

Minutes of the Montana Synod Assembly



“Meet the Future Boldly”
May 31 – June 2, 2019
Best Western Heritage Inn,
Great Falls, Montana

Friday, May 31, 2019

Plenary I: 3-5 PM

OPENING OF THE ASSEMBLY

Bishop Jessica Crist opened the 32nd Montana Synod Assembly at 3:00 p.m. with an opening litany.

CALL TO ORDER

Bishop Crist called the Assembly to order.

Adopt Agenda with Privilege of the Chair to Adjust

Motion

Second: Adopt the agenda with privilege of chair to adjust

SA.19.05.01

VOTE: ADOPT THE AGENDA WITH PRIVILEGE OF CHAIR TO ADJUST

Adoption of the Rules of the Assembly

Motion

Second: Adopt the rules of the Assembly

SA.19.05.02

VOTE: ADOPT THE RULES OF THE ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCTIONS

The following people were introduced to the assembly:

Synod Council Officers – Vice President Dick Deschamps, Treasurer Sue Ost and Secretary Amanda Liggett.

Staff – Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger – DEM, Susan Hedahl, Colter McCarty, Pastor Jason Asselstine – Associate to the Bishop, and Jenny Kunka – Director of NRIT.

Parliamentarian – Pastor Lowell Anderson

Churchwide Representative – Rev. Philip Hirsch, ELCA Domestic Mission

ELCA Region 1 Church Council Representative – John Lohrmann

Special Guests – Bishop of the Cape Orange Diocese of South Africa Motsamai Zachariah Manong, Executive Secretary Rev. Adam Tlaisego Khunou, Bishop Shelley Wickstrom, Bishop Kristen Kuempel, Pastor Laurie Jungling.

Thanks – Bishop Crist offered thanks to Pastor Julie Long for organizing worship during the assembly. She was assisted by Tod Trimble, Deacon Allen Sasser-Goehner, Rev. Melanie Martin-Dent, and Rev. Carol Seilhymmer. Annela Rova, who did the synod summaries.

New to Montana Synod – Steve Olson (retired), Sean Janssen, Donna Putney, Stephanie White, Julia Seymour, Kapp Johnson (retired), John Allen (retired), Janelle Hennager, Wenda Fry, Paul Anderson, Lou Peters (intern), Anne Bjorkland (intern), Kimberly Peterson and Sarah Slicher.

CREDENTIALS REPORT

Neal Wedum presented the Credentials Report:

Clergy: 97

Lay: 171

Total Voting Members: 268

Visitors: 67

Total in Attendance: 335

Motion

Second: Receive the Credentials Report

SA.19.05.03

VOTE: RECEIVE THE CREDENTIALS REPORT

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Pastor Amanda Liggett presented the secretary's report, directing the assembly to her printed report in the reports book. She shared a letter of greeting from the Allegheny Synod.

The minutes of the 2018 Montana Synod Assembly were presented. The minutes are available on the assembly website and links have been sent out in the synod weekly newsletter.

Motion

Second: Adopt the minutes of the 2018 Montana Synod Assembly

SA.19.05.04

VOTE: ADOPT THE MINUTES OF THE 2018 MONTANA SYNOD ASSEMBLY

TREASURER'S REPORT AND PRESENTATION OF THE 2020 BUDGET

Treasurer Sue Ost presented the treasurer's Report.

Thank you to all the congregations in the Montana Synod for your steadfast and generous support of your Synod and the ELCA. I am honored to serve as your Treasurer, and to report to you on the financial condition of the Synod.

For several years, Mission Support – that is, the undesignated financial gifts from your congregations to the Montana Synod – have been declining. Three years ago, in 2015, Mission Support was over \$1,061,000. In 2018, that number was \$975,000 – a decline of about \$86,000, and about 95% of our 2019 budgeted amount of \$1,030,000. Gifts to our Ministry Partners were reduced by 5% and the rest of the shortfall was covered with reduced spending on supplies and travel, and with cash reserves. Our constitution requires that we keep a cash reserve for situations like this. After some long discussions, the Synod Council agreed to revise the 2019 budget to decrease the expected Mission Support, and we have decreased it again in the 2020 budget.

The first three months of 2019 are the lowest since 2001. If this trend continues through this year, the total will be only about \$900,000 and even those adjustments will not cover the decrease in giving. A letter explaining this situation was recently sent to pastors and congregational presidents.

All the Synods of Region I are audited annually by an independent accounting firm, and I participate in those audits through email and conference calls. The Montana Synod is financially healthy and has again received a clean audit report. We thank Alyce Bakker and Karen Dickon of the Region I Financial Services Office for their work on our behalf, in keeping good records, providing regular reports and any financial information and analysis that we request.

A year in our new building has been such a blessing! Many different groups have used the conference room for meetings, and the Synod staff and Synod Council are grateful for the functional space we have. Donations continue to come in toward the mortgage payments. Mission Support dollars are not being used to make the building payments, and there is currently enough in reserve to make the payments for a year. This is due to the continued support and generosity of these donors and it is appreciated very much. The Bishop has asked that financial gifts in her honor be designated to help pay the mortgage. What a blessing that will be. Thank you, Bishop Crist.

Thank you for entrusting me with this challenging, yet rewarding, job.

Motion

Second: Receive the Treasurer's Report

SA.19.05.05

VOTE: RECEIVE THE TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Sue Ost presented the 2020 budget to the Assembly in narrative form.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2020 BUDGET

As congregations of the Montana Synod, we have come together for our Synod Assembly. A big part of the Assembly is sharing our stories with each other.

Every congregation and every individual has a story to tell – a story about how we respond in thanksgiving to the call to serve God’s people in so many ways. Our Synod’s budget can also tell a story of our mission and ministry. For several years, I have presented the proposed budget to the Assembly in the form of a narrative, or a series of stories. The idea is to show specific examples of how the Synod’s funds are spent, and how those examples fit in with our five Synod benchmarks. You, as representatives of your congregations, can see the many and various ministries and activities that are supported by your generous gifts, and you can take those stories home to share with others.

In the development of the 2020 budget, the Executive Committee and the Synod Council estimated that the congregations’ Mission Support will be \$1,000,000. This is compared to \$1,026,000 budgeted for 2019 as I mentioned in my Treasurer’s report. Our Churchwide Support must also be lower, in order to create a balanced budget with less income. As we focus on our Synod Benchmarks, the needs of our Synod change and evolve, and we strive to meet those needs with the resources that are available to us.

Since we’ll be electing a new bishop this weekend, and we are unsure of the staffing changes that might also occur, the Compensation section of the budget was not changed from 2019. The Synod Council will review this area at our September meeting. Once we have the facts, we can estimate these amounts very closely. Most other areas remain basically the same in this lower budget.

Meet the Future Boldly

Campus Ministry is so important to a variety of people. Teenagers who are away from home for the first time, young adults who are making choices about their lives and priorities, non-traditional students, single parents, those with questions about their faith, and students from diverse ethnic backgrounds —these are the people on our college campuses. Lutheran Campus Ministry connects with them using worship, counseling, programs, retreats, social activities, and service projects. Both U of M and MSU have vibrant programs – check out their newsletters, websites, and display booths to find out more about what they are doing. Students involved in campus ministry may become involved in outdoor ministries and post-college service programs like Young Adults in Global Mission and Lutheran Volunteer Corps. It helps young adults contemplate questions of vocation—whether in rostered ministry or in another field and challenges adults, as well, to share their faith with young adults away from home. Campus ministry meets the future boldly.

Serve the World, Especially the Poor and Those in Need

A significant portion of our Mission Support is passed on to the wider church, through our commitment to the ELCA Churchwide organization. The ELCA has so many ministries and does so much, it's hard for me to choose just a couple of examples! Global missions, ecumenical partnerships, Outdoor Ministry, Campus Ministry, World Hunger, Immigration Services, and Disaster Response are only a few of the ministries within our church. We have resources available to us, such as downloadable materials for children's ministry, stewardship, and education.

