

# Minutes of the 2023 East Central Synod of Wisconsin Synod Assembly

*First English Lutheran Church, Appleton, WI  
To Hear the Word of God and Share in the Lord's Supper  
May 20, 2023*

## **Welcome Information**

Bishop Anne Edison Albright opened the assembly at 8:04 AM. Prayer was led for the other synods also gathering this weekend. Bishop led opening litany.

## **Land Acknowledgment**

Pastor Paul Johnson of Lutheran Church of the Wilderness led the assembly in the land acknowledgment, confession, and commitment of the East-Central Synod of Wisconsin to the Ho - Chunk, Menomonie, Ojibwe and Potawatomi peoples.

## **Welcome from First English**

First English Lead Pastor Mary Bauer welcomed the assembly and provided hospitality details.

## **Introductions**

Bishop Anne introduced the Assembly Chaplain Pastor Lois Graper of The United Lutheran Parish. Pastor Graper was called upon to lead prayers throughout the assembly.

Bishop Anne introduced and welcomed the Ecumenical guests and visitors of the assembly. Reverend Keith Fry who serves as Executive for Administration in the Office of the Secretary for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The Right Reverend Matthew Gunter, the bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac; The Reverend Park Hunter, the North East District Superintendent of the Wisconsin Conference of the United Methodist Church and the Most Reverend David Ricken, Bishop of the Diocese of Green Bay. The assembly also gave thanks for the Transitional General Presbyter of the Winnebago Presbytery, the Reverend Dave Colby who will be providing a greeting during the assembly.

## **Dwelling in the word**

Pastor Dara Clifford led the assembly in the text of Luke 24:28 - 35 and invited the assembly to pick out what stood out to them from the text and how it speaks to them today. This was followed by the assembly singing All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly ELW #461.

## **Plenary 1**

**SA23.05.20.**

Bishop Anne called Plenary Session 1 to order at 8:29 AM. “We are a duly constituted assembly of this synod with 276 voting members registered for the assembly, 68% of whom are lay and 32% are pastors or deacons” Details of how to vote and speak at the assembly were given at this time. A practice vote was held. *Is cold pizza a delicious breakfast option? Voting was close, so the credentials and election committee practiced counting. 129 votes in favor, 101 against.*

Point of order was made: don't applaud for the results of a vote.

Vice President of the Synod Nancy Schanke provided the credentials report and made a motion to adopt the agenda.

**Credentials report:** We have 252 voting members as of 8:40 AM.

**Action 1: Adoption of the Agenda**

A motion to adopt the proposed agenda was moved and seconded. The vote was conducted with green and red cards provided in the registration packet. Motion passed.

**Action 2: Standing Rules of Assembly**

A motion to adopt the standing rules of the assembly was moved and seconded. The vote was conducted with green and red cards provided in the registration packet. Motion passed

**Nominations for Synod Positions**

**For position #1, Synod Council, Rostered Minister, Green Bay Conference, 3-year term:**

Reverend Peter Mannoja and  
Reverend Heather Yerion-Keck

No further nominations were received from the floor and the position was closed.

**For position #2, Synod Council, Rostered Minister, Oshkosh Conference, 3-year term:**

Reverend Crystal Lee and  
Reverend Kimberly Stowell

No further nominations were received from the floor and the position was closed.

**For position #3, Synod Council, Rostered Minister, Shawano Conference, 3-year term:**

Reverend Paul Johnson

No further nominations were received from the floor and the position was closed.

**For position #4, Synod Council, Lay Person, Shawano Conference, 3-year term**

No further nominations were received from the floor and the position was closed. Synod council will appoint someone to fill the vacancy.

**For position #5, Committee on Discipline,, Lay Person, Green Bay Conference, 6-year term:**

Paula VanderGrinten

No further nominations were received from the flood and the position was closed.

**For position #6, Committee on Discipline, Lay Person,, Tomorrow River Conference, 6-year term:**

David Leder and Mark Lee

No further nominations were received from the flood and the position was closed.

**For position #7, Committee on Discipline, Lay Person, Wisconsin River Valley Conference, 6-year term:** No further nominations were received from the flood and the position was closed. Synod council will appoint someone to fill the vacancy.

**For position #8, Consultation Committee, Lay Person, Appleton Conference, 6-year term:**No further nominations were received from the flood and the position was closed. Synod council will appoint someone to fill the vacancy.

**For position #9, Consultation Committee, Lay Person, Oshkosh Conference, 6-year term:**

Pam Pfaff has been nominated.

No further nominations were received from the flood and the position was closed

**For position #10, Consultation Committee, Lay Person, Shawano Conference, 6-year term:**

No further nominations were received from the flood and the position was closed. Synod council will appoint someone to fill the vacancy.

