

**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Southeastern Synod Assembly  
June 5-7, 2015**

**FRIDAY, JUNE 5, 2015**

**PLENARY SESSION 1 (12:30—2:30 P.M.)**

Prior to the opening of the first plenary session of the 2015 Southeastern Synod Assembly, participants engaged in pre-Assembly workshops on “Back to the Future: Recovering the Ancient Catechumenate,” “Jesus and the Prostitutes: Sex-Trafficking in the New Testament Era,” and “Short-Term Mission.”

**Call to Order**

The Rev. H. Julian Gordy, bishop of the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), called the first session of the 2015 Southeastern Synod Assembly, to order at 12:37 P.M. The plenary sessions of the assembly, meeting under the theme “We Are Church,” took place in the ballroom of the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Center in Birmingham, Alabama.

**Order for the Opening of an Assembly**

*(Tab J-1)*

Bishop Gordy led assembly in a brief litany and prayer for the beginning of an assembly.

**Assembly Objectives**

Bishop Gordy identified the purposes of the assembly:

- To praise and rejoice in the Triune God who created us, sustains us, and heals the world;
- To pray together and be fed by Word and Sacrament;
- To celebrate twenty-eight years of ministry together as the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
- To give witness to our unity in Christ;
- To share in God’s mission through the work of our congregations, this synod, this church—the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—and our ecumenical and global partners;
- To encourage respectful, mutual conversation and moral deliberation; and
- Under the sure guidance of the Holy Spirit, to make prayerful decisions on behalf of the congregations and people of this synod.

Bishop Gordy explained to those present that the lighted candle on the dais reminds us that the risen Christ is always among us as we do our work in his name.

## **Declaration of Bounds**

Bishop Gordy pointed out the boundaries between voting members and visitors and also reviewed some housekeeping details.

## **Opening Prayer**

Bishop Gordy introduced the chaplain for the assembly, Sr. Sylvia Shoemaker Countess, a member of the ELCA Deaconess Community and of St. John's in Knoxville, TN. Sr. Sylvia opened the assembly with prayer.

## **Report of the Credentials Committee**

Bishop Gordy called on Ms. Margery Kellar, member of Living Grace in Tucker, GA, and chair of the Credentials Committee, for the committee's first report.

Ms. Kellar reported that the total number of voting members pre-registered for the assembly was 333, and the total number of voting members in attendance was 207.

Bishop Gordy declared that a quorum was present.

## **Adoption of the Rules of Organization and Procedure**

*(Tab I, Exhibit 1)*

Bishop Gordy announced to the assembly that amendments to the proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure had been approved by the Synod Council since the rules were first posted online. He reviewed the changes in detail and explained the rationale for them. After allowing time for questions and discussion, Bishop Gordy called for a vote on the proposed rules.

**SESA 2015.1            To adopt the proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure as detailed in Tab I, Exhibit 1.**

## **Introduction of the Parliamentarian**

Bishop Gordy introduced the parliamentarian for the assembly: the Rev. Warren Casiday, a pastor in the United Church of Christ, who recently had been serving as interim pastor at St. Mark's in Huntsville, AL. Pr. Casiday, a member of the National Association of Parliamentarians, had served as parliamentarian for the Southeastern Synod Assembly for a number of years.

## **Robert's Rules of Order Quick Reference Guide**

*(Tab I, Exhibit 2)*

Bishop Gordy called attention to the reference guide to Robert's Rules of Order in the assembly materials. He explained the purpose of all the rules for the assembly and also clarified the difference among the various-colored cards used for voting and floor debate.

## **Report of the Bishop**

*(Tab B-1)*

Bishop Gordy began his report by announcing that there had been no changes to the synod staff since the last assembly. He then introduced the staff members. He called attention to the assistance that conference deans were providing to the synod, and he named and thanked them all. Bishop Gordy expressed his gratitude for the sabbatical the synod had provided the previous summer and thanked Pr. Delmer Chilton, who had served as acting bishop during that time. Bishop

Gordy updated assembly members on the health of his son, Ben, who had been injured during the sabbatical.

Bishop Gordy called attention to the theme of the assembly, “We Are Church,” and to the presenters who would help participants explore that theme: the Rev. Dr. Mark Allen Powell, Bible study leader; the Rev. Ron Glusenkamp, churchwide representative; Bishop Michael Grabow, global partner; and the Rev. Dr. Moses Penumaka, ELCA Glocal team member.

Bishop Gordy highlighted a few aspects of the recently released Pew Research Center’s U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, which had shown a very sharp decline in religious affiliation, especially among the mainline Protestant churches. He put that report into historical context, and he called for the church to return to its roots through the practice of baptism, confession, Holy Communion, preaching the Word, and loving our neighbor.

Bishop Gordy concluded his reflections by saying the following:

- Christianity is not dying. The Lutheran church is not dying. The Church is not dying because the Church is the body of Christ, the resurrected One.
- The Church is not dying because it is not just an institution. The Church is God’s own movement of reconciliation in a broken world.
- The Church is not dying, but it is changing. When we long for some remembered golden age, we are blind to the new thing God is doing in the Church.
- When we as a community of believers can see the promised land of God’s beloved community, when we can imagine the coming reign of God and see our part as Christ’s Church, his own body, people with a mission and ministry, a reason for being here that is not just about the survival of a beloved institution but is about the proclamation of God’s enduring love for the whole world, when we realize that we follow a resurrected Jesus, then we won’t be afraid about what is happening around us. We won’t worry about anything. We might even find it exciting. God isn’t done with the Church. God isn’t done with this church.

The assembly greeted Bishop Gordy’s report with applause.

## **Report of the Nominating Committee**

*(Tab D)*

Bishop Gordy invited to the dais Ms. Elaine Schwarz, member of Amazing Grace, Lawrenceville, GA, and chair of the Nominating Committee. Ms. Schwarz explained the elections process and called attention to the information available in the Elections section of the assembly materials (Tab D). She noted that anyone nominated from the floor needed to submit biographical information by 2:45 P.M. that afternoon.

Ms. Schwarz presented the nominees for Southeastern Synod Treasurer, who had been nominated by the Synod Council: Mr. Raymond Phillippi and Mr. Lee Smith. Bishop Gordy called for nominations from the floor. There being none, he closed nominations for synod treasurer.

Ms. Schwarz turned to nominees for 2016 Churchwide Assembly voting members. She stated that the Southeastern Synod had been allotted 12 voting members and that the bishop of the synod automatically was one of the voting members according to the ELCA *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions*. She outlined the rest of the requirements for voting members, noting that the Rules of Organization and Procedure specify that the synod vice president is also to be

elected as a voting member. Ms. Doris Underwood, the synod vice president, was the only eligible nominee. Bishop Gordy closed nominations.

Ms. Schwarz stated that Mr. Jesse Jackson and Mr. Imran Siddiqui had been nominated for a 2016 Churchwide Assembly voting member position designated for a lay male person of color or whose primary language is other than English (CWA2). Bishop Gordy asked for nominations from the floor. There being none, Bishop Gordy declared nominations closed.

Ms. Schwarz announced the nominations from the Nominating Committee for the 2016 Churchwide Assembly voting member position for a lay youth, either male or female (CWA3): Jordan Becker and Cameron Giordano. Bishop Gordy asked for nominations from the floor. Ms. Elise Dawson, a member of Epiphany, Conyers, GA, was nominated. Nominations were then closed.

Ms. Schwarz named those who had been nominated by the Nominating Committee for a 2016 Churchwide Assembly voting member position designated for a lay young adult, male or female (CWA4): Ms. Elise Anderson, Ms. Nicole Larsen, and Ms. Jessica Morton. Bishop Gordy asked for nominations from the floor. Mr. Keith James was nominated. Nominations were then closed.

Ms. Schwarz read the names of those who had been nominated by the Nominating Committee for a 2016 Churchwide Assembly voting member position designated for a lay male (CWA5): Mr. Michael Franklin, Mr. John Hunter, Mr. Gary Pederson, and Mr. Jerry Weyrauch. Bishop Gordy called for nominations from the floor. There being none, nominations were closed.

Ms. Schwarz indicated those who had been nominated by the Nominating Committee for a 2016 Churchwide Assembly voting member position designated for a lay female (CWA6): Ms. Patti Austin, Ms. Wanza Tina Culpepper, and Ms. Allison Ward. Bishop Gordy called for nominations from the floor. Ms. Anna Gordy Montgomery, St. Andrew's, Franklin, TN, was nominated; nominations were then closed.

