Kozel – Cluster Nomination

**Nominated for 2019 Churchwide Assembly**

Milwaukee Cluster 3 - Clergy

Rev. Andrew Nyren – Cluster Nomination

**Nominated for 2019 Churchwide Assembly**

Milwaukee Cluster 4 – Lay Female, PCL or ESL, Youth/Young Adult

Ms. Youa Reinecker – Cluster Nomination

**Nominated for 2019 Churchwide Assembly**

Northern Lakeshore Cluster – Clergy

Rev. Heidi Borkenhagen – Cluster Nomination

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**Nominated for 2019 Churchwide Assembly**

Northwest Cluster – Lay Female  
Ms. Nanette Smith – Cluster Nomination

**Nominated for 2019 Churchwide Assembly**

Racine Cluster – Lay Male, Youth/Young Adult  
Mr. Matt Nelson – Cluster Nomination

**Nominated for 2019 Churchwide Assembly**

Waukesha Cluster – Clergy  
Rev. Kelli Weiss – Nominating Committee Nomination

Before continuing to nominations for the consultation and discipline committees, the bishop provided a brief overview of the purpose and work.

**Nominated for the Consultation Committee**

Lay Female – Partial Term – 2018 Synod Assembly – August 31, 2019  
Ms. Holly Jurss – Nominating Committee Nomination  
No floor nominations

Clergy – Partial Term – 2018 Synod Assembly – August 31, 2021  
Rev. Carol Jeunette – Floor Nomination  
Rev. Chris Marien – Nominating Committee Nomination  
Rev. Tom Pietz – Floor Nomination  
Rev. Alexis Twito – Nominating Committee Nomination

**Point of information**, requesting the difference between the two lay female positions for the Consultation Committee.

Lay Female – Partial Term – SA 2018 – 8/31/2021  
Ms. Marion Heinz – Nominating Committee Nomination  
Ms. Ellie Schmidtke – Floor Nomination

**Nominated for the Discipline Committee**

Clergy – Full Terms (2): 9/1/2018 through 8/31/2024  
Rev. Kristie Jaramillo – Floor Nomination  
Rev. Roy Nelson – Floor Nomination  
Rev. Sheila Rawn – Floor Nomination  
Rev. Vicki Watkins – Floor Nomination

Lay Female – Full Term: 9/1/2018 through 8/31/2024  
Ms. Starr Anderson – Floor Nomination  
Ms. Pat Faherty – Floor Nomination  
Margie Fischer – Floor Nomination  
Ms. Teresa Reinders – Floor Nomination

Lay Female – Partial Term: SA 2018 through 8/31/2020  
Ms. Leah Krueger – Floor Nomination

Lay Male – Full Term: September 2018 through August 2024  
Mr. Steve Hartfield – Floor Nomination

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## **Nominated for Synod Council**

Youth – Lay Person – Partial Term: 2018 Assembly through August 2019  
Ms. Anja Logan – Nominating Committee Nomination  
No floor nominations

## **Budget Presentation**

Synod Treasurer Tom Gauthier presented the proposed budget as recommended by the Synod Council. He reported that the synod finished its fiscal year 2018 (ending January 31<sup>st</sup>) in the black, despite the 2016 Assembly having approved a deficit budget, but that the proposed budget also includes a deficit. The bishop reiterated that proposed amendments to the budget must have no impact on the bottom line. Action on the budget is scheduled for third plenary session on Saturday morning.

## **Mission Investment Fund Video**

A video highlighting the work of the Mission Investment Fund was shown, featuring changes supported by the Fund in one congregation, and presenting the idea of all working together through the Fund.

## **Break**

The Assembly recessed for a 20-minute break at 10:10 am, with refreshments sponsored by the Mission Investment Fund.

## **Music**

Following a break, the Assembly sang the hymn “God of Grace, and God of Glory.”

## **Ministry Video Reports**

The bishop introduced two short videos on the ELCA, one featuring a statement by [Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton](#), the other a review of activity by the ELCA during 2017.

Presiding Bishop Eaton focused on grace in her comments, and that the defining Lutheran idea is that grace is the freely given gift of God. Grace is, she said, not up to us; it is not what God does, it is what God is. She said that Lutherans “can be the alternative face of Christianity in today’s culture.”

The activity report showcased the [Future Directions 2025](#) initiative, recapped the results of the Always Being Made New campaign, and reviewed the work supported by \$1.7 billion in Mission Support during the past year.

Bishop Eaton said that the focus is on grace. What do we uniquely say about grace? The freely given gift of God. It is not up to us, it is not what God does, it is what God is. We can be the alternative face of Christianity in today’s culture.

## **ELCA Representative Report**

The bishop introduced Judith Roberts, representing the ELCA at this Assembly, as “an incredible gift to the church.”

Ms. Roberts offered special acknowledgement to Bishop Erickson, calling it a special privilege to be invited to the Assembly and as a speaker.

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She began her remarks by recalling Reggie Jackson's speech and his role as griot, or, among a number of meanings, storyteller, and saying that today she would be the ELCA's griot, telling the many stories of the ELCA today.

Her stories included working through racial justice ministries with so many other ministries, ranging from Women of the ELCA to youth and to publishing, but began with a brief note on her journey from Windsor, Connecticut and Christ the King Lutheran Church to being a proud mom.

- She presented the synod's mission support numbers for 2017, with \$1,101,387 going to the churchwide organization, representing 55% of total giving, with the other 45% supporting the work and ministries of the synod. One of the highlights for her was that the ELCA gave \$343,500 in hunger gifts to work in the synod.
- She spoke of new starts in the synod which were supported by the ELCA, including the Breaking the Chains ministry, the Living Faith West Campus, and The Table. Of The Table, she said that she'd had the opportunity to work and serve in the garden, and to join in worship with them.
- She spoke of congregations in renewal in the synod, including Village Church, All People's Church, Cross in Milwaukee, Faith/Santa Fe, Hephatha, Unity, and King of Glory.
- She spoke of youth in mission, and of the [Fund for Leaders](#) scholarships.
- She welcomed leadership in the larger church from those in the synod, including Sonja Wolfe's service on the Church Council; Bishop-elect Vivian Thomas-Breitfeld's past service on the Women and Justice project and Women of the ELCA, and pending service to the South Central Synod; and Rev. Matthew Short's work as Director of Evangelical Mission in the synod.
- She recounted the actions of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly, particularly the diversity goals set forth, with the need to be intentional about progress to mirror the make-up of particular regions, rather than having a simple numeric goal for diversity. This work, she said, will continue with a Diversity Task Force in advance of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. Her recounting also included the Assembly's action to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, to support Campaign Zero, to call the church to account for African Descent Lutherans, and to expand and encourage participation in anti-racism training across the church.

She concluded by saying that, while this work can be hard, with the church not where it should be, she remains energized, connected and hopeful. She said that her "heart is overwhelmed" with the election of two women of color as bishops in the ELCA. "I have hope for this church – I am not giving up on the church!"