**For position #11, Consultation Committee, Lay Person, Tomorrow River Conference, 6-year term:**

Connie Eisch has been nominated.

No further nominations were received from the flood and the position was closed

**For position #12, Consultation Committee, Lay Person, Wisconsin River Valley Conference, 6-year term:** No further nominations were received from the flood and the position was closed. Synod council will appoint someone to fill the vacancy. Nominations were received and closed at 8:50 AM.

**Introduction to Staff of East Central Synod of Wisconsin**

Bishop Anne introduced the staff of the East Central Synod of Wisconsin.

**Stretch Break led by Pastor Asher O' Callaghan**

**Report of the Bishop - Bishop Anne Edison - Albright**

Bishop Anne discussed what she is looking forward to in the ministry of ECSW. Bishop is looking forward to ministries that are working outward. The new ways that congregations are working with each other and beyond. To strengthen and grow cohorts and teams within the synod. How do we support each other to make ministry less lonely and more joyful? BETA test for support. Growing stewardship and generosity for mission support. Ended with a prayer from ELW.

### **Report of the Vice President - Nancy Schanke**

Nancy reported on how the synod is being Christ in the world, on her Churchwide Assembly experience, the importance of Sabbath months, and an update on the sale of the Synod Office Building which has an accepted offer. Nancy thanked the Synod Council. Nancy ended with "For Such a Time as This" from the hymnbook, All Creation Sings.

### **ARISE Campaign Reflections**

Bishop Anne introduced Tom and Nancy Schuerman Co- Chairs of the ARISE campaign. Tom and Nancy gave reflections of the ARISE campaign. The campaign was launched with 1.5 million dollar goal. As of March 2023, \$375,000 has been pledged. In March 2023 the representatives of the campaign committee and Synod staff met to review the accomplishments of the campaign and to prioritize the goals for the future. The three goals and identified amounts are Goal 1 Optimizing Technology \$100,000 Goal 2 Youth Ministry \$100,00 and Goal 3 Stewardship \$45,000.

### **Greetings from Churchwide & Report of Our Denomination, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

Vice President Nancy Schanke introduced The Reverend Keith Fry, the executive for administration in the Office of the Secretary in the churchwide organization to give the Report of Our Denomination. Reverend Fry thanked the synod and its congregations for \$38,727,566 in mission support from the churchwide organization, specifically the ECSW which was responsible for \$586,396 of that mission support. In 2022 Lutheran Disaster Response raised \$23,349,632 and this synod's contribution was \$272,094 much of this went to the efforts of helping Ukraine. ELCA World Hunger donations \$19,194,022, this synod raised \$315,963. For Missionaries' support \$1,861,762, this synod donated \$62,172, these funds went to 131 missionary households, including 24 new missionaries, who served in 54 countries around the world. First Young Adults in Global Mission since 2019, \$645,763 in 2022 24 volunteers served in six country programs. 37 new applicants have been placed for 2023- 2024. Fund for Leaders \$3,062,418, supported around 300 applicants, more than any previous year, our synod has five of these leaders. The International Leaders program gives 200 scholarships each year, \$615,766 was raised for International Women Leaders. There are over 500 Federal Chaplains. New Stars and Explorations in 2022 there were 311 Active new start ministries. Upcoming Events - Rostered Ministers Gathering July 17 - 20, 2023 Phoenix, Arizona. Created to Be 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering July 16 - 20, 2024. Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church first meeting will be July 13 - 15th, asking for prayers for this body in preparation for a report to the 2025 churchwide assembly.

A video greeting “Together We are Called” from presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton of Churchwide.

### **Hymn A Mighty Fortress is Our God - Stanza 1**

#### **Reflection, Greeting, and Prayer - Bishop Gunter of Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac**

Pastor Dara Clifford introduced Rt. Reverend Matthew Gunter the Eighth Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac. Bishop Gunter talked about the dangers of loneliness, divisiveness, and the things that tear at belonging. We cannot say to anyone “we need you not” We can only be human together, we are interdependent. We can be the menders that fix torn things. Closed with prayer.

### **Bishop Anne declared assembly is in recess from 10:15 - 10:45**

### **Plenary 2**

**Bishop Anne called the assembly back to order at 10:45 AM.**

### **Hymn A Mighty Fortress is Our God - Verse 2**

**Pastor Lois led a prayer for Plenary 2.**

#### **Reflection, Greetings, and Prayer - The Most Reverend David L. Ricken, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay**

Maximus Cabey introduced The Most Reverend David L. Ricken, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay who shared a word about John 17:11 and unity. We can be unified through the holy spirit.