Ms. Schwarz announced that the seventh and eight positions for 2016 Churchwide Assembly were designated for lay persons, but the gender specifications depended on the people elected to the first six positions so as to have proper gender balance. Thus these positions would be voted on later in the assembly, and the nominees would consist of those of the appropriate gender who had not yet been elected to a voting member position.

Ms. Schwarz informed the assembly that the ninth 2016 Churchwide Assembly voting member position (CWA9) had been designated for male clergy. The following people had been nominated: Pr. Justin Ask, Pr. David Hardy, Pr. Randy Jones, and Pr. Eric Murray. When Bishop Gordy asked for nominations from the floor, Pr. Michael Jannett, Advent, Murfreesboro, TN, was nominated. Nominations were then closed.

Ms. Schwarz named those who had been nominated by the Nominating Committee for a 2016 Churchwide Assembly voting member position (CWA10), which was designated for female clergy: Pr. Patti Axel, Pr. Joy Blalock, Pr. Beverly Brown Shaw, Pr. Jill Henning, and Pr. Barbara Hunter. Bishop Gordy asked for nominations from the floor. There being none, nominations were closed.

Ms. Schwarz indicated that the last 2016 Churchwide Assembly voting member position (CWA11) was designated for clergy, either male or female. The nominees would consist of those persons previously nominated but not elected.

Turning to nominees for other positions, Ms. Schwarz stated that Mr. Bill Grabill, member of Christ Our Shepherd, Peachtree City, GA, had been nominated by the Nominating Committee for a lay male position on the Discipline Committee, with a term of six years. When the floor was

opened to nominations, the name of Mr. John Ballew, St. John's, Atlanta, GA, was received. Nominations were then closed.

Ms. Schwarz read the names of those who had been nominated by the Nominating Committee for a female clergy position on the Discipline Committee with a term of six years: Pr. Ann Bassett and Pr. Dee Donnelly. No nominations from the floor being received, nominations were closed.

Ms. Schwarz named those who had been nominated by the Nominating Committee for a position on the Discipline Committee designated for male clergy: Pr. Stephen Hilgeman and Pr. Nathan Hilkert. No further nominations were received from the floor, so nominations were closed.

Ms. Schwarz informed the assembly that nominees for a fourth position on the Discipline Committee, designated for clergy, would be drawn from those nominated for other positions on the committee but not elected.

She moved to the three open positions on the Consultation Committee, noting that one was designated for a lay male person of color or primary language other than English. The Nominating Committee nominated Mr. Imran Siddiqui for the position. When Bishop Gordy opened the floor for nominations, there were none, so nominations were closed.

Ms. Schwarz declared that a second position on the Consultation Committee was designated for a lay female person of color or primary language other than English. The Nominating Committee nominated Ms. Wanza Tina Culpepper. Bishop Gordy called for nominations from the floor. There being none, nominations were closed.

Ms. Schwarz announced that the Nominating Committee had nominated Pr. Jill Henning for the final position on the Consultation Committee, which was designated for female clergy. There were no nominations from the floor, so nominations were closed.

Ms. Schwarz turned to nominees for positions on the Synod Council. The first position was for a two-year term designated for a male or female youth. The Nominating Committee nominated Ms. Rachel Cornette. Bishop Gordy opened the floor for nominations, and Ms. Elise Dawson, Epiphany, Conyers, GA, was nominated. Nominations were then closed.

Bishop Gordy indicated that Conferences 1-5 and Conference 9 would be nominating conference representatives at meetings that evening. Those representatives would be formally elected by the assembly on the following day.

Ms. Schwarz named those nominated by the Nominating Committee to fill a one-year unexpired term on the Synod Council, designated as an at-large clergy position: Pr. Eric Murray and Pr. Gary Soop. There were no nominations from the floor, so nominations were closed.

Ms. Schwarz explained that the Synod Council had approved contingent nominations for two at-large lay positions on the council for a two-year term. Those contingently nominated for a lay male position were the following: Mr. James Deason, Mr. Michael Franklin, Mr. Imran Siddiqui, and Mr. Charles Donald Streisguth. Bishop Gordy asked for nominations from the floor. There were none, so nominations were closed.

Those contingently nominated for the lay female Synod Council position were the following: Ms. Karen Boda, Ms. Wanza Tina Culpepper, Ms. Monifa Johnson, and Ms. Lorraine Whitney. When the floor was opened for nominations, none were offered, so nominations were closed.

Ms. Schwarz reminded those who had been nominated from the floor to submit their biographical information by 2:45 P.M. that afternoon. Bishop Gordy thanked Ms. Schwarz for her report.

## **Bible Study**

Bishop Gordy welcomed to the dais the Rev. Dr. Mark Allan Powell, professor of New Testament at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, OH, and an internationally renowned biblical scholar. Dr. Powell is also the editor of the HarperCollins Bible Dictionary and author of more than 25 books on the Bible and religion. Dr. Powell had led a pre-Assembly workshop on “Jesus and the Prostitutes: Sex-Trafficking in the New Testament Era.” Bishop Gordy commented that Dr. Powell’s voice was a welcome one, helping people of faith learn what to do in the face of the tragedy of sex trafficking.

In line with the theme of the assembly, Dr. Powell’s study focused on some images of the Church in the New Testament. The first study examined the image of the Church as the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19) and as the body of Christ (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 1:22-23).

Dr. Powell emphasized that both images are strong signals of a corporate relationship with God. It is the Church, the community of believers, that embodies the presence of Jesus Christ in this world.

Dr. Powell added that Christians together are in relationship with Jesus as part of the body of Christ. Something of Christ but not all of Christ is found in individuals. Each one of us is part of something much, much bigger, something that includes a lot of other people.

Dr. Powell concluded, “Jesus doesn’t want to come into my heart and become part of my body. He wants to draw me to his heart and make me part of his body. I am important but it is all of us together who are the body of Christ, and we are found in him.”

## **Recognition of Rostered Persons**

Bishop Gordy recognized, in five-year increments, the service anniversaries of the following rostered persons:

### Fifth Anniversary (2010)

The Rev. Seyward C. Ask - 7/24  
The Rev. Joy H. Blaylock - 8/15  
The Rev. Ronald S. Bonner, Sr. - 9/30  
The Rev. Kent E. Lewis - 8/27  
The Rev. John A. Tirro - 8/1  
The Rev. Leslie L. Wilder - 4/23

### Tenth Anniversary (2005)

Deaconess Sylvia S. Countess - 8/21  
The Rev. Paul A. Elbert - 5/8  
The Rev. Ruth E. Hamilton - 6/10  
The Rev. Robert L. Harrell, III - 5/8  
The Rev. Michelle J. Kuhlman - 8/20  
AIM Linda S. Larson - 8/5  
The Rev. Tony Prinsen - 7/31  
AIM Paula Smith - 10/30  
The Rev. Jennifer P. Weetman - 12/10

### Fifteenth Anniversary (2000)

The Rev. William P. Benedict - 7/9  
The Rev. Amy C. Figg - 12/17  
The Rev. J. Patrick Finley - 6/18  
The Rev. Vera A. Johnson - 6/25  
The Rev. Edward W. Myers - 8/13

Twentieth Anniversary (1995)

The Rev. Jill L. Henning - 6/25  
The Rev. Matthew W. Henning - 10/1  
The Rev. Eric L. Murray - 6/25  
The Rev. Min Chan Park - 4/19  
The Rev. Donald E. Vollenweider - 4/8

Twenty-fifth Anniversary (1990)

The Rev. William A. Behrend - 6/24  
The Rev. Katherine J. Pasch - 7/8

Thirtieth Anniversary (1985)

The Rev. James C. Braswell, Jr. - 8/16  
The Rev. Stephen G. Damos - 6/9  
The Rev. Delores L. Donnelly - 11/24  
The Rev. Howard M. Edwards, III - 5/31  
AIM James A. Faller - 12/6  
The Rev. H. Julian Gordy - 6/2  
The Rev. Susan L. Springer - 5/31  
The Rev. Craig N. Storlie - 1/13  
The Rev. Paul H. Summer - 5/19

Thirty-fifth Anniversary (1980)

The Rev. Daniel J. Dahl - 4/13  
AIM Virginia A. Knueppel - 5/1  
The Rev. Dale A. Sillik - 6/15  
The Rev. Gary R. Soop - 4/2  
The Rev. David N. Thoreson - 6/22

Fortieth Anniversary (1975)

The Rev. David P. Hendrix - 6/13  
The Rev. Gilbert J. Roth - 8/17  
The Rev. Thomas B. Smith - 6/22

