

**REPORT OF THE 167<sup>TH</sup> CONVENTION  
OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN MINNESOTA**

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**NOVEMBER 8-9, 2024  
SANFORD CENTER  
BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA**

*Who do you say that I AM?*

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7**

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On the evening before Convention, the people of St. Bartholomew's, Bemidji, welcomed early arrivals at their church for social time with refreshments.

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8**

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**WELCOME AND BISHOP'S ADDRESS**

Friday began with Morning Prayer, officiated by Shawn Evelyn, with music by a group from St. David's, Minnetonka, who also provided music throughout Convention.

For reflection: In the Greek "believe" means having confidence in or entrusting your heart to someone or something. Is your heart set upon Jesus? If not, what's getting in the way?

Bishop Loya offered a prayer for Convention.

"Deputy Secretary of the North" Steve Schaitberger gave the Credentials Report. One bishop, 124 lay delegates and 125 clergy were in attendance, constituting a quorum.

Bishop Loya then called the 167<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota to order.

**Bishop's Address**

Bishop Loya began with two stories. The first was of Paulinus of Pella, who lived in fourth-century Gaul and lost everything as the Roman Empire collapsed, yet near the end of his life was able to write an autobiographical poem of thanksgiving. The second summarized a book by Andrew Root, *Churches and the Crisis of Decline*, telling the story of a fictitious church which was in decline after decades of prosperity. Different rectors tried various popular growth and rebranding approaches without success, until one day a young man asked them how to find God. This began a change in which the church did not experience growth but discovered a depth and vitality together they had never known before.

Like Paulinus, the bishop noted, we are living in the midst of an American empire that is coming unraveled through deep and increasingly violent tears in its fabric. And like the church in Root's book, we are living with a model of being church that often feels like it is collapsing under its own weight. But, he said, this is only bad news if you have not read the scriptures, where God's project to heal the world with love doesn't rest on acquiring wealth, power, and people, but by enlisting small communities of the often wildly under qualified to

practice Jesus' way of love. "What I dream for us in the coming years." He said, "is that we will return to the simplicity of being with Jesus, with each other, and for the world by doing just two things: deepening our roots in Jesus, and planting seeds for God's future." He continued by noting examples of root deepening and seed planting throughout the diocese. The first Christians did not have buildings, money, the hymnal, or committees, and the Church is thriving in many places around the world today without those things.

"Our job, in a really big church, or the smallest of small churches, is exactly the same: to keep finding and being found by God. The question we are called to answer, with every breath, every moment, every decision of our lives is Jesus' to his disciples: who do you say that I am? And who do we say Jesus is?" "It is time for us to remember that the church is not the star of God's story," he added. The bishop asked all congregational leaders and organizations to "filter every activity, every conversation, every decision through the question, 'is this deepening our roots in Jesus or planting seeds?'"

Attendees were asked to consider the following in table conversations:

- What captures your imagination?
- Where might you be called to deepen your roots in Jesus?
- Where do you see yourself or your community planting seeds?

### **Storyteller: Nancy Dyson from St. John's, St. Cloud**

Nancy spoke of how Jesus showed forth in her life in her visits to people living in a nearby park at Lake George. She began by taking coffee to them once a week, and then invited others at St. John's to join her. This ministry first grew to include food so that all could have breakfast together, and later expanded to a laundry ministry, where they worked with an area laundromat to help the Lake George people do their laundry. Other churches later joined in, and Nancy noted that a beloved community had formed in a laundromat. "Episcopal Church in Minnesota," she said, who is asking you to go out to your neighborhood to meet people?"

### **Introduction of guest speakers Sally Gaze and Diane Grano**

Bishop Loya introduced the speakers who would be conducting the Saturday sessions.

### **Basic Concepts of Parliamentary Procedure:**

Mark Kelm, Parliamentarian, provided his usual entertaining tour through Robert's Rules of Order.

The morning session closed with prayer from Kelsey Schuster.

## **LUNCH**

## **BUSINESS MEETING**

Bishop Loya introduced the others at the head table: Karen Olson, Secretary; Doug Franzen, Chancellor; and Mark Kelm, Parliamentarian.