#### **Video Greeting from the President and CEO of Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, Hector Colon.**

**Credential Report by Nancy Schanke** We have 258 voting members as of 10:45 AM.

#### **Ratification of Constitution Changes**

Bishop Anne gave the motion to adopt the Synod Constitution as amended comes to us from the synod council and therefore does not need a second. The vote was conducted with green and red cards provided in the registration packet. Motion approved, the Synod constitution is adopted.

#### **Crossway Camping Ministries**

Bishop Anne welcomed Pastor Rich Block, President of the Board of Directors for Crossways. This ministry has three camps: Imago Dei Village, near Clintonville, Pine Lake, south of Waupaca,

and Waypost, near Bevent. Pastor Block shared camp updates, including that they sold three acres of land for \$146,000 to help address the budget shortfall of the Crossways camp. Pastor Rich Block provided other updates of the actions of the Crossways board, the ways Crossways can help people, asked for prayers for the Crossway Camping Ministries and gave thanks to everyone who supports them and their ministry.

### **Compensation Guidelines**

Bishop Anne invited members of the Compensation Guideline Committee, Pastor Jon Gallatin and Pastor Kemp Jones to be ready to answer questions. Motion from the synod council to approve the 2024 Compensation Guidelines. No second is needed because it comes from the council.

A discussion against the compensation guidelines proposed addressing concerns that the congregation members would not be able to meet the guidelines suggested. Vote was conducted with green and red cards provided in the registration packet. The 2024 Guidelines were approved.

### **Greeting from Linwood Community - Fox Valley Lutheran Homes**

Bishop Anne introduced Lynn Ann Clausing Rusch Executive Director of Linwood Community, a Ministry of Fox Valley Lutheran Homes in Appleton. The Linwood Community Mission is to “To Provide a Faith-based, Inclusive and Safe Independent Living Experience for Moderate Income Adults.

### **Prayer was led by Pastor Lois Graper before the Elections**

### **Elections of Synod Positions**

The following positions have one nomination for each open position.

For position #3 **Rev Paul Johnson**

For position #5 **Paula VanderGrinten**

For position #9 **Pam Pfaff**

For position #11 **Connie Eisch**

With no objections, all positions were elected.

The following positions received no nominations and therefore will be appointed by synod council.

Position #4

Position #7

Position #8

Position #10

Position #12

For Position #1, the nominees are

**Rev. Peter Mannoja**  
**Rev. Heather Yerion-Keck**

Voting was done through yellow slips in the voting envelopes.

For Position #2, the nominees are

**Rev. Crystal Lee**  
**Rev. Kimberly Stowell**

Voting was done through pink slips in the voting envelopes.

For Position #6, the nominees are

**David Leder**  
**Mark Lee**

Voting was done through blue slips in the voting envelopes.  
Bishop will announce the results in Plenary 4.

### **Liturgy to Receive Christ Our Savior, Oshkosh | Certificate**

Bishop Anne invited Pastor Connie Weiss from Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church in Oshkosh, as well as others, present from Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church to join her at the baptismal font for the liturgy to receive the new congregation into the synod.

### **Lunch Announcements and Prayer**

**Bishop declared the assembly to be in recess until 1:15 PM**

### **Plenary 3**

**Bishop called the assembly back into session at 1:15 PM**

### **Hymn A Mighty Fortress is Our God Stanza 3**

### **Reflection, Greeting, and Prayer The Reverend M. Park Hunter, NorthEast District Superintendent of the Wisconsin Conference of The United Methodist Church**

Pastor Jenn Pockat introduced the Reverend M. Park Hunter who gave a message on John 17:11 focusing on giving unlimited grace, and working on being a welcoming church to all. Sang "Are We Yet Alive" Charles Wesley (1749). Love one another as Jesus loves us. Left assembly with parting note "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, as long as ever you can" - John Wesley

### **Land Acknowledgement Video**

### **Credentials Report**

We have 258 voting members as of 1:15 PM.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Bishop introduced John Herder who gave the treasurer report. The treasurer's report contains information regarding, the Operational Results for Fiscal Year 2022, the Endowment Fund, the Synod Office Building, and the 2022 Audit. Synod Fiscal Year 2022 Expenses were about 102% of our Fiscal Year 2022 Funds Available, a \$31,000 deficit. Our asset base decreased over the 2022 Fiscal Year. In addition to the small loss from operations, our invested assets were adversely impacted by the downturn in the Equity Markets. The audit results have not been finalized yet, but will be available to everyone once published.

### **Presentation of Budget**

The Budget comes to the assembly recommended for adoption by the synod council. Since it is recommended by the synod council, no second is needed, and the budget is properly before the assembly. Vote was conducted with green and red cards provided in the registration packet. The **2024 Budget** has been adopted.

### **Endowment Protocols**

John Herder makes a motion to "approve the revised endowment protocols, as amended following publication in the Assembly Book." Because this motion comes to us from synod council, it does not require a second.