Forty-fifth Anniversary (1970)

The Rev. James A. Clark - 5/25  
The Rev. R. Christian Hansen - 6/3  
The Rev. James K. Jensen - 6/14  
The Rev. Brian K. Jones - 6/7  
The Rev. Darrel A. Peterson - 5/24

The Rev. Gordon T. Reinertsen - 6/28  
The Rev. Eldon H. Thurow - 6/2  
The Rev. Haco W. von Hacke - 6/1

Fiftieth Anniversary (1965)

The Rev. William E. Boys - 1/1  
The Rev. Harry A. Carlsen, Jr. - 6/20  
The Rev. Paul S. Frank - 5/30

Fifty-fifth Anniversary (1960)

The Rev. Paulwyn L. Boliek - 5/22  
The Rev. Richard W. McLeroy - 1/1

Sixtieth Anniversary (1955)

The Rev. Robert S. Graetz, Jr. - 6/12  
The Rev. William S. Rizer - 4/27  
The Rev. Karl F. Suhr - 5/29

Seventieth Anniversary (1945)

The Rev. David F. Conrad - 4/4

*Total Years of Rostered Ministry = 1780*

**Announcements**

Vice President Doris Underwood made a number of announcements, including reminders about worship, conference caucuses, assembly workshops, and the 2:45 P.M. deadline for submission of biographies for floor nominees. The workshops in the first session included the following:

- Spiritual Care for Veterans Experiencing Moral Injury
- Church Endowments
- What Every Congregation Needs to Know about the Call Process—Sooner or Later
- Sermon Preparation for Lay and Bi-Vocational Preaching
- Targeted, Tricked, and Traumatized
- On the Move: Conversation on Faith and Migration
- Discussion on Race: From Martin Luther, Swastika to Jim Crow and Beyond
- Congregational Change, Growth, and Evangelism: A Case Study from the Trenches
- Cross-Generational Engagement
- Music: A Language that Speaks Volumes
- Resolutions and Memorials.



**Prayer**

Assembly Chaplain Sr. Sylvia Countess closed the first plenary session of the 2015 Southeastern Synod Assembly with prayer.

**Recess**

The 2015 Southeastern Assembly recessed at 2:49 P.M. (CDT) until the next day. The plenary session was followed by an opening Eucharist on the Holy Trinity. Bishop H. Julian Gordy preached; the Rev. O. Dennis Mims presided; and Sr. Sylvia Countess served as assisting minister. The lectors included the **Rev. Dorothea Lotze-Kola** and Mr. Kyoung-Ki Kim.

## **SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2015**

### **PLENARY SESSION 2 (8:30—10:30 A.M.)**

Prior to the beginning of the second plenary session, many of the assembly members participated in a Glocal Breakfast.

#### **Call to Order**

Bishop Gordy called the second plenary session of the 2015 Southeastern Synod Assembly to order at 8:34 a.m. (CDT).

#### **Introductions**

Bishop Gordy began the session by introducing the members of the ELCA's Glocal Team. Staff are the Rev. Sunitha Mortha, Dina Tannous Vega, and Kristina Diaz. Workshop leaders are Linda Staats, the Rev. Valora Starr, John Johnson, and Matt Herzberg. Musicians are Brittany Betts, Aisea Taimani, Benhi Khabebe, Kevin Anderson, Jasmine Clawson, and Jaron Cheung. He also welcomed the Rev. Dr. Moses Penumaka, Sunday's keynote speaker.

Bishop Gordy announced three deaths that had occurred the previous day: Mr. Don Martin, stepbrother of Pr. Ben Moravitz of the synod staff; Pr. Jim Daniels, member of Faith Lutheran, Lebanon, TN; and Pr. Jerry Weeks (retired). He asked the assembly to pray for their families, colleagues, and friends.

#### **Opening Prayer**

Bishop Gordy asked the Assembly chaplain, Sr. Sylvia Countess, to pray to open the plenary session.

#### **Report of the Credentials Committee**

Bishop Gordy called on Ms. Margery Kellar, for the second report of the Credentials Committee. Ms. Kellar stated that 340 voting members were in attendance.

#### **Election Process**

*(Tab D)*

Bishop Gordy welcomed Ms. Dena Lane, chair of the Elections Committee, to the dais to explain the voting process and introduce the first ballot. He first announced that since there had been a number of positions for which there was only one nominee, he would declare those elections completed. He officially declared that the following persons had been elected:

**SESA 2015.2            To declare elected the following persons to their respective offices:**

- **Ms. Doris Underwood as a voting member of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.**
- **Mr. Imran Siddiqui, Ms. Wanza Tina Culpepper, and Pr. Jill Henning to six-year terms on the Consultation Committee.**

Bishop Gordy also indicated that Ms. Lorraine Whitney, who had been nominated for an at-large position on the Synod Council, had asked that her name be withdrawn. With the voting members' permission, he officially withdrew her name.

Ms. Lane called attention to the election information available in Tab D. She then informed the assembly that the following people had been nominated as conference representatives on the Synod Council by their respective conferences:

- Conference 1: Mr. Jim Hazel
- Conference 2: Pr. Michelle Kuhlman
- Conference 3: Mr. Imran Siddiqui
- Conference 4: Pr. Norbert Hahn
- Conference 5: Pr. Erik Allen
- Conference 9: Mr. Michael Huseth

Bishop Gordy asked for and received a motion and a second to elect these nominees. By a voice vote, they were elected.

**SESA 2015.3            To declare elected the following persons as members of the Synod Council:**

- **Conference 1: Mr. Jim Hazel**
- **Conference 2: Pr. Michelle Kuhlman**
- **Conference 3: Mr. Imran Siddiqui**
- **Conference 4: Pr. Norbert Hahn**
- **Conference 5: Pr. Erik Allen**
- **Conference 9: Mr. Michael Huseth**

Bishop Gordy informed the assembly that, as a result of the elections of these conference representatives, the two at-large lay Synod Council positions had been designated for one male and one female. When these positions would be voted upon later in the day, all of the people contingently nominated yesterday would be included, with the exception of Ms. Lorraine Whitney, who had withdrawn, and Mr. Imran Siddiqui, who had just been elected as the representative from Conference 3.

Pastor Lane explained the process for voting.

Sr. Sylvia Countess, assembly chaplain offered prayer.

The first ballot was taken.

### **Recognition of Rostered Leaders**

Bishop Gordy honored those rostered leaders who had retired since the last assembly:

- The Rev. Rusty Edwards
- The Rev. Paul Elbert
- The Rev. Dennis Fakes
- The Rev. Darrel Golnitz
- Associate in Ministry Mary Golnitz
- The Rev. Helen Hollingsworth

- Associate in Ministry Linda Larson
- The Rev. Kent Lewis
- The Rev. Lydia Villanueva
- The Rev. David Webb
- The Rev. Ted Zimmerman

Bishop Gordy also recognized pastors who are serving in their first call and who were new to the Southeastern Synod or new to the ordained roster since the last assembly:

- Pr. Mary Armstrong-Reiner, Interim Pastor, Amazing Grace, Lawrenceville. Transfer from the Central/Southern Illinois Synod
- Pr. John Billa, Pastor Developer, Atlanta Telugu Church, Chamblee, GA.
- Pr. Chris Hermansen, Pastor, Epiphany, Suwanee, GA. Transfer from the North Carolina Synod.
- Pr. Andrea Ng'weshemi, Associate Professor of Religion, Lane College, Jackson, TN. Transfer from the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod
- Pr. Shirley Redmond, Pastor, St. Matthew, Columbus, GA. Transfer from the Southeastern Minnesota Synod.
- Pr. Karen Schwinder, Pastor, Holy Trinity, Elberton, GA.
- Pr. Pam Smith, Pastor, First, Nashville, TN. Transfer from the Florida-Bahamas Synod.

Bishop Gordy announced two new Synodically Authorized Ministers:

- Mr. Michael Sauls, appointed to serve at Sinking Springs, Midway, TN.
- Ms. Paula Smith, who had served previously in the Southeastern Synod for many years as an Associate in Ministry and was appointed to serve as a Synodically Authorized Minister at St. James, Greeneville, TN.

Bishop Gordy called attention to two pastors serving ministries of the Southeastern Synod under an Invitation to Extended Service, the way pastors who are on the rosters of the ELCA's full- communion partners serve in ELCA congregations:

- Pr. Dorothea Lotze-Kola is a pastor in the United Church of Christ and is currently serving as pastor at Die Deutsche Kirchengemeinde (or the German church) in Atlanta, GA. Pr. Lotze-Kola also serves a counseling practice full-time.
- The Rev. Allison Stacey Parvin, a pastor in the United Methodist Church, who is currently serving at Beth-Eden Lutheran Church in Louisville, MS.

