

2021 Assembly of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, ELCA
Thursday, April 15 and 17, 2021

Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson welcomed voting members to the 2021 Assembly of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin on Thursday, April 15, 2021, giving thanks for those who were instrumental in making it possible to hold the assembly online. **Plenary 1 began with Bishop Laurie calling the 2021 Assembly of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin to order at 6:35 p.m.** The Assembly was led through a Land Acknowledgement with history and back ground by Jim Pete, a member of the Red Cliff Band of Chippewa Nation on video; a naming of the Nations and Bands of Indigenous People that live in the region of the Synod; and words of gratefulness and honor for our Native American siblings.

Bishop Laurie introduced the theme of the Assembly – Jesus, Justice and JOY! The theme verse is: “When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous.” – Proverbs 21:15

The Bishop pointed to three words in the Hebrew language that are used for describing justice: *mishpat*, *tsedaqah*, and *shalom*.

The Assembly was led through practice voting using polls on the Zoom platform or by texting by the Rev. Erin Nelson. Bishop Laurie introduced the **Rules and Procedures for a Virtual Assembly**, prepared by the Synod Staff and recommended by the Synod Council at the February 27, 2021 meeting. The Assembly was open for discussion on the rules. After time for discussion, Bishop Laurie declared the Assembly was ready to vote.

Before the vote, Bishop Laurie called for the **Credentials Report**. Vice President Al Arndt reported voting members include: 112 clergy, 3 retired clergy, for a total of 115 clergy and 201 lay, 1 youth, for a total of 202 lay members. There are 317 total voting members. Lay members are further divided as 89 lay male and 113 lay female. Al Arndt reminded lay members of the Synod Council who were not registered under their congregation that they are not eligible to vote on the Rules and Procedures.

Bishop Laurie called for the vote. **The Rules and Procedures for a Virtual Assembly were approved.** Bishop Laurie asked for a motion for the **Adoption of the Agenda. Action: Nancy Amacher/Michelle Rowell – approved.**

Bishop Laurie yielded the chair to Vice President Al Arndt to present the **Constitutional Change to allow Lay Members of the Synod Council to vote at Synod Assemblies**. The constitutional change is recommended by the Synod Council. The Bylaw changes are:

S7.2 I.01C Duly elected voting members of the Synod Council who are not otherwise voting members of the Synod Assembly under *S7.2 I . shall be granted the privilege of both voice and vote as members of the Synod Assembly.

The Constitutional Change was approved: 287/17.

As a point of order, Arndt informed the Assembly that the minutes of the 2019 Assembly were approved by the Synod Council and are posted on the synod website. Arndt yielded the chair back to the Bishop.

Bishop Laurie called on David Whelan, chair of the Resolutions Committee, to read the **Resolution in Support of the ELCA World Hunger Program**. Bishop Laurie reminded the assembly the resolution was prepared by the NW Synod Justice Team and recommended by the Synod Council on February 15, 2020.

Bishop Laurie asked for any discussion on the resolution. Seeing there was no more discussion, Bishop Laurie declared the Assembly was ready to vote.

Before the vote, Bishop Laurie called for a **Credentials Report** to include those synod council lay members now eligible to vote. Al Arndt reported voting members include: 112 clergy, 3 retired clergy, for a total of 115 clergy and 206 lay, 1 lay person of color, 1 youth, for a total of 208 lay members. Lay members are further divided as 90 lay male and 118 lay female. Total voting members are now 323.

Bishop Laurie called on a member of the Synod Youth Board to lead the Assembly in prayer before the vote. **The Resolution in Support of the ELCA World Hunger Program was approved: 315/3.**

A video report on Malawi was presented.

The Bishop's Report, part 1, began with the video, "Basic as Baptism."

A video of the Bright Spot Award – *Curds for Kids*, Peace Lutheran Church of Pigeon Falls, was viewed.

The chair was yielded to Vice President Al Arndt. Arndt reminded the Assembly of the offering recipients: Malawi COVID Relief and Neighbor to Neighbor Ministry; and other announcements. Arndt led the Assembly in the Lord's Prayer. **Arndt declared the Assembly in recess until 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 17, 2021.** (At recess at 8:01 p.m. there were 319 Voting Members present.)

Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson called the Assembly back to order at 9:00 a.m. on April 17, 2021 with Plenary Session 2. The business of the previous day was reviewed. The Assembly opened with the refrain of the theme, a prayer, and the hymn *God's Work Our Hands* from the new hymn book, All Creation Sings. The Assembly was led in singing by Samuel Gray of Pilgrim Lutheran, Superior, WI

The Bishop' Report, part 2, video, "Who's my neighbor?"

