

Last Saturday, along with Pastor Kyle, BethAnn, and Clyde, I attended the 2024 Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly.

Reflecting on the assembly, it becomes clearer how pivotal such gatherings are for the vitality and direction of our faith community. The 377 representatives came from different ethnic backgrounds and generations, but all shared one same voice: "In Jesus' Name, Do Justice."

This mission suggests that we pursue justice and righteousness in the name of Jesus. "The biblical meaning of justice," as Bishop Curry and Secretary Clausen wrote in their opening letter, "includes right relationships and righteous behavior that is inclusive of all. Justice concerns both our individual relationships and how our society is ordered, and resources are distributed. Justice is the cornerstone of Kingdom-building, the mission of the church."

One of my strongest impressions from the assembly, which highlighted the mission statement of "In Jesus' Name. Do Justice" came when we voted on the Resolution on the Middle East. There were heated discussions about the language, "Secure a permanent ceasefire and the release of all hostages and unlawfully detained Palestinian political prisoners; ..." Several rounds of discussions focused on this sentence. Some proposed removing the word *all* instead adding "including Israeli and Palestinian...", while others suggested we change the order, and another representative suggested also including American hostages. I wanted to include a Chinese hostage if we decided not to use the word *all*, since there is a Chinese girl named Noa who has been held by Hamas in Gaza since October 7th, 2023, the day she and her boyfriend were at the Nova Music Festival. Her story and the stories of other hostages have recently been featured by manga artists in Japan to call for unity and the release of hostages.

I understood from the assembly that every voting member wanted God's justice to cover all victims and to urge Hamas to return the hostages home. The discussion went on for a while, but then one voice came to the microphone and said: "All hostages means all; all means all." With this, the discussion on the choice of language came to an end, and the vast majority voted to return to the original language using "*all*."

The process itself was fair, just, equitable, and inclusive — fostering right relationships and communication. It exemplifies righteous behavior. It embodies democratic freedom and justice.

On a personal level, participating in the synod assembly was a profoundly moving experience. It was a reminder of the power of communal discernment and the importance of every individual's contribution. The sense of belonging and shared mission was invigorating, and it reinforced my commitment to the church's work.

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