Bishop Gordy asked the assembly to join him in extending a welcome to these new colleagues.

## **Safe Gatherings**

Bishop Gordy reminded those present that in 2004 the Southeastern Synod had passed a resolution that called for all congregations to have safe haven guidelines in place by 2007, a goal that still need to be met. Since 2004, synod staff have provided boundary and safe church training resources at fall convocations, synod assembly workshops, youth ministry training events, and in individual congregations. He announced that the Southeastern Synod has recently contracted with

Safe Gatherings as a resource for online boundary training, background checks, and reference checks. Used by more than 60,000 congregations across denominational lines, Safe Gatherings is the leading online abuse prevention and boundary awareness system for churches and congregations across North America. Bishop Gordy introduced Ms. Sharon Holt, President of Safe Gatherings. An exhibitor at the assembly, Ms. Holt welcomed the opportunity to talk about her organization's services and the ways they can partner with congregations in creating safe places for ministry. The Safe Gatherings website is posted on the synod website.

## **Bible Study**

Bishop Gordy welcomed back to the podium the Rev. Dr. Mark Allan Powell for the second of his Bible studies. Dr. Powell focused on another image of the Church: the bride of Christ (Mark 2:19, Ephesians 5:31-33, Revelation 21:9). He stated that he wanted to revive this image because it indicates that Christians' relationship with Jesus is definitely a relationship of love, love like that which unites a couple in marriage, love that when all goes well, is defined in term of mutual commitment and faithfulness. According to this image, he pointed out, Christians are people who are loved by Jesus Christ and who love Jesus Christ in return. This image suggests that the love between them is joyful, celebratory, and exciting.

Dr. Powell noted that this image, like the first two he discussed, is communal. The whole Church is the bride of Christ, not any single individual. This corporate love is worship. The Church loves and adores Jesus Christ, and we, who are part of the Church, love and adore him as well.

That's why being a Christian, he said, sometimes feels like being a newlywed in love with someone who has gone away. Referring to the Second Coming, Dr. Powell declared that it also feels like being passionately in love with someone who is about to come back.

## **Greetings from the Mission Investment Fund**

Bishop Gordy invited to the dais Mr. Jerry Johnson, the regional manager for the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA (MIF). He expressed gratitude to Mr. Johnson for his organization's financial support of the assembly, which allowed for development of the Guidebook app and offset WiFi costs. Mr. Johnson shared stories of the ministries that the Mission Investment Fund supports throughout the ELCA and in the Southeastern Synod. He invited people to stop by his exhibit booth to learn more about the MIF.

## **Glocal Presentation**

Bishop Gordy invited the Rev. Sunitha Mortha, ELCA director for mission formation, to offer a presentation on the context of mission. He explained that mission formation is the primary vehicle for education and interpretation of mission in the ELCA Global Mission Unit. Pr. Mortha has created programs and systems that help develop competencies to critically explore worldviews, meta-narratives, and cultures to motivate better practices of mission, globally and locally. Bishop Gordy added that Pr. Mortha is committed to community-building, mobilizing, and providing safe environments for difficult, complex conversations. Pr. Mortha's presentation focused on her work on the changing realities of mission. She pointed out that the line between what is local and what is global is being erased. Glocal mission encompasses ministry in both locations. It involves drawing not lines of separation but lines linking individual stories together.

## **2016 Ministry Funding Plan**

*(Tab E)*

Bishop Gordy called on Treasurer Lee Smith and the Rev. Dr. John Rossing, pastor of Christ the King in Dalton, GA, and chair of the Budget and Finance Committee, to present the 2016 Ministry Funding Plan. Treasurer Smith and Pr. Rossing reviewed the proposed budget and its rationale. At the end of their presentation, Bishop Gordy called for discussion. There being none, the assembly proceeded to a vote.

**SESA 2015.4            To adopt the 2016-17 Ministry Funding Plan as recommended  
by the Synod Council.**

## **Southeastern Synod Advocacy Team**

Bishop Gordy invited Mr. Hilton Austin, a member of All Saints in Lilburn, GA, and member of the Synod Council since 2011, to inform the assembly about the newly approved Southeastern Synod Advocacy Team.

Mr. Austin explained the advocacy teams, which had begun in Georgia and are also forming in Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama. Their purpose is to gather people for advocacy on the issues of criminal justice, immigration, and human trafficking. The teams also will keep people in the synod informed about public policy relating to these issues. Mr. Austin encouraged people to get involved in the teams.

## **NovusWay Presentation**

Bishop Gordy welcomed Ms. Mary Peterson of the NovusWay board, and Mr. Keith Johnson, executive director of NovusWay. Ms. Peterson and Mr. Johnson announced the end of the “Standing on the Promise Campaign,” a capital campaign begun in 2009 to fund a new ministry in the synod, Lutheranch. They thanked all those individuals and congregations that had contributed to the campaign, and detailed the progress that was being made in the development of Lutheranch. They acknowledged, however, that the formal campaign was closing short of its goal and encouraged synod members to continue to support this ministry.

## **Elections**

*(Tab D)*

Bishop Gordy called on Pr. Dena Lane, chair of the elections committee, for a report on the elections. Ms. Lane stated the results of the ballots taken the previous day:

### Synod Treasurer

Number of valid ballots:     296  
Number of invalid ballots:    0  
Number needed for election: 149

**Lee Smith                            209**  
**Raymond Phillippi                87**

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.5 To declare Mr. Lee Smith elected as treasurer of the Southeastern Synod, for a four-year term, beginning immediately.**

Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Lay male person of color or primary language other than English)

Number of valid ballots: 292

Number of invalid ballots: 2

Number needed for election: 147

**Jesse Jackson 177**

**Imran Siddiqui 115**

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.6 To declare Mr. Jesse Jackson elected as a voting member of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.**

Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Youth)

Number of valid ballots: 290

Number of invalid ballots: 0

Number needed for election: 146

**Cameron Giordano 103**

**Elise Dawson 102**

**Jordan Becker 85**

Bishop Gordy stated that there was no election and that the run-off ballot would contain the names of Ms. Giordano and Ms. Dawson.

Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Lay young adult)

Number of valid ballots: 289

Number of invalid ballots: 1

Number needed for election: 145

**Nicole Larsen 96**

**Elise Anderson 77**

**Keith James 74**

**Jessica Morton 42**

Bishop Gordy stated that there was no election and that the run-off ballot would contain the names of Ms. Larsen and Ms. Anderson.

Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Lay male)

Number of valid ballots: 291

Number of invalid ballots: 5

Number needed for election: 146

**Gary Pederson 139**

**Michael Franklin 65**

**Jerry Weyrauch 52**

**John Hunter 35**

Bishop Gordy stated that there was no election and that the run-off ballot would contain the names of Mr. Pederson and Mr. Franklin.

Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Lay female)

Number of valid ballots: 299

Number of invalid ballots: 5

Number needed for election: 150

**Allison Ward 107**

**Anna Gordy Montgomery 83**

**Patti Austin 77**

**Wanza Tina Culpepper 32**

Bishop Gordy stated that there was no election and that the run-off ballot would contain the names of Ms. Ward and Ms. Gordy Montgomery.

Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Clergy male)

Number of valid ballots: 300

Number of invalid ballots: 4

Number needed for election: 151

**Randy Jones 85**

**Eric Murray 81**

**Justin Ask 59**

**Michael Jannett 48**

**David Hardy 27**

Bishop Gordy stated that there was no election and that the run-off ballot would contain the names of Pr. Jones and Pr. Murray



Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Clergy female)

Number of valid ballots: 293

Number of invalid ballots: 3

Number needed for election: 147

**Jill Henning** 77

**Joy Blalock** 59

**Patti Axel** 58

**Beverly Brown Shaw** 50

**Barbara Hunter** 49

Bishop Gordy stated that there was no election and that the run-off ballot would contain the names of Pr. Henning and Pr. Blalock.

Ms. Lane announced that the second ballot was ready for distribution. Bishop Gordy called on the assembly chaplain, Sr. Sylvia Countess, to pray. The second ballot was taken.

**Announcements**

Bishop Gordy called the assembly's attention to the bags that had been given to the assembly participants, made by the women of the Kiswahili Mission in Nashville, TN. He asked that anyone who cared to do so donate to the mission out of gratitude.

Vice President Doris Underwood made a number of announcements, including reminders about the upcoming workshop session, lunch-and-learn opportunities, and afternoon worship.

