

Minutes
NT-NL Synod Assembly
Northern Texas – Northern Louisiana Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Meeting: April 27-28, 2018
Mayborn Convention Center, Temple TX

Friday April 27, 2018

Voting Members Orientation

Bishop Gronberg welcomed voting members to the Assembly and covered procedures for the Assembly that would be used to conduct our business sessions. He thanked all members for their service to the synod at this time of Assembly. The theme for this Assembly is “Under Construction”.

Opening Assembly Worship/Eucharist

Assembly opened with Worship with the homily by Bishop Gronberg.

Business Session I

Pr. Tom Beers and SAWL Austin Nickel welcomed us to the Heart of Texas Conference who are our hosts for this Assembly. They relayed the welcome from all the congregations in the HOT Conference and spoke about the conference's mission work and outreach.

Bishop Gronberg thanked the HOT Conference for their hospitality. He expressed his appreciation for having an Assembly outside the Metroplex.

1st Credentials Report

SAWL Tonda Freitag, Chair of the Credentials Committee reported the following voting members:

Voting Members

Rostered

ELCA Ordained Voting Member- 72 *Count as Ordained

AIM or Deacon: 4

Ordained SAWL. 6 *Count as Ordained

Retired Rostered Leader- 6 *Count as Ordained

Retired Rostered AIM or Deacon 4

Total Rostered:91

Non-Rostered Members

Lay Voting Member: 137

Lay SAWL: 13
Lay Mission Council Member 10
Total Non-Rostered Members: 160

Total Voting Members: 251

Stephanie Varnum presented the Agenda, Rules of Procedure, and Minutes from the Synod Council.

<i>VOTED SA 04.18.01</i>	<i>To approve the Agenda of the 2018 Assembly.</i> <i>APPROVED</i>
--------------------------	---

<i>VOTED SA 04.18.02</i>	<i>To approve the Rules of Procedure for the 2018 Assembly.</i> <i>APPROVED</i>
--------------------------	--

<i>VOTED SA 04.18.03</i>	<i>To approve the Minutes of the 2017 Assembly.</i> <i>APPROVED</i>
--------------------------	--

Vice President Varnum introduced Mr. Rick Bidne, Parliamentarian for the Assembly, Mrs. Kathryn Lohre, ELCA Churchwide representative, Ms. Barb Debski, Portico Rep., Mr. Daniel Cazac, Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest, Pr. Pam Dorman, Mission Investment Fund, Ms. Ann Monson, new leader of NT-NL World Hunger Team, and Pr. Heath Abel and Pr. Chris Farrow, Co-Chairs of the Assembly.

HOT Conference Mission Moment One

Pr. Heath Abel relayed a story regarding his first-year college experience. He spoke about how unprepared he was to attend college. In his haste, he grabbed an old quilt instead of sheets for his dorm room. He remarked that the quilt reminded him of who made it for him and a reminder of God's Love. Quilts represent the transitions the Conference has had. A Prayer Quilt was displayed to Assembly and is for the Assembly. He also referenced a specific Quilt that had been quilted for the Bishop. He spoke about the times that we feel like worn out rags. But, he reminded us that God can make us anew and into something special.

Elections Team

Ann Hafften was introduced as the Chairman of the Nominating Committee and Pr. Paul Krupicka was introduced as Chair of the Elections Committee. Ann presented the ballots for nominees for various uncontested positions.

Bishop invited nominations from the floor. Sarah Gohlke of St. John Lutheran, Coryell City, nominated Glenda Phillips for the Synod Council position for female layperson age 36 and over. There are no other nominees and Glenda is willing to serve.

Bishop recognized the other candidates for various positions that were uncontested and asked them to stand so that Assembly members could see them.

Nominees are:

Ballot - A - NT-NL Synod Treasurer – Mr. Mark Bradley

Ballot - B – Synod Council – Hispanic/Latin@ Conference Minister of Word and Sacrament – Pr. Violeta Siguenza-Del Aguila

Ballot - C – Synod Council Eastern Conference Minister of Word and Sacrament – The Rev. Russell Vardell

Ballot – D – Synod Council Heart of Texas Conference Lay Male – Dr. Douglas Krug

Ballot – E – Synod Council Heart of Texas Conference Lay Female – Ms. Linda Phillips

Ballot – F – Synod Council Conference Out West Lay Male – Mr. K. Fritz Leifeste

Ballot – G – Synod Council Conference Out West Female – Ms. Teresa Swecker

VOTED SA 04.18.04

*To approve election of uncontested
positions by Acclamation.*

APPROVED

Pr. Paul Krupicka relayed the voting procedures to vote for contested races. The ballots were report to Assembly.