The Montana Synod receives some direct benefits from the ELCA, too. Our Director of Evangelical Mission, Pastor Peggy Paugh-Leuzinger, is an employee of the ELCA. Her compensation and most travel costs are covered by them. We receive grants. One example is a grant received to explore a new ministry on the Fort Peck reservation – Spirit of Life Bike Shop. Hunger grants from Churchwide benefit many in Montana and northern Wyoming, including a grant providing emergency food on the Rocky Boy's Reservation. At the end of each month, when other resources have been depleted, families can pick up a basket of food.

Ministry with vulnerable children is one of the most important things any church can do. Intermountain Children's Home was founded in 1909 and today, in addition to its residential program, provides community services that reach more than 800 children and families weekly, combatting emotional trauma, mental health issues, and substance use among children.

Lutheran Social Services walks with women who experience unplanned pregnancies. Whether they choose to relinquish a child for adoption or to parent the child, or something in-between, Lutheran Social Services is there to support them, as well as supporting adoptive families.

These are all examples of how we serve some of those in our world who are most in need.

Deepen Faith and Witness

As Lutherans we support pre-schools and day-cares, Confirmation classes and Bible camps. Our Synod supports ELCA colleges and seminaries. Luther Seminary of St. Paul, Minnesota, and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary of Berkeley, California agree that Synod support is integral to the financial health of the seminaries. Our financial commitment to them supports faculty and students – students who become our pastors. The seminaries work to provide education that's available to place-bound students, such as on-line courses. They work to provide scholarships that help reduce student debt, and they need our help.

In First Call Theological Education, pastors in the Montana Synod in the first three years of call get to know one another. They share challenges, frustrations, ideas, and opportunities. They meet Synod staff, and they meet with experienced pastors who can be mentors. This program helps new pastors succeed.

Northern Rockies Institute of Theology provides continuing education and lifelong learning to pastors and lay people in the Montana Synod. NRIT now has on-line courses, in addition to face-to-face.

One way that lay people can both learn and teach is through the Lay Pastoral Associates Training program. The two-year curriculum provides instruction in preaching, worship, prayer, and pastoral care. At the completion of the program, LPAs serve congregations in a variety of ways.

Education deepens faith and witness.

Promote Unity

The Montana Association of Christians and the Wyoming Interfaith Network are both organizations that focus on spiritual growth, education, and social justice. Both organizations are working to overcome differences between Christian denominations so that we may work together for the betterment of the world.

Synod Secretary Pastor Amanda Liggett is the ELCA's representative to the United Methodist Council of Bishops Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships. Your Mission Support helps to fund these organizations that promote unity.

Strengthen Congregations

Bishop consults with congregations in difficult times and provides leadership and focus to encourage us as we do God's work in our various ways. Associate to the Bishop Jason Asselstine provides leadership in the areas of mobility, First Call Theological Education, the LPA program and youth ministry. DEM Peggy Paugh-Leuzinger serves on behalf of the ELCA as a part of the Montana Synod staff in areas of stewardship, mission support, ministry development/redevelopment, and with the Native American accompaniment team. Susan Hedahl and Colter McCarty provide a variety of support in countless ways. We might be here all day if I listed the various duties that these two dedicated employees perform!

Our Candidacy process recruits and supports candidates for ordained ministry and the lay rosters. Some of our pastoral candidates are right out of college, and some are second or third career. The Montana Synod Candidacy process supports the congregations of the synod through the candidacy, assignment and mobility processes.

In our Synod, we have three congregations that we specifically support financially: Freedom in Christ Prison Congregation, Spirit of Life at the Fort Peck Adult Correctional Facility, and Our Saviour's Lutheran on the Rocky Boy Reservation.

According to the Freedom in Christ website, when faith communities work with inmates while in prison, and during their transition back into communities, the inmates who participate have a much higher chance of staying out of prison in the future. They are better prepared for the transition and have a support network that really does help them succeed.

Pastor Rob Nedbalek and a team of volunteers offer incarcerated individuals access to God's grace, God's love, God's forgiveness through worship, Bible study, baptism, and caring hearts.

Pastor Christine Holler-Dinsmore has worked with the incarcerated on the Fort Peck Reservation for several years. Spirit of Life serves both men and women, with worship, Bible Study, and social time. This ministry helps them forgive and be forgiven as they serve their sentences and transition back into the community.

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church has served the people of the Rocky Boy Reservation since 1920. It's one of 22 Native congregations in the ELCA. In addition to regular worship, this congregation offers many ministries that reach out into the community – a sewing group and classes, layette ministry, children's Christmas gift give-away, a thrift store, and a large facility that is used for many different needs in the community. Servant groups come from near and far to help maintain and upgrade the structures. Pastor Linda Webster organizes cross-cultural experiences that help educate seminarians, pastors, and lay people about the Native cultures.

I hope this presentation has shown how the Synod's funds are used to promote and achieve our benchmarks. If you weren't able to attend the Budget session earlier today, I am available to answer your detailed questions throughout the Assembly –just catch up to me during the break times or leave a message at the Assembly Office. Thank you.

FIRST BALLOT FOR BISHOP

Rev. Philip Hirsch began by describing what it means to be a bishop of this church. He explained the ecclesiastical ballot. VP Dick Deschamps led the assembly in prayer. The first ballot was distributed and collected by the election assistants.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Bishop Jessica Crist presented her report to the assembly.

Report of the Bishop to the Montana Synod Assembly, May 31, 2019

I have been thinking about last things more and more these last few months, especially as I prepare for this last Synod Assembly and this last Bishop's Report. So I want to talk with you a bit about the last year—since we met in Assembly in 2018, and then I want to take a quick look back at the last 12 years, and then orient us to the future.

This past year was our first year in the new Synod House. And it has been good. Very good. If you haven't been by to see it, drop by tomorrow over the lunch hour and you can have a tour. 1221 24th St. South, just off of 10th Avenue South, in the shadow of the hospital. Really. It is quite fine. Each staff member has adequate space for optimal functioning. It is all on one level so that it is ADA compliant. It is green, with all sorts of energy-saving features. And it is tech- ready. Staff are in closer communication with each other.

We can host in-person meetings. Our conference room has served the Synod Council, the First Call Theological Education; LPA training; Candidacy Committee; hunger grant reviewers, the FLBC Board, and church council retreats. It is an inviting space that enables us to have hybrid meetings—some there in person, some there on the screen.

I said that our building is tech-ready, and it is. We have saved thousands of dollars of travel expenses by holding meetings by zoom, skype and telephone. And we have saved hundreds of hours of travel time. Does that mean we sit in our offices and don't go anywhere? Of course not. We are still out on the road weekly, preaching, meeting with people, working with congregations. But we steward our time and our travel budget. The new building makes it easy to do, with good connections, large screens and adequate space. And, more and more of our congregations have the technology and the knowhow to connect comfortably for a short meeting.

I can remember the early years of trying to connect electronically. In one instance I was meeting with a call committee by Skype, and they were all standing huddled around the secretary's desk peering into the computer one by one. In another I was skyping with the congregation, and while they saw my face up in the center of the sanctuary, all I could see was the back of their heads. It made conversation a challenge. But we are way beyond that now.

One more thing about the Synod House. We have a chapel. It is small. It is quiet. It is a place for contemplation and prayer, a little retreat. And you know, people walk and drive by our building and say, "Wow." That is beautiful. And it is. And it doesn't belong to the staff. It belongs to the Synod, to you. So go take a look. And go back to your congregation and tell them about it, and make a commitment to help pay down the mortgage. A number of people worked very hard to create this building. Now it is up to the rest of us to help pay for it.

