

## SEJ Thursday Morning Brings Strong Word but No Election

By Jessica Brodie

LAKE JUNALUSKA, North Carolina—Day Two of the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference started with much hope there would be the third and final episcopal election that morning. But after two invalid votes and the withdrawal from the slate of one nominee, Iosmar Alvarez, the session closed with a vote on Ballot 15 but no results.

Presiding Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, North Georgia Area, called the Thursday morning session to order after a worship service preached by Bishop R. Lawson Bryan.

### **Embracing mysticism**

In his message, Bryan lifted up the great “mystery” of God’s secret plan and urged all gathered to embrace that mystery as they strive to remain refreshed in the Lord.

Refreshment is key to everything, Bryan reminded the body, from relationships, business and community life to good preaching, yet we often go around feeling tired and worried, not refreshed.

Yet even in a time of much turmoil— political polarization, a pandemic, racial reckoning, economic ups and downs, one nation invading another—we must remember the apostle Paul also experienced difficulty, and he was able to persevere by embracing what really seized his heart: the beautiful mystery of God’s secret plan to unite the Jews and the Gentiles as God’s people.

We should do the same, Bryan urged.

“Is there any arena of life that does not benefit from refreshment?” he asked. “A mystery is not to be figured out but is to be lived.”

All sang Charles Wesley’s hymn “And Can It Be” to close the service.

### **Ballots 13-15**

Hauptert-Johnson began the morning business session calling for prayer from retired Bishop Young Jin Cho, who called for a time of silence and stillness before the Lord.

“Thy kingdom done, thy will be done on earth in this place today, and in all other jurisdictional conferences, as it is in heaven,” Cho prayed.

Conference Secretary Anne Travis next offered a moment of deep appreciation for the young adult panelists who spoke the evening prior. While the balloting during their discussion might have felt choppy, it was intentionally orchestrated and provided them more time to dialogue had they not designed it this way.

Before Ballot 13, Hauptert-Johnson requested prayer again, this one from South Carolina clergy delegate the Rev. Will Malambri. Malambri lifted up the Spirit of God that moves like a wind and blows through this place, asking that God fit us all for faithful service so “our bones live abundantly for you, and our hearts, heads and hands work for you.”

Following the prayer, Alvarez approached the microphone, thanked all for their support and withdrew his name from the slate of episcopal nominees.

Ballot 13, which contained his name, became invalid, and Hauptert-Johnson called for Ballot 14. However, that ballot also was invalid, as it called for a vote of two people, not one.

Ballot 15 came at 10:45, just before the memorial service. Business will resume at 2 p.m. after a lunch break.