Ballot H – Nominees to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for a clergy position to the ELCA Church Council (elect two):

The Rev. Russell Vardell,

The Rev. Neil White,

The Rev. Nick Billardello

Ballot I – 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member Female – Rostered Minister of Word and Sacrament (elect one):

The Rev. Diane Eggemeyer

The Rev. Kristin Klade

Ballot J – Nominees to the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member Male – Rostered Minister of Word and Sacrament (elect one):

The Rev. Franz Schemmel

The Rev. Edy Santos

The Rev. Nathan Strong

Ballot K – 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member Lay Female – 18-35 years old (elect one):

Ms. Bianca Blaney

Ms. Emer Kate Sanders

Ballot L – 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member Lay Female – 36+ years old (elect one):

Ms. Susan Batdorf

Ms. Shirley Wilson-Sigler

Ms. Sabrina Walker

Ballot M – 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member Lay Male – 18-35 years old (elect one):

Mr. Thomas M. Blaney

Ballot N – 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member Lay Male – 36+ years old (elect one)

Mr. Thomas K. Blaney

Mr. Don Heller

Voting for these ballots were conducted. Bishop Gronberg declared the voting closed and the ballots were collected.

Bible Study Session One

Dr. Mandy Brobst-Renaud lead the first Bible Study for Assembly on “Constructing Identity.” The first session was on Ancient Ideas about Identity Formation. The Power of Story was a video to facilitate the Bible Study. The video referenced Cognitive Technology and the Creation of Stories. A man had two sons, The story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-7) was read to Assembly. The story of Ishmael and Isaac (Genesis 17:17-21) was read. The story of Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25:23-28) was read. Finally, the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) was read. Aristotle, Theophrastus, and Luke were contrasted to see different forms of Identity Formation. Assembly members answered some questions that Dr. Brobst-Renaud proposed. Answers were collected from the members to analyze the results. Dr. Brobst-Renaud shared some of the responses. She encouraged us to let the story in because it shapes our identity.

Credentials Report Update

220 Voting members were present where the ballots were cast. Some members were still registering when the ballots were being presented as they were late in coming to Assembly. These extra 8 were allowed to vote.

HOT Conference Mission Minute Two

Pr. Terry Atkins and Pr. Heath Abel talked about assisting our neighbors through a story about sheep and goats. A congregation in the Conference was looking to close its

homeless ministry. After hearing this story, the congregation not only continued the ministry but grew the ministry to feed over 200 families once per month. This congregation saw a need and filled it.

Report of the Treasurer

Mark Bradley presented the report on the 2017 Audit. The report is online on the NT-NL website. He spoke about the amendment to the NT-NL Constitution regarding audits and explained the need for the amendment. He referenced his report in the Book of Reports. He will ask Assembly to approve the 2019 Mission Strategy. He relayed a few highlights from his report.

NT-NL Website

Bishop introduced Jason O'Neill, NT-NL Communications Manager to the Assembly. Jason reported about the ongoing efforts to expand the functionality of the website. The Responsive Design means the website views easily on any device that accesses the site. Whether the device is a phone, tablet, or a desktop, the website responds and re-sizes for easy viewing. Also, the database driving the website is being updated as well. Overall, the website is functioning very well.

Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest

Bishop introduced Mr. Daniel Cazac, representative of the Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest. He greeted Assembly and showed a video regarding planned gifts. Assembly members were encouraged to view LFSW as a resource for designing plans for gifts and ministries through gifts. Bishop relayed that NT-NL has received over \$30,000 in gifts from LFSW this past year.

Portico Health Benefits

Bishop introduced Ms. Barb Debski, representative from Portico Health Benefits. She greeted the Assembly and showed a video regarding health benefits and new features that are being offered through Portico. She stressed the challenges faced with benefits for pastors. Portico works with the ELCA to design benefits that work in a challenging healthcare environment.

Break for Setup of Banquet

Becky Brakke supplied information regarding a break so that the Convention Center Staff can prepare for our banquet this evening. Bishop Gronberg will give his report in the Cultural Arts Center on the south side of the Mayborne Convention Center. Upon returning to the Convention Center, a cash bar will be available for members and guests.