David Whelan, chair of Resolutions Committee, read the **Resolution for Racial Justice Training**. The resolution was submitted by the NW Synod Justice Team. The Bishop asked for discussion. Wayne Kendrick's objection to background information being geared towards the Black population in Milwaukee rather than Indigenous populations of our synod was referred to Synod Council. Before the vote, Al Arndt presented the Credentials Report on voting members: 111rostered, 3 retired rostered, for a total of 114 clergy; and 211 lay, 1 lay person of color, 1 youth, for a total of 213 lay members. Lay members are further divided as 88 lay male and 125 lay female. Total voting members are now 327. The Assembly was led in prayer by the Synod Youth Board. **The Resolution for Racial Justice was approved: 292/31.**

A video of the Bright Spot Award - Neighbor to Neighbor *Latinx Ministry*, was viewed.

The Racial Equity Statement of the NW Synod of WI was introduced by Bishop Laurie, presented by various members of the Synod, and received by the Assembly. A suggestion from John Sutherland that the document include language about anti-Semitism and Islamaphobia. The Assembly was led with the refrain of the theme.

A video of the Bright Spot Award – Bethesda in Bayfield/Immanuel of Cornucopia on *Native American Sanctuary work*, was viewed.

Bishop Laurie called for the **Nominating Committee Report**. Al Arndt presented the elections for Synod Council, Discipline Committee and Churchwide Assembly. Motion: Phil Ruge-Jones/ Carol Rudd – to vote

for all unopposed elections was approved. The assembly elected by acclamation all those positions which were unopposed.

There was one contested election for Churchwide Assembly, St. Croix Valley voting members, and votes tallied were Carolyn Staats – 158 votes, Lucas Ladnier – 122 votes. The results of all elections are below:

Report of Elections to Synod Council– 2 year term

The following were elected at this assembly:

Apple River Conference Lay Female:

Margo Nelson (unopposed)

Chequamegon Conference Clergy:

Rev. Evelyn Weston (unopposed)

Chippewa Valley Conference Clergy:

Rev. Lucy Schottelkorb* (unopposed)

Dairyland Conference Lay Male:

Jon Zander (unopposed)

Heart of the North Lay Female

Bonnie Christenson (unopposed)

Lake Superior Lay Male:

Tom Potterton* (unopposed)

St. Croix Valley Conference Lay Male:

Richard Jackson (unopposed)

***Incumbent**

Report of Elections to Discipline Committee (5 year term)

The following were elected at this assembly:

Mary Olson-Lay Female

Phyllis Beastro-Lay Female

Max Neuhaus-Lay Male

Rev. Jay Ticknor-Clergy

Rev. Heather Kistner-Clergy

Report of Elections to Synod Council (3 year term) The following were elected at this assembly:

Apple River Conference Clergy:

Rev. Margaret Grant (unopposed)

Chequamegon Conference Lay Male:

Lyle Roe* (unopposed)

Chippewa Valley Conference Lay Female:

Arvin Solsaa* (unopposed)

Dairyland Conference Lay Female:

Linda Talford (unopposed)

Heart of the North Clergy:

Rev. Tamra Harder (unopposed)

Lake Superior Lay Female:

Karen St. George (unopposed)

St. Croix Valley Conference Lay Female:

Marcia Lindseth* (unopposed)

Secretary Synod Council (4 year term):

Rev. Julie Brenden* (unopposed)

Secretary Treasurer (4 year term):

Rev. Peter Muschinske (unopposed)

***Incumbent**

Report of Elections to Churchwide Assembly 2022 The following were elected at this assembly:

Apple River Conference

Lay Male: **Al Arndt**

Rostered Leader: **Rev. Laurie Kenyon-Woods**

Chequamegon Conference

Lay Female: **Carol Lekies**

Rostered Leader: **Rev. Elizabeth Bier**

Chippewa Valley Conference

Lay Female: **Paige Burrows**

Rostered Leader: **Rev. Karen Behling**

Dairyland Conference

Lay Male: **Scott Brown**

Lay Female: **Linda Trotter**

Rostered Leader: **Rev. David Christianson**

Heart of the North

Lay Female: **Teri Schult**

Rostered Leader: **Rev. Joel Bacon**

Lake Superior

Lay Male: **Tom Potterton**

Rostered Leader: **Rev. Bridget Jones**

St. Croix Valley Conference

Lay Male: **Ryan Brill**

Lay Female: **Sammy Brill**

Rostered Leader: **Rev. Carolyn Staats**

Black, Indigenous, or Person of Color

Carl Warren

The guest speaker for the Assembly was Judith Roberts, Program Director for Racial Justice Ministries in the ELCA.

Plenary 3 began with Bishop Laurie's Report, part 3, on the right relationship to our God.

The Bright Spot Award – *Reconciling in Christ* work of Bethany, Rice Lake was viewed.

