

Assembly of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, ELCA – in person format
June 7-8, 2024

Two workshops are held prior to the first plenary session of the assembly on Friday, June 7. The first workshop held at 1:15 p.m. is “JUSTmove: Building an Anti-Racist Youth Group,” led by Joe Davis and David Scherzer. The second workshop held at 2:3 p.m. is “Journey Together” led by the Synod Youth Board, Outdoor Ministry, and Campus Ministry leaders.

The people of the assembly gathered to recognize and honor those celebrating 25th and 50th ordination anniversaries and retirement. The people of the assembly joined in worship at 4:00 p.m.

Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson called the assembly to order at 5:19 p.m. on Friday, June 7, 2024.

Plenary 1 began with the Opening of the Assembly. Those on the dais during the assembly are: Rev. Tanner Howard, of Pilgrim, Superior, the Synod Parliamentarian; Al Arndt of Luck Lutheran, Luck, the Vice President of the Synod and Chair of the Bishop Elections Committee; Rev. Julie Brenden, of Trinity, Hammond, the Secretary of the Synod; and Deacon Mary Ann Schwabe of Chicago, the ELCA Representative.

The Synod Staff were introduced.

Bishop Laurie welcomed those visiting and observing the proceedings of the assembly including Region 5 colleague bishops: Bishop Yehiel Curry, Metro Chicago Synod; Bishop Paul Erickson, Milwaukee Area Synod; and former Bishop Rick Hoyme, NW Synod of WI.

Bishop Laurie called attention to the Assembly Agenda on page 2 of the assembly booklet. A motion to approve the Assembly Agenda/seconded. No discussion. The motion passed. The Guidelines for the Assembly on pages 21-22 were called to the attention of the assembly. A motion to approve the Guidelines of the Assembly/seconded. No discussion. The motion passed.

Bishop Laurie noted that the minutes of the 2023 Assembly of the NW Synod of WI were reviewed and approved by the Synod Council and are posted on the Synod website. She reminded the assembly that resolutions submitted before April 16, 2024 are included in the Assembly Booklet on pages 27-30.

Bishop Laurie called on Deacon Mary Ann Schwabe to give instructions for the Election of a Synod Bishop, including describing the election as a call process. Schwabe outlined legal and illegal ballots, and how the election proceeds from the first ballot all the way through to the fifth ballot, if needed. Deacon Schwabe called on Al Arndt to give a credentials report. Registered voting members are as follows:

Rostered Leaders	88	
Retired Rostered	20	
Total Rostered	108	
Total Lay Leaders	260	(including 4 Youth)
<u>Total Voting Members</u>	<u>368</u>	(Total Rostered Leaders + Total Lay Leaders)

A quorum was declared with 368 voting members at 5:45 p.m.

Deacon Schwabe prepared the assembly for the first ballot. Al Arndt, Chair of the Election Committee and Vice President of the NW Synod of WI, gave instructions for the first ballot. Deacon Schwabe called for a video prayer led by former bishop, Rev. Duane Pederson, she called for a moment of prayer and reflection led by Rev. Katie Wagner, and called to the assembly to vote. Schwabe declared the first ballot closed at 5:57p.m. The results will be announced at 7:15 p.m.

Bishop Laurie thanked Deacon Schwabe for her leadership, the Bishop’s Election Committee, and the Synod Youth Board who are functioning as pages during the assembly. After some announcements, she called on Vicki Fankhauser to lead the table prayer for dinner.

The assembly reconvened at 7:15 p.m. Bishop Laurie asked for the results of the first ballot by giving the Chair to Deacon Schwabe. Schwabe called on Al Arndt to report the results. On Ballot 1, the election of bishop results are:

Total number of ballots cast: 351

Total number of legal ballots: 348

Total number of ballots required for election (75% of Total Legal): 261

The Rev. Martin Halom	119
The Rev. Diane House	65
The Rev. Elizabeth Bier	53
The Rev. Chad Anderson	35
The Rev. Judy Kincaid	32
The Rev. Karen Behling	21
The Rev. Kristina Weber	21
The Rev. Brad Dokken	1
The Rev. Josh Toufar	1

Deacon Schwabe declared there is no election.