Report of the Bishop

Assembly members reconvened at the Cultural Activities Center beside the Mayborn Convention Center to listen to Bishop Gronberg's report. He explained his five points of focus: The focus points were 1) to be present with our leaders and congregations, 2) to encourage creative growth, 3) accountability with Latinx/ethnic specific ministries, 4) that investment in Briarwood must pay dividends, and 5) to name privilege and work for justice. Bishop also referenced three areas of attention as he saw them developing: 1) Engaging youth and young adults; 2) Education, Accountability, and Leadership for lay and ordained; and 3) Recommitting to a healthy relationship with our ELCSL partners. Bishop further stressed our work with our ecumenical partners and how we need to work with others to deliver ministry within our local contexts. At the end of his presentation, Bishop Gronberg received questions from Assembly members and guests in an open forum.

Banquet

The evening banquet was held for Assembly members. Several congregations were recognized as celebrating Anniversaries as well as several pastors.

Saturday April 28, 2017

Opening Devotion

Bishop welcomed all back to Assembly. Worship opened the assembly with Dr. Christopher Richmann preaching.

HOT Conference Mission Minute Three

Dr. Christopher Richmann spoke about his journey toward being ordained as an ELCA pastor. He is serving as a SAWL at St. John, Coryell City where he has served for 8 years. As he finished his PhD work at Baylor, he was faced with what to do next. The Candidacy Committee then worked with him to continue his path toward word and sacrament ministry. This story is similar to that of Dr. Mandy Brobst-Renaud and Austen Nickel who are on similar paths. It shows how the Synod is working with candidates, gifts, and institutions to produce ordained clergy.

Business Session II

2nd Credentials Report

SAWL Tonda Freitag reported that there are the following voting members:

Voting Members

Rostered

ELCA Ordained Voting Member- 72 *Count as Ordained

AIM or Deacon: 4

Ordained SAWL. 6 *Count as Ordained

Retired Rostered Leader- 6 *Count as Ordained

Retired Rostered AIM or Deacon 4

Total Rostered:91

Non-Rostered Members

Lay Voting Member: 137

Lay SAWL: 13

Lay Mission Council Member 10

Total Non-Rostered Members: 160

Total Voting Members: 251

Committee on Minutes

Pr. Eric Petty reported that the Minutes of the Assembly were in order at this time.

Election Results

Pr. Paul Krupicka, Chair of the Elections Committee announced the results of the contested ballots from yesterday.

Results are:

Ballot H

The Rev. Russell Vardell - 126

The Rev. Neil White -119

The Rev. Nick Billardello – 128

Bishop Gronberg declared The Rev. Nick Billardello to be elected.

Ballot I

The Rev. Diane Eggemeyer – 99

The Rev. Kristin Klade - 117

Bishop Gronberg declared The Rev. Kristin Klade to be elected.

Ballot J

The Rev. Franz Schemmel – 112

The Rev. Edy Santos – 93

The Rev. Nathan Strong – 41

A run off between Pr. Franz Schemmel and Pr. Edy Santos will be held.

Ballot K

Ms. Bianca Blaney - 136

Ms. Emer Kate Sanders – 74

Bishop Gronberg declared Ms. Bianca Blaney to be elected.

Ballot L

Ms. Susan Batdorf – 41

Mrs. Shirley Wilson-Sigler – 104

Ms. Sabrina Walker - 62

A run off ballot will be held for Shirley Wilson-Sigler and Sabrina Walker.

Ballot M

Mr. Thomas M. Blaney ran uncontested.

Bishop Gronberg declared Mr. Thomas M. Blaney to be elected.

Ballot N

Mr. Thomas K. Blaney – 78

Mr. Don Heller – 134

Bishop Gronberg declared Mr. Don Heller to be elected.

The run off ballot was handed out for Pr. Franz Schemmel and Pr. Edy Santos. A prayer for these two willing to step forward was given by Bishop. Voting was conducted and ballots were collected.

The run off ballot was handed out for Shirley Wilson-Sigler and Sabrina Walker. A prayer for these two willing to step forward was given by Bishop. Voting was conducted and ballots were collected.