### **Reference & Counsel Committee**

Rev. John Brink presented the report of the Reference & Counsel Committee, reading the resolved statements from the two submitted resolutions.

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## **Ministry Moment – Raising Up New Leaders**

The bishop then introduced Esther Rusch, who shared information on the ELCA's Fund for Leaders. Created by the 1997 Churchwide Assembly, the fund has provided more than \$8 million to date in scholarships to roughly 2,000 "students of great promise" attending ELCA seminaries. This allows these students to go into ministry with less student debt. Following a change in procedures, these grants are now made directly to students rather than through the seminaries. Ms. Rusch recounted her work reviewing applications as part of a twelve-member committee, which awarded 40 scholarships. She noted that videos were included with applications, and that she would like to see videos as part of the synod candidacy process.

Following her presentation, the bishop asked recipients of fund scholarships to stand for recognition by the Assembly. He then spelled out the need for new leaders to serve, particularly rostered leaders, saying that there had been 16 retirements in the first 20 months of his term as bishop, with only two ordinations. He added a good news item: that there are three more ordinations scheduled in the next couple of weeks, with perhaps one or two more through the end of the summer.

Citing churchwide statistics, he said that there had been 256 first-call pastors (including eleven in the Greater Milwaukee Synod), with only 118 new leaders available.

"We are going to need leaders; we are needing good leaders, prepared leaders, perhaps you or someone you know, someone in your community, your family."

## **Video – Show Up**

A video calling for leaders for the ELCA, with the message that you are not the magician, you are the magic, and that if you want to change the world, show up.

## **Table Conversation**

The Assembly had table conversations on finding new rostered leaders. Business card-sized cards had been placed at each table with [URLs for getting basic information](#). The intent is to have members of the Assembly and others share these cards with people who might have some interest, even if that interest has not yet been expressed, including young people.

## **Workshop Explanation**

The bishop provided an overview of activities scheduled through 2:00 pm, and then asked his three assistants to share a few words on the breakout sessions, with each assistant facilitating one session.

Rev. Matthew Short, who will lead the conversation on curiosity, said that how we move from making statements about each to how we ask each other will be his group's focus, noting that all three topics are linked. The operative notions he presented were to talk through, to learn, to talk more, and to practice.

Rev. Jennifer Arnold, together with Judith Roberts, will address courage. She presented the ideas that we all long to live into the fullness of life that God provides, and to struggle to have necessary tough conversations about race, understanding each other from where we enter. Their session, she said, will set examples of courageous conversations, leaving participants with partners, resources and a plan.

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Rev. Kristin Nielsen will address compassion in her session. She said that “we understand that the other two, curiosity and courage, need compassion.” The work will include an exploration of what compassion is, through a video, discussion, and reflection on next steps. The video used will be the same used in all three presentations, with other common resources provided. In addition to the handouts, resources will be available on the synod website.

## **Announcements and Prayer**

The elections team was called to meet at the podium as the lunch recess began. David Rebey as of today, intern at Redemption Lutheran Church in Wauwatosa, offered a prayer. The Assembly recessed at 11:54 am, to reconvene at 2:15 pm, following lunch and the breakout sessions.

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## **Friday, June 1, 2018**

### **Plenary II**

Bishop Erickson called the Assembly to order at 2:15 pm.

#### **Music**

The Assembly sang “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” with musicians Theo Merriweather, piano; Chris Hanson, guitar; Charlotte Linberry, violin; and Rev. David Dragseth, guitar.

#### **Devotions**

Devotions were shared by Rev. Jennifer Rose from Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in Hartland, who asked “what comes to mind for courage?” Citing her formative years, she said she always thinks of the fictional game character Mario, who always, no matter what, heeds to call. She went on to talk about figures like Mary, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks, asking how we can be more like those courageous figures. Sharing a portion of Isaiah 43, she spoke of going through deep waters, of “remembering who I am and whose I am,” and connection giving purpose to our lives, adding that “vulnerability can push courage.”

#### **Music**

With the musicians leading again, the Assembly sang “Oh, Sing to God Above,” first in English, then in Spanish.

#### **Announcement**

In introducing the Lutheran Social Services presentation, the bishop updated the text-to-give total, which stood at \$495.

#### **LSS Video and Presentation**

A video highlighting the work of Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan was shown, followed by a presentation by President and CEO Héctor Colón. The video showcased the refugee resettlement work of LSS.

In his remarks, Mr. Colón shared part of his personal history, growing up on the near South Side of Milwaukee in a family from Puerto Rico. He learned to box and was a seven-time boxing champion who gave his life to Christ in 1992. Though he moved

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away from boxing, he said that he strives for excellence in everything he does, utilizing the skills learned from boxing.

In his previous position as director of the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services he said that he decreased reliance on correctional care, with a focus on serving people in the community, especially on giving kids a chance to succeed. Another priority was attempting to eliminate homelessness in Milwaukee County.

Speaking of LSS, he said the agency has been helping people facing crises for 135 years, serving as the place to turn for help. His goal going forward is to assure that this can continue in the context of LSS' values. He thanked the Assembly for support for LSS, saying that "continued support means meeting mission for many years to come."

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

Lee Johnston provided an updated report for the Credentials Committee, reporting that in attendance at the Assembly at the opening of the second plenary session on Friday, June 1, 2018, were 120 clergy and 205 lay people, for a total voting membership of 325. Also present were 39 visitors for a total attendance of 364. Lay voting members continued to exceed 60% of total voting membership.

### **First Ballot for Synod Positions**

Bishop Erickson called for the first ballot for those nominated for positions in the synod, beginning with a voice vote for all Churchwide Assembly candidates put forth by clusters.

#### **Assembly Action**

##### **SA18.06.04. Election of Nominees**

Election as Voting Members for the 2019 Churchwide Assembly from clusters as presented by the Nominating Committee.

*Voice vote*

Bishop Erickson then asked that ballots, distributed by the election committee, be marked for all remaining positions. Ballots were collected by members of the committee.

### **Ministry Moment – Village Church**

Rev. Vicki Watkins and Wyatt Meyer shared the story of [Power Shift](#), a ministry of the Village Church, which remains open during open hours for bars twice a month on Friday nights. Begun to serve police officers working the late shift in their neighborhood, attendees now include both police officers and bar-goers.

### **Global Mission Report – Meru**

Rev. Sue Ruehle reported on the Meru Partnership Committee's work to build, sustain and fulfill the commitments made as a synod to the Diocese of Meru in Tanzania. One facet is their work to maintain communication between the bishops, with specific accomplishments including parish-to-parish partnerships, building a well, a professional education fund, and, addressing a big problem in Meru, keeping enough pastors for growing churches. She also mentioned Telescopes to Tanzania and other projects, thanking the Assembly for the synod's support.