Before I go any further, I want to acknowledge a loss. This past year brought us the untimely death of Tom Gossack, our Synod Vice President. Tom was a member of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Great Falls and a faithful Synod Council member. When the previous Vice President resigned suddenly, Tom graciously stepped up, and led us through the building process. Tom was a real promoter of our Synod Benchmarks--every Synod Council meeting he asked members to tell a story about one of the benchmarks. Tom was diagnosed with cancer late in the fall, and died in January, much too young. We remember Tom and are grateful for his service. And we are grateful that Bozeman

Synod Council member Dick Deschamps was willing to step up to become Vice President on short notice.

So we've had this year in the new digs. And we've been able to do some new things. We have established a new LPA program, LPA 2.0, for LPAs who are being asked to do more than they originally signed on for. LPA 2.0 is designed to give additional resources, both theological and practical, to Synodically Authorized Ministers. Do you know what they are? They are lay people who serve in the pastoral role on a long-term basis. LPA 2.0 assists them. So we have 3 different LPA classes going concurrently—the LPA at the Ursuline Center, LPA East, meeting in Glendive these last 2 years, and LPA 2.0. Associate to the Bishop Jason Asselstine works with the LPA classes, recruiting faculty and encouraging participants. We have a new LPA East class starting up in the fall in Sidney. Check out the LPA table or contact our office next week. Also, there is a lunch on the Sun Terrace for people who want to learn more about the program. It is tomorrow at lunchtime.

We've started to look at ministries in a new way this past year. Director for Evangelical Mission Peggy Paugh Leuzinger has begun working with the Vitality Task Force to envision ministry possibilities. Pastor Greg Holler-Dinsmore's post-retirement project, Spirit of Life Bike Shop, has been recognized as a ministry worthy of support. And a group is looking at an alternative ministry for Missoula.

When I preach in a congregation, I bring them greetings from the 125+ congregations and ministries of the Montana, and I name the 4 corners of the Synod—Libby in the Northwest, Sheridan, Wyoming in the Southeast, Westby in the Northeast, and Hamilton in the Southwest. And what's amazing is that there is almost always someone in the congregation where I am preaching who is from one of those corners. And what it also illustrates is that we have a really big synod geographically, and we have some very different demographics.

Some parts of our Synod are growing. Bozeman is one of the fastest growing cities in the country. Some parts of our Synod are not growing. Some are shrinking. Our rural areas, in particular, have experienced population decline. Where there was once a town and a church every ten miles across the hi-line, there's been consolidation. There aren't as many people, so the communities can no longer sustain an independent school system, a stand-alone church.

We are responding to the challenges of supply and demand in new and creative ways. Some congregations are yoking with others, either Lutheran or our full-communion partners. Some are employing part-time retired pastors. Some are raising up pastoral candidates through TEEM, where they can serve a congregation while simultaneously going to seminary. Some are making use of LPA as Synodically Authorized Ministers. Here in the west we are on the cutting edge of the church of the future. We are finding ways to continue to serve God's people, whether they are in fast-growing urban environments or shrinking rural communities. All are God's children. All are in need of God's love and care. And it is our job to provide that.

In this past year, our synod was invited to send a delegation to the 80th anniversary celebration of the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church. It is a sign of growing trust and mutuality that we were invited not only to watch this time, but to participate. Our three LPAs who were part of the delegation—Alex Tooley, Dave Scholten, Cynthia Thomas—were invited to speak about their experiences as LPA's and then to answer questions from Bolivian Lutherans, comparing experiences with lay ministry.

The pastors who were in our group—Steve Van Gilder, Stacey Siebrasse, and Lindean Barnett Christenson, were invited to serve communion at the 80th Anniversary Celebration. And I was asked to preach at the service. This was a new level of trust and accompaniment. And when we returned home, Pastor Presidente Emilio joined one of our LPA classes by Skype, just to see how we do things.

We are delighted to have our South African partners here with us at this Assembly. The Cape Orange Diocese is our other companion synod, and we are looking forward to showing out guests around the synod, and plan future activities. Through our companion synods we learn that the world is bigger than us.

We are church, not only for our own sake, but also for the sake of the world. This past year both the Montana and the Wyoming legislatures were in session, and people of faith were present, advocating for the poor and the disenfranchised. Our MAC Day at the Legislature in January was both a show of support and thanks to legislators for their service, but also an opportunity for participants to learn more about issues and to talk with their representatives.

MAC continues to work in coalition with others to defeat the death penalty, replacing it with life in prison without parole. Each year more states across the country take this step, and join the rest of the civilized world in outlawing state-sanctioned murder. It is an ongoing stain on us that we cling to the death penalty. It is a legislative issue and a moral issue.

This year the ELCA has a Churchwide Assembly in August. At the end of this meeting we will bless voting members and send them on their way. They will have the opportunity to elect a Presiding Bishop and a Secretary, adopt a Social Statement on Faith, Sexism and Women: A Lutheran Call to Action; adopt a Declaration of Interreligious Commitment, and much more.

One of my great regrets is that although the Churchwide Assembly adopted the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery three years ago, the church has not moved forward on any of its promises made in that resolution. The Doctrine of Discovery, in case that is not a familiar term to you, is based on a papal bull that declared that Christians have not only a right, but also a responsibility to take over lands inhabited by non-Christians, and to convert them by force, if need be.

This papal bull is the justification for the European conquest of the Americas and was even adopted into US jurisprudence in the 1800s. As recently as the last 20 years, it was

used to decide a land claim against a tribe. Nobody is suggesting that we can undo history, that the Europeans and other immigrants can go back to where their ancestors came from and leave the lands to their original inhabitants. But it is important to understand what happened, and how there is an ongoing effect that still affects people today.

If I may use an example from our companion synod in South Africa—Apartheid is officially outlawed—has been for a generation. But the economic effects of apartheid live on. The economic and social effects of the doctrine of discovery live on in indigenous people in this country, in this hemisphere. The ELCA Churchwide Assembly promised to engage this issue in some specific ways. And it simply has not been done. It is a deep disappointment, and I consider it the responsibility of synods like ours, who are in Indian country, to remind our ELCA brothers and sisters of this unfinished business. In preparing this report, I looked at my reports to the synod assembly for the last 11 years. It was fun. A lot of it I had forgotten. But really, a lot has happened in the last 12 years. Let me just go over some of the highlights.

Bricks and mortar: I've already described the benefits of our new building. Twelve years ago we were in a building that was built the year I graduated from college. It was too small, it was not ADA compliant, and it was configured all wrong for our 21st century needs. Thanks to the hard work of a lot of people, we now have something that is not only adequate for today, it has flexibility built in as needs might change.

Congregations: In the last 12 years we have welcomed 4 new congregations—not a single one a traditional new start. All Saints in Big Sky is a combined Lutheran-Episcopal congregation serving that growing resort community. Freedom of Christ is a congregation within the Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge. New Hope is a congregation of people who wanted to stay in the ELCA after their congregation left in 2010. And Spirit of Life is an ever-adapting ministry on the Fort Peck Reservation. In the last 12 years we have had 21 congregations leave the ELCA. And we've had half a dozen close because there weren't enough people left to sustain ministry. We've also had small rural congregations going strong, not daunted by small numbers.

Ecumenical relationships in the last 12 years: We already had 5 full communion agreements 12 years ago—Presbyterians, UCC, RCA, Episcopal, Moravian. In 2009 we entered into full communion with the United Methodists. We have been able to share ministries and pastors with each of our full communion partners (with the exception of RCA and Moravians) in the last 10 years. It just makes sense. We work together ecumenically so that small communities can have at least 1 mainline Protestant ministry. These relationships are valuable.

We have also commemorated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in the last years, and had some significant work with Roman Catholics. In 2010, we celebrated jointly the 10th anniversary of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. And then in 2012, Bishop Warfel and I did a series of road trips across the eastern part of the synod to have Lutheran-Catholic conversations in 5 communities. In 2017, we culminated the

Reformation anniversary with a festive Vespers at the Helena Cathedral. Who would have thought?

Institutionally, we worked closely with the Episcopalians, sharing both a convocation one year, and our Pastoral Conference at Chico another year.

And we reaffirmed our 1995 Agreement with the Montana Association of Jewish Communities.

