

Synod Summary
Saturday, June 1, 2019

The morning begins with continued registration and the deadline for withdrawal from bishop's election and for the submission of biographical information. Plenary Session III opens. The second ballot for bishop is handed out and described. There are currently ten candidates running for bishop after those announced in the first ballot decided they wanted to withdraw from the election. An announcement on the votes for any position other than the bishop is shared. The vote for offices other than bishop deemed completed, and the new representatives for positions other than bishop are announced.

Bishop Shelley Wickstrom from the Alaska Synod led morning prayer. Bishop Wickstrom led the prayer with an accurate description of the duties of being a bishop and how this is a privileged position, but it is hard. She equates trying to drink from a firehose as how the first couple of years in office is like as the bishop. She names the grief those in the Montana Synod assembly may be having by having to say goodbye to Bishop Jessica Crist and her 12 years as leader of the synod. Morning prayer concludes.

Rev. Philip Hirsch from Churchwide along with the newly appointed President of the Montana Synod council Dick Deschamps announce the process along with the ten remaining candidates for the bishop election. Credentials announced. The second ballot only voting on the office of bishop is now announced and voted on. The vote is completed and closed.

Bishop Jessica Crist gives some background on the Montana Synod Lay Pastoral Associate program. Bishop Crist describes the expansion of this program by adding additional classes in Sidney, Montana in Fall 2019. Bishop Crist then announces nine students from the Glendive program who have completed their studies in the Montana LPA program. The nine students rise and come up to the stage. They are honored through a thank you from the Bishop and applause from the assembly. Then the LPAs are handed their certificates for completion of the program.

ELCA Church Council member John Lohrmann, comes to the podium to announce his handing off of responsibilities to the new voting members who will attend the Churchwide council meeting August 2019 in Milwaukee. Lohrmann explains the process of church council meetings describing how they only meet once every three years and this year, the Churchwide council meeting in Milwaukee. The meeting in Milwaukee is where he will step down from his responsibilities, and someone else will be taking his place from the Montana Synod for Region 1. Lohrmann goes on to describe the Churchwide council meeting process.

- Council of Bishops
- Boards
- Discerning God's will for the church, trusting the Holy Spirit
- Bishop Eaton, we are church, we are Lutheran, we are church together for the world
- 65 synods
- Mission support is passed on to the synod to churchwide (10%).

Lohrmann thanks the Montana Synod for their hospitality and wishes his fellow Montana and Wyoming folk who will take his place God's blessings.

The assembly now announces the seven candidates who are remaining after the second ballot. The assembly will move to the third ballot after a bible study given by Rev. Dr. Laurie Jungling.

Bible Study on Parable of talents, Rev. Dr. Laurie Jungling: Responsibly Risky Faith Matthew 25:14-30

Rev. Hirsch from churchwide checked in with the assembly about the second ballot for Bishop which now moves the candidates from 10 to seven and how the process will proceed with five-minute speeches of the seven remaining candidates. After speeches the third session of voting with resume. If $\frac{2}{3}$ of votes go towards one of the candidates, then the election for the new bishop of Montana Synod will be completed. The session breaks for workshops.

The session returns for five-minute speeches for the remaining seven candidates.

- Darren L. Paulson
- Laurie Jungling
- Jason Asselstine
- Scott Hedegaard
- Philip R. Wold
- Arne Bergland
- Peggy Paugh Leuzinger

The third ballot is taken in for the seven candidates for office of the bishop. Rev. Philip Hirsch announces $\frac{2}{3}$ necessary for a top candidate those with the most plus ties will appear on the fourth ballot and will have a question and answer period. Credentials report total votes = 286; Total attendance = 363. The third ballot is voted on and closed.

Plenary III closes as the assembly breaks for lunch.

Assembly returns with acclamation and appreciation for Bishop Crist. An announcement that resolutions will be shared in the next plenary session.

Plenary IV is opened with credentials and a report on the third ballot for the office of bishop. Credentials report at 1:45 pm goes as follows 103 clergy, 183 lay with a total= 286, there are 77 visitors in attendance also. The total attendee at the 2019 Montana Synod assembly at this time is 363.

Rev. Hirsch announces the report on the third ballot. There are now three remaining candidates. He announces the candidates. The process will proceed with question and answers. To complete the election for the office of the bishop during the fourth ballot, Rev. Hirsch announces that out of the 279 votes cast 66% or 186 votes needed to complete the election.

Top three candidates proceed with question and answer. Each candidate/nominee will have 90 seconds to answer each question. The order in which the candidates are asked the question and answer will be decided for the first three questions. For the fourth question, lots will be drawn to determine the order in which candidates will answer.

Questions are as follows:

- 1) There is a great diversity across Wyoming and Montana how will you be attentive to the different identities 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?

The fourth question pertains to the five Montana Synod benchmarks. The candidates have to pick one of the four and talk about it. Draw lots for who will go first. They go as follows; 1 meet the future boldly, 2 serve the world, especially poor and in need number, 3 deep in faith and witness, 4 promote unity, 5 support/strengthen congregations.