Deacon Schwabe gave instructions for the Second Ballot scheduled for 9:00 a.m. Saturday morning. The seven candidates (plus ties) who received the greatest number of legal ballots will be on stage together and have two minutes each to respond to one question.

Deacon Schwabe introduced the Keynote Speaker for the evening, David Scherzer and Joe Davis of JUSTmoveculture.com. They led the assembly in one of their presentations on exploring our differences using music, dancing, poetry, and storytelling.

The assembly was reminded to reconvene in the morning at 8:30 a.m. for morning prayer and 9:00 a.m. for the second ballot. The people of the assembly were invited to join in Evening Prayer.

The people of the assembly gathered for Morning Prayer reflecting on the theme of the assembly, "Water Is Life." The assembly was reconvened at 9:01 a.m. on June 8, 2024 by Bishop Laurie. The first order of business was listening to the top candidate for bishop in a Q&A session. Sue Zahrbock of the Bishop's Election Committee led the questioning. Deacon Schwabe prepared the assembly for the Second Ballot. Deacon Schwabe called on Al Arndt to give a credentials report. Registered voting members are as follows:

Rostered Leaders	92
Retired Rostered	20
Total Rostered	112
Total Lay Leaders	270 (including 7 youth)
<u>Total Voting Members</u>	382 (Total Rostered Leaders + Total Lay Leaders)

There were 382 Voting Members as of Saturday morning.

Deacon Schwabe called on Madeline Leske-Oppedahl to lead the assembly in prayer and Rev. Katie Wagner to lead the assembly in song. Schwabe called for voting to begin. The second ballot closed at 9:35 a.m.

Bishop Laurie lifted up the theme, saying we are all formed by water. She called present and past synod staff to the dais for recognition while also giving gifts to each one of them. She gave her report, pages 14-17 in the assembly booklet, focusing on the assembly themes and resolutions over the years. She emphasized how the teaching resolutions have been enacted within congregations. She shared a video with messages for former bishops encouraging offerings for the Water Is Life Initiative. She talked about two congregations closing, and emphasized that though the buildings closed, the people continue their lives of faith in new ways and places. She noted the importance of Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAM's) in providing ministry leaders at 30 sites across the synod.

Bright Spot Award Winners were recognized:

Our Savior's Lutheran, Menomonie completed months of discussion and learning, a unanimous vote to become a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation at the last annual meeting.

Spirit Creek Lutheran, Black River Falls, changed their name, after consultation and education, no longer

using a name which was derogatory of Indigenous people.

Grace Lutheran, Eau Claire, for taking an educational wing and having it redeveloped for housing homeless Veterans.

The Congregations of Superior – Zion, Our Savior's, Concordia, and Pilgrim for shared ministry efforts, including supporting refugees from Afghanistan.

Two congregations for using solar arrays – Peace of Pigeon Falls, and Ezekiel of River Falls.

The next order of business was Resolution 1 – the Endowment Fund Appeal. Bishop Laurie called on Rev. David Whelan to read the resolves. The resolves are:

therefore be it RESOLVED, that individuals be encouraged to explore avenues of giving to the synod and discover ways they can leave a joyful legacy with a bequest through their will or estate plan, a gift from life insurance, an IRA, or other qualified retirement account, or a gift of real estate or other personal asset; and be it further RESOLVED, that congregational councils be encouraged to generously search ways to give a legacy gift of a tithe (or more) to the synod from special fund appeals, gifts from estates, offering for special celebrations like anniversaries; and be it further RESOLVED, that congregations, when they vote to move toward holy closure, consider a legacy gift to continue their ministry through the synod so that the next generation will come to know and love Jesus; and be it further RESOLVED, that congregations and individuals consider a gift to the synod endowment fund to provide lasting ministry that benefits generations to come.