Voting was conducted with green and red cards provided in the registration packet. The **Endowment Protocols were adopted.**

At 2:05 Bishop Anne has called for the assembly to be in recess until 3:00 PM

### **Plenary 4**

**Bishop Anne called the assembly into session at 3:00 PM**

**A Mighty Fortress Is Our God ELW #504 (stanza 4)**

**Pastor Asher O'Callaghan gave a message on behalf of The Reverend David Colby, Transitional General Presbyter for the Winnebago Presbytery**

### **Credentials Report**

We have 258 voting members as of 3:00 PM.

### **Conclude elections**

With thanks to our Nomination Committee and our Credential and Elections Committee, we'll conclude our elections for synod leadership positions.

For Position #1 **Rev. Peter Mannoja** has been elected.



For Position #2, **Rev. Crystal Lee** has been elected.

For Position #6 **David Leder** has been elected.

## **Resolutions**

Bishop Anne invited Pastor Alan Schaffmeyer of the Resolutions Committee to present the resolutions

### **Resolution #1 Resolution to Encourage Land Acknowledgements**

Has been moved by synod council and does not need a second.

Discussion: Three different voting members spoke in favor of the resolution. The first speaker said that the panel discussion on Land Acknowledgement showed the importance of these. It encourages congregations to create their own Land Acknowledgement, it is aligned with the churchwide movement. The second was in favor because we need to acknowledge the actual history of events, and this is the first step of correcting it. The third said it is more than just a land acknowledgment, it is an acknowledgement of the culture of the peoples as well. Vote was conducted with green and red cards provided in the registration packet. Resolution #1 has passed.

### **Resolution # 2: Educate Members to be Hunger Advocates**

Has been moved by synod council and does not need a second.

Discussion: One member spoke in favor because they collected 100 signatures today. Many of us are passionate about feeding the hungry but it is not enough. It is important to also use our voices to help those who are in places that are not being as helpful as we are.

Vote was conducted with green and red cards provided in the registration packet. Resolution #2 has passed.

### **Resolution # 3 - Action to End Racism**

Has been moved by synod council and does not need a second.

Discussion: one member who spoke in favor of this was written on behalf of women of the synod who made this one of their goals in response to the work of the St. John Lutheran Men's Anti Racist group.

Vote was conducted with green and red cards provided in the registration packet. Resolution #3 has passed.

**Offering** - The Bishop's Resource Fund is used to provide for special training and support of lay and rostered leaders, as well as an emergency fund when leaders are in need. 50% of the assembly offering will also go to Dar al-Kalima University in Bethlehem, Palestine, in honor of The Rev. Dr. Niveen Sarras.

### **Racial Equity Report**

Pastor Niveen Sarras gave a report of the work of the team. Mission statement "In response to God's creative love for all and call to live justly, The Racial Equity Team educates, equips, and empowers Individuals and congregations to act boldly To transform our ministries and communities By working for racial justice" The Racial Equity team has provided several opportunities for our synod to learn about racism and promote equity. Examples are a virtual meeting to discuss the ELCA statement on *Now is the Time: A Study of the ELCA Declaration to People of African Descent* and offered a virtual Panel Discussion on Land Acknowledgement. The racial equity team offered an anti-racism workshop orchestrated by two distinguished speakers.

### **Land Acknowledgement Report**

Deacon Hugh Kress was invited to share the Land Acknowledge report. The important takeaway from this report was calling attention to resolution one. This resolution asks us to do two things. The first is to have congregations have Land Acknowledgement actions, not a simple one-and-done like an announcement and mounting of a plaque, but an on-going part of rituals and routines. The second is to contribute to the summary report of Land Acknowledgement activities that will be compiled and submitted at next year's assembly. The calling is for each congregation to become aware of the resources that our synod and national church have to assist us in walking a path that leads to understanding and meaningful relationships with our indigenous siblings in the world given by the Creator.

### **Gift to Executive Council Member Leaving | Pr Karen Jewell-vanBuskirk**

The assembly celebrated Pastor Karen with a gift and applause.

### **2024 Assembly Date and Location**

The theme of the 2024 Assembly is the next baptismal promise, "To Proclaim the Good News of God in Christ through Word and Deed" at the Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel & Convention Center in Oshkosh, May 17th and 18th, 2024. Mark your calendars.

### **Thanksgiving for Ecumenical Guests | Thank yous | Thanksgiving for Ministry**

### **Video: Congregation Anniversaries**

### **Video: Ordination Anniversary Trivia**

**Plenary Session #4 ended by Bishop Anne at 3:45**

**4:15 Worship with Holy Communion**

**Installation of Synod Council | Sending Liturgy and Closing of Assembly**