Indigenous Neighbors: In the last 12 years we have made some needed steps forward in relating to our indigenous neighbors. In 2010, we adopted an apology to the tribes, at our synod assembly, and then committed to taking it in person to the various tribes. We are only part-way through that process, and I lift it up as an ongoing commitment. I thank the many congregation and individuals who have continued to offer support to our long-standing congregation at Our Saviour's Rocky Boy. And I am pleased that we have now established an intentional ministry presence on the Fort Peck Reservation in the form of Spirit of Life. Thanks to all who have contribute to that ministry, particularly with socks and prayer shawls and prayers.

I was pleased that our synod overwhelmingly repudiated the doctrine of discovery and sent it on the churchwide assembly. I think you have heard my disappointment that, despite overwhelming votes in favor at the churchwide assembly, nothing has been done. This is unfinished business.

Synod Identity: When I began as bishop I listed five priorities:

- Practicing Word and Sacrament faithfully
- Open and Hospitable, Ecumenically and Interfaith
- Ownership of the church
- Savor learning
- Looking outward, not inward.

I thought those were grand. And I still do. But we moved on. The next year churchwide, at our request, did a listening post around the Synod to hear what people were thinking. People were pleased with synod staff and congregations, with the LPA program and the candidacy process. Frustrations included distance, the economy, isolation. And then everything fell apart—the economy tanked and the church was in turmoil over human sexuality.

Coming out of that turmoil, the Synod Council established 5 benchmarks by which to set our compass.

- Meet the future boldly.
- Serve the world, especially the poor and those in need.
- Deepen faith and witness.
- Promote unity.
- Support congregations.

Global Relationships: In the last dozen years the Young Adults in Global Mission program has blossomed. We have had probably two dozen YAGMs from our Synod (and some LVC's as well). Some of our fine younger pastors were YAGMs. Still other returning YAGMs are finding ways to serve the world, especially the poor and those in need.

I've already mentioned our companion synods. In the last 12 years there have been 3 bishops in the Cape Orange Diocese. We are delighted that Bishop Manong is able to be here with us today, along with Pastor Khunou. And we are pleased that Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp has a counselor this summer from the Cape Orange Diocese. This has long been one of our goals—to be able to connect our young people.

In the last 12 years the Bolivian Church has also had 3 Pastor Presidentes. Pastor German was elected in April. Ten years ago work was completed on the Obispa Jessica Crist retreat center, and we dedicated its official opening. Working together, we have found points of common ground in lay ministry.

And we have learned about accompaniment and applied it everywhere.

Structural and Institutional Changes: The church has changed in this way in the last 12 years.

LSS is no longer a free-standing ministry with the LCMS. It is now completely under the umbrella of St. John's, with financial assistance from the synod. LCMS has pulled out completely. LSS is now called St. John's United Family Care.

The Region 1 Regional Governing Council is no more. You will see that when we vote on constitutional changes on Sunday. We are removing elections for it from our documents, since it doesn't exist.

And MAC and WAC (Montana Association of Churches and Wyoming Association of Churches) have changed not only in name, but in orientation. MAC is now Montana Association of Christians, and WAC has become WIN, Wyoming Interfaith network.

Leaders: Long time treasurer Harold Spilde retired. Vice President Tom Gossack died after a brief illness this winter, and former Vice Presidents Jake Block and Elsie Redlin also died. Dave Peters, John Allen and George Karres, all former synod staff members, have retired.

Lay Ministry: 12 years ago there was a MAC Lay Ministry program that dovetailed with our LPA program. Although it was started primarily for denominations who didn't have enough people for a robust stand-alone program, we were heavily involved in it as the Montana Synod, both in teaching, and in LPAs taking the classes. This ecumenical program is no more. But as I described earlier, our Montana Synod LPA program is thriving. And we even had visitors from a neighboring synod come to see how we do it, so they could set up a similar program.

Office Operations: Twelve years ago we were still doing paper newsletters. Each month we would recruit a cadre of volunteers to fold and label and sort the newsletters so we could mail them out. Gradually we started emailing them, and gradually the number of paper newsletters shrank as the number of emails grew.

Then we moved from monthly to weekly news. And we no longer mail out any newsletters.

We have a staff person for technology—not just to help us in our office with all our tech needs, but to help you in your congregations and ministries to help you with whatever it is that you need.

As an office we do more and more online, and we are increasingly green. And you help us with that. Every time you read the synod news online, every time you read your assembly documents online, we don't have to print it out. Our use of paper has plummeted in the last 12 years.

Ministries: Looking at other ministries in the last 12 years, I can say this:

Campus ministry still exists, but it has changed.

Camps still exist, but they have changed.

NRIT still exists, but it has changed.

Youth ministry still exists, but it has changed.

WELCA still exists, but it has changed.

Social ministry organizations still exist, but they have changed.

Changes on a Churchwide Level:

Lay rostered ministers, formerly AIMs and Diaconal Ministers, are now Deacons
People whose orientation is same-sex can marry and be pastors in our church.

We have, in the last 12 years, adopted 4 social statements, and are on the verge of a fifth.

Adopted were: Education, Human Sexuality, Genetics; Criminal Justice. Under consideration is Faith, Sexism and Justice: A Lutheran Call to Action.

We have, in the last 12 years, also adopted 4 Social Messages: Disabilities, Mental Illness, Gender-based Violence, Human Rights.

Looking Ahead:

We are, 31 years into this iteration of church, a church looking into the future, a church ready to change, a church focused for mission. We are called to meet the future boldly. Although I will no longer be in leadership, I have some hopes for the church.

Do you know that 2020 is the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women in the Lutheran Church in the US? In 1970, first the LCA, then the ALC changed their constituting documents to allow women to become pastors. It is my hope that the Montana Synod will join other synods across the church in celebrating the 50th anniversary of women's ordination on the year that, incidentally, will also be the 100th

anniversary of women's suffrage in the United States. I am actually chairing the ELCA's task force on the 50th anniversary and will continue that work beyond my term as bishop. ELCA Lutherans are the largest mainline Protestant group in the state of Montana. Our voice matters. I hope that Lutherans will continue to work for justice in Montana and Wyoming and the US and the world, and that we will not be afraid to make our voices heard. It is my hope that we will be able to get beyond partisan divisiveness and speak out consistently for the poor, the disadvantaged, those without a voice.

I hope that the Montana Synod will continue to take risks for the sake of the Gospel, that we will not be afraid to sponsor new ministries to get out the incredible good news of Jesus Christ out to a world hungry for good news. I hope that we will continue to see the value of our interconnectedness. I hope that we will make accompaniment our way of being in the world.

We have some unfinished business. As an overwhelmingly white church in Indian country, we have some unfinished business—coming to terms with what our European ancestors did to the indigenous people.

As an overwhelmingly aging church, we have to find ways to listen deeply to younger people, to accept that they, too, are made in the image of God, and that their idea of church may not be ours, but that it is still valid.

As an overwhelmingly immigrant church, I hope we will open our hearts to the world's refugees, who, like many of our ancestors, are seeking a place to live in safety, to raise their families and contribute to the community that welcomes them in.

As a denomination that is in decline numerically, like every other denomination, we need to let go of institutional self-preservation and become church for the sake of the world. God is bigger than any of our institutions, and we need to believe that with all our hearts. Because it is true.

Conclusion: I thank you for the opportunity to be your bishop these past 12 years. It has been exhilarating, exhausting, edifying, electrifying, challenging, gratifying and so much more. It has been an honor to serve.

And I want to thank the staff who have been part of this ministry: Susan Hedahl, Executive Assistant, Colter McCarty, Administrator for Information Technology, Pastor Jason Asselstine, Associate to the Bishop; Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger, Director for Evangelical Mission; Jenny Kunka, NRIT Director.
Thanks to you all.

Jessica Crist, Bishop

REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

John Sheppard presented the slate of candidates for positions other than bishop. Alex Tooley led the assembly in prayer. The ballot was distributed and collected by the election assistants.