The following were moved, seconded, and adopted:

- Standing Rules of Order
- Convention Agenda

Privileges for non-delegates (providing seat to all visitors; and seat and voice for clergy not canonically resident in Minnesota)

The following guests were introduced:

- Bishop Bill Tesch of the Northwest Synod of the ELCA

- Bishop Craig Anderson of North Dakota (resigned)
- The Rev. Mark Olson ELCA Coordinator for Indigenous Ministries
- The Rev. Del Moen, a Lutheran pastor serving St. Helen's, Wadena

## Storyteller: Bill Butcher from St. John's Onigum & St. Peter's, Cass Lake

Bill said that he often thinks of how we need to share what we receive. In his work as a youth advocate for his reservation, he met a young person who had a good guitar but couldn't play, and Bill could teach him. He used grant funds to buy six guitars, which he took around to reservation communities for teaching other youth as well. The first boy with the guitar has moved on to trombone and is a band; others have learned quickly and also branched out. "I think about things God has planned for you that you don't know about. Jesus and God and the Spirit will help you down the road where you are to go," he said.

## Consent Calendar

The following Consent Calendar was presented and adopted

### Secretary of Convention (Canon 209.1)

Ms. Karen Olson

### Treasurer (Canon 309.1)

Mr. David Holmberg

### Chancellors (Canon 306.1)

**Chancellor** – Mr. Doug Franzen

**Vice Chancellors** – Ms. Rebecca Bernhard, Mr. Christopher Bowman, Mr. Robert Butterboldt, Mr. Graham Kerr van der Leeuw

### Disciplinary Board (Canon 405(d)) – *For a three-year term ending at 2027 Convention*

The Rev. Dave Langille, The Rev. Cindy Peterson-Wlosinski, The Rev. Terry Erickson, Ms. Angela Paulson

### Commission on Ministry

(Canon 113.5.a) *Chair, for second two-year term, ending 2025*

The Rev. Margaret Thor

(Canon 113.4.b) *Bishop Appointments – For three-year terms, ending 2027*

The Rev. Shawn Evelyn, Ms. Margaret Pretasky

### Council (Canon 219.2) *Vice-Chair*

The Rev. Jennifer McNally

Bishop Loya introduced Jone Howard from VistaCom (the electronic voting system) Karen Olson gave information to delegates on logging in to the system, and several whimsical practice votes were taken.

## Nominations Report and Elections

The nominations were read by Karen Olson, Secretary of Convention.

For Standing Committee in the Clergy Order (electing 2 people for three-year terms)

Justin Chapman

Tom Roy

For Standing Committee in the Lay Order (electing 2 people for three-year terms).

James Huber

David Taylor

For Commission on Ministry in the Clergy order (electing 1 person for a 3-year term).  
Peter Stebinger

For Commission on Ministry in the Lay order (electing 1 person for a three-year term)  
Jen Drganc

For Trustees (electing 3 people, clergy or lay, for a three-year terms)  
Allison Ferro  
Aquilla Roberts-Ford  
Jonathan Strand  
Christopher Rogers (*withdrawn*)

(and 1 person to fill a two-year term)  
Steve Dickie

After no nominations were received from the floor, Bishop Loya placed, without objection, all of the uncontested candidates for election on one slate for unanimous consent. This slate was approved unanimously. Following the elections, clergy ratified lay order elections, and lay delegates ratified clergy order elections.

## **Election Results**

### **Standing Committee**

#### **Lay**

James Huber  
David Taylor

#### **Clergy**

Justin Chapman  
Tom Roy

### **Commission on Ministry**

#### **Lay**

Jennifer Drganc

#### **Clergy**

Peter Stebinger

### **Trustees**

#### *Three-year terms:*

Allison Ferro  
Aquilla Roberts-Ford  
Jonathan Strand

#### *Filling out two-year term*

Steve Dickie

Bishop Loya thanked those rotating off various bodies; they were acknowledged with applause.

## **2025 Financial Statement of Mission**

Canon Kelsey Schuster introduced the 2025 Financial Statement of Mission, noting that like the Church everywhere, we as a Diocese are in a time of deep, challenging and hope-filled transformation. In the last four years we have articulated a commitment to four priorities – discipleship, justice, vitality, and innovation – and have sought to align staff portfolios and resources with those priorities. The financial statement of mission, this diocesan budget, is built by the Bishop, ECMN Missioners, ECMN Treasurer, the Joint Finance and Audit Committee, and Council. These bodies work collaboratively to build a document that reflects the work we are called to do, and aligns us with the vision of where God is calling us.

Treasurer David Holmberg moved its adoption, and it was adopted unanimously by voice vote. Bishop Loya thanked David, Kelsey, Council, and the Finance and Audit Committee.

## Canonical Amendments

Chancellor Doug Franzen reported that the Committee on Constitution, Canons and Resolutions received two resolutions and considered four canonical amendments which were provided in the Business Booklet.