**Closing Prayer**

At Bishop Gordy's invitation, Sr. Countess, the assembly chaplain, closed the second plenary session with prayer.

**Recess**

The 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly recessed at 10:35 a.m. (CDT).

## **SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2015**

### **PLENARY SESSION 3 (3:15—6:00 P.M.)**

Prior to the beginning of the third plenary session, assembly members participated in workshops and worship. The following were offered in Workshop Session 2 (10:45 a.m.-12:15 P.M.):

- WELCA 101
- Caring for Creation
- Story of Faith Community
- Disaster Readiness for Your Congregation
- Forgiveness and Reconciliation: How Bound Up Are We?
- Feed My Sheep: Neighborhood Responses to a Global Challenge
- Public Mission: Social Action and Advocacy
- Southern Hospitality: Congregations Standing for Welcome with Migrants and Refugees
- Saving Lives: One Community at a Time
- Music: A Language That Speaks Volumes
- Modern-Day Slavery
- Compensation Guidelines

Worship and Holy Eucharist with global themes took place at 1:45 P.M. The Rev. Pam Smith of First, Nashville, TN, was the presider; the Rev. Michael Grabow, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria preached; Ms. Ellie Thompson of St. Stephen, Decatur, GA, was the assisting minister, and Ms. Sequoya McLendon of St. John, Griffin, GA, served as the lector.

### **Call to Order**

Bishop Gordy called the third plenary session of the 2015 Southeastern Synod Assembly to order at 3:18 P.M. (CDT).

### **Opening Prayer**

At Bishop Gordy's invitation, Sr. Sylvia Countess, the assembly chaplain, opened the plenary session with prayer.

### **Report of the Credentials Committee**

Bishop Gordy called on Ms. Margery Kellar, chair, for the report of the Credentials Committee. Ms. Kellar announced that 344 voting members were in attendance.

### **Recognitions**

Bishop Gordy recognized four new seminary graduates assigned to the Southeastern Synod:

- Dr. Mica Koli, graduate of Candler School of Theology with a Lutheran year at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary—Lenoir Rhyne, currently serving at Christ the King, Cumming, GA, assisting Interim Pastor John Weber while awaiting her first call;
- Ms. Susan Thisell, graduate of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary—Lenoir Rhyne;

- Ms. Betty Rendon Madrid, graduate of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago;
- Ms. Bonnie E. Lanyi, graduate of Luther Seminary.

Bishop Gordy also recognized Mr. Vance Blackfox, executive director of Oaks Indian Mission, an exhibitor at the assembly, and Mr. Bill Grabill, member of Christ Our Shepherd, Peachtree City, GA, and chair of the Candidacy Committee. Bishop Gordy noted that the Southeastern Synod currently has 70 candidates for rostered ministry.

## **Elections**

*(Tab D)*

Bishop Gordy invited Pr. Dena Lane, chair of the Elections Committee, to come to the dais to deliver a report and provide instructions for the next ballot. Pr. Lane stated the results of the ballots taken the previous day:

### Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Youth)

Number of valid ballots: 295  
 Number of invalid ballots: 4  
 Number needed for election: 148

**Elise Dawson 161**  
**Cameron Giordano 134**

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.7 To declare Ms. Elise Dawson elected as a voting member of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.**

### Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Lay young adult)

Number of valid ballots: 291  
 Number of invalid ballots: 4  
 Number needed for election: 146

**Nicole Larsen 150**  
**Elise Anderson 141**

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.8 To declare Ms. Nicole Larsen elected as a voting member of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.**

Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Lay male)

Number of valid ballots: 293

Number of invalid ballots: 5

Number needed for election: 147

**Gary Pederson 193**

**Michael Franklin 100**

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.9 To declare Mr. Gary Pederson elected as a voting member of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.**

Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Lay female)

Number of valid ballots: 287

Number of invalid ballots: 4

Number needed for election: 144

**Anna Gordy Montgomery 144**

**Allison Ward 143**

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.10 To declare Ms. Anna Gordy Montgomery elected as a voting member of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.**

Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Clergy male)

Number of valid ballots: 292

Number of invalid ballots: 5

Number needed for election: 147

**Randy Jones 156**

**Eric Murray 136**

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.11 To declare Pr. Randy Jones elected as a voting member of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.**

### Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Clergy female)

Number of valid ballots: 301

Number of invalid ballots: 5

Number needed for election: 151

**Jill Henning 152**

**Joy Blalock 149**

### **SESA 2015.12 To declare Pr. Jill Henning elected as a voting member of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.**

Pr. Lane explained that the upcoming ballot contained the contests for the three remaining Churchwide Assembly voting member positions, the contested positions on the Consultation and Discipline Committees, and the youth and at-large positions on the Synod Council. She informed voting members that the ballot for the remaining Churchwide Assembly voting member position designated for clergy would include the names of all pastors previously nominated but not elected for the two clergy positions that have been filled. She added that the two remaining lay Churchwide Assembly voting member positions would be designated for males so that there would be four lay males and four lay females among the Southeastern Synod's voting members. The ballot would contain the names of all lay males who were nominated but not elected for any of the other lay Churchwide Assembly voting member positions. She indicated that voting members should vote for two of the nominees listed.

Bishop Gordy called on the assembly chaplain, Sr. Sylvia Countess, for prayer. The third ballot was taken.

### **Bible Study**

Bishop Gordy invited to the dais the Rev. Dr. Mark Allan Powell for his final Bible study.

In his third presentation Dr. Powell focused on the image of the Church as branches on a vine (John 15:1-5). He explained that Jesus Christ is the vine and we the Church are the branches. We abide in Jesus Christ, and we bear much fruit. Dr. Powell commented that this image emphasizes being over doing. Branches don't have to do much; they just need to stay connected to the vine. What Jesus Christ wants is for us to be present, experiencing all that God is doing. He added that God is doing wonderful, exciting, and fantastic things in the world, and the Church gets to be a part of it. Often our calling is simply to be the people for whom, in whom, and through whom God does these wonderful things. Dr. Powell continued by saying that before we are called as Church to help the needy; we are called to be the needy. We are called to be the people who need Christ and who have received Christ. He concluded: Our calling is to be who we are, who God has made us: salt of the earth, light of the world, and born-again, freed children of God. And just like fruit that appears on branches connected to the vine, wonderful and fantastic things will happen as God works in us, for us, and through us. We can know that when all is said and done, the world will be a much better place because we were here. What incredible Good News that is: to be the Church.

At the conclusion of Dr. Powell's presentation, Bishop Gordy presented him with a gift of bees from the ELCA's Good Gifts program.

### **Synod Council's "We Are Church Together" Congregational Visits**

At Bishop Gordy's invitation, Vice President Doris Underwood offered a brief report on the visits that Synod Council members had been making to congregations in order to strengthen ties between the synod and congregations. Her report was accompanied by a video presentation about the work of the synod. She encouraged congregations that had not already done so to contact their Synod Council liaison and establish a time for a visit.

## **2016 Compensation Guidelines**

*(Tab I, Exhibit 3)*

Bishop Gordy, welcomed the Rev. Scott Seeke, interim pastor at Lutheran Church of the Incarnation, Marietta, GA, and chair of the Compensation Guidelines Committee, and asked for the committee's report. Pr. Seeke detailed the proposed changes to the compensation guidelines and the reasons for the changes. Bishop Gordy called for discussion of the proposal. There being none, he called for a vote.

**SESA 2015.13      To adopt the 2016 Compensation Guidelines, as detailed in Tab I, Exhibit 3.**

## **Report of the Churchwide Representative**

Bishop Gordy introduced the churchwide representative, the Rev. Ronald T. Glusenkamp, director of "Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA." Pr. Glusenkamp talked about the state of the ELCA and showed a video focusing on the church's work in congregations, locally, and globally. Pr. Glusenkamp also provided an update on the campaign and highlighted the areas of ELCA ministry that it would support. He thanked the Southeastern Synod for its generosity.

At the end of Pr. Glusenkamp's report, Bishop Gordy presented him with a gift of bees from the ELCA's Good Gifts program.

## **Resolutions and Memorials**

*(Tab G)*

Bishop Gordy called on the Rev. Delmer L. Chilton, chair of the Reference and Counsel Committee, to lead the assembly's consideration of two memorials. Bishop Gordy reviewed the procedures for floor debate.