Synod Council

Dick Deschamps – Vice President

Sue Ost – Treasurer

Rev. Doris Tollefson – Fort Peck Cluster

Rev. Jessie Obrecht or Rev. Natalie Faltin – Golden Triangle Cluster

Robin Matthews or Lorrie Vennes – Great Divide Cluster

Mary Hutchinson – Shepherd Cluster

Evan Ceaicovschi – Youth

Consultation Committee

Clayton Schenck – Lay Male

Shawna Michelena – Lay Female

Committee on Discipline

Rev. Mark Taylor

Rev. Chris Flohr

Rev. Tammy Bull

Rev. Audrey Rydbom

Larry Jensen

Tana Lambert

Kogodus Board

Craig Ekegran

CLOSING PRAYER

Robin Matthews led the assembly in prayer.

The Assembly was recessed for dinner.

Plenary II: 7-8 PM

Credentials Report

Jessie Obrecht presented the Credentials Report:

Clergy: 99

Lay: 178

Total Voting Members: 277

Visitors: 75

Total in Attendance: 352

REPORT OF THE FIRST BALLOT FOR BISHOP

Rev. Philip Hirsch presented the report of the first ballot for bishop.

Votes cast 242

Illegal Votes 1

Legal 241

Number needed for election 181
Election completed? NO

Those receiving votes were:

Jason Asselstine – 68
Darren Paulson – 19
Steve Van Gilder – 18
Peggy Paugh Leuzinger – 17
Phil Wold – 15
Laurie Jungling – 11
Peter Erickson – 9
Arne Bergland – 7
John Lund – 7
Miriam Schmidt – 7
Scott Hedegaard – 6
Tom Schlotterback – 6
Andy Wendle – 4
Kathy Larson Aasheim – 3
Steve Loy – 3
Mark Taylor – 3
Brad Ulgenes – 3
James Darchuk – 2
Mark Donald – 2
Ken DuVal – 2
Chris Flohr – 2
Dan Heskett – 2
Seth Nelson – 2
Doug Peterson – 2
Steve Schmidt – 2
Paul Seastrand – 2
John Allen – 1
Lowell Anderson – 1
Lindean Barnett-Christianson – 1
Joel Brosten – 1
Tim Christensen -1
Darius Larson – 1
Amanda Liggett – 1
Melanie Martin-Dent – 1
Mark Morgenstern – 1
Michael O’Haren – 1
Tony Rhoades – 1
Martin Russell – 1
Stacey Siebrasse – 1
Elizabeth Sillerrud – 1
Tim Tostengard – 1

Sandy Van Zyle – 1
Kendra Wilde – 1

REPORT OF THE FIRST BALLOT FOR POSITIONS OTHER THAN BISHOP

Allen Hansen presented the report of the ballot for positions other than bishop.

Synod Council

Dick Deschamps – Vice President
Sue Ost – Treasurer
Rev. Doris Tollefson – Fort Peck Cluster
Rev. Jessie Obrecht – Golden Triangle Cluster
Robin Matthews – Great Divide Cluster
Mary Hutchinson – Shepherd Cluster
Evan Ceaicovschi – Youth

Consultation Committee

Clayton Schenck – Lay Male
Shawna Michelena – Lay Female

Committee on Discipline

Rev. Mark Taylor
Rev. Chris Flohr
Rev. Tammy Bull
Rev. Audrey Rydbom
Larry Jensen
Tana Lambert

Kogodus Board

Craig Ekegran

RECOGNITIONS OF MILESTONES IN MINISTRY

Deacons

Fifteenth Anniversary

Robert Stuberg, Moshi, Tanzania

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary

Beverly Larson, Retired, Kalispell

Thirty-Fifth Anniversary

Mary Jones, Retired, Missoula

Pastors –

Fifth Anniversary

Rev. Christine Holler-Dinsmore, Wolf Point

Rev. Gretchen Wagner, Culbertson

Rev. Julie Long, Broadus

Rev. Seth Nelson, Ronan

Rev. Wade Brinkopf, Circle

Tenth Anniversary

Rev. Elizabeth Sillerud, Billings

Rev. Janet Young, Hot Springs

Fifteenth Anniversary

Rev. Carol Karres, Retired, Tucson, AZ

Rev. Jason Asselstine, Choteau/Great Falls

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary

Rev. Michael O'Hearn, Havre

Thirtieth Anniversary

Rev. Gregory Holler-Dinsmore, Retired, Wolf Point

Rev. Peggy Paugh-Leuzinger, Livingston/Great Falls

Thirty-Fifth Anniversary

Rev. Alan Baglien, Retired, Helena

Rev. Kenneth DuVall, Retired, Helena

Rev. Timothy Spring, Bozeman

Fortieth Anniversary

Bishop Jessica Crist, Great Falls

Rev. George Karres, Retired, Tucson, AZ

Rev. James Darchuk, Retired, Billings

Rev. Mark Morgenstern, Shepherd

Rev. Paul Balaban, Havre

Rev. Stephen Schmidt, Bozeman

Rev. Steven Nelson, Retired, Great Falls

Forty-Fifth Anniversary

Rev. Charles Sider, Retired, Billings

Rev. David Aaseng, Retired, Billings

Rev. Lorin Sanden, Retired, Bozeman

Fiftieth Anniversary

Rev. James Engh, Retired, Missoula

Rev. Neal Ruedisili, Retired, Helena

Rev. Robert Ohnstad, Retired, Clancy

Fifty-Fifth Anniversary

Rev. John Mattison, Retired, Boise, ID

Sixtieth Anniversary

Rev. Harold Everson, Retired, Billings

Congregations

100th Anniversary

Hope Lutheran Church, Bozeman, MT

First American Lutheran Church, Hardin, MT

Shields River Lutheran Church, Wilsall

The following were recognized upon their retirements:

Rev. Mark Taylor
Rev. Steve Paugh-Leuzinger
Rev. Roberta Pierce
Rev. Ellen Ayres
Rev. Kim Wilker
Rev. John Allen
Rev. Char Shmediskamp
Bishop Jessica Crist

The guests of the synod were recognized:

Rev. Philip Hirsch, ELCA Representative
Bishop Motsamai Manong, Cape Orange Diocese, South Africa
Rev. Adam Khunou, Cape Orange Diocese, South Africa
Bishop Shelley Wickstrom, Alaska Synod
Bishop Kristen Kuempel, Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod
John Lohrmann, ELCA Church Council, Walla Walla, Washington

The assembly was recessed for the evening.

OPENING EUCHARIST

Bishop Jessica Crist presided over the Opening Eucharist. Bishop Manong delivered the sermon.

Saturday, June 1, 2019

Voting members were treated to a buffet breakfast sponsored by Mission Investment Fund.

Plenary III: 8:30 AM – 12:30 PM

CREDENTIALS REPORT

Rev. Todd Wright presented the Credentials Report:

Clergy: 101

Lay: 183

Total Voting Members: 284

Visitors: 77

Total in Attendance: 361

SECOND BALLOT FOR BISHOP

Rev. Philip Hirsch conducted the second ballot. Pastor Amanda Liggett led the assembly in prayer. The second ballot was distributed and collected by the election assistants.

MORNING PRAYER

Morning prayer was led by Bishop Shelley Wickstrom. New graduates of the Lay Pastoral Associates program were recognized. Those recognized were: Eric Rydbom, Michelle L. Fuhrman, Cindy A. Linse, Laura Lee Ullrich, Carleen Gaub, Caryn Rein, Kelly Miller, Leah Juneau, and Lana Buerkle.

GREETINGS FROM ELCA CHURCH COUNCIL

John Lohrmann brought greetings from the ELCA Church Council. He will be finished with his term soon, to be replaced by one of our candidates to be elected at the churchwide assembly. The focus of the church council has been the goals set out in strategic plan of the ELCA “Future Directions: 2025”.