With respect to the proposed amendment to **Canon 611** regarding the Age of Retirement, the Committee received feedback from some of the Mission Area Gatherings about a few aspects of confusion voiced around the wording and intention. In light of this, the Committee reconsidered their original recommendation to vote in favor and instead moved and adopted the referral of that amendment back to the Canons Review Committee. That committee will work to clarify the proposed amendment and bring it back to Convention next year.

**Amendments to Canons 218 and 226** were developed by the Canon Review Committee. This first set of revisions were developed in partnership with the Committee and Council, with the aim and objective of making the role of that body more clear and the membership of that body smaller, while still maintaining its geographic representation, and the representation of both clergy and lay members.

The Committee moved the adoption of Canon 218 Council and Canon 226 Mission Area Teams as an interdependent set. **APPROVED.**

**Amendment to Canon 410** removed the requirement that church attorneys be communicants in good standing in the Church. It was noted that there are fewer Episcopal attorneys now, and other dioceses are experiencing similar situations. **APPROVED.**

Bishop Loya thanked the members of the Canons Review Committee.

## Resolutions

**1. Migration with Dignity**, endorsing and engaging the commitments of the C031 Migration with Dignity resolution from General Convention 2024.

Rex McKee stated that this resolution has been in process for about two years. It was presented at General Convention but missed deadline for the 223 Diocesan Convention. **APPROVED.**

**2 Northstar Act**, supporting and endorsing the continuing legislative actions of adopting the Northstar Act, which supports progressive immigrant and refugee rights legislation in Minnesota. **APPROVED.**

In a moment of personal privilege, Bishop Loya, a third-generation descendant of Mexican immigrants, expressed his gratitude to Convention for passing these resolutions.

## Report from General Convention

Each of the General Convention Deputies in attendance spoke of an aspect of General Convention.

**Margaret Thor** showed photos and listed deputies and alternates.

**Minnie Steele** spoke of people of color and of a celebration of goals that came to fruition.

**Ramona Scarpace** spoke of Minnesota clergy and laity in governance roles in the wider church.

**Christy Stang** noted the presence and achievements of Minnesotans at the convention, including the awarding of the Hero of Camping Award to Branwyn Skov.

**Rick Swenson** spoke of the reinvigoration of Province 6, to which Minnesota belongs. He and Minnie Steele are its Minnesota representatives.

Bishop Loya added that he was a guest at the Episcopal Church Women luncheon where LaDonna Boyd from Farmington was honored with the Distinguished Woman Award from Minnesota.

## **Ordinations, Transitions, Milestones, Clergy Necrology**

Bishop Loya read the following list of milestones: Those present acknowledged with applause

### **Ordained Priest in 2024**

Dave McEahcron

### **Ordained Deacons in late 2024**

Nathan Black

Beth Rose

Clara Sanders

Colleen Swope

### **30 Year Priesthood Anniversaries in 2024:**

Theo Park

Gretchen Pickeral

Arthur Wojciehowski

James Young

### **30 Year Diaconate Anniversaries in 2024:**

Mary Jo Feely

### **Letters Dimissory to ECMN in the past year**

Charissa Bradstreet

Howard Anderson

Lydia Gajdel

Diane Luther

Wanda Copeland

Shawn Evelyn

Peggy Schnack

### **Priests received into the Episcopal Church from other Provinces of the Anglican Communion, who are now canonically resident in Minnesota**

Christopher Rogers

Jeckonia Okoth

### **Congregations Closed**

None

### **Clergy Necrology**

Don Nesheim

Harlan Strong

Sandy Hampton

Milton Wright

Frank Vandesteeg

Bishop Loya closed with a prayer for the departed.

## Courtesy Resolutions

Mark Kelm presented the following courtesy resolutions

### Congratulations to:

- Outgoing Presiding Bishop Michael Curry
- New Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe

### Greetings to:

- Bishop Loya & family
- Brian & Staci Prior
- Jim Jelinek

### Thanks to/for:

- The team of Canon Missioners
- Storytellers: Nancy Dyson, Bill Butcher, Chris Lilley
- Guests: Bishop Bill Tesch, Sally and Di from England
- Musicians
- Fun “roasty” things: Bishop’s truck, fly fishing The new “Canons for Cute” (the 6-week-old Okoth twins of Jeckonia Okoth, Missioner for Multicultural Ministries)

Bishop Loya added his Thank Yous to several people in gratitude for what they did for Convention:

- Sally Gaze and Di Grano
- Pastor Bill Tesch, Bishop of the ELCA Northwestern Minnesota Synod, our preacher for the Eucharist
- Diocesan staff
- The team that helped the Missioners and Canons make Convention happen: Paul Johnson, Susan Barksdale, Jone Howard from VistaCom, Roger Stratton and his fabulous musicians, the numerous volunteers who helped with registration and other sundry needs

## Concluding Business

Bishop Loya then declared that the 167<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota to be adjourned.