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## **Resolutions**

### **Report of the Reference and Counsel Committee**

Rev. John Brink, chair of the Reference and Counsel Committee, was asked to again present the resolved statements for the two resolutions submitted for consideration by the Assembly prior to debate and action for each resolution. The bishop prefaced Rev. Brink's presentation by providing guidance on the conduct of debates.

### **Point of Order**

A request that speakers mention the location of their congregation in addition to its name.

**Resolution 1 – In Commitment to More Fully Embracing the Reconciling in Christ Identity of the Greater Milwaukee Synod**, which was submitted by Milwaukee Clusters 1 and 2 and co-sponsored by: Ascension Lutheran Church, Cross Lutheran Church, Hephatha Lutheran Church, Lake Park Lutheran Church, Reformation Lutheran Church, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, and The Village Church of Milwaukee; Kingo Lutheran Church, Shorewood; Grace Lutheran Church, Thiensville; and the Greater Milwaukee Synod Reconciling in Christ Ministry Team.

WHEREAS, The Greater Milwaukee Synod (GMS), since 1991, has identified itself as a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) synod and committed to the work of "equality and full inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" as stated on the GMS webpage; and

WHEREAS, In the resolution passed at the 1998 Synod Assembly, the congregations of the GMS "adopted a time limit of six months from [that] date whereby all individual congregations [would] report in writing and identify to the bishop and synod council the procedure that they [would] procure for their respective congregations to address the issue of becoming a 'Reconcil[ing] in Christ' congregation"; and

WHEREAS, In the 20 years since adopting the 1998 resolution addressing the issue of individual congregations becoming RIC, only 18 additional congregations, for a total of 24 of the 122 congregations within the GMS, plus the two Lutheran Campus Ministries have completed the process of becoming RIC; and

WHEREAS, With GMS staff citing compliance with the social statement on "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" adopted at the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, GMS congregations in transition who claim "bound conscience" are allowed to deny the paperwork of and interviews with rostered leaders in the call process who openly identify as LGBTQIA+, based on their sexual/gender identities; and

WHEREAS, The GMS constitution clearly commits "to participate in God's mission" by manifesting "the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives" (S6.02.f); and

WHEREAS, Encouraged in Paul's letter to the Ephesians "to lead a life worthy of the calling to which [we] have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"; be it

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**RESOLVED**, That the 24 RIC congregations and two Lutheran Campus Ministries within the GMS be encouraged to play an active role in representing and living out their RIC identity within the Synod by participating on the Reconciling In Christ Ministry Team and, with the GMS staff, GMS council, and RIC Ministry Team, journeying with willing congregations who are not yet RIC through conversations, trainings, and the RIC process; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That the GMS staff and council annually identify congregations who are not RIC or who have expressed a “bound conscience” in response to LGBTQIA+ inclusivity and affirmation in order to invite these congregations into recurring conversations with the GMS staff about their congregational identity and the identity of the GMS as RIC; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That GMS staff and council members, in consultation with the RIC Ministry Team, participate in training by a third party organization (such as Reconciling Works, Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries, The Reformation Project) to confidently and competently engage in constructive conversations on topics such as “bound conscience,” LGBTQIA+ inclusion and affirmation within congregations, and accompanying LGBTQIA+ rostered leaders in their ministry; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That the GMS staff, in consultation with the RIC Ministry Team, provide training and resources from a third party organization (such as Reconciling Works, Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries, The Reformation Project) for interim pastors in order to equip these leaders to facilitate conversations within congregations in transition on calling pastoral candidates to their faith community who may identify as LGBTQIA+; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That the GMS council, in support the GMS’s identity as RIC, add a RIC financial line item to the 2020 synodical budget, the amount of which to be determined by the GMS council in dialogue with the RIC Ministry Team; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That in consultation with the RIC Ministry Team, the GMS staff and council establish metrics with which to determine the progress of the efforts to embrace the synod’s identity as a RIC Synod, and that these statistics be intentionally assessed throughout the year and reported on at the 2019 Synod Assembly by the GMS RIC Ministry Team. The report may include: an increase to the number of RIC congregations within the GMS, training that has occurred for GMS staff, GMS council members, and interim pastors, intentional conversations with LGBTQIA+ rostered leaders and congregation members about their experiences within the GMS, and the work accomplished within congregations either by GMS staff, interim pastors, or RIC Ministry Team.

Following the reading, Rev. Carolyn Sellers, of Kingo Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, moved acceptance, with a second provided.

Speaking in favor of the resolution, Rev. Sellers recounted that the resolution resulted from Milwaukee Clusters 1 and 2 meeting and discussing the fact that despite the synod having been a Reconciling in Christ synod for 27 years, there were only 24 congregations and two campus ministries that had become RIC. The thought was that we could do better. She added that the language regarding RIC status has evolved in

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this time. The purpose of this resolution, she said, was to encourage us to speak together, to be trained together, and to have conversations.

Rev. Patrick Keene said that his congregation Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, is an RIC congregation. He called for funds to be allocated, given what he called the disparity between being an RIC synod and not having funds budgeted for that purpose.

Carla Ullerich of First Lutheran Church, West Allis spoke to second resolved statement that calls for "the GMS staff and council annually identify congregations who are not RIC or who have expressed a 'bound conscience'", saying that she did not feel those congregations should be singled out. "If they have made their decision, it should be their right to do so." She said that this could be interpreted as bullying non-RIC congregations, saying also that especially where bound conscience has been expressed, they should not have to prove their stance. She stated that the synod should accept that each congregation has the right either to accept or not the resolution and RIC status. Referring to the third whereas statement, she said that 24 congregations represents a distinct minority. She called on the Assembly to have a kind heart, and to not annually identify congregations which are not RIC; "it's okay to have discussions, but if congregations are strong on their beliefs, they have the right to follow their heart, even if other people believe that is wrong."

Rev. Jay McDivitt of Christ the Servant Lutheran Church in Waukesha moved to amend, striking "or who have expressed a 'bound conscience' in response to LGBTQIA+ inclusivity and affirmation" from the second resolved statement. Following a second, Rev. McDivitt spoke to redundancy in this phrase, adding that "bound conscience [should] be applied to all." He noted that this phrase is counterproductive by singling out people who may be tenuous in their connection with the ELCA. He added that it "does not serve a purpose to further alienate" those who in congregations which are not RIC.

### **Assembly Action**

#### **SA18.06.05. Motion to Amend**

The Assembly voted to amend the second resolved statement by striking the phrase "or who have expressed a 'bound conscience' in response to LGBTQIA+ inclusivity and affirmation."

*Voice vote*

Susie Hess of Ascension Lutheran Church in Milwaukee said that she doesn't understand opposition to this measure. "I don't see a problem with this." It is an example of opening eyes.

Rev. Kristin Rice, on leave from call said that she came to the GMS from a conservative synod. "Both anti-racism and RIC are critical to me. Both of these concerns are ongoing. I am in favor of resolution because it honors and implores us to be in and to continue this conversation."