Pr. Chilton introduced the first memorial. Bishop Gordy opened the floor to debate and discussion. The Rev. Ed Wolf (retired), member of the synod's Green Team, spoke in favor of the resolution. A **second speaker** advocated that the memorial be tabled unless it was reconsidered and broadened in scope. Ms. Leah Webb, Shepherd of the Hills, Birmingham, AL, spoke in favor of the memorial because it reaffirmed and encouraged work that already is being done. Dr. Bernard Wellmaker, Conference 3, recommended tabling the motion because it was neither clear what the implications of the memorial were nor what alternatives there might be.

**Moved;**

**Seconded:**      To table the memorial.

Bishop Gordy explained that tabling the memorial meant that it would not be available for the assembly to debate unless it were taken up later during the current plenary session or the

following day's session. At that point someone could provide a substitute memorial. A vote on the motion to table the memorial was taken.

**Moved;**

**Seconded;**

**Defeated:** To table the memorial.

Debate resumed, with the Rev. Jeff Prim, Ascension, Chattanooga, TN, calling attention to the fact that Chattanooga recently had been named the best city in America by Outside magazine. This was a great turn-around because in 1968 Chattanooga was declared the most polluted city in America for its size. He supported passage of the memorial because it is worth giving the churchwide organization affirmation for what it is already doing.

The Rev. Erik Allen, Christ the King, Cumming, GA, called the question. The vote was taken.

**Moved;** (*Two-Thirds Required*)

**Seconded;**

**Approved:** To end debate.

The vote was then taken on the memorial.

**SESA 2015.14 To adopt the following memorial to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly:**

### **Transition to Clean, Renewable Energy**

WHEREAS, in 1993 with the "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice" social statement, the Southeastern Synod demonstrated its awareness that urgency was already "widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide [of] dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide" from the burning of fossil fuels, and that "action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children's children. Time is very short"; and

WHEREAS, "Vision and Expectations" explicitly states, "The people of God are called to the care and redemption of all that God has made. This includes the need to speak on behalf of this earth, its environment and natural resources and its inhabitants"; and

WHEREAS, the most recent report by the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change claims continued greenhouse gas emissions will cause "long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems"; and

WHEREAS, the burning of fossil fuels is by many sources reported to be the leading source of greenhouse gas emissions causing global climate change, and therefore it is incumbent upon society to transition from fossil fuels to clean, renewable sources of energy; and

WHEREAS, as a church the ELCA should not profit from the production, distribution and use of fuels we believe to be the leading cause of climate change; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Church Council took action in November 2014 to "recommend limiting investments made in corporations which are most egregious in terms of damage to human health or the natural environment" and to make "investments in corporations which are taking positive steps toward a sustainable environment"; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to affirm the ELCA's Corporate Social Responsibility program and encourage that program to grow its work on developing a sustainable environment; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Churchwide Assembly affirm the ELCA Foundation's use of guidelines for socially responsible investing in the investment of assets within its Endowment Fund Pooled Trust; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Churchwide Assembly affirm the shareholder advocacy work engaged in by Portico Benefit Services and encourage Portico to support the development of clean, renewable energy sources whenever such support is consistent with its fiduciary obligations.

Pr. Chilton introduced the second memorial. Bishop Gordy opened the floor to debate and discussion.

A speaker from St. John's, Atlanta, GA, spoke in favor of the memorial, noting that the National Institute of Health already has prepared a prioritized suicide prevention research agenda that is ready for implementation once funding is provided.

Mr. Eddie Jones, St. Paul, Vonore, TN, supported that memorial, saying that the kind of funding proposed would give more people the means to do more data analysis and make them aware of the impact of suicide and ways to prevent it.

There being no further speakers, Bishop Gordy called for the vote. The assembly then voted.

**SESA 2015.15            To adopt the following memorial to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly:**

**Increase Funding for Suicide Prevention Research**

WHEREAS, suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States and the second leading cause of death for the age group 15 to 24 years; and

WHEREAS, suicide impacts all people, including ELCA rostered persons, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, sex, nationality or occupation; and

WHEREAS, more members of the armed forces died by suicide during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan than died in combat; and

WHEREAS, approximately 22 veterans die by suicide each day, and represent almost 20 percent of all suicide deaths; and

WHEREAS, the American Association of Suicidology, the oldest suicide prevention organization in the nation, estimates there are more than 5 million survivors of suicide (people who have lost a friend or loved one to suicide) in the United States today and that more than 1 million people annually act on the desire to end their lives; and

WHEREAS, the annual National Institutes of Health (NIH) investment in suicide prevention research is approximately \$56 million, less than one-seventieth of the investment in HIV and AIDS research; and

WHEREAS, the number of deaths due to HIV and AIDS has decreased approximately 50 percent over the past 13 years, and the number of suicides has increased steadily to more than 41,000 annually, an increase of approximately 37 percent, over the same time period; and

WHEREAS, this disparity between the federal research investment in suicide prevention and HIV and AIDS, when viewed against the contrasting trends in annual deaths from these two causes, represents a social injustice; and

WHEREAS, the Institute of Medicine has stated, "There is every reason to expect that a national consensus to declare war on suicide and to fund research and prevention at a level commensurate with the severity of the problem will be successful, and lead to highly significant discoveries as have the wars on



cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and AIDS" ("Reducing Suicide: A National Imperative," Nation Academy of Sciences, 2002); and

WHEREAS, in the 1990s, Congress established the precedent of doubling the federal investment in the NIH; and

WHEREAS, the [U.S. Surgeon General's] "National Strategy for Suicide Prevention" in 2001, and its revision 10 years later, have failed to stem the tide of increasing suicide; and

WHEREAS, a groundswell of grassroots state and federal suicide prevention efforts since 1998 has failed to stem the annual increase in completed suicides; and

WHEREAS, "This church must participate in social structures critically, for sin also is at work in the world. Social structures and processes combine life-giving and life-destroying dynamics in complex mixtures and in varying degrees. This church, therefore, must unite realism and vision, wisdom and courage, in its social responsibility. It needs constantly to discern when to support and when to confront society's cultural patterns, values, and powers" (ELCA social statement, "Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective"); and

WHEREAS, according to the "Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA," among the purposes of this church in participating in God's mission are to "study social issues and trends, work to discover the causes of oppression and injustice, and develop programs of ministry and advocacy to further human dignity, freedom, justice, and peace in the world" (4.03.); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2015 Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the ELCA Washington Office to advocate that the U.S. Congress double, over five years, the federal funding to the National Institutes of Health for suicide prevention research.

Bishop Gordy thanked Pr. Chilton and the Resolutions and Memorials Committee for their work.

## **Greetings**

Bishop Gordy welcomed the Rev. Michael Grabow, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, to the podium so that he could bring greetings from this global partner of the Southeastern Synod. Bishop Grabow thanked the members of the Southeastern Synod for the hospitality it had shown to him and the members of his church as they toured the synod prior to the assembly. He looked forward to the visit of synod members to Bavaria planned for 2017. He reviewed the history of the relationship between his church and the Southeastern Synod and informed the assembly participants of the historic importance of the city of Augsburg for Lutherans. It was the site of the signing not only of the Augsburg Confession but also of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* in 1999. Bishop Grabow closed his remarks with a word of blessing for the Southeastern Synod.

At the end of his presentation, Bishop Gordy gave Bishop Grabow a gift of bees from the ELCA's Good Gifts program.

## **Elections**

(Tab D)

Bishop Gordy asked Pr. Dena Lane, chair of the Elections Committee, to deliver a report and provide instructions for the next ballot. Pr. Lane stated the results of the ballots taken earlier that day:

Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Lay male, two positions)

Number of valid ballots: 287

Number of invalid ballots: 0

Number needed for election: 144

<b>Michael Franklin</b>	<b>152</b>
<b>Imran Siddiqui</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Keith James</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Jerry Weyrauch</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>John Hunter</b>	<b>57</b>

Bishop Gordy declared the election:

**SESA 2015.16 To declare Mr. Michael Franklin as a voting member of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.**

Bishop Gordy informed the assembly that there would be a run-off election for the second position. That ballot would contain the names of Mr. Imran Siddiqui and Mr. Keith James.

Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Clergy)

Number of valid ballots: 286

Number of invalid ballots: 4

Number needed for election: 144

<b>Joy Blalock</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Eric Murray</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Justin Ask</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Beverly Brown Shaw</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Michael Jannett</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Patti Axel</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Barbara Hunter</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>David Hardy</b>	<b>7</b>

Bishop Gordy stated that there was no election. A run-off ballot would contain the names of Pr. Joy Blalock and Pr. Eric Murray.