The resolution was moved/seconded. There was some discussion further explaining how the Endowment fund benefits people and ministries. Prior to the vote, Luke Pederson, SAM at Trinity-Norden, Good Shepherd, led the assembly in prayer. The resolution was adopted.

Bishop Laurie called on Rev. Amy Heinz of Zion Lutheran, Stratford. The congregation received a large portion of land, which was sold and a portion of it, 10% which was \$ 15,000 was given to the NW Synod of WI, divided between the Endowment Fund and Water Is Life Initiative.

The Rev. David Whelan was called on to read the resolves of Resolution 2 – Supporting & Celebrating Children and Young Families. The resolves are:

therefore be it RESOLVED, that each congregation make every effort possible to support and celebrate children and young families being a full part of the life of a congregation, and be it further RESOLVED, that the Synod will provide intentional, safe, nurturing, and well-publicized child care services for all in-person events such as Fall Retreat, Winter Theological, and Synod Assembly. The Synod will provide access to space conducive for children's needs such as play and rest, during any session hours, beginning with Fall Retreat 2024, and be it further RESOLVED, that the Synod will facilitate the formation of a Children & Young Family Resource Committee of lay and rostered leaders to oversee the provision of child care and provide resourcing and consultation with congregations on providing safe and nurturing spaces for children & young families.

The resolution was moved/seconded. There was some discussion. Before the vote, Deacon Lidix Montoya, Synod Minister and Mission Developer for Neighbor to Neighbor Ministry, led the assembly in prayer. The resolution was adopted.

The next order of business was Ministry Partner reports: Neighbor to Neighbor given by Deacon Lidix Montoya. She stated, "You are Neighbor to Neighbor. Thank you for your generosity and participation." She cited her work included obtaining three Spanish speaking interns from UWEC for the Health Fair, work around the synod at different locations, forming a 12 member board of directors, overseeing the annual thrift sale which funds scholarships at UWEC and CVTC, and the growing monthly worship held at Immanuel, Eau Claire.

Jennifer Prinz introduced herself as our synod representative from Portico, and unique benefits entity which promotes health and wellness among rostered leaders. A report of Lutheran Campus Ministry given by Rev. Lori Ruge-Jones and Sarah McCullough inviting people of the synod to get to know their nearest campus ministry site, to pray for them, to volunteer, and tell congregational college students about the availability of this ministry.

Paul Peterson of Lutheran Social Services noted that annually 30,000 people are served in 72 counties of WI and upper MI. A donor from the Green Bay area is providing up to \$1,000,000 of matching funds for congregational support in 2024.

Bishop Laurie noted the Assembly Offering received at Friday's worship totaled about \$6,300. The Endowment Fund Appeal reached \$135,000 adding Zion's gift at the Assembly.

Bishop Laurie asked for the report of the second ballot. Deacon Schwabe called on Al Arndt to report the results. Arndt acknowledged and thanked the Bishop's Election Committee for their work. On Ballot 2, the results of the Election of Bishop are:

Total number of ballots cast:	362
Total number of legal ballots:	362
Total number of ballots required for election (75% of Total Legal):	272

The Rev. Martin Halom	159
The Rev. Diane House	56
The Rev. Karen Behling	45
The Rev. Elizabeth Bier	34
The Rev. Chad Anderson	28
The Rev. Judy Kincaid	24
The Rev. Kristina Weber	16

Deacon Schwabe declared there is no election. The following candidates will appear on the third ballot: Halom, House, Behling, Bier and Anderson. They will appear on the stage and each have two minutes to answer one question. The Chair was returned to Bishop Laurie. The assembly viewed a video report from Rear Admiral Peter Muschinske, a member of the synod council and the highest-ranking chaplain in the U.S. Navy.

Bishop Laurie gave the Chair to Deacon Schwabe for the next round of questions for the nominees for bishop. Sue Zahrbock led the questioning. Deacon Schwabe called for a Credentials Report from Al Arndt at 11:45 a.m.