Rev. Delaney Schlake-Kruse, Associate Pastor at North Cape Lutheran Church in Franksville, said that her congregation is not RIC, but that she is in favor of the resolution. She cited the fourth resolved statement calling for training for call committees, asking whether all congregations are open to all candidates. "Are

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congregations ready to call any qualified pastor? There are unjust hiring practices that continue in the ELCA.”

Rev. Rachel Young Binter, of Lutheran Campus Ministry at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, spoke in favor of the resolution, noting that she is bisexual. She recalled language used following the ELCA’s adoption of ordination for women, which was nearly identical to language used following the ELCA’s adoption of the Social Statement on Human Sexuality in 2009, both sets of language calling for exclusion. She said that “it would be a shame not to make use of the gifts of talented seminarians.”

Rev. Molly Doreza, Interim Pastor at Bay Shore Lutheran Church, Whitefish Bay, spoke in support of the resolution, focusing especially on bringing resources to bear. She called for the synod to “move the conversation to celebrate the gifts of a variety of people.”

Wyatt Meyer of Village Church in Milwaukee, speaking in favor, said that he is trans and did not want to be in church before.

MaryBeth Hoffman of All People’s Gathering Lutheran Church in Milwaukee noted that “Reconciling Works,” as presented in the resolution should be “ReconcilingWorks.” The bishop ordered that this typographical correction be made. Ms. Hoffman also raised the question of who will pay for training since that is not included in the resolution for the next year. The bishop responded by saying that an amendment to the budget is expected to cover those costs in the 2019-2020 budget.

Wayne Wedepohl of St. Luke Lutheran Church, Sheboygan Falls, spoke in opposition to the resolution. He complimented the spirit of the people who brought the resolution forward, but said that if we want to be inclusive, “we cannot be separating people out. Our congregations are working very hard, making people feel welcome. All we are doing with the resolution is creating a divide.”

Rev. Sheila Rawn of St. Mary’s Lutheran Church, Kenosha, said that her congregation is not on the list of RIC congregations, asking for an updated list, which may show a higher number. She said that her congregation went through the RIC process, a long, multi-year conversation, beginning from a stance of “don’t ask, don’t tell.” She said it was a scary conversation to begin but ended up being a blessing for the congregation. “A lot of people wanted to have this conversation, because it is happening in all parts of their lives.” The process, she said, gave the freedom to have this conversation. She asked why we are singling out one group. “One young person said I wanted to have the conversation. I think the resolution is good.”

Rev. Patrick Keene returned to make an additional statement, asking “what does it mean to be a 21<sup>st</sup> century church? What we are putting before you today, not just wrestling with that question, but to move toward engaging with 21<sup>st</sup> century people.” He quoted from a hymn by Isaac Watts from 500 years ago; “to serve this present age is my calling to fulfill.” “We are called to be a 21<sup>st</sup> century church. To be the church that God is calling us to become here and now.”

Rev. Bill Beyer, pastor at Grace Lutheran Church, Thiensville said that as an openly gay pastor, he wants to point out that these questions are vitally important to this church.

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A motion was made suspend the rules in order to grant voice to Carol Baumgartner.

## **Council Action**

### **SA18.06.06. Granting of Voice**

The Assembly voted to suspend the rules to grant voice but not vote to Carol Baumgartner.

*Voice vote*

Carol Baumgartner, Trinity Lutheran Church, South Milwaukee, stated that movement won't happen without the discussion.

There were no additional speakers.

## **Assembly Action**

### **SA18.06.07. Approval of Resolution**

The Assembly voted to approve Resolution 1 – In Commitment to More Fully Embracing the Reconciling in Christ Identity of the Greater Milwaukee Synod, as amended:

**RESOLVED**, That the 24 RIC congregations and two Lutheran Campus Ministries within the GMS be encouraged to play an active role in representing and living out their RIC identity within the Synod by participating on the Reconciling In Christ Ministry Team and, with the GMS staff, GMS council, and RIC Ministry Team, journeying with willing congregations who are not yet RIC through conversations, trainings, and the RIC process; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That the GMS staff and council annually identify congregations who are not RIC in order to invite these congregations into recurring conversations with the GMS staff about their congregational identity and the identity of the GMS as RIC; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That GMS staff and council members, in consultation with the RIC Ministry Team, participate in training by a third party organization (such as ReconcilingWorks, Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries, The Reformation Project) to confidently and competently engage in constructive conversations on topics such as “bound conscience,” LGBTQIA+ inclusion and affirmation within congregations, and accompanying LGBTQIA+ rostered leaders in their ministry; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That the GMS staff, in consultation with the RIC Ministry Team, provide training and resources from a third party organization (such as ReconcilingWorks, Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries, The Reformation Project) for interim pastors in order to equip these leaders to facilitate conversations within congregations in transition on calling pastoral candidates to their faith community who may identify as LGBTQIA+; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That the GMS council, in support the GMS's identity as RIC, add a RIC financial line item to the 2020 synodical budget, the amount of which to be determined by the GMS council in dialogue with the RIC Ministry Team; and be it further

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**RESOLVED**, That in consultation with the RIC Ministry Team, the GMS staff and council establish metrics with which to determine the progress of the efforts to embrace the synod's identity as a RIC Synod, and that these statistics be intentionally assessed throughout the year and reported on at the 2019 Synod Assembly by the GMS RIC Ministry Team. The report may include: an increase to the number of RIC congregations within the GMS, training that has occurred for GMS staff, GMS council members, and interim pastors, intentional conversations with LGBTQIA+ rostered leaders and congregation members about their experiences within the GMS, and the work accomplished within congregations either by GMS staff, interim pastors, or RIC Ministry Team.

*This resolution was approved by a show of cards.*

**Resolution 2 – In Support of Expanding Support of Prison Congregation, Prison/Jail Re-Entry Ministry and Prison Reform Advocacy**, which was submitted by Hephatha Lutheran Church; Rev. Mary Martha Kannass, Pastor and Rev. Joseph W. Ellwanger, Assisting Minister; Milwaukee Clusters 1 and 2; Rev. Jon Jacobs and Rev. Alexis Twito, Deans; and Reformation Lutheran Church, Milwaukee; Rev. Marilyn Miller, Pastor.