## CONVENTION EUCHARIST

Bishop Bill Tesch, Bishop of the Northwestern Synod of the ELCA, preached. Referencing the Gospels that provided the theme for Convention, “Who do you say that I am?” he linked that account to the encounter of Moses and the burning bush. The things we learn, he said, may change how we see things. Perhaps, he suggested, the burning bush may have been there all along and Moses didn’t have the eyes to see it. When the Lord noticed that Moses had turned aside, *then* he spoke to him. “God is there, shining away, waiting for you to notice.”

“How are you seeing things these days,” he asked, “especially the people who are our siblings near and far? When we choose to put the needs of our vulnerable neighbors before ourselves, something starts to happen to our vision then we start to see world charged with the grandeur of God.

If you are feeling discouraged, Bishop Tesch concluded, Jesus sees and knows you and me truly and never stops. Jesus sees the pain, brokenness, and trauma, but also sees a child of God, a disciple for whom he was willing to die. “Come, take up your cross and follow me.”

During the Prayers of the People, attendees were asked to write down or draw, the following, and then take

them with them for prayers in the days ahead

- What are you grateful for?
- What needs God's healing?
- What makes you hopeful?

Offering at the Eucharist was designated for Good Courage Farm in Hutchinson.

## DINNER

### **Storyteller: Chris Lilley from St. Matthew's, St. Paul**

Chris spoke movingly of his journey to the Episcopal Church from an evangelical community that practiced exclusion to a place where "Jesus met me where I was and gently and lovingly put me back on my feet." He was here, he said, because "Jesus refused to stop speaking to me," and is now a postulant for Holy Orders. "I ask all of you," he said. "Where is Jesus calling you? Are you willing to follow him?"

### **"New" Whipple photos:**

A set of "new" pictures of Bishop Whipple and Bishop Gilbert was presented, showing them with amazing fishing catches of highly unbelievable size. These had been "found" by Bishop of Georgia Frank Logue. Bishop Loya noted that what matters is that we can't take ourselves seriously, but that we take our faith in Christ seriously.

## **Recognition and Awards**

Karen Olson and Kelsey Schuster presented Lay Canon award to Susan Barksdale, noting her years of service to the diocese.

Bishop Loya presented the Whipple Cross to Lee Grim, the first deacon to receive the Whipple cross and the first deacon formed as part of a Total Ministry team.

## **SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9**

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Morning Prayer was led by Chris Commerce. Attendees were asked to reflect and discuss the following questions about the scripture reading:

- What words, phrases, and images capture your imagination?
- What questions does this passage raise for you?
- What do you think God might be wanting to say to you and to us through this passage?

## **Mission Shaped and Rural: Your Next Faithful Step**

Guest Speakers Sally Gaze and Diane Grano were introduced by Blair Pogue. Sally is an Archdeacon of Rural Mission, and is the Director of "Growing in God in the Countryside", a six-year initiative to see 1,500 new people begin to follow Jesus in the rural areas of Suffolk, England. An important part of the project was the beginning of the Suffolk Fresh Expressions Community known as "Lightwave", which is headed by Diane Grano. It is a church for people who normally don't go to church, and consists of small groups, predominantly in rural areas, working closely with parish churches. It is committed to shining the light of Jesus through Christian witness and practical service through combating isolation and poverty, engaging in youth work,



caring for creation, and agricultural chaplaincy.

Sally noted that in England, "rural" means living in a community under 10,000, and that Suffolk has many "benefices", consisting of a number of parishes all served by a single priest. She and Diane related many stories and examples of their work, which deals with many of the same challenges as rural Minnesota faith communities. Table discussion questions included the challenges for rural mission as opposed to urban mission, consideration of the next faithful steps, and traveling together on a discipleship pathway. Responses from these discussions were shared with all, in conversation with the speakers.

Sally and Diane noted that hospitality is the new evangelism, and asked attendees how they speak about Jesus in their everyday living. They cautioned against getting so busy sowing that we never get to the fruit, and advised people never to forget to help or show people how they can serve as well. "Jesus is alive," they said in conclusion. "We are the light and love of our communities, but we are also the voice and feet of Jesus to love and proclaim Christ."

The attendees were dismissed with a sending prayer.

Karen Olson, Secretary of Convention  
Report prepared by Susan Barksdale