Registered voting members are as follows:

Rostered Leaders	92	
Retired Rostered	21	
Total Rostered	113	
Total Lay Leaders	270	(including 7 youth)
<u>Total Voting Members</u>	383	(Total Rostered Leaders + Total Lay Leaders)

There were 383 Voting Members as of 11:45 a.m. Arndt read the instructions for Ballot 3. The ballots were distributed. Gabi Amble, a member of the Synod Youth Board led the assembly in prayer. The Rev. Katie Wagner led the assembly in song. The voting began, and was closed at 11:56 a.m. Results of the ballot are expected at 1:15 p.m. The assembly sang the Table Grace and recessed for lunch.

Bishop Laurie called the assembly to order at 1:15 p.m. She gave the Chair to Deacon Schwabe. She called on Al Arndt for the results of Ballot 3:

Total number of ballots cast:	367
Total number of legal ballots:	366
Total number of ballots required for election (2/3 of Total Legal):	246

The Rev. Martin Halom	211
The Rev. Karen Behling	56
The Rev. Diane House	49
The Rev. Elizabeth Bier	26
The Rev. Chad Anderson	24

Deacon Schwabe declared there was no election. The following candidates will appear on the fourth ballot: Halom, Behling, and House. The three candidates will now be sequestered. One at a time, each candidate was

brought to the podium to answer three questions. Sue Zahrbock led the questioning. Deacon Schwabe called for an updated Credentials report from Al Arndt at 1:44 p.m.

Rostered Leaders	93	
Retired Rostered	21	
Total Rostered	114	
Total Lay Leaders	270	(including 7 youth)
<u>Total Voting Members</u>	384	(Total Rostered Leaders + Total Lay Leaders)

There were 384 Voting Members at 1:44 p.m. The ballots were distributed. Eric Klein, Executive Director of Luther Park Bible Camp led the assembly in prayer. Rev. Katie Wagner led the assembly in song. The assembly voted, Schwabe declared voting closed at 1:53 p.m.

Bishop Laurie invited Deacon Mary Ann Schwabe to give the Report of the ELCA. She is the ELCA Executive for Synod Relations. Schwabe thanked the Synod for \$432,806 in Mission Support Offerings in 2023. She noted that the ELCA World Hunger Appeal received \$20,201,732 from the whole church with NW Synod of WI giving \$346,591; and Lutheran Disaster Response received \$13,698,753 from the whole church with NW Synod of WI giving \$119,146. She thanked the people of the Synod for their generosity. She reported on the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church which has held 60 listening sessions, taken an online survey, and will provide a report in 2025. She ended by noting that the largest ELCA event is the Youth Gathering this summer.

Joan Moe was invited to give the synod Women of the ELCA report. She noted the use of Katie's Fund, with some funds going to the Malawi Clean water initiative. She encouraged congregations to continue a relationship with WELCA, even if groups don't meet monthly, by identifying one person as a communications contact and another as a treasurer.

Gabi Amble, a member of the Synod Youth Board led their report. The Youth Board is excited about how God is showing up and they believe God is calling them to be courageous. They encouraged congregations to think about youth who might serve on the SYB, and to call forth inclusive, kind and authentic youth.

Bible Camp Directors Eric Klein of Luther Park and Suzi Orlapp of Lake Wapogasset gave a report on behalf of all four camps. They encouraged congregations to send every child so that they experience camp. They encourage kids to work at camp because many who work at camp later become Rostered Leaders in the church.

Bishop Laurie called the forward the Conference Deans, introduced them, and sent them to the Assembly floor to gather in a Noisy Offering to benefit the Malawi wells, Neighbor to Neighbor, and the Endowment Fund.