WHEREAS, Jesus, in Matthew 25, says that when we visit someone in prison, we are visiting Christ; and

WHEREAS, The United States, with over two million persons in jails and prisons, has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, and Wisconsin has the second highest rate of incarceration of African American men in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Greater Milwaukee Synod, in collaboration with the ELCA Congregational Centers for Mission and with Prison Congregations of America, launched Breaking the Chains congregation at the Felmers Chaney Correctional Center (minimum security prison), 2825 N. 30th St., Milwaukee, in 2016, with Rev. Mark Thompson serving as pastor; and

WHEREAS, Project RETURN was founded by a Synod congregation, Cross Lutheran, Milwaukee, in 1980, to help meet employment, housing, and counseling needs of men and women leaving incarceration and engaging in the reentry process; and

WHEREAS, Congregations and individuals of the Greater Milwaukee Synod have been engaged in prison reform efforts for the past 15 years through four congregation-based justice organizing groups—MICAHA (Milwaukee), RIC (Racine), CUSH (Kenosha), SOPHIA (Waukesha); and

WHEREAS, Several Synod congregations and individual members have responded to the 2017 Assembly resolution urging participation in Breaking the Chains congregation and in prison and jail ministry (number of individuals attending worship at the Chaney Center or signed up for required orientation is 33; number of individuals who have prepared or provided materials for the ministry is 13; number of congregations that have

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had Breaking the Chains Pastor Mark Thompson as a preacher or discussion leader, have contributed funds, and/or provided volunteers is 13); and

WHEREAS, A Synod Prison/Jail Ministry Task Force has been formed by the Breaking the Chains Steering Committee in cooperation with Synod staff, to encourage and coordinate participation by congregations and individuals in all three levels of prison ministry—in-prison/jail ministry, reentry ministry, and prison reform advocacy; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, That congregations and individual members of the Greater Milwaukee Synod be encouraged to begin, or to continue, their support of Breaking the Chains congregation, by sending volunteers to participate in the Saturday evening worship and Wednesday evening Bible class, by membership on the Breaking the Chains Steering Committee, by inviting Pastor Mark Thompson to speak/preach at congregational worship and gatherings, and by contributing financially to the ministry needs of Breaking the Chains congregation; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That congregations be encouraged to participate on the Synod Prison/Jail Ministry Task Force, to be engaged in the development of the Synod's prison ministry and prison reform advocacy strategy; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That congregations be encouraged to support and participate in the reentry ministry of Project RETURN and in the prison reform campaign (Restoring Our Communities) of MICAHA, RIC, CUSH, and SOPHIA; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That congregations be encouraged to participate in ministries at local county and city jails, and nearby youth detention centers and state prisons, as opportunities are available; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That the Synod Prison/Jail Ministry Task Force send a report to all the congregations of the Greater Milwaukee Synod in December 2018, and in May 2019, in preparation for the 2019 Synod Assembly, indicating the number of congregations and individuals involved in the three levels of prison ministry—Breaking the Chains congregation and other in-prison and in-jail ministries, Project RETURN and other reentry ministries, and prison reform advocacy (MICAHA/RIC/CUSH/SOPHIA ROC Campaign).

Rev. Joseph Ellwanger, Hephatha Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, and a member of Breaking the Chains and of the Project Return board, moved the resolution.

Speaking in favor, Rev. Ellwanger stated that the resolution provides practical suggestions to every congregation and every member, with information on “getting their toes wet” on the issue, and with the possibility of involvement in the ministry itself. He recounted the experience at Hephatha of receiving someone from the prison program who was baptized, joined the congregation, was married there, and became president

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of the congregation. He ended by noting that “we are the most incarcerating nation in the world.”

Rev. Andrew Nyren of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Milwaukee also spoke in support of the resolution, adding the suggestion that a future synod gathering should have a major focus on this ministry

Chris Manke, Lead Pastor at St. Matthew’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wauwatosa, spoke of doing the work of encouraging.

## **Assembly Action**

### **SA18.06.08. Approval of Resolution**

The Assembly voted to approve Resolution 2 – In Support of Expanding Support of Prison Congregation, Prison/Jail Re-Entry Ministry and Prison Reform Advocacy, as presented.

*This resolution was approved by a show of cards.*

## **Action on Constitutional Amendments and Bylaws**

Secretary Matthew Brockmeier moved adoption of amendments to the bylaws of the Greater Milwaukee Synod as recommended by the Synod Council in action at its November 2017 meeting. These amendments were proposed in order to assure that the required threshold for lay representation at future Synod Assemblies be maintained.

## **Proposed Amendments to Synod Constitution and Bylaws**

**S7.22.01.** All ~~ordained~~ ministers of Word and Sacrament and ministers of Word and Service, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers who are retired, on leave from call, or designated as disabled and whose names appear on the rosters of this synod shall be voting members of the Synod Assembly.

**S7.22.02.** All retired ministers of Word and Sacrament on the roster of this synod shall elect 10 percent of their number to be voting members; all others shall be advisory members with voice but no vote. All retired ministers of Word and Service on the roster of this synod shall be voting members of the Synod Assembly.

## **Point of Order**

A request that the method for electing 10% of retired clergy be explained.

Bishop Erickson responded to the request by saying the election would take place at an annual event for retired rostered leaders, with all those wishing to be considered nominating themselves, in effect acting as a retired clergy caucus.

## **Motion to Refer**

Rev. Ross Larson, Mount Pleasant Evangelical Lutheran Church, Racine, moved to refer, as follows:

"In the interest of maintaining a 60-40 ratio of lay to clergy voting at the annual assembly, without disenfranchising any particular segment of rostered clergy, the

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motion to amend is hereby referred to the Synod Council for further study and report at the next synod assembly."

The motion was seconded.

Speaking to the motion, Rev. Larson said that we "can do better than this," saying that the math does not assure success and that there are other ways to address the need to assure a 60/40 split. He stated that the Central/Southern Illinois Synod is adding youth delegates, increasing the overall voting membership. He also suggested that other options would be to modify the allotment of voting members to congregations or to have clusters nominate at-large members. Continuing, he said that a second reason to seek a better means is that ordination has not been dependent on who signs your paycheck, in other words, "no one questions the validity of our ordination." This should not, he said, be the means to affect the right of franchise. Recounting work both he and Pastor Joe Ellwanger did for racial justice in the 1960s, he added that ageism is just as insidious and devaluing as racism or sexism: "picking out people who can be identified and disenfranchising" them. "We can do better."

Jerry Key, Reformation Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, said that "age is something I am working on," going on to say that "this has nothing to do with disenfranchising someone because of their age, but about fulfilling our constitution obligation of 60 to 40" ratio for voting members. "One of the things that hinders that is having more retirees while there is less participation in our church. In the meantime, we need to find a way."

Rev. Carol Hegland, Village Church in Milwaukee, spoke in opposition to the amendment. "Primarily out of love for this church" she wants it to look less like her. "I have looked out over congregations and I want to see our church grow in younger people, look for ways to have younger people participate in the synod assemblies, and making moves to encourage lay participation. "I get an opportunity to be like John the Baptist; I must decrease so that you may increase."

Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse, St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Wauwatosa, spoke briefly in opposition to the motion.

Bill Durling, House of Prayer Lutheran Church, Franklin, said that he is voting for the motion "because we are taking a group who had unfettered rights, we are going to restrict their rights, a small select group being pushed into slavery."