Bible Study Session Two

Dr. Mandy Brobst-Renaud lead the second Bible Study for Assembly on Constructing Identity. The second session was on Modern Ideas about Identity Formation. God uses everything at his disposal to create our identity. Mikhail Bakhtin and Judith Butler's perspectives were discussed. Two sons, both of whose behavior is at odds with their father's generosity, are studied. From Bakhtin we know that Interdividuality is an encounter with another person that changes and shapes us. From Butler, our existence is dependent upon encounters with one another. Who are you? is the question that drives our need for connectivity. God reconstitutes us on the basis of the act of confession itself. Also, we are always in Media Res, the middle of the story, when we are trying to understand and relay the Story. The Story We Tell shapes us.

ELCA Churchwide Report

Stephanie Varnum introduced Mrs. Kathryn Lohre from ELCA Churchwide. Mrs. Lohre warmly greeted Assembly and brought well wishes from Churchwide. She spoke about the song from worship the prior day, "I Love to Tell the Story," she was reminded of her early faith formation and how it stirs those who hear it. She encouraged us to continue to tell our story.

She had four points to share: 1) Thanks to our synod for our work and leadership in the ELCA; 2) Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations work that is being performed by the ELCA; 3) ELCA's role in the world and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) 4) Updates and Opportunities within the ELCA. She showed a video from ELCA Churchwide with the message from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton.

Election Results

Pr. Paul Krupicka announced the results of the two run-off ballots.

Ballot J

Pr. Edy Santos – 135

Pr. Franz Schemmel – 112

Bishop Gronberg declared Pr. Edy Santos to be elected.

Ballot L

Shirley Wilson- Sigler – 115

Ms. Sabrina Walker – 104

Bishop Gronberg declared Ms. Shirley Wilson-Sigler to be elected.

Worship

Worship was presided over by Bishop Gronberg. Director of Evangelical Mission Pr. Irma Banales preached the sermon.

Break for Lunch

Lunch was served for Assembly and break-out sessions were held in various venues for Assembly members and guests to attend.

HOT Conference Mission Moment Four

Pr. Heath Abel spoke about time when they were fundraising for Briarwood. They were able to throw a party and raise \$10,000. The next year they threw another party and raised funds for Mosaic. The pastors in the Conference get along which enables them to expand and share ministry efforts beyond what they could do themselves. They are living "In Mission Together." Pr. Abel also shared that the Conference helped a church in Dickinson after Hurricane Harvey.

Briarwood Report

Matt Baumhardt reported on the ministries and activities of Briarwood. He relayed his story of Faith Formation through his work at Briarwood. He spoke about the work of Courtney Sullivan who serves as interim Program Director for Briarwood. They are looking for a Program Director as Courtney will not be able to continue in her role. He relayed that studies are showing a direct link between outdoor ministries and the path to ordination for pastors. He spoke about the operation of Briarwood and that 50% of the revenue is generated by hosted events. Many different groups use the facility throughout the year. He shared a story of how we are in this ministry to show the Love of God in our lives.

Parish Lay Ministry Academy

Pr. Phil Heinze reported on the activities of the PLMA. He highlighted many who have been members and graduates of the PLMA. He spoke about the program being in both Spanish and English. He currently has 17 students. They are using Zoom meetings to accommodate students with travel challenges. There is a Parish Lay Minister Track with a Certificate which is given if students only want to pursue the courses they have interest in. There is a Community Care Ministry Track and a Leadership Certificate. There is also a Preaching Certificate.

Bible Study Session Three

Dr. Mandy Brobst-Renaud lead the third Bible Study for Assembly on Constructing Identity. She spoke about her influences in her life that encouraged her to be a pastor. The third session was on Telling Stories Makes a New Future Possible. At one point or another, we are separated from “Home.” Even in the midst of exile, we are not alone. Walter Brueggemann spoke about the dangers of exile. Doxologies when in exile are an anticipatory stance on what God will do for his people in the future. Israel's most daring and definitional promises were uttered in exile, that is, precisely when the evidence seems to preclude such hope. By imagining a new story, it becomes true in our life. She tied these ideas back to the story in Luke 15:11-32. Where will the two sons be in the future? No matter where we are in our stories, how we tell shapes our future. God is not and will never be finished with us.

Report of Lutheran Sunset Ministries

Assembly heard a report from Rodney Reuter of Lutheran Sunset Ministries. He encouraged those at Assembly to come and visit to see what they are about in Clifton. He spoke about the service they offer.