The refrain of the theme of the Assembly was repeated.

David Whelan, chair of the Resolutions Committee, read the **LGBTQIA+ Resolution**. Bishop Laurie asked for discussion. After 20 minutes of discussion, there was a motion to call the questions, moved and seconded. The vote: 206/116 for 63.9%, failed. Motion to extend the debate 10 minutes failed. **The resolution was voted on and approved: 292/30.**

Bishop Laurie thanked the Assembly for the faithful support of the work that is done together as Synod staff and congregations for the sake of the gospel. Bishop Laurie called for the report of the Finance

Committee, thanking John Levi for his years as serving as Treasurer. The 2022-2023 mission plan was presented. **The Operating Plan for 2022-2023 for the NW Synod of WI was approved: 302/2.**

Al Arndt presided over the Resolution to Minimum Standards for Compensation for 2022-2023. Chris Sevold highlighted two changes: a 1.3% increase in base salary and a Portico Statement. David Whelan read the resolves. **The 2022 Minimum Standards for Compensation were approved: 307/4.**

Ted Hakala, chair of the Synod's Mission Endowment Fund Committee gave a report.

Al Arndt reminded the Assembly of the Assembly Offering that is divided between Malawi COVID Relief and the Neighbor to Neighbor Latinx Ministry. The refrain of the Assembly was repeated. Al Arndt led the Assembly in prayer before the recess for lunch.

At 12:45 p.m. Al Arndt reconvened the Assembly beginning Plenary 4. Bishop Laurie took time for prayer for Cares and Concerns as a Community. The refrain of the theme was repeated. Part 4 of Bishop Laurie's report was on *Shalom*.

The Bright Spot Award – *Care of Creation*, West Denmark of Luck, video was viewed.

David Whelan read the resolves of the Resolution of Care of Creation. The resolution was approved: 301/8.

Bishop Laurie introduced the Constitutional Changes in the bylaws to bring to the attention of the Assembly the intentional work needed to become a more inclusive and diverse church. The bylaw changes are:

S10.01.02. Conferences shall nominate at least one person from their constituent congregations for each respective position to the Synod Council, to be elected by the Synod Assembly for a three-year term; the conference representative may be re-elected once. Additional nominations may be made from the floor for all elections. Each conference representative shall be nominated by the conferences, and shall be elected by the Synod Assembly to the Synod Council to a three-year term and may be reelected once. The Youth organization shall nominate two representatives to be elected by the Synod Assembly to staggered two-year terms and may be reelected once. The Synod Nominating Committee shall comply with the age and diversity goals of S6.04 and S6.04.01 The Synod Nominating Committee shall nominate three persons of color or language other than English from the Synod at large, one clergy, one lay female, and one lay male to be elected by the Synod Assembly to a three year term and may be reelected once. The Synod Council shall see that approximately one third be elected year. Should a vacancy occur between meetings of the Synod Assembly the Synod Council shall appoint a person to fill the vacancy and complete the unexpired term. S10.01.04. The Synod Council shall have the authority to elect to the Synod Council from the Synod at large the necessary number of minority persons to achieve the minority goal consistent with S10.01. The Synod council shall have this authority until the Synod has opportunity to establish its long-term plan as outlined in S6.04.A87 The synod council oversee the formation and evaluation of the synod's Racial Equity Action plan. See the synod website.

The above Constitutional Changes approved: 287/17.

Video of the Synod Minister Reports were viewed.

David Whelan read the **Gender Justice Resolution**. The paragraph, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, was amended to read: that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin develop or provide training materials for the

synod staff, candidacy committee, call committees, councils, and congregations that address the topic of equality in compensation and benefits for all rostered and lay administrative staff and support staff positions;

The question was called the motion to vote was affirmative. The Synod Youth Board led in prayer. **The Gender Justice Resolution was approved as amended: 309/5.**

Bishop Laurie led the Assembly into Plenary 5. A video report from Portico was viewed. The refrain of the theme of the Assembly was repeated. Bishop Laurie yielded the chair to Al Arndt for the **Resolution to receive Joy Lutheran of Centuria. The congregation was received by a vote: 307/0.**

Bishop Laurie ended the Assembly with thanks to Trinity Lutheran Church in Eau Claire for hosting the Zoom format meeting; to Heather Day and Cindy Beck of help with technical issues; to the Rev. Elizabeth Bier, the Rev. Rachel Sieja, the Rev. Carolyn Staats, and Deacon Laura Ramlow for serving as the Tech Crew; to Leslie Frost for serving as Parliamentarian; to the five Bright Spot Award winners for inspiring us; and to guest speaker, Judith Roberts.

The Assembly closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Pastor Julie A. Brenden