Rev. Jay McDivitt – Moved to call the question.

### **Assembly Action**

#### **SA18.06.09. Previous Question**

The Assembly voted to close debate on the motion to refer bylaw amendments to the Synod Council.

*This action was approved by a show of cards.*

### **Assembly Action**

#### **SA18.06.10. Approval of Referral**

The Assembly voted to approve the motion to refer, as follows: in the interest of maintaining a 60-40 ratio of lay to clergy voting at the annual assembly, without

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disenfranchising any particular segment of rostered clergy, the motion to amend is hereby referred to the Synod Council for further study and report at the next synod assembly.

*Initial vote by show of cards was too close to call; a counted vote was taken.  
Motion carries 147 yes, 118 no*

## **Video**

A video on “*Switch: How to Change things when Change is Hard*”, a book looking at emotions leading rationality, and finding ways to use that understanding to shape the path to allow for easy progress. Discussion at tables followed.

## **Portico Video**

The bishop introduced a video message from Portico Benefits Services, which serves more than 50,000 current or retired church leaders. “We serve church leaders so they can serve others.”

## **Global Mission Report – El Salvador**

Gretchen Hauge, co-chair of El Salvador Action Team, spoke about how dedicated the committee is to this partnership. The team meets monthly at St. Matthew’s in Wauwatosa. She asked members of the Assembly to stand if their congregation has a partnership in El Salvador, or if they have participated in a mission of healing in El Salvador, have been to El Salvador, or if their interactions with El Salvador have changed their life, faith or view of the world. She invited contacts and questions.

## **Election Results**

Mr. David Rothe reported the results of the first ballot for each position, with the bishop declaring either the name of the person elected or the names of the two individuals continuing to a second ballot in cases where no nominee had a majority of votes on the first ballot.

## **Churchwide Assembly Voting Members**

At Large – Clergy

<b>Rev. Marilyn Miller</b>	<b>134 – will continue for second vote</b>
<b>Rev. Rachel Young-Binter</b>	<b>60 – will continue for second vote</b>
Rev. Denise M. H. Mbise	51
Rev. Bill Beyer	50

At Large – Lay Female

<b>Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman</b>	<b>138 – will continue for second vote</b>
<b>Ms. Debra Donovan</b>	<b>94 – will continue for second vote</b>
Ms. Janet Blank	40

At Large – Lay Male

<b>Mr. Matthew Brockmeier</b>	<b>151 – elected</b>
Mr. Todd Beutin	56
Mr. Scott W. Donovan	42
Mr. Joshua Hielt	36



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appetizers and beverages, as well as loud and lively singing, led by Pastor Felix Malpica.” Rev. Felix Malpica prayed table grace.

The bishop announced that the Assembly was in recess at 5:31 pm, to resume at 8:45 am Saturday.

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## **Saturday, June 2, 2018**

### **Plenary III**

#### **Call to Order**

Bishop Erickson called the Assembly to order at 8:45 am.

#### **Music**

“Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” was sung by the Assembly.

#### **Devotion**

The bishop introduced Sonja Wolfe, who was recently appointed to fill the vacancy on the [ELCA Church Council](#) left by the resignation of Carolyn Jewett, who had been elected to a six-year term in 2016.

Ms. Wolfe spoke of compassion, beginning by recounting a vivid childhood memory, of family, but especially her mother. “My behavior concerned her. I was always trying to help people. I didn’t know about gangs and drugs and was without fear of my surroundings.” She went to the store one day without telling anyone, and when she returned, everyone had been looking for her. She saw a look in her mother’s eyes she hadn’t seen before, and never wanted to see again, the look of fear. “This reaction caused fear for me. As parents we want to show our love for our children, but sometimes we can have an impact beyond” what we know. She talked about fear being implanted in her, that made her stop playing with her friends, and stop giving away food. Later she talked to her mother about how her mother’s fear had made her afraid, leading to confusion, misunderstanding and loneliness. She “got back to being able to help others. Fear causes us to shut ourselves off, and can cause isolation, panic, irrational behavior and hate.

#### **Announcements**

The bishop gave an update on giving online, which stood at \$1,165. More cards have been made available for invitations to potential future leaders.

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

Lee Johnston provided a final report for the Credentials Committee. In attendance at the opening of the third plenary session of the Assembly, on Saturday, June 2, 2018, were 121 clergy and 206 lay people, for a total voting membership of 327. The number of visitors present was unchanged at 39, for a total attendance of 366. Lay voting members continued to exceed 60% of total voting membership.

#### **Second Ballot**

The second ballot was conducted for the following positions, following a prayer by the bishop.

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## **Churchwide Assembly**

At Large – Clergy  
Rev. Marilyn Miller  
Rev. Rachel Young-Binter

## **Churchwide Assembly**

At Large – Lay Female  
Ms. Debra Donovan  
Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman

## **Consultation Committee**

At Large – Clergy, Partial Term – SA2018 through 8/31/2021  
Rev. Carol Jeunnette  
Rev. Alexis Twito

## **Discipline Committee**

At Large – Lay Female, Full Term – 9/1/2018 through 8/31/2024  
Ms. Margie Fischer  
Ms. Teresa Reinders

## **Outreach for Hope Report**

By way of introduction of the [Outreach for Hope](#) report, the bishop said that “one of the things that makes my fellow bishops jealous of serving in this synod is the fact that we have Outreach for Hope, this amazing ministry that helps to organize our resources in a way that supports essential ministries in our synod. We have a new executive director, Tim Larson, and I invite him and Maripat Monahan along with their fellow presenters, Pastors Gary Erickson and Marilyn Miller and Julie Ische.

Mr. Larson spoke of celebrating “our champions of hope – those who make our work possible,” with Ms. Monahan adding that they are “gratified by our impact – 23 diverse ministries served,” including feeding and food pantry programs, employment assistance, health screenings, after school programs, and leadership training. Rev. Erickson, chairperson of the Outreach for Hope board, spoke of also being a donor, and saying that “how you name something is so important, Outreach for Hope. I give so that I can be part of God’s work in communities of poverty, to say and do the Gospel at the same time. God’s work can be further finished among us, he said, urging those assembled to “join in being a champion. Hope that is found in giving and receiving – giving hope is essential to our faith.”

Rev. Marilyn Miller said that Outreach for Hope is standing with and serving a vulnerable section of the city, “working with those dealing with economic and other oppressions.” She called for allies and companions, donors and champions. This is an “opportunity to serve, to give, supporting the work of restoring and giving hope – an opportunity you don’t want to miss.”

Ms. Ische said “I am a verb – I like to do stuff – I volunteer for the bike ride, congregational support, and to donate to Outreach for Hope. God gives us all the ability to do stuff – to put our faith into action – because of my faith I act – join me – become a champion.”

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Champions for Outreach for Hope stood and were recognized for their wide-ranging contributions.