Recognition of San Mateo and Rocio Alarcon

Bishop recognized the Synodically Authorized Worshiping Community of San Mateo and is being hosted by St. Matthews in Waco, TX. Ms. Rocio Alarcon was recognized as the leader of the worshiping community and she spoke about how Lutheranism has helped her faith formation. Bishop and Assembly blessed her ministry.

National Youth Gathering Update

Bishop Gronberg introduced Janelle Mueller from Calvary, Richland Hills, TX as the coordinator for the Synod for those attending the Youth Gathering in Houston, TX. She spoke about her memories of faith formation and at what time in her life it appeared. She has held events at Briarwood and she has been to Youth Gatherings in the past. How do we work with partners to better facilitate events for our Youth? She spoke about the support from the Synod in organizing and attending the Youth Gathering. She played a video greeting from a Youth Group. She presented some information on who was attending the Youth Gathering and reminded Assembly congregations to send youth too.

Report on the Assembly Offering

Bishop reported that our gifts totaled \$14,409 from Assembly members and guests and a matching gift of \$10,000 was given for a total of \$24,409 given.

Women of the ELCA

Sarah Gohlke was introduced to Assembly and she is the President of NT-NL's chapter of WELCA. She reported on the activities of her organization and expressed gratitude for the support her organization has received. She spoke about the recent trainings they have received in Minneapolis, MN and how that has helped develop more interest and action in ministry in our Synod. She spoke about their organization's use of Briarwood as a resource. She works to expand the ministries of WELCA in our Synod. She will be hosting a retreat for Region 4 in Crawford, TX on behalf of the WELCA. Their annual meeting will be held at Rejoice Lutheran, Frisco, TX. She thanked all the women in all the congregations that are members of the organization.

Mission Endowment Fund Report

Ms. Hattie Hammer, Executive Director of the MEF referred to her Report in the Book of Reports. She thanked all at Assembly for their support of the Fund over the years. Bishop presented her with a gift from the Synod.

Business Session III

Credentials

Final report from Credentials Committee Chair SAWL Tonda Freitag.

Voting Members

Rostered

ELCA Ordained Voting Member- 72 *Count as Ordained

AIM or Deacon: 4

Ordained SAWL. 6 *Count as Ordained

Retired Rostered Leader- 6 *Count as Ordained

Retired Rostered AIM or Deacon 4

Total Rostered:91

Non-Rostered Members

Lay Voting Member: 137

Lay SAWL: 13

Lay Mission Council Member 10

Total Non-Rostered Members: 160

Total Voting Members: 251

Committee on Minutes

Minutes are reported to be complete and accurate.

Vice-President Action Items

Stephanie Varnum presented two items of business for Assembly. Changes from Churchwide to our Constitution were referenced.

VOTED SA 04.18.05

*To approve the changes to the Synod
Constitution.*

APPROVED

The proposed change to the Constitution regarding audits was presented by Stephanie. Mark Bradley explained the need for the change.

VOTED SA 04.18.06

*To approve the new amendment regarding
Audits.*

APPROVED

I, Sec. Todd Weiss, presented the 2019 Care and Compensation Package for consideration.

VOTED SA 04.18.07

*To approve the 2019 Care and
Compensation Package.*

APPROVED

Mark Bradley presented the 2019 Mission Strategy. Pr. Rusty Sullivan challenged congregations of the NT-NL to give more to the Synod. He pledged an additional 1% from his congregation's budget and encouraged others to do the same.

VOTED SA 04.18.08

To approve the 2019 Mission Strategy.

APPROVED

Reference and Counsel

Pr. Kathi Johnson presented a Resolution of Thanks for the planners and staff of Assembly.

After the Resolution was presented, Pr. Paul Mussachio challenged everyone at Assembly to support Briarwood with at least \$7 per month as a follow up to Matt Baumhardt's story of a regular \$7 gift that was a mighty affirmation from God of love and support. That faithful giver has passed away and now we have the chance to step up. Many pledged they would.

2019 Assembly Location

The 2019 Assembly location will be Calvary Lutheran Church in Richland Hills, Texas and Co-Chairs are Pr. Phil Heinze and Pr. Kyle Rouze.

Assembly concluded at 4:30 pm for the day's session.

Respectfully submitted,
Todd Weiss