BIBLE STUDY

Rev. Dr. Laurie Jungling presented a study on the Parable of the Talents.

REPORT ON THE SECOND BALLOT FOR BISHOP

Rev. Philip Hirsch presented the report on the second ballot for bishop.

Number of Votes Cast: 275
Number of Illegal Votes Cast: 1
Number of Legal Votes Cast: 274
Number needed for election (75%): 206
Election Completed? NO

Jason Asselstine: 110
Darren Paulson: 44
Peggy Paugh Leuzinger: 31
Phil Wold: 20
Laurie Jungling: 37
Arne Bergland: 10
Scott Hedegaard: 14
Steve Loy: 4
Doug Peterson: 3
Martin Russell: 1

WORKSHOPS

The following workshops were offered for the assembly:

Understanding Trauma Across the Life Span – Jim FitzGerald, CEO of Intermountain

Confirmation @ Home – Rev. Dick Hardel

They are US! Extending Lutheran Welcome in Times of Great Changes – Wilmot Collins

Funding Ministries in the Future – Beth Adams, ELCA Foundation

Path to Wellness – Ingrid Roeder & Rev. Kris Mitzman

Recommended Proposed Social Statement: Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Lutheran Call to Action
– Trudi Schmidt and Gloria Lannen

Community Organizing Within Your Congregation – Rev. Stacey Siebrasse & Rev. Jayson Nicholson

Native Voices from the Fort Peck Reservation – Rev. Chris Holler-Dinsmore

Cape Orange Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa: A Conversation – Bishop Motsamai Manong & Pastor Adam Tlaisego Khunou

SPEECHES BY BISHOP’S CANDIDATES

The seven remaining candidates each gave a five-minute speech before the assembly. They were Jason Asselstine, Darren Paulson, Peggy Paugh-Leuzinger, Phil Wold, Laurie Jungling, Arne Bergland, and Scott Hedegaard.

THIRD BALLOT FOR BISHOP

Rev. Philip Hirsch conducted the third ballot. A member of the Synod Council led the assembly in prayer. The third ballot was distributed and collected by the election assistants.

The assembly was recessed for lunch.

HYMN SING

Pastor Julie Long, Tod Trimble, and Deacon Allen Sasser-Goehner re-gathered the assembly with hymn singing.

RESOLUTION OF COMMENDATION

Rev. Mark Ramseth presented a resolution commending Bishop Jessica Crist.

Whereas, Bishop Jessica Crist has served congregations and clergy as Bishop of the Montana Synod for 12 years, with her service now concluding in 2019;

Whereas, Bishop Crist was a principle voice in the formation of the ELCA’s defining of geographical synods in 1987 as a leader on the church Transition Team;

Whereas, Bishop Crist serves with distinction, with unique and particular care of congregations and congregational leadership – and with additional service in bold fashion for and to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;

Whereas, Bishop Crist has witnessed for all, careful and loving care for her family: Rhiannon, Raph and her spouse, Turner Graybill, while serving the call of faithful service to the church;

Whereas, a profound legacy for Bishop Crist is shared and remains with the Montana Synod, with a lasting emphasis on:

1. The pathway for women in service to the gospel in Montana;
2. Strong leadership in the discipline of ecumenical and interfaith relations, with special focus on the Jewish faith community and the Roman Catholic Church in a time of “The Joint Declaration on Justification” and the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation;
3. Movement toward the Native nations – with acknowledgments of her support of the congregations at Rocky and Fort Peck and other reservation communities – and, with Native people of Standing Rock. Bishop Crist invited Synod

commitment by the Synod resolution: “An Apology to the Tribes” – and the “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery,”

4. Bishop Crist was instrumental in holding forth the ministry of the Montana Association of Churches as this entity transitioned to the Montana Association of Christians;
5. Bishop Crist’s sharpening of the relationship with two companion synods;

Whereas, Bishop Crist has been a principle advocate in the movement of Churchwide for “Justice is not Just Us”;

Whereas, the teaching office of the Office of Bishop is sustained by Bishop Crist from her years as Director of the Northern Rockies Institute of Theology, and in her former service as Montana Synod Secretary;

Whereas, Bishop Crist took leadership in the fostering of the idea and completion of the Synod House which is a permanent sign of Montana Synod life and service;

Whereas, Bishop Crist constructed, with the Montana Synod Council, the *Montana Synod Strategic Benchmarks* for Synod identity and service to the world;

And, whereas, Bishop Crist provided for stability and safety with and in the Montana Synod through a period of challenge in the years 2008-2009 and following, much at her own personal and profession expense. In this time, Bishop Crist was defined in her commitment, leading the synod forward.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the Montana Synod, gathered in Assembly, May 30-June 2, 2019, offer acclamation and appreciation to Bishop Jessica Crist for lasting legacy and service. And, may this gathered body offer her hope for a generous future in new directions of leadership.

Motion

Second: To approve the Resolution of Commendation of Bishop Jessica Crist as presented.

SA.19.05.06

VOTE: TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION OF COMMENDATION OF BISHOP JESSICA CRIST AS PRESENTED.

Plenary IV: 1:45 – 5:30 PM

CREDENTIALS REPORT

Rev. Jessie Obrecht presented the Credentials Report:

Clergy: 103

Lay: 183

Total Voting Members: 286

Visitors: 77

Total in Attendance: 363

REPORT ON THE THIRD BALLOT FOR BISHOP

Rev. Philip Hirsch presented the report on the third ballot for bishop.

Number of votes cast: 279

Number of illegal votes cast: 0

Number of legal votes cast: 279

Needed for election (66%): 186

Election Completed: NO

Jason Asselstine – 94

Laurie Jungling – 59

Darren Paulson – 37

Peggy Paugh-Leuzinger – 34

Phil Wold – 26

Scott Hedegaard – 18

Arne Bergland – 11

The chair declares that there will be a fourth ballot with the top three names.

BISHOP'S CANDIDATES QUESTION AND ANSWER

The three remaining nominees, Jason Asselstine, Laurie Jungling and Darren Paulson, were asked a series of questions, with 90 seconds to answer each.

The questions were:

1. There is great diversity across Montana and Wyoming. How might you be attentive to the different identities of congregations, rural and urban?
2. What would you do to promote vitality in Montana and Wyoming Congregations?
3. What is your understanding of the church's place in society today?
4. The nominees were provided a list of the synod benchmarks, and they were invited to speak to one of their choosing.

FOURTH BALLOT FOR BISHOP

Rev. Philip Hirsch conducted the fourth ballot. John Sheppard led the assembly in prayer. The fourth ballot was distributed and collected by the election assistants.

GREETINGS FROM THE CAPE ORANGE DIOCESE

Pastor Adam Khunou brought greetings from the Cape Orange Diocese of South Africa. He related some of the political events of South Africa at this time. The theme of the assembly – meeting the future boldly – resonates with him. He encouraged people to embrace prayer and fasting as a practice to humble oneself and meet the future boldly.

Bishop Motsamai Manong brought greetings from the Cape Orange Diocese of South Africa.

OTHER BUSINESS

Resolution: Standing for Racial Justice and Cultural Competency in the Montana Synod

Rev. Tammy Bull presented the resolution on behalf of the resolutions committee. Rev. Stacey Siebrasse spoke in favor of the resolution as one of its authors.

An amendment was proposed to remove the phrase “skin color makes a difference and white people benefit from a privileged position” from the second whereas and the last statement. The proposed amendment was defeated.