### **Bishop's Report**

Bishop Erickson turned the chair over to Joyce Caldwell for the duration of his report. Ms. Caldwell introduced the bishop.

The bishop began by posing the question of whether he was enjoying himself, answering that this is not the best verb, but that he is deeply called, and loves this church and the people. He also expressed deep appreciation for the people with whom he gets to collaborate on a daily basis, accomplishing the work of accompaniment.

These are, he said, times of transition and conflict, where sometimes we are not able to change quickly enough, unable to come together.

He spoke of 121 congregations in the synod, with 44 in transition; 23 likely to call a full-time pastor, eleven a part-time pastor, six congregations with long-term supply pastors and three discerning what to do. Five new pastors are not yet installed, and ten congregations have made calls in the last year. "Life in the synod office is never dull."

He then introduced the synod staff: Mary Romskog, Phil Smith, Sarah Christiaansen, Lee Johnston, Maripat Monahan, Tim Larson, and pastors Kristin Nielsen, Matthew Short and Jennifer Arnold. He then asked his three programmatic assistants to address the Assembly.

Rev. Kristin Nielsen, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations in Mission, said that it is a "privilege to work with all of you. I have met many of you; it is a blessing. I want to share a passion for accompanying you as leaders of congregations, so that the Gospel can be shared." She expressed constant curiosity about what is happening in congregations. "How are we connecting? What kind of leader are we when we enter the room?" The ELCA, she said, has recognized the importance of this moving into the future, of leaders who are aware of what they bring and what is happening. She spoke of her participation in the ELCA systems academy, which represents a three-year commitment, through which she will be able to build a team here to accompany congregations, providing help, insight and guidance.

Rev. Matthew Short, Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission, said that "evangelical mission" is really all of our job titles. "We are gathered but deployed – sent out to live out the Gospel." He said that his presence is an embodiment of the synod's relationship with the ELCA, and that this includes annual get-togethers with other directors of evangelical mission. "It is," he said, "a gift to work with you." He then spoke of his next effort, developing a capability for missional consultations with congregations, urging members to "consider if you really like listening," with the idea of "getting together once or twice a year to listen at a neighboring congregation."

Rev. Jennifer Arnold, Assistant to the Bishop for Missional Leadership, gave thanks for "the privilege of serving on the synod staff." She too spoke of a new effort, to publish new compensation guidelines for rostered leaders as a tool for congregations. She said that she is beginning to revise those guidelines, to make them more concise, more user friendly, and shorter. There is, she said, a Listserve survey on possible improvements

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that will be available through Monday, June 4<sup>th</sup>. “If you have input, please point to that.” Her goal is to complete the new guidelines in time for action at the September Synod Council meeting. She also spoke of Together in Mission, an annual event providing opportunities for leaders to come together. It will take place again on Saturday, February 9, 2019. The 2018 event drew more than 200 people and included 19 workshops. The workshop topics were guided by a survey; there will be another survey by the end of summer on topics for 2019.

Bishop Erickson continued his report noting leadership transitions and new rostered leaders, leaders who died, and anniversaries for rostered leaders and for congregations.

He then provided a summary of changes for the Synod Assembly for 2019, which will begin with a dinner on Friday evening and end by late afternoon Saturday. The 2019 Assembly will take place at the Italian Community Center in Milwaukee. The bishop said that with a shorter Assembly not requiring time off during the workweek the hope is to increase age diversity and make it possible for many lay people to participate. Despite the shorter duration, he said that there will be an effort to balance the work of the church and opportunities for people to connect with each other. Most of the remaining workshop activity associated with the Assembly will become part of Together in Mission in February, leading to the two events being complementary in nature.

Also, next year, the ELCA comes to Milwaukee for the Churchwide Assembly in August at the Wisconsin Center. Volunteers will be needed to assist – there will be opportunities to serve.

He reminded those gathered that curiosity, courage, compassion formed the outline of this year’s Assembly, forming the heart of what needs to guide us.

We need to be more curious, not having all the answers, but able to enter into relationships with curiosity and wonder, to try to understand each other. Curiosity is a great tool to break the ice with new people and old relationships. God has created each of us as unique, precious and interesting.

We need courage to step outside of our routines, and to look at beliefs, determining which beliefs are valuable, and which are in the way. God is alive and well and is in this space. We just need to discover the ways the Spirit will guide us.

And we need to add a bit more compassion, in order to see more than a problem or an adversary. The compassion to meet people as broken and beautiful.

The ELCA, he said, is using language of congregational vitality. Communities of Jesus that foster life-changing relationships with God, each other and the world. All our work stems from this.

In closing, the bishop said that he has been called to be the synod’s pastor. Reggie Jackson, he said, has a great title, head griot. “Leaning more into what it means to be a griot than a first responder.”

Vice President Caldwell, saying that it is a privilege and honor to serve in this synod, returned the chair to Bishop Erickson.

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## Election Results

Mr. David Rothe reported the results of the second ballot, with the bishop declaring the winners for each position.

### Churchwide Assembly

At Large – Clergy

<b>Rev. Marilyn Miller</b>	<b>148 – elected</b>
Rev. Rachel Young-Binter	69

### Churchwide Assembly

At Large – Lay Female

<b>Ms. MaryBeth Hoffman</b>	<b>137 – elected</b>
Ms. Debra Donovan	81

### Consultation Committee

At Large – Clergy, Partial Term – SA2018 through 8/31/2021

<b>Rev. Alexis Twito</b>	<b>121 – elected</b>
Rev. Carol Jeunnette	96

### Discipline Committee

At Large – Lay Female, Full Term – 9/1/2018 through 8/31/2024

<b>Ms. Teresa Reinders</b>	<b>145 – elected</b>
Ms. Margie Fischer	73

### Ministry Moment - diakonia

Sonja Wolfe and Pat Faherty were invited by the bishop to report on Sonja's experience in the [diakonia](#) program. She graduates next week, having taken 12 classes taught by pastors over two years. The Assembly was told that information on the program is available, and diakonia graduates were asked to stand.

Sonja said that she loves her family, friends, congregation, and she loves working with the youth.

Pat asked her to describe her call to ministry. Sonja said that her call to ministry had been chasing her as long as she can recall. She started the classes to learn more about history and Lutheranism. It became more than that. She felt complete peace in her heart. "I am just beginning."

Pat asked about her favorite part, and why it was her favorite. Sonja said that was "how to see how others see," giving her the confidence to accept the call to the ELCA Church Council. Pat: "What was your favorite class? Sonja: Practical ministry – visitation. She originally did not want to do this, but changed, and enjoyed it. Finally, Pat asked for the three things people should keep their eyes on; and Sonja answered "don't be so set on what you think you should be doing, remember to ask for help, and don't try to do too much or do it all yourself. Look and listen."