Heard from the three nominees now moving to the fourth ballot 60% of the votes must go to the final candidate for the election to be completed. Transition to a prayer led by a council member for discernment as the synod moves close to a decision.

The assembly moves to vote on the fourth ballot for the office of the bishop. The vote is done, collected and to be counted and finalized later in the plenary session.

The assembly moves on now to greetings from South Africa from Bishop Motsamai Manong and Pastor Tlaisego Khunou. Bishop Manong talked about how the recent president of South Africa is a member of the Lutheran Church — meeting the future boldly in South Africa. Bishop Manong brings fraternal greetings. He describes the importance of the bishop election. Go boldly with this new bishop. Are you ready to meet the future as it comes, he asks the assembly? He tells those in the assembly that scripture tells us that God steps in powerfully and supernaturally when facing the future. Humility is vital to meet their future boldly. Lay ourselves low before God, become weak before God. Through prayer and fast, fasting is humbling before God. When facing the future discernment requires fasting and praying before God. Face the future with desperation towards God. Face it against all the odds. He preaches that this is what the Montana synod needs as we continue with this election. Bishop Manong and Rev. Khunou prayer that God almighty help guide the assembly in electing the right leader for the synod.

Bishop Crist announces a ballot issue with the ballots being printed and given were not all correct. Bishop Crist announces that the assembly will move to resolutions and then will have a Round 2 of fourth ballot election for the office of bishop.

Resolutions will now be presented.

First resolution from the committee, standing for racial justice and cultural competency in the Montana Synod. Rev. Stacey Siebrasse, Interfaith Council Missoula community organizer

announces the resolution. The resolution calls the Montana Synod to learn to uplift God's diversity and hold each other's stories and diversity. The assembly is informed that a racial justice and competency task force that will assemble within the synod with liaisons from various congregations across the two states. There will be a contact person to update their congregation and also speak on behalf of their community.

The amendment is called to a proposal to remove the final quote in the second "whereas." Three individuals came up to argue against the proposed amendment. The assembly moves to vote on amendment. Bishop Crist leads the vote for the amendment. Majority vote no on the amendment to the resolution second paragraph "whereas."

The assembly now moves on to round two bishop elections fourth ballot 2.0 The fourth ballot 2.0 for the office of bishop has the same three candidates as who were in the question and answer, the ballots have them labeled correctly now. The vote is voted on and ballots collected to be counted and announced later.

A synod congregation member calls the resolution discussion into question. Montana Synod members ask yes or no to continue discussing the Racial Justice and Cultural Competency resolution. Majority vote no. The debate is now closed. The assembly moves to vote yes or no on the decision. Majority vote yes. The resolution on racial justice and cultural competency are passed.

Rev. Eric Huseth from Bonner, Montana presents the second resolution for the assembly to address is the Care for Creation and Respond to Climate Change. This second resolution calls the Montana Synod and its congregations to create more public awareness of climate change and how the church together can help in the efforts to alleviate the various issues creating climate change and the effects it is having on people and the environment. The resolution also offers a group with representatives from congregations across the state to discuss people's perspectives and concerns with climate change. The floor opened to the assembly for public discourse among voting members verbalizing whether they are for or against this resolution, or asking for clarification.

One member asks for an amendment in using more scientific facts within the actual resolution. Decided they will work on it with the presenter of the resolution. This amendment passes, and the amender will confer with the originator of the resolution.

Member asks to amend the "climate change," words in the resolution. Another member wants to amend the amendment of changing the world "climate change," to "changing climate."

Vote for the amendment to the amendment. The discourse continues at the different mics for assembly members to present their arguments. Bishop Crist facilitates this as many members are rising to speak to this resolution and the controversy it brings to each person's community whether they are 'for,' or 'against.' The discourse discontinues as the results of the fourth ballot 2.0 are ready to be announced and the fifth ballot is ready to be voted on.

Fourth ballot voting 2.0 results two top candidates Rev. Dr. Laurie Jungling at 109 and Rev. Jason Asselstine at 105 and Rev. Darren Paulson at 65. With these results, the assembly will move to the fifth ballot between Jungling and Asselstine.

Credentials reported. The assembly is at a total of 279 voting members.

The assembly moves to vote on the fifth ballot with only two candidates from the fourth ballot 2.0. The fifth ballot is voted on, and the votes are collected and will be counted on and then announced later. The fifth ballot closes. After this ballot, the Montana Synod Assembly will know who their new bishop will be.

Bishop Crist thanks everyone for their patience in the glitch. She invites people to go into the workshops despite a 35-minute delay due to ballot glitch. People attend workshops and Plenary IV closes.

The night moves to a conclusion with a reception and banquet for Bishop Jessica Crist. During the reception, it is unofficially announced that the bishop-elect of the Montana Synod is Rev. Dr. Laurie Jungling. The votes went as follows; Jungling at 143, Asselstine at 138.

The night concludes with the Montana Synod Assembly honoring Bishop Crist and her ministry at a banquet.