Discipline Committee

(Lay male)

Number of valid ballots: 276

Number of invalid ballots: 2

Number needed for election: 139

<b>Bill Grabill</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>John Ballew</b>	<b>71</b>

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.17 To declare Mr. Bill Grabill elected to the Discipline Committee for a six-year term.**

Discipline Committee

(Female Clergy)

Number of valid ballots: 277

Number of invalid ballots: 2

Number needed for election: 139

**Ann Bassett 174**

**Dee Donnelly 103**

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.17 To declare Pr. Ann Bassett elected to the Discipline Committee for a six-year term.**

Discipline Committee

(Male Clergy)

Number of valid ballots: 266

Number of invalid ballots: 0

Number needed for election: 134

**Nathan Hilkert 134**

**Stephen Hilgeman 132**

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.18 To declare Pr. Nathan Hilkert elected to the Discipline Committee for a six-year term.**

Bishop Gordy announced that the names of Pr. Dee Donnelly and Pr. Stephen Hilgeman would appear on the next ballot for the remaining clergy position on the Discipline Committee.

Synod Council

(Youth)

Number of valid ballots: 273

Number of invalid ballots: 3

Number needed for election: 137

**Elise Dawson 160**

**Rachel Cornette 113**

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.19            To declare Ms. Elise Dawson elected to the Synod Council for a two-year term.**

Synod Council

(At-large Clergy)

Number of valid ballots:    280  
Number of invalid ballots:    2  
Number needed for election: 141

**Eric Murray                    192**  
**Gary Soop                      88**

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.20            To declare Pr. Eric Murray elected to the Synod Council to fill a one-year unexpired term.**

Synod Council

(At-large Lay Male)

Number of valid ballots:    268  
Number of invalid ballots:    1  
Number needed for election: 135

**Michael Franklin              167**  
**James Deason                 61**  
**Charles Donald Streisguth 40**

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.21            To declare Mr. Michael Franklin elected to the Synod Council for a two-year term.**

Synod Council

(At-large Lay Female)

Number of valid ballots:    271  
Number of invalid ballots:    2  
Number needed for election: 136

**Karen Boda                     138**  
**Wanza Tina Culpepper        93**  
**Monifa Johnson                40**

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.22            To declare Ms. Karen Boda elected to the Synod Council for a two-year term.**

Pr. Lane explained that the next ballot would contain the names of the nominees for the run-off for the two remaining Churchwide Assembly voting member positions.

Bishop Gordy called on the assembly chaplain, Sr. Sylvia Countess, to pray. Ballots were distributed, and voting was completed.

**Announcements**

Bishop Gordy requested that Vice President Doris Underwood make announcements. She called attention to the times for worship the next day and for the opening of Plenary Session 4. She reminded those who were singing in the Assembly Choir that a rehearsal would begin immediately after the current session closed.

**Closing Prayer**

Bishop Gordy invited Sr. Sylvia Countess, the assembly chaplain, to close the plenary session with prayer.

**Recess**

At 6:08 P.M. Bishop Gordy declared the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly to be in recess until 10:00 a.m. the next day.

## **SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2015**

### **PLENARY SESSION 4 (10:00 A.M.--NOON)**

Prior to the beginning of the fourth plenary session, assembly members participated in worship. The Rev. H. Julian Gordy, bishop of the Southeastern Synod, presided; the Rev. Katherine Pasch, Saint John, Griffin, GA, preached; Mr. Tony Endozo, Good Shepherd, Woodstock, GA, served as the assisting minister. The Rev. Esther Ngomuo, Christ Kiswahili, Nashville, TN, and Mr. Alberto Sifontes, Iglesia Luterana de Cristo, Oakwood, GA, served as lectors.

#### **Call to Order**

Bishop Gordy called the fourth plenary session of the 2015 Southeastern Synod Assembly to order at 10:03 a.m.

#### **Opening Prayer**

Bishop Gordy invited the assembly chaplain, Sr. Sylvia Countess, to open the session with prayer.

#### **Report of the Credentials Committee**

Bishop Gordy asked Ms. Margery Kellar, chair of the Credentials Committee, to present its final report.

Ms. Kellar announced that 346 voting members were in attendance. Of these, 224 were lay persons and 122 were clergy. In addition, there were 40 visitors and 104 volunteers. In total, 490 people attended the assembly.

#### **Elections**

*(Tab D)*

Bishop Gordy called on Ms. Dena Lane, chair of the Elections Committee, to report on the final ballot.

Ms. Lane informed the assembly of the following results:

##### Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Lay male)

Number of valid ballots: 265

Number of invalid ballots: 0

Number needed for election: 133

**Imran Siddiqui** 145

**Keith James** 120

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.23 To declare Mr. Imran Siddiqui elected as a voting member of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.**

Bishop Gordy announced that Mr. Keith James would serve as the alternate if one of the elected lay males is not able to attend the assembly. Based on the voting reported the previous day, Ms. Allison Ward would serve as the alternate if one of the elected lay females were unable to attend the Churchwide Assembly.

Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

(Clergy)

Number of valid ballots: 263  
Number of invalid ballots: 1  
Number needed for election: 132

**Joy Blalock 147**  
**Eric Murray 116**

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.24 To declare Pr. Joy Blalock elected as a voting member of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.**

Bishop Gordy stated that Pr. Eric Murray would serve as the alternate if one of the elected clergy were unable to attend the assembly.

Discipline Committee

(Clergy)

Number of valid ballots: 260  
Number of invalid ballots: 5  
Number needed for election: 131

**Dee Donnelly 132**  
**Stephen Hilgeman 128**

Bishop Gordy declared the election.

**SESA 2015.25 To declare Pr. Dee Donnelly elected to the Discipline Committee for a six-year term.**

Bishop Gordy thanked Pr. Lane and the Elections Committee for their work. He noted that all Synod Council members, including those newly elected, were invited to a luncheon meeting immediately following the close of the assembly. He added that everyone who had been elected during the assembly to a position would be installed later in the plenary session.

**Southeastern Synod Green Team**

Bishop Gordy invited the Rev. Edward Wolf, retired, to update the assembly on the work of the synod's Green Team. Pr. Wolf reviewed the biblical mandate for care of creation and the environmental problems that are evident today. He talked about some of the things people are doing to address those problems individually and collectively. He called attention to the group of

Lutherans Restoring Creation that has developed an Energy Stewards Initiative to help people make changes in their use of energy and the loans from the Mission Investment Fund for items like solar panels and energy-efficient windows. Finally, Pr. Wolf encouraged other people to join the Green Team.

### **Glocal Presentation**

Bishop Gordy welcomed to the dais the Rev. Dr. Moses Penumaka, director of Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) at Pacific Lutheran Seminary of California University and a member of the Glocal team. Dr. Penumaka spoke about the accompaniment model of mission, which is a journey that focuses on getting to know those with whom we have been called to be church and then sharing gifts for the sake of the world. Accompaniment is based on five values: mutuality, inclusivity, vulnerability, empowerment, and sustainability. At the end of Dr. Penumaka's presentation, Bishop Gordy thanked him and the Glocal team and presented him with a gift of bees from the ELCA's Good Gifts program.

### **Women of the ELCA**

Bishop Gordy asked Ms. Patti Austin, president of the Women of the ELCA (WELCA) and member of All Saints, Lilburn, GA, to bring greetings from her organization and talk about its work. Ms. Austin greeted the assembly on behalf of WELCA and its executive director, Ms. Linda Post. Ms. Austin reminded assembly participants of WELCA's purpose statement as a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. She outlined the ministries that her organization undertakes, including development of Bible studies and other resources, quilt-making, providing scholarships and grants for Lutheran women, and empowering of women for leadership. She asked for continued prayers and support of WELCA.

### **Southeastern Synod Women of the ELCA**

Bishop Gordy introduced Ms. Louise Iconis, president of the Southeastern Synod Women of the ELCA and a member of Messiah Lutheran Church, Decatur, GA. Ms. Iconis detailed the specific ministries her group carries out, including raising money and gifts for social service organizations and charities in the synods as well as support for women in global partner churches. Ms. Iconis invited the women present to participate in the 28<sup>th</sup> annual convention, "Redeeming Water," September 18-20, 2015, on St. Simon's Island, GA.

### **Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta (LTCA)**

Bishop Gordy called on Dr. Everett Flanigan, director for evangelical mission and administrative dean of LTCA, for a report. Dr. Flanigan described the center's origin 27 years ago as a place to prepare ecumenical, multicultural, and multiracial leaders. He pointed out that today LTCA works primarily in four areas: Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM), lay schools, public theology, and Lutheran identity. He reminded those present that although the center is based in Atlanta, it serves the whole synod and is interested in finding more ways to do so.