Bishop Laurie called the assembly to turn to pages 25-26 for Synod Elections. The positions for Synod Council and Synod Consultation Committee are all unopposed. She called for a vote by consensus. There was a motion/second. The assembly voted to elect all unopposed for Council and Consultation Committee. Those elected from the Conferences for Synod Council include:

Rev. Laurie Kenyon Woods – Apple River	Rev. Sara Feld – Heart of the North
Kaj Peterson – Chequamegon	Mary Trettin – Lake Superior
Jacob Gapko – Chippewa Valley	Kim Warren – St. Croix Valley
Nancy Quarberg – Dairyland	Rev. Julie Brenden – Secretary

Those elected from the Conferences for Synod Consultation Committee include:

Sam Campeau – Apple River	Rev. Michael Sparby – Heart of the North
Irene Villareal – Chequamegon	Kandee Rosburg – Lake Superior
Rev. Brad Peterson – Chippewa Valley	Dan Bensen – St. Croix Valley
Rev. Jennifer Hatleli – Dairyland	Rev. Al Aakre – St. Crois Valley

Bishop Laurie called for a vote on the positions for Churchwide Assembly Voting Members which were unopposed to be by consensus. There was a motion/seconded. The assembly voted to elect all unopposed for Churchwide Assembly. They include rostered leaders and lay leaders respectively:

Deacon Jodi Lorenz and Karalyn Littlefield – Apple River
Rev. Katie Anderson and Shelby Niskanen – Chequamegon
Rev. Jennifer Hatleli and Nancy Quarberg – Dairyland
Rev. Tiffany Chipman and Ted Hakala – Heart of the North
Rev. Katie Wagner and Mary Trettin – Lake Superior
And lay leaders from the following:
Mike Hutlett and Heather Day – Chippewa Valley
Eric Klein – St. Croix Valley

The St. Croix Valley Conference rostered candidates was contested, and ballots were passed out. The assembly voted with results to be counted and announced later.

The Rev. David Whelan was called on to read the resolve of Resolution 3 – the 2025 Minimum Standards for Compensation and Benefits. The resolution was moved and seconded for approval by Synod Council action. Bishop Laurie called for the vote. The Resolution passed.

The Rev. David Whelan was called on to read the resolve of Resolution 4 – the Operating Mission Plan for the synod. The resolution was moved and seconded. Ted Hakala gave comments on the mission plan, noting it is a lean and mean mission plan. He also noted that income has not decreased. Adyson L’Heureax was invited forward to pray. The assembly approved the resolution.

Bishop Laurie expressed thanks for the partnership ministries. She called on Michelle Pride to report as the Synod Hunger Advocate. Pride encouraged congregations to find ways to reach out in their community. She noted a goal from the 2021 Justice and Joy Assembly of the synod was to raise \$1 million dollars for hunger by June 2024. The synod surpassed the goal, raising \$1,135,661. She thanked everyone for their generosity.

Luke Peterson, SAM and chair of Care of Creation, noted the number of Green Teams in congregations is increasing. He noted the synod partnership in implementing the Eco Faith Summit 2024. He told everyone that small beginnings, when given time to take root, began to thrive.

Bishop Laurie called for the results of the fourth ballot. Schwabe called on Al Arndt for the results.

Total number of ballots cast:	354
Total number of legal ballots:	354
Total number of ballots required for election (2/3 of Total Legal):	213

The Rev. Martin Halom	241
The Rev. Karen Behling	57
The Rev. Diane House	56

Schwabe declared the Rev. Maritn Halom bishop elect. Bishop Laurie invited Bishop Elect Halom to address the assembly.

Bishop Laurie called forward Dale Kringle, chair of Racial Justice group, to report. He encouraged people to read the Just Love – Just Act newsletter; the group provided a worship resource on synod website; supported the N2N Healthcare events and worship. He noted they provide Pulpit Supply – Dale, Michelle Pride, Lidixe Montoya, and Sara Bishop.

The assembly received a report on Malawi, led by Deacon Laura Ramlow, including a video greeting. She noted how the country struggles with climate change, which leads to economic crisis. The church in Malawi is still joy filled and practicing generous hospitality.

Bishop Laurie called the Synod Staff up to thank them.

The results of the contested election for Churchwide Assembly Rostered Voting Members of St. Croix Valley Conference are:

Rev. Ben Nelson – 107

Rev. Lucas Ladnier – 98

Rev. Kristen Kellaheer 88.

Nelson is the elected voting member.

Bishop Laurie declared the Assembly closed at 3:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Julie A. Brenden