Resolution: Standing for Racial Justice and Cultural Competency in the Montana Synod

Whereas: section 6.04.01 of the Montana Synod constitution states, “It is the goal of this synod that 10 percent of the membership of synod assemblies, councils, committees, boards and/or other organizational units be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English”; and

Whereas: the ELCA’s social statement, “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture” (1993), includes statements such as: “When we speak of racism as though it were a matter of personal attitudes only, we underestimate it”; and “We have only begun to realize the complexity of sin, which spreads like an infection through the entire social system”; and “What has been the case is still the case: skin color makes a difference and white people benefit from a privileged position”; and

Whereas: in June of 2010, the Montana Synod adopted an Apology to the Tribes of Montana that reads, “We ask for forgiveness, forgiveness for what we have done, and what we have failed to do. As a sign of our repentance and a desire to be reconciled, we pledge to walk with our brothers and sisters of the Tribal Nations”; and

Whereas: in June of 2016, the Montana Synod passed a memorial asking the Churchwide Assembly to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, a 15th-century papal bull declaring that any lands that were not populated by Christians were subject to being conquered. This doctrine, embedded into US law in the 19th century, continues to justify the treatment of indigenous people as less than fully human; and

Whereas: in August of 2016 the ELCA Churchwide Assembly passed a resolution repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery, pledging to “practice accompaniment with Native Peoples” into the future; and

Whereas: sections 5.01.A16 and 5.01.B16 of the ELCA Constitution declare that the ELCA has committed itself to being ethnically and racially diverse, mandating that each synod submit its goals, strategies, and progress toward its goals to the Church Council and appropriate church offices; and

Whereas: 26 years after “Freed in Christ” was approved, 9 years after the Montana Synod adopted the Apology to the Tribes, and 3 years after the Doctrine of Discovery was repudiated, racial injustice and violence still persist and our congregations remain intertwined in a network of racial disparity; and

Whereas: Scripture calls us, as part of our Christian response, to walk in solidarity with people of color because continuing in silence enables injustice and violence in our communities, our country, and our world; and

Whereas: congregations can be empowered to be a catalyst for addressing issues of racial injustice within their larger communities by engaging in such conversations about racism, racial disparities, and further commitments to racial justice and cultural competency; therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the 2019 Montana Synod Assembly direct the Montana Synod Council to form a Racial Justice and Cultural Competency Taskforce that will:

- assemble and provide resources, materials, and educational means for teaching cultural competency and the practice of racial accompaniment throughout our synod
- determine the amount of funds needed
- determine the means for raising funds; and be it further

RESOLVED: that each congregation and individual be encouraged to live out their baptismal covenant, finding ways to advocate for racial justice through word and deed; and be it finally

RESOLVED: that each congregation be invited to forward the name of a congregational liaison to the Racial Justice and Cultural Competency Taskforce by December 31, 2019.

Submitted by Rev. Stacey Siebrasse and Rev. John Lund

Motion

Second: Approve the Resolution *Standing for Racial Justice and Cultural Competency in the Montana Synod*.

SA.19.05.07

VOTE: APPROVE THE RESOLUTION *STANDING FOR RACIAL JUSTICE AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN THE MONTANA SYNOD*.

Resolution to “Care for Creation and Respond to Climate Change”

Rev. Tammy Bull presented the resolution on behalf of the resolutions committee. Rev. Eric Huseth spoke on behalf of the authors.

An amendment was proposed to remove the term “Climate Change” in the title and in the resolved for #2.

A second amendment was made to replace “Climate Change” with “changing climate” in the title and resolved #2. The amendment passed. It now reads: *Resolution to Care for Creation and Respond to Changing Climate* in the title, and in describing the name of the task force.

Discussion of the resolution was tabled.

FOURTH BALLOT FOR BISHOP X2

There was a problem with the printing of the fourth ballot, with some people getting one version and others another. The chair declared the ballot vacated and new ballots distributed and collected by the election assistants.

REPORT ON THE FOURTH BALLOT FOR BISHOP

Rev. Philip Hirsch presented the report on the fourth ballot for bishop.

Number of votes cast: 279

Number of illegal votes cast: 0

Number of legal votes cast: 279

Needed for election (60%): 168

Election completed: NO

Laurie Jungling: 109

Jason Asselstine: 105

Darren Paulson: 65

FIFTH BALLOT FOR BISHOP

Rev. Philip Hirsch conducted the fifth ballot. Allen Hanson led the assembly in prayer. The fifth ballot was distributed and collected by the election assistants.

The assembly was recessed for the rest of the day.

WORKSHOPS

Workshops were held throughout the afternoon. They were:

Peace in the Parish – John Munding

Ministry with Young Adults in Changing Times: Survey results, stories and reflection – Rev.

John Lund and Rev. Kathleen Larson

That it May Be Well with You – Rev. Dick Hardel

Practical Stewardship Help: Tools and resources for Congregations – Montana Synod

Stewardship Task Force

Lenten Evening Prayer – Rev. Seth Nelson

Wittenberg, Germany, 2019: Luther with 17 non-US Pastors – Rev. Gretchen Wagner

Toward a More Creative Prayer Life – Rev. Julia Seymour

Here We Stand: How Lutherans can respond to climate change in Montana – Rev. Eric Huseth & Abby Huseth

Drucker’s Five Most Important Questions You Can Ask Your Church – Rev. Kapp and Bonnie Johnson

Campus Ministry held a reception in the display area. Rev. Laurie Jungling was unofficially announced as having been elected bishop of the Montana Synod.

BANQUET:

The assembly representatives and their guests gathered for a banquet at 6:30 pm. The program was a thank you to and farewell to Bishop Crist with many speakers, gifts and tributes. A reception followed.

Sunday, June 2, 2019

Voting members were treated to a buffet breakfast sponsored by Concordia, Pacific Lutheran University and Portico.

MORNING PRAYER

Morning prayer was led by Bishop Kristen Kuempel, assisted by Rev. Andrew Wendle.

Plenary V: 9:00-10:30 AM

CREDENTIALS REPORT

There were no new registrations.

REPORT OF THE FIFTH BALLOT FOR BISHOP

Rev. Philip Hirsch presented the fifth ballot for bishop.

Number of votes cast: 281

Number of illegal votes cast: 0

Number of legal votes cast: 281

Number of votes needed for election on this ballot (50%): 141

Election Completed: YES

Laurie Jungling: 143

Jason Asselstine: 138

Bishop Crist declared Rev. Dr. Laurie Jungling to be the bishop elect of the Montana Synod.

Bishop Elect Jungling shared a few words with the assembly. She asked for support, prayers and guidance.

FLATHEAD LUTHERAN BIBLE CAMP

Margie Fiedler gave a report on how the camps and campus ministries work together to provide ministry to the young people of the synod. She also highlighted how they work with NRIT, the Native American Ministries, Mission Builders, Mission Investment Fund, World Hunger, YAGM, congregations, seminaries, and all the many ways that our ministries network with one another.

She then introduced Damian Kok of the Cape Orange Diocese of South Africa, who will spend the summer working at Flathead. He shared greetings and his excitement for the coming months.

REPORT OF THE CHURCHWIDE REPRESENTATIVE

Rev. Philip Hirsch, ELCA Domestic Mission, brought greetings from the churchwide expression of the ELCA. He shared a video from Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. He then highlighted some of what the ELCA has been up to in the world. He then highlighted the many ministries that are supported by our mission support and donations, as well as how the ELCA supports ministries right here in Montana and Wyoming. Lutheran Disaster Response sent a new solar generator to Puerto Rico and has used 11.5 million dollars in the past year alone to help people in distress. Help has been given to people all over the world (33 countries, and 33 emergencies in 19 states). Members and congregations of the Montana Synod donated almost \$200,000 to alleviate hunger last year. Our Saviour's Rocky Boy was a recipient of one of these grants. The Campaign for the ELCA has raised \$230 million, with almost \$250,000 coming from the Montana Synod. The new synodically authorized worshipping community in Missoula is one recipient of a grant from these funds. At the churchwide assembly in Milwaukee, there will be a bishop's election and election for secretary, which is open.

Rev. Hirsch shared troubling statistics about the decline of membership in the ELCA and across all mainline denominations, but asserted that we should have hope. He said, "We need to set the conditions right for growth." Examples of ways to set those conditions are our congregational vitality task force, mission developers, and the "Growing Young" study. Finally, he encouraged us in our Lay Pastoral Associates program, telling us how impressed he is. "It may have been born out of necessity, but I believe it is something that the whole church needs."

BUDGET 2020 VOTE

VP Dick Deschamps led the assembly in discussion of the proposed budget.

Adoption of the Budget for the MT Synod for 2020

Motion

Second: adopt the 2020 MT Synod budget

SA.19.05.08

VOTE: ADOPT THE 2020 MT SYNOD BUDGET

CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF THE RESOLUTION TO "CARE FOR CREATION AND RESPOND TO CLIMATE CHANGE"

The bishop thanked the assembly for their patience and care in attending to this resolution the day before.

At the end of the previous business session, an amendment was on the floor to strike the words "Changing Climate" from the title and from the name of the task force. The amendment was defeated.

An amendment to #2 of the resolved was proposed to change "present" to "suggest" and "implement" to "consider". The amendment passed.

The amended resolution reads as follows:

Resolution to “Care for Creation and Respond to Changing Climate”

Whereas, God’s first commandment to humanity is that we care for and take care of God’s good creation (Gen. 1:28 & 2:15); and

Whereas, the 1993 ELCA Social Statement Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice affirms that “we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;” and recognizes that “action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children's children;” and

Whereas, the 1999 ELCA Social Statement Economic Life: Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All recognizes that “the growth of economic activity during the twentieth century, and the industrialization and consumerism that fueled it, has radically changed the relationship between humans and the earth. Too often the earth has been treated as a waste receptacle and a limitless storehouse of raw materials to be used up for the sake of economic growth, rather than as a finite, fragile ecological system upon which human and all other life depends;” and

Whereas, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton wrote in a pastoral letter on September 19th, 2014: “Daily we see and hear the evidence of a rapidly changing climate. Glaciers are disappearing, the polar ice cap is melting, and sea levels are rising. Incidents of pollution-created dead zones in seas and the ocean and toxic algae growth in water supplies are occurring with greater frequency. Most disturbingly, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising at an unprecedented rate.....The present moment is a critical one, filled with both challenge and opportunity to act as faithful individuals and churches in solidarity with God’s good creation”; and

Whereas, the Lutheran World Federation has in 2017, with its three-fold theme “Salvation: Not for sale. Human beings: Not for sale. Creation: Not for sale.”, signaled its intention to include creation at the center of its global mission; and

Whereas, there is scientific consensus that the climate is warming due to human activity. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2018 Special Report on Global Warming states that allowing the earth to continue to warm would cause widespread impacts on ecosystem and human health; and ¹

Whereas, according to the 2017 Montana Climate Assessment, the projected climate impacts for Montana include: increased annual temperatures, hotter summers, reduced low-elevation snowpack, earlier spring snowmelt, more frequent and intense droughts, wildfires, and wildfire smoke, will be more severe if global greenhouse gas emissions are not reduced sharply in the near future; ²

Therefore, be it RESOLVED, that the Montana Synod will commit to better caring for our creation and respond to climate change by taking the following steps:

1) Strive for more public awareness of the Montana Synod’s current climate change efforts including: the recent construction of a LEED certifiable Synod Office building, Synod Sustainability Loans, and its support of broader ELCA ministries which boldly confront this issue.

2) Direct the Montana Synod Council to assemble a *Creation Care and Changing Climate Task Force* that will suggest measurable and meaningful actions for the Synod and its congregations to consider. This Taskforce will be made up of ELCA church members and clergy from around the Montana Synod and include one member liaison from the Montana Synod Council. The taskforce will report to the Montana Synod Council and will offer periodic updates and resources for future Synod Assemblies and within regular Synod communication.

3) Commit to working with environmental advocacy and ecumenical partners in raising awareness and inspiring collective action among faith communities across Montana and Wyoming.

Submitted by: Pastor Eric Huseeth and Pastor
John Lund

¹ IPCC, 2018: Summary for Policymakers. In: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, H.-O. Pörtner, D. Roberts, J. Skea, P.R. Shukla, A. Pirani, W. Moufouma-Okia, C. Péan, R. Pidcock, S. Connors, J.B.R. Matthews, Y. Chen, X. Zhou, M.I. Gomis, E. Lonnoy, T. Maycock, M. Tignor, and T. Waterfield (eds.)]. World Meteorological Organization, Geneva, Switzerland, 32 pp.

² Whitlock C, Cross W, Maxwell B, Silverman N, Wade AA. 2017. Executive Summary. In: Whitlock C, Cross W, Maxwell B, Silverman N, Wade AA. 2017. 2017 Montana Climate Assessment. Bozeman and Missoula MT: Montana State University and University of Montana, Montana Institute on Ecosystems. 318 p. doi:10.15788/m2ww8w.

Motion

Second: Approve the resolution *Care for Creation and Respond to Changing Climate*.

SA.19.05.09

VOTE: APPROVE THE RESOLUTION CARE FOR CREATION AND RESPOND TO CHANGING CLIMATE.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Constitution and Bylaw Change Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

Eliminate S9.03.01.c, and renumber.

Rationale: We no longer have at-large Synod Council positions.

S9.03.01. The Nominating Committee shall:

- a. Establish a procedure to secure qualified nominees from the congregations of this synod.
- b. Nominate up to two persons for each position for which an election will be held by the Synod Assembly following the guidelines of †S6.04.
- c. Insure geographical representation when nominating for At-Large Synod Council positions which is compatible with cluster representation and follows the guidelines of †S6.04.
- d. Insure geographical and congregational representation when nominating for members of the Churchwide Assembly following the guidelines of †S6.04.

Recommendation 2:

Eliminate S9.11, and renumber.

Rationale: The Region I Council no longer exists.

S9.11. The Synod Council shall elect or appoint representatives to the council of Region I. This constitutional provision is defunct, in that the Region I Council no longer operates in the way that our constitution suggests

Recommendation 3:

Eliminate S12.01.02, and renumber.

Rationale: This was aspirational and no longer remotely describes reality, nor should it.

S12.01.02. The leadership team of the cluster shall be:

- 1. The elected cluster chairperson (normally a lay person)
- 2. The cluster dean (a pastor)
- 3. The Synod Council Member from the Cluster.

Recommendation 4:

Eliminate S12.01.03 and S12 01.04, and renumber.

Rationale: “the cluster shall nominate” presupposes a reality that does not exist.

12.01.03. Upon notification by the bishop’s office, the cluster shall nominate one member to the Synod Council, delegates to Concordia College and/or Pacific Lutheran University, complying with the stated instructions.

S12.01.04. Upon notification by the bishop’s office, each cluster may submit to the Synod Nominating Committee names of persons it wishes to nominate for members of the Churchwide Assembly.

Recommendation 5:

In S12.01.07, make the following changes: to reflect current realities.

Bear Paw, Liberty County—remove Immanuel Joplin

Bear Paw, Hill County—remove Hingham, Hingham

Fort Peck, Valley County—remove Our Savior’s, Larslan

Fort Peck, Valley County—remove Valley View Home, Glasgow

Golden Triangle, Liberty County—remove Sanctuary of Hope, Chester

Northeast Cluster, Roosevelt County—remove St, John’s, Poplar

Southeast Cluster, Custer County—remove First, Miles City

Motion

Second: Adopt the recommended changes to the synod constitution.

SA.19.05.10

VOTE: ADOPT THE RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO THE SYNOD CONSTITUTION.

BLESSING OF THE CHURCHWIDE VOTING MEMBERS

Those who will be attending the Churchwide Assembly were blessed.

REMEMBERING TOM GOSSACK

VP Deschamps shared a tribute to Tom Gossack, who served as the vice president of the Montana Synod, as well as in many other ways before his death in 2018.

CLOSE OF ASSEMBLY

Bishop Crist declared the Montana Synod Assembly Closed

CLOSING EUCHARIST

Bishop Jessica Crist presided over the closing Eucharist. Vice President Dick Deschamps and Treasurer Sue Ost were installed.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pastor Amanda Liggett
Secretary, Montana Synod