## **Southeastern Synod Campus Ministry**

Bishop Gordy requested that Ms. Rachel Alley, assistant to the bishop for Young Adult and Youth Ministries and liaison to campus ministry, give an overview of the activities of the various campus ministries in the Southeastern Synod. Bishop Gordy added that \$7,199.30 had been received for campus ministry through the offerings given during the assembly. (Subsequently, other amounts were added to this total.)

Ms. Alley explained that campus ministries are funded by the mission support that congregations send to the synod as well as by individual donations. She provided details about the work at each of the campus ministry sites. She closed her presentation by thanking those involved in campus ministry and those who had donated to campus ministry through their assembly worship offerings.

## **Disaster Ministry Committee**

Bishop Gordy invited the Rev. Morgan Gordy, Christ, Nashville, TN, chair of the Disaster Committee, to update the assembly on recovery and response work going on in the synod and around the world. Pr. Gordy talked about disaster work in the synod, including the response in the aftermath of tornadoes in Mississippi and Alabama, along with congregations and social ministry organizations. She also called attention to the disaster planning work in which the committee was engaged synodically and regionally. She noted that a regional gathering of Lutheran disaster response coordinators would be held in the synod in a few weeks. Pr. Gordy celebrated the partnership that her committee has with Lutheran Disaster Response and thanked Thrivent Financial Services for providing each assembly voting member with a thumb drive containing resources for disaster planning in congregations. She asked that congregations and individuals continue their support for Lutheran Disaster Response as it worked with Lutheran World Relief in responding to disasters across the world. Pr. Gordy thanked those involved with disaster response, recovery, and planning.

## **Southeastern Synod Lutheran Youth Organization (SESLYO)**

Bishop Gordy introduced Carolyn Einertson, current SESLYO chair, and Lauren Luetgers, chair-elect. Ms. Einertson explained SESLYO's mission: to empower youth to serve as leaders, grow as disciples in Christ, and acts as a voice for youth in the synod. The theme of the year is "Together We Can." Together, Ms. Einertson and Ms. Luetgers combined on a presentation that informed the synod about past and future SESLYO activities, including the upcoming trip to the ELCA Youth Gathering in Detroit.

## **Report of the Reference and Counsel Committee**

*(Tab G)*

Bishop Gordy called on Pr. Delmer Chilton, chair of the Reference and Counsel Committee, to present the final resolution. Pr. Chilton read the following resolution, which the assembly approved with acclamation:

**SESA 2015.26      To approve the following resolution of thanks:**

**A Resolution of Thanks at the 2015 Assembly of the  
Southeastern Synod of the ELCA**

RESOLVED, that the voting members of the 2015 Assembly of the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America offer thanks and prayerful support to our bishop, our officers, our synod staff, and our deans for their faithfulness in working for and with us, and for their loving support of us in our life together; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we offer thanks, and prayers for traveling mercies, to Bishop Grabow and the delegation from our Bavarian partner church; the Rev. Dr. Mark Allan Powell, Pastor Ronald Glusenkamp, Pastor Sunitha Mortha, Dr. Moses Penumaka, the Glocal musicians, and those representing Novus Way; their presence among us and their witness to us is a reminder that the Church—the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the vine and the branches, the temple of the Holy Spirit, a house built of living stone—is larger, more beautiful, and has a brighter future than any of us can ever imagine; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we offer thanks to all those who offered their service to the church through the election process, to those who were elected, and to those who continue to serve; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we offer thanks to the Nashville Kiswahili Worshiping Community for the handmade assembly bags and to all our congregations for sending 200 bags of non-perishable food to share with our partner in ministry, Greater Birmingham Ministries of Alabama; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we offer thanks to those who took care of us throughout this assembly: the Synod Assembly Committee, the various other committees, our Synod Parliamentarian, Pastor Warren Casiday, our Synod Assembly chaplain, Sister Sylvia Countess, the Synod Assembly worship team and their volunteers and musicians, SESLYO, the ELCA Mission Investment Fund and Thrivent Financial for their financial support of this gathering and their ongoing partnership with us in the Gospel, and, finally, the hotel and convention center staff and technical crew.

### **World Hunger Ministry Video**

Bishop Gordy called attention to the ministry of St. Paul's, Nashville, TN, and St. Timothy, Hendersonville, TN, which, through the ministry of Vicar Monica Weber, support urban hunger ministries while educating suburban Lutherans about the prevalence of hunger in America today. The video telling the story of these ministries was created and produced by Vicar Weber.

### **Recognition of Congregational Anniversaries**

Bishop Gordy recognized the anniversaries of the following congregations and gave thanks for their faithful witness to the Gospel:

#### 25 Years

- Shepherd of the Hills, Birmingham, AL
- Messiah, Madison, AL
- Christ the King, Cumming, GA
- Christ, Fairfield Glade, TN

## 50 Years

- St. Timothy, Hendersonville, TN
- Bethel, Biloxi, MS

## **Recognition of Service**

Bishop Gordy and Vice President Doris Underwood honored the following for their service on the Synod Council as their terms were completed:

- Mr. Gary Pederson
- Pr. Gary Soop
- AIM Linda Larson
- Pr. Nathan Hilbert
- Mr. Tony Endozo
- Mr. Hilton Austin
- Mr. John Baumgart.

Bishop Gordy expressed gratitude for the work of the assembly committees—Credentials Committee, Elections Committee, Minutes Committee, Reference and Counsel Committee—as well as for the work of the members of the Assembly Planning Committee: Ms. Bernice Bland, chair, Ms. Linda Few, Pr. Darryl Kiehl, Ms. Barbara Schwanebeck, Mr. Jim Ward, and Ms. Lorraine Dorrough.

## **Announcement of the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly**

Bishop Gordy announced that the 2016 Synod Assembly would be held on May 27-29 under the theme “We Are Lutheran” at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Center in Birmingham, AL.

## **Thank God I’m Fed Project**

Bishop Gordy thanked all those who had participated in the Thank God I’m Fed project. Over 200 bags of nonperishable foods had been donated to local families who are food insecure.

## **Installation of Those Elected to Office**

Bishop Gordy installed into office those who had been elected at the assembly:

### Synod Treasurer

Mr. Lee Smith

### Discipline Committee

Pr. Ann Bassett, Pr. Dee Donnelly, Mr. Bill Grabill, Pr. Nathan Hilbert

### Consultation Committee

Ms. Wanza Tina Culpepper, Pr. Jill Henning, Mr. Imran Siddiqui

### Synod Council

Mr. Jim Hazel (Conference 1), Pr. Michelle Kuhlmann (Conference 2), Mr. Imran Siddiqui (Conference 3), Pr. Norbert Hahn (Conference 4), Pr. Erik Allen (Conference 5), Mr. Michael Huseth (Conference 9), Ms. Elise Dawson (Youth), Pr. Eric Murray (at-large), Mr. Michael Franklin (at-large), Ms. Karen Boda (at-large)

### 2016 Churchwide Assembly Voting Members

Vice President Doris Underwood, Pr. Joy Blalock, Ms. Elise Dawson, Mr. Michael Franklin, Pr. Jill Henning, Mr. Jesse Jackson, Pr. Randy Jones, Ms. Nicole Larsen, Ms. Anna Gordy Montgomery, Mr. Gary Pederson, Mr. Imran Siddiqui. Alternates: Mr. Keith James, Pr. Eric Murray, Ms. Allison Ward.

### SESLYO

Ms. Lauren Luetgers (chair), Ms. Emma Liner (chair-elect); Ms. Sequoya McLendon (secretary), Ms. Emily Nord (director of communications), Mr. Akugbe Imudia (multicultural), Mr. Carter Crenshaw (chaplain), Ms. Savannah Harvil (Conference 2), Ms. Ellie Thompson (Conference 3), Mr. Tyler McIntyre (Conference 8), Mr. Peyton Boyer (Conference 9), Pr. Kevin Martin (TN adult representative), Ms. Sue Tyler (TN adult representative), Mr. Chawn Felix (GA adult representative), Mr. Ben Witcher (GA adult representative), Ms. Tina Culpepper (GA adult representative), Ms. Catalina Ontiveros (AL adult representative), Pr. Randy Jones (AL adult representative), Ms. Rachel Alley (Synod adult representative).

### **Order for Closing an Assembly**

*(Tab J)*

Bishop Gordy led the assembly in the order for closing.

### **Adjournment**

The 2015 Southeastern Synod Assembly, meeting in the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Center, Birmingham, AL, adjourned at 12:11 P.M.