### Ministry Moment – St. Peter's Sheboygan

Rev. Kristin Berglund, Pastor of St. Peter Lutheran Church, Sheboygan, spoke about innovation at her congregation, while also noting that St. Peter is the northernmost congregation in the synod. Pray Ground, an initiative begun two years ago, welcomes

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children and families in worship. After extensive research, planning and training for the congregation, “we were ready” to begin the experiment of providing an activity area in the front of the sanctuary during the service. The project started well, but then got rowdy, though it was mostly the grownups making noise. A review led to modifications, making the space larger, taking out the table and paper, and placing quiet toys in the space. The quiet toys were Beanie Babies, and there was a Bible. The children began turning the Bible to the reading of the day and placing it so that the Beanie Babies would know what was going on. “It was a risk, some were uncomfortable, but it works. Kids getting room to be kids; learning to give God room to be God.” Complete with Beanie Baby blessings during communion.

### **Break**

The bishop spoke final words of thanks to Judith Roberts, who he called a gift to the whole church, and gave a gift to her. The Assembly then recessed for 15 minutes at 10:21 am.

### **Music**

Following the break, the Assembly sang “Gather Us In.”

### **Lutheran Campus Ministry Report**

Rev. Jessica Short, Abbie Papka, and Mikayla Jones presented a report on [Lutheran Campus Ministry](#), beginning by noting that the bishop “is a strong supporter of LCM.”

Abbie is a junior at Marquette University, where LCM “is small in number, but strong” There is great diversity of those present. “We are a rich, welcoming place” in an environment at Marquette where there is sometimes a lack of welcome for Lutherans, “we work to welcome others, to welcome everyone.”

Mikayla, also a junior at Marquette, has been part of LCM since freshman year. As a non-Catholic person of color, she said that she felt isolated. But at LCM, she feels that she is a part of something. “Aloneness falls away like chains breaking free.” There is a bond in not being Catholic.

Rev. Short said that Marquette is a challenging place if you stand out; if you are not Catholic, not white, or are LGBTQ or stand out in other ways. She said it is “challenging to challenge the system of power. These students are courageous, and authentically practice their faith.” Mikayla is a peer minister for community service. She also mentioned priorities of other students. “Difficult to say goodbye to graduating seniors, sending them equipped to go out into the world. Thanks to the synod.”

### **Report of the Synod Council**

Synod Vice President Joyce Caldwell was introduced by the bishop, who noted her variety of service to the church.

Vice President Caldwell began her report by asking members of the Synod Council to stand up to be recognized, reminding the Assembly that the Council does the work of the synod between assemblies. She said that the past year has been a time to get to know one another, since roughly half the members were new following elections at last year’s Synod Assembly.

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For the new year, she plans to engage in sustained discussions of who we are as a church, a synod. "The Spirit is moving; now take that work on and carry it forward." We are, she said, a unique synod with diversity in a small geographic area and a range of identities. "We do not lose our differences within our sameness as children of God."

She noted that the current synod mission statement dates from 2009 and she wants to develop a new mission statement, stating who we are, what we do, and what impact we hope to have in our world. "We seek to become multi-cultural within a white church." The questions include who we are and what we are called to do as a synod. When she contemplates Jesus' call to take up our cross and follow him, she thinks of the call as "take up your courage and follow me." We are, she said, changed completely. "That courage challenges, to stand up, speak up, take action. Call to something larger and harder and with meaning. It's the hard stuff. Part of being courageous. The way of the Gospel requires courage. Justice and love takes courage.

Conversations on values yesterday afternoon. What does it mean to take up your curiosity and follow me? Wisconsin NICE can mean that nothing is critically examined. Ways to critically examine, that takes courage. "What do we need to ask as a synod, and ask others to ask?"

What about taking up your compassion in your life and follow me? Following Jesus is walking towards people, and not away from people. How do we put our focus on those who need us most? In this time of bullying and name calling, what does it mean to have compassion?

Not just curiosity, courage and compassion; "add a fourth word – community. It's about relationships." Not work around, beside, or against one another – but with one another. We are in relationship.

She spoke of inviting sharing at each Synod Council meeting as a means of building community. She then invited members of the Assembly to participate; to "take a first step to develop our mission statement as a synod." Mission, she said, takes us out of ourselves, as opposed to vision, which is internal.

She asked that members discuss the assigned question with one other person and write responses on a note card. Then, as pairs, share responses with others at the table and create a table card, with patterns or similarities as a table group. At the end, one table from each section will report on the table card.

Following table discussions, the answers elicited included "growing and searching, who are we called to serve?", "share Jesus with the world, at synodical, congregational and individual levels," and "helping all people to feel welcomed and loved by God and God's people" as an "example of a diverse body in the world."

All cards were collected as part of the process of developing the mission statement, "to define who we are and what we do."

### **Action on the Budget**

The 2019/2020 budget was moved for adoption.

Motion to adopt the recommended 2019/2020 budget.

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Rev. Carolyn Sellers of Kingo Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, offered amendment to the budget. This amendment met the rules requirements for modifications to the proposed budget. Speaking in favor of the amendment, Rev. Sellers said that this was part of Christ's work.

### **Assembly Action**

#### **SA18.06.11. Amendment to Proposed Budget**

The Assembly voted to amend the 2019/2020 GMS budget by moving \$1,000 from synod staff travel (line 61) to fund Reconciling in Christ synodical work (a new line item under synod ministries).

*This amendment was approved by a show of cards.*

David Groenewold asked for clarification on whether the synod is in fact giving 55% to mission support for the ELCA, when it appears that the budget only shows 54.5%. The answer provided was that the \$2 million cap for calculating the ELCA's share resulted in this outcome.

Susie Hess of Ascension, Milwaukee, asked which line numbers are referred to in this question; the bishop responded that line 30 is the line in question.

Wayne Higgins of Unity Lutheran Church in Brookfield questioned a major difference on line 78 major from the budgeted to actual amount. Lee Johnston, Synod Financial Administrator, responded that this was due to the increased use of electronic and credit card giving, resulting in fees that are continuing to grow.

### **Assembly Action**

#### **SA18.06.12. Approval of Budget**

The Assembly voted to approve the Greater Milwaukee Synod budget for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2020 as amended, with total contributions and support of \$2,057,500, and total ministries (expenses) of \$2,157,586

*Vote by show of cards.*

### **Remaining Business**

The bishop gave thanks to the Assembly planning team; the staff at the hotel; video and tech and sound team; child care workers; all of you; for a rich and meaningful time.

### **Point of Privilege**

Rev. Vicki Watkins offered thanks to Bishop Erickson.

The bishop called attention to a handout with a brief Assembly summary, which is also on the website, and to additional business cards for potential leaders.

The bishop offered a parting gift, a bonus hymn that he composed, sung to the tune of "[The Church's One Foundation](#)." He then called forward those elected during the Assembly for installation.

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**End of Session**

Bishop Paul Erickson declared, without objection, the conclusion of the business of the Assembly at 11:44 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Brockmeier  
Secretary  
Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA