

ELCA Southeastern Synod Assembly
May 27-29, 2016
Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Center
Birmingham, Alabama
Final Minutes

FRIDAY, MAY 27, 2016

PLENARY SESSION 1 (12:00-2:30 P.M.)

Call to Order

The Rev. H. Julian Gordy, bishop, called the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly to order at 12:03 p.m. (CDT).

Order for Opening of an Assembly

(Tab J)

Bishop Gordy led the assembly in the order for opening of an assembly.

Assembly Objectives

Bishop Gordy announced the purposes of the assembly:

- Worship the Triune God who created us, sustains us, and heals the world;
- Pray together and be fed by Word and Sacrament;
- Celebrate twenty-eight years of ministry together as the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
- Give witness to our unity in Christ, even when we disagree with one another;
- Share in God's mission through the work of our congregations, our agencies, this synod, this church—the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—and our ecumenical and global partners;
- Encourage respectful, mutual conversation and moral deliberation; and
- Under the sure guidance of the Holy Spirit, make prayerful decisions on behalf of the congregations and people of this synod.

Bishop Gordy reminded the assembly that the lighted candle on the dais reminds us that the risen Christ is always among us as we do our work in God's name.

Declaration of Bounds

Bishop Gordy described the bounds of the Assembly and announced some housekeeping details.

Opening Prayer: Assembly Chaplain

Bishop Gordy announced that the chaplain for the assembly was the Rev. Dr. Brian Hooper. He stated that Pastor Hooper's call from the Southeastern Synod Council is to his practice of pastoral psychotherapy, where he sees individuals and couples and has a specialty in working with gay men and with women who have found themselves married to gay men. Pastor

Hooper also serves part time as the minister of pastoral care at First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Nashville where his responsibilities include visitation, the catechumenate, and marriage ministry.

Pastor Hooper opened the meeting with prayer.

Report of the Credentials Committee

Bishop Gordy called to the podium Mr. Jon Scheumann, member of Christ Our Shepherd, Peachtree City, GA, and the chair of the Credentials Committee, to provide the initial report of the Credentials Committee.

Mr. Scheumann stated that the total number of voting members pre-registered was 329 and the total number of voting members in attendance was 183.

The chair declared that a quorum of voting members was present.

Adoption of the Agenda

(Tab A)

Bishop Gordy introduced the proposed action.

SESA 2016.01.

That the agenda for the four plenary sessions and two workshop sessions be adopted as the Orders of the Day.

Adoption of the Rules of Organization and Procedure

(Tab I, Exhibit 1)

Bishop Gordy highlighted a number of recommended changes to the previously proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure. The first two changes were recommended by the Synod Council at its January 2016 meeting and were reflected in the Proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure that were posted as Exhibit 1 prior to Thursday evening. Those changes are as follows:

- Page 7, item #19(d) now reads: “Resolutions must be submitted to the synod office by 5:00 p.m. on the Friday that precedes by six weeks the start of a synod assembly, in order to be considered by that assembly’s Committee on Reference and Counsel.” The change is the deadline, which moves from three weeks prior to the synod assembly to six weeks prior. The reason for this change is to allow the Reference and Counsel Committee ample time to receive and prepare the Resolutions and Memorials received for the assembly’s consideration. This assembly, with nine resolutions and memorials, demonstrated that three weeks is just not enough time for the committee to do its work and for appropriate time for their consideration to be included in the assembly agenda.
- Page 11, item #29, the references to “rental fees” for exhibitors were replaced with the term “exhibitor fees” in order to give the assembly planner some discretion in setting exhibitor fees to cover actual costs.

The following changes were approved by the Synod Council at its meeting on Thursday, May 26, 2016, and are now included in Exhibit 1 as it is posted. These changes to the rules are proposed to make them consistent with amendments to the continuing resolutions of the Southeastern Synod’s *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions*, also approved by the

Synod Council at its May 26, 2016, meeting. Those changes ensure that language in the synod's constitution is consistent with that of the ELCA's *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* and with that of the churchwide organization.

The language that describes the formula that congregations should use to elect the number of voting members that they can send to Assembly was changed to be consistent with the language in the synod's continuing resolutions. It is important to note that the formula itself was not changed.

- Also, references to "Transition" pastor were changed to "Interim" pastor; references to "Licensed Lay" ministers were changed to "synodically authorized ministers."
- Finally, on page 1, at the very bottom of the page, the words "as reported in the previous year's official parochial report" were added to clarify how and when the number of voting members will be calculated

SESA 2016.02.

That the Rules of Organization and Procedure recommended by the Synod Council be adopted.

Introduction of the Parliamentarian

Bishop Gordy introduced the assembly's parliamentarian. The Reverend Dr. Warren Casiday was serving in that role for the sixth consecutive year. An ordained pastor in the United Church of Christ, Pr. Casiday served for 38 years in pastoral ministry before retiring a few years previously. Since then he has served as interim pastor in this synod, at St. Mark's, Huntsville, and in the North Carolina Synod.

Robert's Rules of Order Quick Reference Guide

(Tab I, Exhibit 2)

Bishop Gordy called attention to the Robert's Rules of Order Quick Reference Guide in Tab I, Exhibit 2. He then explained what it means to be an assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Bishop Gordy also talked about the purpose of Robert's Rules, the use of the yellow point-of-information card, and the need for voting members to read biographical materials of nominees prior to elections.

GARY Talk: Being a Synod Assembly Voting Member

Bishop Gordy invited Mr. Gary Pederson, member of Christ Our Shepherd in Peachtree City, GA, and research leader of a seed bank for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to present a talk on the duties of being voting members for the Southeastern Synod Assembly.

In a light-hearted but ultimately serious talk, Mr. Pederson described the responsibilities of voting members both during and after the assembly, including the duty of reporting assembly actions to their congregations. He concluded by saying, "Be serious. Be open. Be curious. Be attuned. Be Lutheran. And say amen."

Report of the Bishop

(Tab B)

Bishop Gordy opened his address to the assembly by noting that he would not be reading his written report, which had been posted recently, but would instead provide some highlights of the upcoming assembly and the work of the synod.

He introduced distinguished guests of the assembly: Bishop Terry Kee of the Lutheran Church in Singapore, as well as Bishop Aaron Yap and Pastor Thomas Low, secretary, of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia. He explained that partnership agreements with both church bodies would be signed during the assembly. Other honored guests included Dr. Ossama Bahloul, imam and resident scholar of the Islamic Center of Nashville, and Mr. Carlos Peña, ELCA vice president and churchwide representative to the assembly. The Rev. Dr. Mary Sue Dreier of the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary would lead Bible studies on the theme of “We Are Lutheran” and discuss how Lutheran identity informs our mission.

Bishop Gordy called attention to the following:

- The abundance of music and musicians bringing their gifts to the assembly;
- Groundbreaking for the McKanna-Sandrock conference center at Lutheranch;
- Reception of a new congregation: Celebration of Grace, Canton, GA.;
- Observance of the 275th anniversary of Lutheran Church of the Ascension, Savannah, GA.;
- Accomplishments of youth and young adults;
- The necessity of moving the synod office and the planning underway for doing so;
- The fall leadership convocation, focused on a conversation about race;
- The need for congregations to provide mission support to the synod and the churchwide organization.

Bishop Gordy concluded his report by offering gratitude to the synod staff and volunteers as well as to deans and all who support the work of the synod.

Report of the Nominating Committee

(Tab D)

Bishop Gordy asked Ms. Elaine Schwartz, member of Amazing Grace, Lawrenceville, GA, and chair of the Nominating Committee, to bring the report of the committee.

Ms. Schwartz indicated that there were two openings on the synod’s Consultation Committee, both of which were designated for clergy. She explained that the first position was for a one-year unexpired term to June 2017. She announced that the Nominating Committee had nominated Pastor C. Hope Knobler for this position. Bishop Gordy called for nominations from the floor. There being none, he called for a vote to elect Pastor Knobler to the position.

SESA 2016.03.

To elect the following:

Consultation Committee (clergy)

Term to June 2017

Pastor C. Hope Knobler

Ms. Schwartz continued with her report, stating that the other clergy opening on the Consultation Committee is for a three-year unexpired term to June 2019. The Nominating Committee had nominated Pastor Scott Seeke. Bishop Gordy called for nominations from the floor. There being none, he called for a vote to elect Pastor Seeke to the position.

SESA 2016.04.

To elect the following:

Consultation Committee (clergy)

Term to June 2019

Pastor Scott Seeke

Ms. Schwartz explained that the Nominating Committee is also the group charged with nominating candidates for the young adult position on the Synod Council. The position up for election is for a two-year term to June 2018. Nominees must be lay persons between the ages of 18 and 30; both males and females are eligible. For the position of young adult member of the Synod Council, the Nominating Committee nominated the following: Ms. Madeline Burkhardt and Ms. Emily Jackson. Bishop Gordy called for nominations from the floor. There being none, nominations were closed.

Ms. Schwartz reminded the assembly that elections for several other positions on the Synod Council also would take place during the assembly. Conference 4 and Conferences 6 through 9 would be nominating conference representatives, which the assembly would be asked to ratify later in the meeting. She called attention to the schedule for conference caucuses and the information about nominations on pages D-1 and D-7.

Ms. Schwartz added that the assembly also would be electing persons to fill two at-large positions on the Synod Council. One of the at-large positions was designated for a pastor and the other at-large position was to be filled by a lay person. Both males and females were eligible for the clergy position. After the results of the conference caucuses are known, it will be clear whether the gender for the lay position must be designated. That information would be available later in the evening on the Assembly app and website.

Ms. Schwartz informed the assembly that for the at-large clergy position on the Synod Council, to fill a two year term to June 2018, the Synod Council has nominated the following: Pastor Delmer Chilton and Pastor Randy Jones. Bishop Gordy called for additional nominations. There being none, he stated that nominations for this position were closed.

Ms. Schwartz stated that the Synod Council had approved contingent nominations for the at-large lay position on the Council. Those nominated for a two-year term on the Synod Council, contingent on the at-large lay position being designated for a lay male at a later point during the assembly, are the following:

Mr. Bert Blood

Mr. Eugene Davis

Mr. Chawn Felix

Mr. Gary Pederson

Bishop Gordy asked for further nominations from the floor. There being none, nominations for this position were closed.

Ms. Schwartz continued by saying that the person nominated for a two-year term on the Synod Council, contingent on the at-large lay position being designated for a lay female at a later point during the assembly, is the following:

Ms. Rundi Ream

Bishop Gordy asked for nominations from the floor. There being none, he announced that nominations for this position were closed.

Ms. Schwartz indicated that the assembly also would be voting to nominate two lay males to serve on the ELCA Church Council for a six-year term. Bishop Gordy explained the process used for selecting the nominees, which had resulted in three names. He noted that the names of two of the three nominees would be forwarded to the ELCA 2016 Churchwide Assembly for election. Ms. Schwartz announced that the Nominating Committee, following the procedure established by the Synod Council, proposed that the following people be nominated:

Mr. Hilton Austin

Mr. Gary Pederson

Mr. Mike Wessel

Bishop Gordy called for nominations from the floor. There being none, he announced that nominations were closed.

Ms. Schwartz stated that the initial report of the Elections Committee was concluded.

Key Note and Bible Study Session 1

Bishop Gordy introduced the keynote presenter and Bible study leader for the assembly. He stated that the Rev. Dr. Mary Sue Dreier began as Associate Professor of Pastoral Care and Missional Leadership at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (LTSS) in the fall of 2013. Her primary responsibility as a full-time member of the faculty is to help students form their pastoral identities, not only for the nurturing of congregations internally, but also for the cultivation of congregational action in the world. Bishop Gordy noted that before the 2015-2016 academic year, Dr. Dreier was appointed by seminary provost Dr. Clayton Schmitt to serve as the interim associate dean at the School of Theology.

Pastor Dreier expressed her gratitude for the assembly's offerings, which were designated for the establishment of a chair in Lutheran studies chair at LTSS. She announced that in her presentations the assembly would dwell in God's word under the theme of "We Are Lutheran." She pointed out that three core Lutheran commitments are that they are graced, freed, and sent. This is what it means to be Lutheran.

Pastor Dreier read the scriptural focus for her first presentation: Romans 5:1-5, one of the readings for Trinity Sunday. She asked members of the assembly to converse with one another about what the reading said to them.

Pastor Dreier emphasized that the text from Romans reminds us that because of God's overabundant grace, we can take whatever else life hands us. God lifts us out of suffering; we are standing in the water of grace. It's all about grace. She closed her talk by reminding assembly participants of three things: grace is sufficient; as Lutherans we are graced; and we can proceed out of abundance, not scarcity, because we have what we need. We can be hopeful because we see that grace is not going to dry up. So we also have something to do with our lives: spread grace around.

Greetings from the Mission Investment Fund

Bishop Gordy welcomed to the dais Mr. Jerry Johnson, the Southeast regional manager for the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA (MIF). Mr. Johnson spoke about the services of the MIF and showed a video that demonstrated some of its work.

Report of the Reference and Counsel Committee

(Tab G)

Bishop Gordy called on the Rev. Randy Jones, pastor of Messiah, Montgomery, AL, and chair of the Reference and Counsel Committee, to bring the report of that committee and introduce the first resolution for consideration by the assembly. Bishop Gordy reviewed the procedure for the consideration of resolutions.

Bishop Gordy asked the chaplain, Pastor Hooper, to begin the assembly's deliberations with prayer. Following prayer, he invited Pastor Jones to introduce the first resolution for consideration.

Pastor Jones thanked the members of the committee. He announced that there were nine resolutions or memorials under consideration at the assembly. He introduced resolution 2016-01, Resolution on Youth, and announced that the Reference and Counsel Committee recommended adoption of the resolution.

Moved;

Seconded: To approve the following resolution:

Resolution on Youth (2016-01)

Whereas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is one of the largest Christian denominations in North America, with over 3,760,000 members in over 9,000 congregations; and

Whereas, the Southeastern Synod Lutheran Youth Organization (SESLYO) is a part of the ELCA, representing youth in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee; and

Whereas, SESLYO empowers youth to serve as leaders and provides a voice for youth within the Southeastern Synod; and

Whereas, SESLYO held its annual youth assembly in Covington, Georgia, on March 11-13, 2016; and

Whereas, the theme of the 2016 conference was "Who We Are," which is based on Ephesians 2:8: "for by grace you are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"; and

Whereas, at the 2016 conference the youth discussed ways to better serve their congregations and communities; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Council encourage all congregations of the Synod to:

1. Work with the younger youth in our congregations to foster stronger relationships and faith experiences; and,
2. Include all youth in activities regardless of ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, cultural heritage, or race; and,
3. Inform all youth of scholarship and post-secondary opportunities to continue their faith journeys; and,
4. Promote fund raising within congregations to allow equal opportunity for all youth to participate in youth retreats and synodical camps; and,
5. Provide opportunities for the youth to help their neighbors in times of need, both locally and globally; and,
6. Acknowledge congregationally and synod-wide the fact that the youth are the church of today and should be represented and offered opportunities to further their faith to create a strong foundation for the mission and future of the church.

Bishop Gordy opened the floor for discussion of the resolution.

The chair recognized the Rev. Robert Loshuertos, All Saints, Huntsville, AL, who moved an amendment. His motion was seconded.

Moved;

Seconded: To strike point #4.

Pastor Loshuertos spoke to his amendment, saying that the synod should encourage stewardship rather than fund-raising.

The Rev. Jim Dumond, Reformation, Greenville, TN, moved an amendment to the amendment. The amendment was seconded.

Moved;

Seconded: To amend point #4 to read: Promote fund raising as approved by the Congregation Council within congregations to allow equal opportunity for all youth to participate in youth retreats and synodical camps;

Bishop Gordy explained that the assembly would now debate the substitute amendment.

Pastor Kim Stover, All Saints, Lilburn, GA, stated that he was against the amendment because he wanted to respect the principle of hearing the voice of SESLYO and honoring it.

There being no further debate, Bishop Gordy called for a vote on the substitute amendment.

Moved;

Seconded:

Defeated: To amend point #4 to read: Promote fund raising as approved by the Congregation Council within congregations to allow equal opportunity for all youth to participate in youth retreats and synodical camps;

Pastor Ed Myers, Our Saviors, TN, proposed a substitute amendment. It was seconded.

Moved;

Seconded: To amend point #4 to read: Promote funding within congregations to allow equal opportunity for all youth to participate in youth retreats and synodical camps;

Ms. Karen Wylie, Shepherd of the Lake, TN, observed that with or without point #4 fundraising in congregations is not prohibited. She asked whether this part of the resolution is about promoting funding or promoting equal access.

Pastor Steven Hilgeman, Redeemer, Savannah, GA, pointed out that elimination of the funding aspect weakened the whole resolution. Participation in SESLYO activities needs to be funded.

There being no further debate, Bishop Gordy called for a vote on the amendment on the floor.

Moved;

Seconded;

Approved: To amend point #4 to read: Promote **funding** within congregations to allow equal opportunity for all youth to participate in youth retreats and synodical camps;

Mr. Dave Hrivnak, Holy Trinity, Kingsport, TN moved another amendment. His motion was seconded:

Moved;

Seconded: To amend point #2 so that it reads: Include all youth in activities **regardless of ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, cultural heritage, or race;**

Mr. Keith James, Christ the Lord, spoke against the amendment, pointing out that naming these qualities is important because SESLYO is dedicated to promoting inclusivity.

Ms. Gwen Taylor, St. John's, Griffin, also spoke against the amendment because it altered what the youth who drafted the resolution perceive as a real problem. There being no further debate, Bishop Gordy called for a vote on the proposed amendment.

Moved;

Seconded;

Defeated: To amend point #2 so that it reads: Include all youth in activities **regardless of ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, cultural heritage, or race;**

There being no further speakers on the resolution, Bishop Gordy called for a vote on the resolution as amended:

SESA 2016.04

To approve the following resolution:

Resolution on Youth (2016-01)

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Council encourage all congregations of the Synod to:

- 1. Work with the younger youth in our congregations to foster stronger relationships and faith experiences; and,**
- 2. Include all youth in activities regardless of ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, cultural heritage, or race; and,**
- 3. Inform all youth of scholarship and post-secondary opportunities to continue their faith journeys; and,**
- 4. Promote funding within congregations to allow equal opportunity for all youth to participate in youth retreats and synodical camps; and,**
- 5. Provide opportunities for the youth to help their neighbors in times of need, both locally and globally; and,**
- 6. Acknowledge congregationally and synod-wide the fact that the youth are the church of today and should be represented and offered opportunities to further their faith to create a strong foundation for the mission and future of the church.**

Extension of Plenary Session

Bishop Gordy asked for and received the assembly's approval for a five-minute extension of the current plenary session.

Recognition of Rostered Persons' Anniversaries of Ordination, Commissioning, and Consecration

(Tab B)

Bishop Gordy led the assembly in the recognition of the service of the following persons:

5th - 2011

The Rev. Stephen D. Friedrich - 10/29

The Rev. Timothy A. Morgan - 7/30

Ms. Noel C. Reagan, AIM - 4/10

The Rev. J. Matthew Steinhauer - 1/2

10th - 2006

Ms. Michelle B. Angalet, AIM - 7/23

The Rev. Helen M. Hollingsworth - 11/11

The Rev. Julie A. Crosby - 10/22

The Rev. Sandra K. Johnson - 6/25

15th - 2001

The Rev. David Armstrong-Reiner - 7/1

The Rev. Elizabeth C. Birkholz - 8/18

The Rev. E. Barbara Gibson - 9/23

The Rev. Alex L. Hoffner - 8/25

Ms. Judy A. Knapp, DM - 2/18

The Rev. T. Scott Landrum - 3/25

The Rev. Shirley M. Redmond - 3/10

The Rev. Scott J. Seeke - 7/29

20th - 1996

The Rev. Mary E. Armstrong-Reiner - 10/20

The Rev. Virginia K. Barnes - 2/17

The Rev. Ronald S. Bonner - 7/20

The Rev. Nancy K. Christensen - 7/14

The Rev. Marie F. Hatcher - 3/10

The Rev. Jeffrey K. Lott - 3/10

The Rev. Andrew J. Seibert - 8/17

The Rev. Edward S. Wolff - 7/20

25th - 1991

The Rev. Gretchen E. Person - 9/8

The Rev. Devin L. Strong - 6/29

The Rev. Jack A. Wilder, Jr. - 10/4

The Rev. Leslie B. Wilder - 8/3

30th - 1986

The Rev. Thomas E. Clark, Jr. - 5/18
The Rev. Linda J. Hilliard - 6/20
The Rev. Dena C. Lane - 5/18
The Rev. Randal G. Palm - 6/8

35th - 1981

The Rev. Paul W. Baumgartner - 5/31
The Rev. Paul D. Hanson - 5/17
The Rev. Evon O. Flesberg - 6/14
The Rev. David B. Helfrich - 6/28
The Rev. James W. Nipper - 6/7
The Rev. Scott E. Peterson - 11/1
The Rev. William H. Roen - 8/30
The Rev. F. Clay Seneker - 5/31

40th - 1976

The Rev. Jonathan H. Edwards - 7/11
The Rev. Darrell D. Golnitz - 6/27
The Rev. Ronald C. Grunke - 6/13
The Rev. David M. Hood - 6/8
The Rev. James R. Thomas - 9/10

45th - 1971

Ms. Mary M. Golnitz, AIM - 8/15
The Rev. Jeffrey M. Halenza - 6/6
The Rev. Harvey L. Huntley, Jr. - 12/15
The Rev. Marcus J. Miller - 6/20
The Rev. John M. Weber - 6/14

55th - 1961

The Rev. Sigurd J. Arnesen, Jr. - 6/11
The Rev. Robert L. Hartenfeld - 6/25
The Rev. Robert F. Sims - 6/11
The Rev. Donald R. Strandlund - 6/18
The Rev. Allen J. Swanson - 6/18
The Rev. Leonard V. Sylte - 6/11
The Rev. Arnold M. Walker, Jr. - 6/18

60th - 1956

The Rev. Eugene W. Bensch - 6/17
The Rev. Edwin R. Brigham - 5/23
The Rev. John H. Ohsiek, Jr. - 5/27

Total Years of Rostered Ministry = 1830

Announcements

At the request of Bishop Gordy, Mr. Lee Smith, synod treasurer, provided announcements to the assembly.

Closing Prayer

The Rev. Brian Hooper, chaplain, closed the plenary session with prayer.

Recess

The first plenary session of the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly concluded at 2:40 p.m. (CDT). Following the plenary session, the assembly participants gathered for worship. Workshop Session 1 took place from 4:30-6:00 p.m., after which conference caucuses began at 6:00 p.m. An evening of Beer and Hymns began at 8:00 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 28, 2016

PLENARY SESSION 2 (8:30-10:30 A.M.)

Call to Order

Prior to the opening of Plenary Session 2, music was provided by Dr. Kelly “Glow” Williams. Bishop H. Julian Gordy reconvened the assembly at 8:37 a.m.

Opening Prayer

At the invitation of Bishop Gordy, Pastor Brian Hooper, assembly chaplain, opened the session with prayer.

Thanks and Introduction

Bishop Gordy introduced Dr. Kelly “Glow” Williams, to the assembly and thanked her for her introductory music. He stated that Dr. Williams is an award-winning inspirational recording artist who uses hip hop to rekindle a passion for prayer and renewal in youth and young adults. In 2015, she received the Gospel Choice Award for Best Holy Hip Hop Artist. Currently, she tours as a full-time musician and serves as mission developer of the Be Free Ministry, which is a synodically authorized worshipping community (SAWC) in the Southeastern Synod, based in the metropolitan Atlanta area. Dr. Williams is a member of St. Luke Lutheran Church in McDonough, GA.

Report of the Credentials Committee

Bishop Gordy called on Mr. Jon Schuemann, chair of the Credentials Committee, for the committee’s second report. Mr. Schuemann announced that the total number of voting members in attendance was 337.

Election Procedure

(Tab D)

Bishop Gordy invited to the podium the Rev. Terri Stagner-Collier, chair of the Elections Committee and pastor of Cross of Life in Roswell, GA, to introduce the first ballot.

Pastor Stagner-Collier informed assembly participants that biographical information for all of the nominees was contained in Section D of the guidebook and that several copies of the new biographies had been placed on the assembly hall tables this morning. She announced that the first order of business for the assembly’s consideration was ratification of conference nominees for the Synod Council. The nominees for two-year terms on the Synod Council, beginning Sunday, were the following:

Conference 6 – Richard Anger, St. Paul’s, Maryville, TN

Conference 7 – Jed Deason, St. Mark’s, Huntsville, AL

Conference 8 – Pastor Lewis Groce, St. Timothy, Hendersonville, TN

Conference 9 – Edwin Bryant, Christus Victor, Ocean Springs, MS

In addition, Pastor Stagner-Collier said that Conference 4 nominated Pastor Kim Stover from All Saints in Lilburn, GA, to fill a one-year unexpired term on the Synod Council.

Bishop Gordy asked for a motion and a second to ratify the election of the nominees. Those being received, he called for a voice vote on the motion.

SESA 2016.05

To ratify the election of the following to two-year terms on the Synod Council, beginning at the close of the 2016 Synod Assembly:

- **Conference 6 – Richard Anger, St. Paul’s, Maryville, TN**
- **Conference 7 – Jed Deason, St. Mark’s, Huntsville, AL**
- **Conference 8 – Pastor Lewis Groce, St. Timothy, Hendersonville, TN**
- **Conference 9 – Edwin Bryant, Christus Victor, Ocean Springs, MS; and**

To ratify the election of the following to a one-year term on the Synod Council, beginning at the close of the 2016 Synod Assembly:

- **Conference 4 – Pastor Kim Stover, All Saints in Lilburn, GA.**

Bishop Gordy explained that because all of those just elected were male, the at-large lay Synod Council position must be designated to be filled by a female. Since there was only one female nominated yesterday, he declared that Ms. Rundi Ream had been elected to an at large-position on the Synod Council for a two-year term.

SESA: 2016.06

To elect Ms. Rundi Ream, Holy Trinity, Nashville, TN, to an at-large position on the Synod Council for a two-year term, beginning at the close of the 2016 Synod Assembly.

Pastor Stagner then provided the assembly with detailed voting instructions. After calling for questions about the balloting process, Bishop Gordy asked Pastor Hooper, assembly chaplain, to pray. Ballots then were distributed.

Additional Thanks and Recognition

Bishop Gordy thanked Ms. Linda Few for her artwork that served as the 2016 Synod Assembly logo. He stated that Ms. Few for several years also has managed the assembly’s AV needs, along with the staff of PSAV at the convention complex. This year she created the logo, highlighting Luther’s rose, for the “We Are Lutheran” theme.

Bishop Gordy acknowledged that when a number of young adults from this synod and the work that they are doing were recognized the previous day, Ms. Jennifer Jarvie, Resurrection, Newnan, who serves as an ELCA missionary in Japan, was inadvertently omitted. Ms. Jarvie teaches English at Hongo Center, which is part of Hongo Lutheran Church in Tokyo, and at Katarina, a girls’ dormitory in Tokyo.

Trip Announcement

Bishop Gordy announced that the Southeastern Synod has the pleasure of partnering with Dr. Lamontte Luker of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary to offer a Holy Land study program. This 13-day trip is scheduled for January 2017 and is being offered for lay people, rostered leaders, and those in the candidacy process preparing for rostered ministry, for whom

the study trip meets the course requirements for Multicultural Immersion. A special fund has been developed to accept offerings to help cover the cost for seminarians from our synod. Dr. Luker is also offering scholarship funds for 10 seminarians.

Bishop Gordy added that Diaconal Minister Allison Ward and her husband Jim are organizing this trip. Pastor Harry Tedrow and his wife, Barbara, who have been on this trip before, are also helping to gather people for the experience. So far 27 have registered, but there is still room. The Tedrows have offered to go to anywhere in the synod and do a presentation about the Holy Land and the trip. On August 5 there will be one in Savannah at the Wards' home. Brochures are on the information table on the third floor; the Wards and the Tedrows would be glad to answer any questions. There is also a link under the Resource tab on the Assembly website and app with details and registration information.

Congregational Anniversaries

Bishop Gordy indicated that two congregations were celebrating significant anniversaries this year. St. Luke Lutheran Church, McDonough, GA, whose pastor is The Rev. Robb Harrell, is celebrating its 50th anniversary. He asked that those who were present from St. Luke stand to be recognized.

Bishop Gordy announced that Lutheran Church of the Ascension, Savannah, GA, one of the oldest ELCA congregations in the United States, just celebrated its 275th anniversary. The congregation marked this occasion officially in April. Bishop Gordy recognized Ascension's pastor, the Rev. Carl Yost. Pastor Yost shared the vision statement for the anniversary year: "Remember the witness, share the vision." He also reviewed some of the history of the congregation and its current ministry.

Bishop Gordy thanked Pastor Yost and recognized Chaplain Patrick Findlay, USAF, a son of Ascension.

Recognition of Recently Retired Rostered Leaders

Bishop Gordy formally recognized those who have retired since the last assembly. He noted that, although they are officially retired, many rostered leaders are actually still very active in ministry, serving as interim and supply pastors, on task forces, and in other roles throughout our synod. The following people were recognized:

Pr. Stephen Damos, Grace, Oak Ridge, TN

Pr. David Hood, Synod Interim Pastor, Murfreesboro, TN

Pr. Thomas Kenny, Prince of Peace, Johns Creek, GA

Pr. Susan Montgomery, Christus Victor, Ocean Springs, MS

Pr. Larry Richardson, Faith, Clay, AL

Pr. Gilbert Roth, Executive Director, Roth Center, Hendersonville, TN

Other Recognitions

Bishop Gordy formally acknowledged the ministry of the Rev. Bill and Helen Funk, who have been faithful partners in assisting congregations with development and redevelopment work. He stated that Pr. Funk and Helen have decided that it is time to be closer to family and so they will be moving to do so. He thanked them on behalf of the Southeastern Synod for their mission and ministry wished them Godspeed.

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

- The Rev. Leland Armbright is now serving as the senior pastor at Christ the King, Peachtree Corners, GA. He comes from the Grand Canyon Synod. Pr. Armbright and his family just welcomed a new daughter to their family.
- The Rev. Charles Bowker is a retired ELCA pastor now living in Franklin, TN. He, too, came to us from the Grand Canyon Synod.
- The Rev. Tiffany Chaney is now serving as Pastor Developer of Gathered by Grace in Montgomery, AL. Pr. Chaney comes to us from the New England Synod, but she is from Mobile, AL.
- The Rev. Norman Deal transferred from the South Carolina Synod and is now serving as pastor of both Salem and Luther Memorial, otherwise known as the Parrottsville Parish, in Parrottsville, TN.
- The Rev. Paul E. Dirksmeyer, recently transferred from the Northern Texas – Northern Louisiana Synod. He is currently on-leave-from-call and is living in Franklin, TN.
- Diaconal Minister Melanie Johnson serves as the Program Manager for Volunteer, Congregation and Community Engagement (Department of Refugee and Immigration Services), Lutheran Services of Georgia (LSG). While Ms. Johnson is not new to the Southeastern Synod and is already known to many of us here, she was recently consecrated as a diaconal minister and called by the Synod Council to serve at LSG, so she is recognized today as one newly rostered since our last Assembly.
- The Rev. Bonnie Lanyi is also newly rostered and new to the synod. Pr. Lanyi serves as pastor at Lord of Life on St. Simons Island, GA. She is serving in her first call and was a candidate for ministry in the Florida-Bahamas Synod. Pr. Lanyi is a graduate of Luther Seminary.
- The Rev. Katherine Museus serves as the Associate Pastor, St. Andrew, Franklin, TN. Pr. Museus is serving in her first call and completed her internship at St. Andrew. She was a candidate for ministry in the Southeastern Synod and is a graduate of the Vanderbilt Divinity School.
- The Rev. David Osborne recently returned to the Southeastern Synod after serving a call in Hilton Head, SC in the South Carolina Synod. Pr. Osborne, now on the retired roster of the ELCA, is currently serving as the interim pastor at Redeemer in Atlanta.
- The Rev. Steven Plonk now serves as the pastor at Jerusalem in Rincon, GA. Pr. Plonk transferred from the South Carolina Synod. He has served in the Southeastern Synod before, most recently as an interim pastor. Pr. Plonk is also married to the next new-to-the-synod pastor.
- The Rev. Susan Thisell is serving as pastor at Good Shepherd in Garden City, GA. She is serving in her first call and was a candidate for ministry in the South Carolina Synod. She is a graduate of Lenoir Rhyne–Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary.
- The Rev. Mary Louise Sitton is now serving as pastor at Immanuel in Blountville, TN. She transferred from the North Carolina Synod.
- The Rev. David Trott, Sr., who serves as pastor of St. Stephen in Decatur, GA, was recently received onto our ELCA clergy roster. Pr. Trott has served as pastor at St. Stephen since 2013 but is recognized today as one of the newest ordained folk on our synod's roster. He was previously ordained in the AME Church.

Bishop Gordy also recognized Diaconal Minister Sandra Braasch, who is a candidate for ordained ministry in this synod and was recently appointed to serve as a Synodically Authorized Minister at Peace, Memphis, TN.

He also recognized the two pastors serving ministries of the Southeastern Synod under an Invitation to Extended Service, which is the way through which pastors who are on the rosters of our full communion partners are invited to serve in ELCA congregations. The Rev. David Rogers is now serving as associate pastor for Spiritual Care at Cross of Life in Roswell, GA. Pr. Rogers is an ordained pastor in the Presbyterian Church–USA. The Rev. Dr. Craig Wylie is serving as interim pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Bristol, TN. He is an Episcopal priest in the Diocese of Southwest Virginia.

Bishop Gordy welcomed two pastors serving in the Southeastern Synod who are rostered in other synods. The Rev. Norma E. Johnson is serving as the interim pastor at Grace, Oak Ridge, TN, and is rostered in the Florida-Bahamas Synod. The Rev. Kathryn I. Love is serving as the interim pastor at Martin Luther, Mobile, AL. She is currently rostered in the Caribbean Synod.

Greetings from Bishop Aaron Yap, Lutheran Church in Malaysia, and Signing of Global Companion Synod Agreement

Bishop Gordy introduced Bishop Aaron Yap of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia, one of the synod's global companion synod partners. He stated that Bishop Yap was an engineer prior to graduating with a Master of Divinity degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS) in Hong Kong. Ordained as a minister in the Lutheran Church in Malaysia (LCM), he went on to serve as the District Secretary (2009), District Dean (2011) and, since October 2013, as Bishop. He also serves as a Director in the Sabah Theological Seminary (STS), Seminary Theoloji Malaysia (STM), a Christian bookstore, and a church-owned Christian cemetery. He is the national secretary of Evangelism Explosion, the treasurer of the FELCMS (Federation of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Malaysia and Singapore), and a board member of the Council of Churches, Malaysia (CCM). Bishop Yap is involved in migrant workers' ministries and the native- or Malay-speaking ministry. He also helps to increase awareness in the social concerns ministry, disaster relief, and ecumenical works in Malaysia. He is married to Ms. Tan See Kee. They have three children: Joyce, Jabez, and Jaime. Traveling with Bishop Yap is Pr. Thomas Low, who serves as secretary of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia.

Bishop Gordy expressed his gratitude that these two partners were able to attend the 2016 Synod Assembly.

Bishop Yap brought greetings from the Lutheran Church in Malaysia. He thanked the synod for its hospitality and partnership. He remembered the missionaries from the 1950s, without whom there would be no Lutheran Church of Malaysia or Lutheran Church of Singapore. He looked forward to future ministry together with the Southeastern Synod. Bishop Yap presented the synod with a Malaysian flag and a commemorative plaque.

Following the greetings, Bishop Gordy, Bishop Yap, Secretary Low, and Secretary Hamilton signed a partnership agreement between the two church bodies in the presence of the assembly.

Keynote and Bible Study Presentation

Bishop Gordy welcomed back to the podium Pastor Mary Sue Dreier, interim dean at Lutheran Theological South Seminary. She returned to her themes of "graced, freed, sent." Pastor Dreier commented that she thought that Lutherans know exactly what to do with grace:

receive it. What we have problems with, she said, is what to do with our freedom. Pastor Dreier read the Scriptural focus for her presentation, John 8:31-36. She asked participants to be “detectives of divinity,” looking for signs of God’s activity.

Pastor Dreier stated that as Lutherans, we are recipients of grace but we are far from passive. Lutherans understand two things about freedom: we are freed from death, sin, and power of evil and its empty promises, but we are also freed for service to God and our neighbor. Martin Luther declared that: “I will give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself for me. I will do nothing except what is necessary to my neighbor.” A freedom that radical enables us to take risks. So, she said, we are constantly being mobilized by our freedom. We are distinguished by that. It makes us different from a Lions Club or Rotary. We come to build relationships with people because that is what our Trinitarian God is all about—relationships. We are radicalized by freedom, set free, and sent into communities and world. We are freed to address the weighty issues, not for our own survival but for our neighbor, because we are standing in pools of grace.

Greetings from Imam Ossama Bahloul

Bishop Gordy invited Imam Ossama Bahloul, the Resident Scholar of the Islamic Center of Nashville, Nashville, TN, to bring greetings to the assembly. Bishop Gordy introduced Imam Bahloul, who is a graduate of the renowned Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, where he earned his B.A. in Islamic Studies, and his M.A. and his Ph.D. in comparative religion. Dr. Bahloul’s passion in comparative religions has fueled over 16 years of experience in interfaith dialogue and numerous public corroborations with both Muslim organizations and religious leaders from other faiths. As Imam, Dr. Bahloul’s unfailing commitment, enthusiasm, and perseverance for the educational and spiritual growth and wellbeing of his community have culminated in his induction into the Fiqh Council of North America. Prior to his tenure at the Islamic Center of Nashville, Dr. Bahloul was the Imam at the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro, Murfreesboro, TN. Bishop Gordy continued by saying that it was there that Pr. Michael Jannett, Advent, Murfreesboro, TN, and Dr. Bahloul became friends and colleagues. He informed the assembly that in the workshop session later in the morning both Dr. Bahloul and Pr. Jannett would lead a discussion on what it looks like for congregations of two different faiths to explore conversations about what it means to love one’s neighbor. Bishop Gordy thanked and welcomed Dr. Bahloul.

Dr. Bahloul expressed his gratitude for the invitation to the assembly. He stated that people who are having serious communication with one another and building bridges must be honest about their religious commitments. They also need to reach out to each other. Serious worship of God means the serious work of implementation of faith. He applauded Pastor Jannett for speaking not about Muslims but with Muslims. Dr. Bahloul declared that freedom is the most important tool to fight extremism. He invited those with questions to attend his workshop later in the assembly.

2017-18 Ministry Funding Plan

(Tab E)

Bishop Gordy invited to the podium Mr. Lee Smith, synod treasurer and member of Messiah in Madison, AL, and Mr. Dave Lemcke, chair of the synod Budget & Finance Committee and member of Trinity, Lilburn, GA, to present the 2017-18 Ministry Funding Plan.

Mr. Smith reviewed the synod finances, summarizing the year-end results of 2015-16. He noted that the second synod appeal had garnered much less money than the first and may

have undercut year-end receipts. As a result, the Synod Council had decided not to hold an appeal in 2016 until its effects could be analyzed.

Mr. Smith also presented an overview of the 2017-17 ministry funding plan.

Bishop Gordy called for discussion and questions. There being none, a vote was taken.

SESA 2016.07

To adopt the 2017–2018 Ministry Funding Plan, as recommended by the Synod Council.

NovusWay McKanna-Sandroch Retreat Center Symbolic Groundbreaking

Bishop Gordy announced that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly would be witnesses to and participants in the symbolic groundbreaking for the McKanna-Sandroch Retreat Center at Lutheranch. He called to the podium Mr. Paul Schabacker, a member of Shades Valley, Birmingham, AL, and chair of the Site Selection Committee for Lutheranch, a member of the NovusWay Board of Trustees, and chair of the Planning and Review Committee. Mr. Schabacker honored the volunteers who had worked on the project over the last 10 years, the congregations that had supported the effort, and the NovusWay advancement staff. He particularly recognized the generosity of Drs. Jim McKenna and Vivian Casagrande, Christ, Nashville, TN, who had provided the lead gift for the retreat center.

In a wheelbarrow in the assembly hall Bishop Gordy and four board members “broke ground” brought from synod congregations while the assembly watched, via a video feed, ground being broken at Lutheranch. A planter on the site would later be filled with the dirt from the assembly.

Pastor Dale Sillik, Trinity, Lilburn, GA, thanked individuals and congregations who helped make the event possible. He informed the assembly that construction on the retreat center would begin in July, with a dedication on March 11, 2017. He noted that the project was \$475,000 short of being debt-free and invited those present to help “complete the dream.”

Consideration of Resolutions and Memorials

(Tab G)

Bishop Gordy invited to the podium Pastor Randy Jones, chair of the Reference and Counsel Committee, to lead further consideration of resolutions and memorials. Pastor Jones read Resolution 2016-02 on Home Owners Insurance and stated that the committee recommended passage of the resolution.

Moved;

Seconded: To approve the following resolution:

Resolution on Home Owners Insurance (2016-2)

Whereas, each family who owns or desires to own their own home will at some time obtain a Home Owners Insurance Policy that has the purpose of protecting their assets in their own home; and

Whereas, when purchasing a home with a mortgage, the lending facilities require that each home have their own home owners insurance policy, to protect the assets of the lending facility; and

Whereas, prior to 2006 most home owners policy rates were fairly equal across the country and from coastal to non-coastal areas of each state and most insurance companies relied on historical data to determine the rate structure; and

Whereas, after 2006 the rate structure has been determined by computer generated data (called Hurricane Insurance Catastrophic Models, commonly referred to as Cat Models) which includes historical data along with an estimate or prediction of losses that may occur due to a given hurricane each year, which has caused insurance prices to rise in the coastal areas as much as 300 to 800 % in a given year, and deductibles to increase from \$100 per year to as much as \$10,000 per year, or 5 to 15 % of the value of the home; and

Whereas, Grace Lutheran Church in Gulf Shores, AL, in the fall of 2006 and winter of 2007 went door to door in their neighborhood to determine the needs of the community and found that insurance premiums were of deep concern in the area; and

Whereas, working with ACT-II (All Churches Together) a community-organizing group from Fairhope, AL, Grace Church addressed the issue of home owners insurance, working with local legislators and state representatives to bring about change in the insurance rates, presenting bills to the state legislature requesting determination if rates were justified, and working on multi-state programs to help neighboring states; and

Whereas, a special commission appointed by Alabama Governor Robert Bentley in 2015 recommended multi-state solutions, and the Alabama State Legislature has passed a resolution in support of exploring said solutions, and the Alabama Department of Insurance has and is taking the lead on this issue by presenting information for change to other state departments of insurance; and

Whereas, fixing this injustice would not cost the government or unaffected churches or families in any way; and

Whereas, churches or individual church members can contact their local, state, and federal legislators and departments of insurance and ask them to look into this problem and become part of the solution; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that all members of this body be requested to take this information back to their congregation and that all congregations be encouraged to learn more about taking action in their community and state by contacting ACT-II through Grace Lutheran Church in Gulf Shores, Alabama; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregations consider actively working with their local, state, and federal legislators to relieve the burden on the coastal community of the high cost of home owners insurance.

Bishop Gordy opened debate on the resolution. There being no one speaking on the matter, he called for a vote.

SESA 2016.08

To approve the following resolution:

Resolution on Home Owners Insurance (2016-2)

RESOLVED, that all members of this body be requested to take this information back to their congregation and that all congregations be encouraged to learn more about taking action in their community and state by contacting ACT-II through Grace Lutheran Church in Gulf Shores, Alabama; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregations consider actively working with their local, state, and federal legislators to relieve the burden on the coastal community of the high cost of home owners insurance.

Pastor Jones read Resolution 2016-03, A Memorial Concerning the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery, and stated that the committee recommended passage of the memorial.

Moved;

Seconded: To approve the following memorial:

A Memorial Concerning the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery (2016-03)

Whereas, we confess with our Native sisters and brothers that the whole of creation is God's work, that God declares it all as good, and that God's Spirit dwells within it; and

Whereas, we confess that Jesus Christ became incarnate to show God's love and mercy to all humanity, in all its variety, and to every race and people on every continent of the earth; and

Whereas, we acknowledge with pain and regret the damage done to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas by the European conquest and migration to what Europeans called a "new world," but which was in reality already the homeland of many peoples; and

Whereas, we recognize that Christian churches were and remain complicit in that conquest, migration, and dispossession and that Christian churches helped develop conceptions of Native peoples that blamed them for their own ills and that continue to perpetuate prejudice and injustice against them and their descendants; and

Whereas, we deplore and reject the so-called "doctrine of discovery": the legal principle, originating with Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and further entrenched in U.S. federal law in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), that Native inhabitants have no property or any other rights which colonizing European nations and their sovereigns were bound to respect, a principle which promotes the myth that the Americas were a largely empty land that European conquerors and migrants had a right to claim, occupy, and possess simply by virtue of their Christianity and their European civilization; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly explicitly and clearly repudiate the European Christian-derived "doctrine of discovery" with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod acknowledge and repent of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, The United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and The Moravian Church in doing the same; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to join it in offering a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and "civilization," requesting that the Office of the Presiding Bishop plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the "doctrine of discovery" and its consequences for Native people in North America, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA Domestic Mission Unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

Bishop Gordy opened discussion on the memorial.

Mr. Ben Severance, Messiah Lutheran Church, Montgomery, spoke against it. He stated that while everyone acknowledges the tragic fate of Native Americans, but this particular memorial seems unwarranted. It mischaracterizes the case of *Johnson V. McIntosh*. The language of the second resolve is an overly harsh indictment that defines people solely by vices. The fourth resolve is essentially a vague apology for the sins of the fathers. He did not see how

the assembly could speak for past generations when we don't fully understand the context that motivated their actions.

There being no further debate, Bishop Gordy called for a vote on the memorial.

SESA 2016.09

To approve the following memorial:

A Memorial Concerning the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery (2016-03)

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly explicitly and clearly repudiate the European Christian-derived “doctrine of discovery” with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members to this day; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod acknowledge and repent of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to join with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, The United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church and The Moravian Church in doing the same; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to join it in offering a statement of repentance and reconciliation to Native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity and “civilization,” requesting that the Office of the Presiding Bishop plan an appropriate ELCA national ceremony of repentance and reconciliation with tribal leaders, and provide resources for similar synodical and congregational observances with local tribal leaders, at all such times and places as are appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA, with the help of Native communities, commit itself to the development of resources in the next triennium to help its congregations and people understand and reduce the negative impact of the “doctrine of discovery” and its consequences for Native people in North America, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to request that the ELCA Domestic Mission Unit bring forward to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA and accompaniment with North American Native communities generally, with a particular commitment to long-term, stable funding of ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native ministries, increasing partnerships with congregations and synods in the ELCA, and promoting efforts with the Native communities within which our congregations and synods reside.

Announcements

Bishop Gordy called attention to the bags given at the assembly, handmade by the women of the Kiswahili Mission in Nashville, TN. He thanked Pr. Esther Ngomo and the members of the mission for the gift of the bags and for their ministry. He called attention to an opportunity for assembly members to donate to the mission in thanksgiving for their work. Bishop Gordy called on Mr. Lee Smith, synod treasurer, for announcements.

Mr. Smith made a number of announcements about the day's schedule, availability of food for purchase, and a planned cruise in 2017.

Closing Prayer

At Bishop Gordy's invitation, Pastor Brian Hooper, assembly chaplain, closed the plenary session with prayer.

Recess

The second plenary session of the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly recessed at 10:34 a.m. Workshop Session 2 followed at 10:45 a.m. Assembly worship took place from 1:45-3:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 28, 2016

Plenary Session 3 (3:30-6:00 p.m.)

Call to Order

Prior to the opening of Plenary Session 3, music was provided by Dr. Kelly “Glow” Williams. Bishop H. Julian Gordy thanked her and also provided more information about the jazz quartet that had played at the worship service. Bishop Gordy reconvened the assembly at 3:35 p.m.

Opening Prayer

At the invitation of Bishop Gordy, Pastor Brian Hooper, assembly chaplain, opened the session with prayer.

Report of the Credentials Committee

Bishop Gordy called on Mr. Jon Schuemann, chair of the Credentials Committee for its third report. Mr. Schuemann announced that total number of voting members in attendance was 348.

Additional Recognitions

Bishop Gordy recognized three other young adults about to serve the ELCA:

- Ms. Emily Rupert, St. James, New Brunswick, GA, going to Mexico with Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM);
- Ms. Kyle Jacobsen, Passion Collective, Lutheran Campus Ministry, Atlanta, GA, to Cambodia (YAGM);
- Mr. Max Waterhouse, Passion Collective, Lutheran Campus Ministry, Atlanta, GA, working with food ministries in Omaha, Nebraska, for Lutheran Volunteer Corps.

Bishop Gordy welcomed six candidates for rostered leadership who recently had been assigned to the Southeastern Synod and were awaiting a first call. They are either recent seminary graduates or candidates ordained in another tradition who have been approved to be received on the ordained roster in the ELCA:

- Ms. Karen Boda (spouse Alan) - Candler/Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. Ms. Boda is a member of Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Marietta, GA. She also serves as an at-large member of the Synod Council.
- Mr. Filemon Diaz (spouse Maria) - Seminario de la Inmaculada Concepcion/PLTS. Mr. Diaz is from the Rocky Mountain Synod and is awaiting his first call there.
- The Rev. Uijin Hwang (spouse Sina) - Ordained in another tradition. Pr. Hwang is ordained in the United Methodist Church. He will be helping the folks at Grace, Carrollton, GA, beginning in June as Pr. Michelle Kuhlmann prepares to begin her sabbatical on June 1.
- The Rev. Crispin Ilombe Wilondja (spouse Jacqueline) - Ordained in another tradition. Mr. Wilondja is ordained as a Jesuit priest and was recently granted asylum in the United

States after fleeing religious persecution in the Congo. Many of you may know Crispin from the work that he currently does as a case manager working with refugees and immigrants with Lutheran Services of Georgia.

- Ms. Anna Gordy Montgomery (spouse James) - Luther Seminary. Ms. Gordy attends Christ, Prattville, AL.
- Ms. Monica Weber - Trinity Lutheran Seminary. Ms. Weber is a member of St. Timothy, Hendersonville, TN.

Bishop Gordy introduced synod office volunteers: Ms. Bernice Bland and Ms. Margery Kellar, Living Grace, Tucker, GA; Ms. Paulette Alderfer, Good Shepherd, Woodstock, GA; Ms. Beverly Clark, Messiah, Decatur, GA; and Ms. Beverly O'Brien, Redeemer, Atlanta, GA. He expressed the synod's gratitude for their work and asked that anyone interested in being a volunteer speak with one of the synod staff.

Location of Synod Office

Bishop Gordy reminded the assembly that he had mentioned in his report that the synod office would likely be moving in the very near future. He explained that about a year ago, the Synod Council appointed an office space working group to investigate and report on options for future synod office space because the rent on the current space is not sustainable for the synod, and the space no longer fits the synod's needs. Bishop Gordy reported that at its meeting on May 26, the Synod Council approved a recommendation to relocate the Southeastern Synod office to a dedicated suite of offices on the premises of St. John's Lutheran Church in Atlanta, contingent on a couple of key steps that the council and working group believe to be achievable by the September Synod Council meeting. These include 1) reaching agreement on particular lease terms and 2) raising funds from synod donors which will help to make reaching an agreed upon targeted rent possible.

Bishop Gordy added that the people at St. John's, the synod staff, and council members are excited about the ministry possibilities such a partnership would create. Over the summer months a team of people from the synod staff and St. John's will be inviting donors to participate in this venture. He asked for assembly members' prayers for the process and for donations to make the move possible.

Elections Procedure

(Tab D)

Bishop Gordy asked Pastor Terri Stagner-Collier, chair of the Elections Committee, to provide the assembly with the final report on the elections.

Pastor Stagner-Collier announced the results of the elections.

Synod Council (Young Adult)

Valid ballots:	281
Invalid ballots:	5
Needed for election:	141
Emily Jackson	162
Madeline Burkhardt	119

Bishop Gordy declared that Ms. Emily Jackson had been elected to the Synod Council Young Adult position.

SESA 2016.10

To elect Emily Jackson to a two-year term to the Synod Council as the Young Adult member, beginning at the close of the 2016 Synod Assembly.

Synod Council (At-Large, Clergy)

Valid ballots:	297
Invalid ballots:	3
Needed for election:	149
Delmer Chilton:	182
Randy Jones:	115

Bishop Gordy declared that Pastor Delmer Chilton had been elected to the Synod Council in an at-large clergy position.

SESA 2016.11

To elect Pastor Delmer Chilton to a two-year term on the Synod Council, beginning at the close of the 2016 Synod Assembly.

ELCA Church Council Nominees (Lay Male)

Valid ballots:	249
Invalid ballots:	3
Needed for election:	125
Gary Pederson:	218
Hilton Austin:	176
Mike Wessel:	103

Bishop Gordy declared that Mr. Gary Peterson and Mr. Hilton Austin were elected as the nominees for a lay male position on the ELCA Church Council.

SESA 2016.12

To elect Gary Pederson and Hilton Austin as the nominees for the ELCA Church Council.

Bishop Gordy thanked Pastor Stagner-Collier and the committee for their work.

Keynote and Bible Study Presentation

Bishop Gordy welcomed back to the podium Pastor Mary Sue Dreier, interim dean at Lutheran Theological South Seminary. Pastor Dreier announced that the focus of her third presentation was that God sends us out in mission to the world. She read aloud 2 Corinthians 5:17-20, asking assembly participants to note the verbs in this passage. She pointed out that God is the subject of active verbs.

Pastor Dreier proposed a friendly amendment to Martin Luther's explanation of the Third Article: "The Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlighten, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth." She advocated adding "and sends" to the list of the Spirit's activities.

Pastor Dreier commented that God comes to us with the good news that we are all God's beloved children in God's royal family. We are sent with a commission to point people to God's love. That does not wait to be discovered. We know it and we have that good news to share. It is given at birth, sealed at baptism, told again in Scripture, and nourished with Eucharistic bread and wine. It is not about us; it's about God. That's the point of the whole missional church movement, she pointed out. Over the years the Church started to focus on itself, its buildings and aspirations, policies, procedures, and programs, rather than its commission from God to go. Mission became one of the things the church did, preferably in exotic places. It is not that God's Church has a mission, but that God's mission has a Church commissioned to do that work.

Pastor Dreier urged the Church to keep asking: Where is God in all this? What is God up to? What is God calling us to be and to do? We have to believe that God is up to something. We were born into a family where love is not conditional. Let the world know this. God's calculus is that we are graced, freed, and sent. She stated that God is counting on us, entrusting this message of reconciliation to the likes of us. We are appealing to God's princes and princesses: "Come home . . ." Pastor Dreier concluded her address by saying: "As God makes God's appeal through you, the Southeastern Synod, may God bless you."

Following her presentation, Bishop Gordy presented Pastor Dreier with an ELCA Good Gifts of some chicks and a rooster and a chrismon made by Pastor Terri Stagner-Collier of Cross of Life Lutheran Church, Roswell, GA.

Presentation of 2017 Compensation Guidelines

(Tab I, Exhibit 3)

Bishop Gordy called on Pastor Mark Beatty, chair of the synod's Compensation Guidelines Committee, to present the proposed 2017 Compensation Guidelines. Bishop Gordy read the resolution, which came from the Synod Council.

Pastor Beatty presented the 2017 Compensation Guidelines and urged individuals and congregations to use them, not just at times of call but for regular updating of compensation packages. He reviewed the changes in the guidelines.

Bishop Gordy then opened the floor for discussion of the resolution.

Pastor Steve Hilgeman, Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Savannah, GA, pointed out that siblings were not included in the language about family leave. Pastor Beatty responded that the committee did not try to define all the permutations of immediate family where the rostered leader is the primary care giver.

There being no further discussion, Bishop Gordy called for the vote.

SESA 2016.13:

To adopt the 2017 Compensation Guidelines recommended by the Synod Council.

Report of the Churchwide Representative

(Tab C)

The report of the ELCA churchwide representative to the Southeastern Synod began with the annual video message from ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. Then Bishop Gordy

welcomed Mr. Carlos Peña, ELCA vice president. Bishop Gordy introduced Mr. Peña and reviewed his considerable work history and volunteer experience as well as his service to the ELCA in many ways. He noted that Mr. Peña was completing his last term as vice president; a new vice president would be elected at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

Mr. Peña's report took the form of a question-and-answer session with Mr. Imran Siddiqui, Synod Council member and voting member to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. Among the questions asked were the following

- What does the ELCA vice president do? How are is he or she elected?
Mr. Peña responded by listing his chief duties: chairing the ELCA Church Council, leading the process if the presiding bishop cannot carry out his or her duties, and acting as this church's representative to various official meetings, including synod assemblies.
- What does the theme of "We are Lutheran mean to you?"
Mr. Peña responded by talking about his introduction to Lutheranism as an adult. He noted the importance to him of the paradox of being both saint and sinner, living by Scripture, being saved by grace through faith, and being freed to serve his neighbors.
- What excites you about the ELCA?
Mr. Peña replied that among the interesting things happening in the ELCA are the ministry possibilities that the campaign is opening, the partnership with companion synods, and global mission projects.
- What do you see as the strengths of the ELCA?
Mr. Peña replied that its strengths include its committed, dedicated, and faithful members and its leadership, including the Conference of Bishops. Mr. Peña went on to thank Bishop Gordy, Vice President Doris Underwood, ELCA Council member Pastor William Flippen, and other leaders of the Southeastern Synod for their work. He also expressed his gratitude for the synod's generosity as demonstrated by its mission support and its gifts to ministries like the ELCA Campaign, World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Relief, and others.

In closing, Mr. Peña called attention to this year's "God's Work. Our Hands" Sunday on September 11, 2016. He also invited assembly participants to the Grace Gathering in New Orleans, August 8-14, 2015.

At the end of Mr. Peña's presentation, Bishop Gordy presented him with an ELCA Good Gifts of some chicks and a rooster and a chrismon made by Pastor Terri Stagner-Collier of Cross of Life Lutheran Church, Roswell, GA.

Consideration of Resolutions and Memorials

(Tab G)

Bishop Gordy invited to the podium Pastor Randy Jones, chair of Reference and Counsel Committee, to lead further consideration of resolutions and memorials.

Pastor Hooper led the assembly in prayer.

Pastor Jones introduced Resolution 2016-04, "A Resolution Regarding 2017 as the "Year for Care for Creation." He read the resolved clauses and stated that the committee recommended approval.

Moved;

Seconded: To approve the following resolution and memorial:

A Resolution Regarding 2017 as the “Year for Care for Creation” (2016-04)

Whereas, we are called to tend to God’s creation as part of our loving service to God and to our neighbor, and yet consuming non-renewable fossil and fuel resources in a way that is both unsustainable in the future and unfair to those in the developing world; and

Whereas, human activity, especially the over-consumption of energy and natural resources, appears to be a critical factor in causing environmental distress, thereby exacerbating already difficult situations for millions living with poverty and hunger, as weather extremes such as violent storms, flood, and drought increase; and

Whereas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has long been committed to addressing environmental issues as part of our call to justice, sustainability, and solidarity with affected communities, as witnessed by its social statement, “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice,” adopted by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly on August 28, 1993; and

Whereas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, along with our partners in the Lutheran World Federation, Lutheran Disaster Response, ELCA World Hunger, and Lutheran World Relief, is committed to working to alleviate hunger, poverty, and unsustainable living conditions globally; and

Whereas, congregations and their congregants can support care for creation through educational efforts and energy audits, and worship experiences, assisted by the synod staff, synod council, and the Green Team, and

Whereas there are several resources available through Lutheran organizations such as Lutherans Restoring Creation to assist us in understanding the challenges of the environments and how we can respond; now, therefore, let it be

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod designate the year 2017 as the year of CARE FOR CREATION to emphasize the commitment to earth stewardship, utilizing worship, education, property maintenance, and outreach to demonstrate this commitment.

Bishop Gordy opened the floor for discussion of the resolution.

The Rev. Ed Wolff, retired pastor and member of Our Saviour, Johnson City, TN cited Scripture to remind assembly participants that God loved the world and that God is reconciling the world to Godself. God loves not just people but the whole world, he said. Pastor Wolff pointed out that the earth is the only home humans have, and it was given to us by grace and given in love. He stated that the resolution would help increase awareness of the work of Care for Creation as part of an emphasis on eco-Reformation in 2017.

Mr. David Barnes, member of Redeemer, Atlanta, offered a brief amendment. He wished to add to the Resolved clause the following: RESOLVED that the Southeastern Synod designate the year 2017 as the year for CARE FOR **ALL OF GOD’S** CREATION. There being no further debate, the assembly voted on the proposed amendment.

Moved;

Seconded;

Approved: To amend the Resolved clause as follows: RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod designate the year 2017 as the year for CARE FOR **ALL OF GOD’S** CREATION. . . .

Mr. Mike Franklin, Holy Trinity, Nashville, recommended that the title of the resolution be amended to reflect the approved change. The chair ordered it done.

There being no further debate, the assembly voted on the resolution as amended.

SESA 2016.14

To approve the following resolution, as amended:

A Resolution Regarding 2017 as the “Year for Care for All of God’s Creation” (2016-04)

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod designate the year 2017 as the year for CARE FOR ALL OF GOD’S CREATION to emphasize the commitment to earth stewardship, utilizing worship, education, property maintenance, and outreach to demonstrate this commitment.

Pastor Jones introduced Resolution 2016-05, “A Resolution Concerning the Christian Calling to Love and Serve our Refugee Neighbors.” He read the resolved clauses, noting an editorial change that added “to” to the last bullet point of the final Resolved clause. He stated that the committee recommended approval.

Moved;

Seconded: To approve the following resolution and memorial:

A Resolution Concerning the Christian Calling to Love and Serve Our Refugee Neighbors (2016-05)

Whereas, today there are more than 60 million people displaced from their homes by war, violence and persecution, more than at any time since such records have been kept; and

Whereas, more than 16 million of those who are displaced have been forced to cross a border seeking safety and are considered refugees under humanitarian international law; and

Whereas, most refugees hope to return to their homeland, some are able to remain and integrate into their country of first asylum, and a small number (half of 1%) seek and are granted resettlement in a third country like the United States; and

Whereas, refugees contribute greatly to a community’s economy, culture, and diversity; and

Whereas, the Lutheran churches in the United States were founded by immigrants; and

Whereas, ministry with newcomers through congregations, social ministry organizations, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has been a hallmark of our demonstration of love of neighbors as together we have resettled more than 500,000 refugees; and

Whereas, God’s love for the stranger is central to the Biblical faith: Exodus 22:21, “you shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Matthew 25:35, “for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me”; and

Whereas, individuals and communities in the US often struggle between their desire to welcome newcomers and their fear of the changes this will bring to their communities; and

Whereas, recognized hate groups in the US are disseminating misinformation in order to fuel fear and incite actions against refugees and those that provide services to assist them; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod develop a plan and share resource materials to assist congregations in exploring their Christian calling to love and serve their refugee neighbors and to learn about the experiences and needs of refugees, the processing of refugees through the US refugee program, and ways to accompany refugees; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod recommit itself to being an advocate and justice seeker for refugees, and request that the synodical bishop communicate our concerns to our members of Congress and other elected officials; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the synod encourage congregations, individuals, and communities to be the church at work in the world offering welcome and hospitality to refugees through local ministries and in partnership with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service; and be it further

RESOLVED, that each congregation is encouraged to pray for refugees and annually host a Refugee Sunday (www.lirs.org/refugeesunday); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to:

- Request that the Presiding Bishop communicate this church’s commitment to the resettlement of refugees in the US and encourage steadfast support for this program to the President and Members of Congress; and

- Request that churchwide units, in cooperation with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, provide easy access to resource materials for congregations to learn about and take part in ministries with refugees; and
- Encourage the Presiding Bishop, the Church Council, and the bishops to speak out publicly against hateful language that targets refugees and immigrants and actions that exclude or discriminate against them.

Bishop Gordy opened the floor for discussion. There being none, he called for the vote.

SESA 2016.15

To approve the following resolution, as amended:

A Resolution Concerning the Christian Calling to Love and Serve Our Refugee Neighbors (2016-05)

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod develop a plan and share resource materials to assist congregations in exploring their Christian calling to love and serve their refugee neighbors and to learn about the experiences and needs of refugees, the processing of refugees through the US refugee program, and ways to accompany refugees; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod recommit itself to being an advocate and justice seeker for refugees, and request that the synodical bishop communicate our concerns to our members of Congress and other elected officials; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the synod encourage congregations, individuals, and communities to be the church at work in the world offering welcome and hospitality to refugees through local ministries and in partnership with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service; and be it further

RESOLVED, that each congregation is encouraged to pray for refugees and annually host a Refugee Sunday (www.lirs.org/refugeesunday); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to:

- **Request that the Presiding Bishop communicate this church’s commitment to the resettlement of refugees in the US and encourage steadfast support for this program to the President and Members of Congress; and**
- **Request that churchwide units, in cooperation with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, provide easy access to resource materials for congregations to learn about and take part in ministries with refugees; and**
- **Encourage the Presiding Bishop, the Church Council, and the bishops to speak out publicly against hateful language that targets refugees and immigrants and actions that exclude or discriminate against them.**

Pastor Jones introduced Resolution 2016-06, “A Resolution Concerning Congregational Advocacy.” He read the resolved clauses and stated that the committee recommended approval.

Moved;

Seconded: To approve the following resolution:

A Resolution Concerning Congregational Advocacy (2016-06)

Whereas, we are a church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace; and
Whereas, Lutheranism has a long history of active public life; and
Whereas, the 2015 Southeastern Synod Assembly officially authorized the Southeastern Synod Advocacy Team to advocate for state public policy that represents our Christian values and our church's official actions regarding certain policy issues; and

Whereas, our country's division on social issues negatively affects the lives of millions of people; and

Whereas, we as Christians are called to be peacemakers and a light to the nations; and

Whereas, the ELCA constitution states "Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every ordained minister shall: speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world" (7.31.12.a.7), and

Whereas, our voices can make a difference in determining the future policies of Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi as well as the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that all congregations of the Southeastern Synod be encouraged to keep their members informed on current state and national public policy by having at least one, but not limited to one, member to serve as a congregational advocate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the synod advocacy team, in coordination with the bishop, the synod staff, and the Washington, D.C., advocacy office, provide training, coordination, and support to the congregational advocates; and be it further

RESOLVED, that pastors be requested to encourage the 50,000 members of the Southeastern Synod to fully participate in public life by voting and regularly contacting their state and national representatives and sharing their opinions on pending legislation.

Bishop Gordy opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Hilton Austin, All Saints, Lilburn, GA, noted that this was the one-year anniversary of the establishment of the synod advocacy team and explained that the resolution was the logical next step for the synod. He encouraged assembly participants to take the resolution home to their congregations and make it their own. He declared that advocacy is being church for the sake of the world.

Pastor Dale Sillik, Trinity, Lilburn, GA, proposed an amendment. It was seconded.

Moved;

Seconded: To substitute "congregation councils" for "pastors" in the third Resolved clause.

There was no further speaking on the proposed amendment, so Bishop Gordy called for a vote on it.

Moved;

Seconded;

Approved: To substitute "congregation councils" for "pastors" in the third Resolved clause.

There being no further speaking on the resolution as amended, Bishop Gordy called for a vote.

SESA 2016.15

To approve the following resolution, as amended:

A Resolution Concerning Congregational Advocacy (2016-06)

RESOLVED, that all congregations of the Southeastern Synod be encouraged to keep their members informed on current state and national public policy by having at least one, but not limited to one, member to serve as a congregational advocate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the synod advocacy team, in coordination with the bishop, the synod staff, and the Washington, D.C., advocacy office, provide training, coordination, and support to the congregational advocates; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregation councils be requested to encourage the 50,000 members of the Southeastern Synod to fully participate in public life by voting and regularly contacting their state and national representatives and sharing their opinions on pending legislation.

Pastor Jones introduced Resolution 2016-07, “A Resolution Concerning Justice.” He read the resolved clauses, including the fourth Resolved clause, which did not appear in the text that the assembly had received. He asked that the assembly approve consideration of the resolution as amended and stated that the committee recommended approval of the resolution.

Moved;

Seconded: To approve the following resolution, as amended:

A Resolution Concerning Justice (2016-07)

Whereas, the prophet Amos speaks to us today with his words, “Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream,” (5:24) reminding us to stand with the cause of justice; and

Whereas, in 1997 the ELCA Churchwide Assembly passed, by an 80% margin, a memorial from the Southeastern Synod advocating that the US Congress outlaw job discrimination based on sexual orientation; and

Whereas, the Southeastern Synod passed a formal statement of welcome to people of all sexual orientations in 2000, making this a Reconciling in Christ Synod; and

Whereas, the Southeastern Synod passed a resolution calling for local governments to pass nondiscrimination laws that include sexual orientation and gender identity in 2007; and

Whereas, the Southeastern Synod passed a memorial encouraging the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to enact policy changes that permitted congregations to offer blessings of same-gender couples; and

Whereas, in 2014 the Southeastern Synod memorialized the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to consider providing worship resources for the blessing of same-gender couples in Lutheran churches; and

Whereas, now that it is legal across the United States, a number of this synod’s congregations are welcoming marriage of same-gender couples; and

Whereas, in reaction to a U.S. Supreme Court decision, the state legislatures of Georgia, Tennessee, and Mississippi passed laws in 2016 that could be used to justify discrimination against people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity on religious grounds; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commend Governor Nathan Deal of Georgia for his decision to veto HB757; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America implore Governor Phil Bryant and the legislators of Mississippi to repeal House Bill 1523, which prohibits state government from taking any discriminatory action against a person, religious organization, business, or government employee for refusing services to LGBT people because of “sincerely held religious beliefs” or “moral conviction” against same-sex marriage, extra-marital sex, and/or transgender people; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America call upon Governor Bill Haslam and state legislators of Tennessee to repeal House Bill 1840, which gives therapists and other mental health professionals the right to refuse to treat patients whose lifestyles go against the professionals’ “sincerely held principals”; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America call upon the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the state of Alabama to support and protect equal rights and access to services and facilities for LGBT people; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America place a statement on the synod website asserting that the synod will not condone, or support, any legislative action that would discriminate against individuals based on race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or ethnicity in the name of religious freedom; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the members of the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA be encouraged to contact their local and state legislators and ask them not to support any legislation that would promote discrimination

against individuals based on sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, race, religion, or ethnicity; and be it further

RESOLVED, that members of the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA be encouraged to support legislation that provides for nondiscrimination legislation that includes sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, race, religion, or ethnicity; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Assembly request that the bishop communicate the assembly's actions in this resolution via letters to the appropriate parties.

Bishop Gordy opened debate on the resolution.

Ms. Karen Slappey, Redeemer, Atlanta, GA, spoke in favor of the resolution. As a person actively engaged with those disenfranchised by the church and from the church, she said that the resolution would be received as a statement of support, love, and reconciliation for those who have been disenfranchised. For some, she said, the matters addressed in the resolution are an issue of life and death.

Ms. Brenda Wallach, Christ Our Hope, Riverdale, GA, corrected the spelling of "principles" in the third Resolved clause.

Pastor Terri Stagner-Collier, Cross of Life, Roswell, GA, argued that the resolution worked against the value of inclusivity because inclusivity embraces diverse viewpoints. She reminded the assembly that this church voted in 2009 to respect the bound consciences of all, including those who disagreed with decisions this church made. The resolution on the floor, she said, leaves no room for those who cannot provide services because of their consciences. This synod needs to allow for diverse viewpoints and avoid sending the message that those who disagree should leave. Furthermore, it is not the government's role to enforce the view of some over the views of others.

Pastor William Flippen, Emmanuel, Atlanta, GA, stated that he spoke in support of the resolution because in his view any legislation that brings harm to any brother or sister is discriminatory and wrong, especially when it is being passed under the guise of religion. He lifted up the freedom that is given by the gift of grace, but noted that using that freedom and religious liberty to discriminate is wrong.

Ms. Nicole Larson, Cross of Life, Roswell, GA, focused on the third Resolved clause, asking why anyone would want therapists to treat people whom they cannot treat properly. The resolution seems to approve the use of government force to make people do things in spite of any sincerely held beliefs.

Mr. Madison Tiegreen, Redeemer, Atlanta, GA, spoke in favor of the resolution, saying that on March 28, 2016, when Georgia Governor Nathan Deal vetoed the bill cited, he used faith-based reasons for the veto. He declared that there should be no discrimination based on gender or sexuality, and the Southeastern Synod should be motivated to support legislation for non-discrimination.

Pastor Steve Hilgeman, Redeemer, Savannah, proposed an amendment, which was seconded.

Moved;

Seconded: To delete from the fourth Resolved clause the words "condone, or" so that it reads: Resolved, that the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America place a statement on the synod website asserting that the synod will not support any legislative action that would discriminate against individuals based on race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or ethnicity in the name of religious freedom.

There being no further debate on the proposed amendment, Bishop Gordy called for a vote on it.

Moved;

Seconded;

Approved: To delete from the fourth Resolved clause the words “condone, or” so that it reads: Resolved, that the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America place a statement on the synod website asserting that the synod will not support any legislative action that would discriminate against individuals based on race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or ethnicity in the name of religious freedom.

Mr. Imran Siddiqui, St. John’s, Atlanta, GA, recalled the themes of the Keynote presentation: “We are graced, freed, and sent.” He stated that too many LGBT people do not feel freed but chained. This church needs to say that it is for the freedom of all God’s children. He stated that he understands that are differences in conscience on this issue, but faithful people need to assert that they are in favor of those who feel that God has abandoned them and who have heard that they are not worthy. He asked what it looks like to other when the church does not object to what the government is doing when it discriminates against people.

Ms. Wendy Tiegreen, Redeemer, Atlanta, GA, identified herself as a social worker. She said that LGBTQ individuals encounter exclusion in many places, but the church should not be part of that environment. Many people feel unsafe and do not have a single adult in their lives to turn to. The church needs to be clear that it is a supportive environment. Ms. Tiegreen stated that the National Association of Social Workers had expressed its disappointment with the Tennessee law, calling it discriminatory, and it has pledged to raise awareness about it. The Association of Pastoral Counselors and other Christian counselors do not support this law, either.

Pastor Scott Peterson, Messiah, Madison, AL, expressed concern that the resolution might impact pastors’ having the ability to decide whether to perform same-sex weddings.

Mr. Mike Franklin, Holy Trinity, Nashville, TN, moved the previous question.

Pr. Leslie L. Wilder, Good Shepherd, Morristown, TN, raised a point of information. Bishop Gordy ruled that her statement was not germane to a point of information.

Bishop Gordy called for a vote on closing the debate.

Moved; *(Two-thirds vote required)*

Seconded;

Approved: **To end debate.**

Bishop Gordy stated that the assembly would proceed to a voice vote on the resolution as amended.

Moved;

Seconded;

Approved: **To approve the resolution, as amended.**

A count of the vote was ordered.

SESA 2016.16 (Yes-183; No-88)

To approve the following resolution, as amended:

A Resolution Concerning Justice (2016-07)

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commend Governor Nathan Deal of Georgia for his decision to veto HB757; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America implore Governor Phil Bryant and the legislators of Mississippi to repeal House Bill 1523, which prohibits state government from taking any discriminatory action against a person, religious organization, business, or government employee for refusing services to LGBT people because of “sincerely held religious beliefs” or “moral conviction” against same-sex marriage, extra-marital sex, and/or transgender people; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America call upon Governor Bill Haslam and state legislators of Tennessee to repeal House Bill 1840, which gives therapists and other mental health professionals the right to refuse to treat patients whose lifestyles go against the professionals’ “sincerely held principles”; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America call upon the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the state of Alabama to support and protect equal rights and access to services and facilities for LGBT people; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America place a statement on the synod website asserting that the synod will not support any legislative action that would discriminate against individuals based on race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or ethnicity in the name of religious freedom; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the members of the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA be encouraged to contact their local and state legislators and ask them not to support any legislation that would promote discrimination against individuals based on sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, race, religion, or ethnicity; and be it further

RESOLVED, that members of the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA be encouraged to support legislation that provides for nondiscrimination legislation that includes sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, race, religion, or ethnicity; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Assembly request that the bishop communicate the assembly’s actions in this resolution via letters to the appropriate parties.

Bishop Gordy asked for and received the assembly’s agreement to extend the plenary session by up to 15 minutes.

Greetings from Bishop Terry Kee, Lutheran Church in Singapore, and Signing of Global Companion Synod Agreement

Bishop Gordy welcomed to the podium Bishop Terry Kee of the Lutheran Church in Singapore. He introduced Bishop Lee, reviewing his history and credentials. Bishop Gordy told the assembly that following Bishop Lee’s remarks, a companion synod agreement between the Southeastern Synod and the Lutheran Church in Singapore would be signed. Bishop Gordy explained that although the Southeastern Synod had been in relationship with both the Lutheran

Church in Malaysia and the Lutheran Church in Singapore where they were one body, this is the first time to formalize the partnership with the Lutheran Church in Singapore.

Bishop Lee greeted the assembly in the name of Jesus. He informed those present that the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and the Lutheran Church in Singapore had been started, brought to faith, and nurtured by pastors and missionaries from this synod. The Rev. Carl Fiske had served as its first bishop. He thanked the synod for its contributions to the birth of the churches and its accompaniment through their growth. Bishop Lee presented the synod with a gift of a chalice and paten that was inscribed in Chinese and English as well as with a scarf that was one of a limited edition created for the church's anniversary in 2005.

Bishop Gordy, in turn, presented Bishop Lee with the gift of a rooster and chicks and a chrismon made by Pastor Terri Stagner-Collier, Cross of Life, Roswell, GA. He noted that other gifts had been given earlier in their visit to both Bishop Lee and Bishop Yap. Bishop Gordy commented that it is amazing what the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and the Lutheran Church in Singapore do with the resources their people provide to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Bishop Gordy, Bishop Lee, and Secretary Hamilton proceeded to sign a partnership agreement between the two church bodies in the presence of the assembly.

Greetings from Ms. Beth Lewis, President, Augsburg Fortress

Bishop Gordy called to the podium Ms. Beth Lewis, president and chief executive officer of Augsburg Fortress, Publishers (AFP). He introduced her to the assembly and named a number of recent publications useful for congregations and individuals.

Ms. Lewis thanked the synod for its hospitality. She recognized Pastor Pam Smith, who serves as a member of the Board of Trustees of AFP and had been elected as vice chair of the board for the next three years. Ms. Lewis reviewed a number of her organization's resources for faith formation in congregations and at home. She also called attention to its offerings in fiction and its parenting blog. She invited feedback on how AFP might help congregational ministries.

Bishop Gordy thanked Ms. Lewis for her generosity in providing gifts for giveaways at the assembly.

Announcements

Mr. Lee Smith made a number of announcements pertaining to the rest of the day's schedule, including the evening's concert by Mr. Chris Clay, musician and ministry coordinator at St. John's Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN.

He also reminded assembly members that worship would begin the next morning at 8:30 a.m.

Closing Prayer

At Bishop Gordy's invitation, Pastor Brian Hooper, assembly chaplain, closed the plenary session with prayer.

Recess

The third plenary session of the 2016 Southeastern Synod Assembly recessed at 6:12 p.m.

Sunday, May 29, 2016

Plenary Session 4 (10:00 a.m.-Noon)

Call to Order

Prior to the opening of Plenary Session 4, assembly participants attended a festival service of Holy Communion. As the session came to order, music was provided by Dr. Kelly “Glow” Williams. Bishop H. Julian Gordy reconvened the assembly at 10:05 a.m.

Opening Prayer

At the invitation of Bishop Gordy, Pastor Brian Hooper, assembly chaplain, opened the session with prayer.

Reception of New Congregation

Bishop Gordy invited Diaconal Minister Rebecca Kolowé, former director for evangelical mission, to the dais as the synod welcomed its newest organized congregation, Celebration of Grace Lutheran Church, Canton, GA. He explained that Ms. Kolowé was both willing and eager to come back for the assembly so that she could be part of this day with Celebration of Grace, one of the new starts that she worked with while on staff. Ms. Kolowé noted that Celebration of Grace was the fifth congregation received in the last four-and-a-half years. A number of the members came to the front of the assembly hall, including Ms. Priscilla Giddens, the president-elect of the Congregation Council. She spoke about the 11-year journey leading to this day and narrated a video presentation about the journey. Ms. Giddens thanked those who had previously served Celebration of Grace as well as its current pastor, the Rev. Harry Tedrow. She described Celebration of Grace as small in number but large in Spirit, and talked about its mission, vision, and guiding principles.

Report of the Credentials Committee

Bishop Gordy called on Mr. Jon Schuemann, chair of the Credentials Committee, for its final report. Mr. Schuemann announced that the total number of voting members in attendance was 348, of whom 225 were lay persons and 123 were clergy. Also in attendance were 82 visitors and 39 volunteers, for a total of 469 participants.

Consideration of Resolutions and Memorials

Bishop Gordy invited to the podium Pastor Randy Jones, chair of Reference and Counsel Committee, to lead further consideration of resolutions and memorials.

Pastor Hooper led the assembly in prayer.

Mr. Mike Franklin, Holy Trinity, Nashville, TN, raised a point of order concerning the implications of the budget and the shortfall in mission support. It was received as advice to the assembly.

Pastor Mark Beatty, Cross of Life, Roswell, GA, called attention to the Staff Support Fund.

Pastor Jones introduced Memorial 2016-08, “A Memorial Concerning Military Personnel, Veterans, and Their Families.” He read its resolved clauses, and stated that the committee recommended that it be approved.

Moved;

Seconded: To approve the following memorial:

A Memorial Concerning Military Personnel, Veterans, and their Families (2015-08)

Whereas, 1.2 million Americans are currently serving in the various branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, and about 21.2 million American men and woman are veterans of military service; and

Whereas, hundreds of thousands of military personnel have been injured over the years and returned home with wounded bodies, minds, and hearts; and

Whereas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is highly committed to ministry among those in military uniform and those who have faithfully, and often sacrificially, served this nation; now, therefore, let it be

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage congregations of the ELCA to offer their gratitude and support to all military personnel, veterans, and their families and friends with tangible expressions of care and encouragement in one or more of the following ways:

- Express our gratitude often and remain especially attentive to those currently serving in the Armed Forces and veterans, including military and federal chaplains.
- Present copies of *The Prayer Book for the Armed Services* (Augsburg Fortress), a companion to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* designed for those serving in uniform, veterans, and their families, to military personnel and their families, and donate additional copies of the prayer book to military chaplains.
- Regularly lift up in prayer those who are serving and those who have served, and pray especially with and for soldiers and the families of those who have been wounded or killed in the line of duty.
- Give ongoing support to, and hold in constant prayer, the military chaplains who, on our behalf, bring the Means of Grace in the name of Christ Jesus to the 1.2 million women and men in the Armed Forces, as well as to those in veterans hospitals, and wherever else they are called to serve.
- Explore and facilitate congregational, cluster, conference, and/or synodical events that equip individuals and congregations to offer needed care and support for returning veterans such as the ELCA “Care for Returning Veterans,” Congregational Centurions, and other efforts to receive those returning home with open hearts and arms.
- Lift up the vocational call of those who serve in the Armed Forces and raise up the need in our congregations for those who may hear the call of the Spirit of God and the church to serve as ordained military and federal chaplains of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- Designate one Sunday each year to remember those in military uniform, veterans who have served, the wounded, and their families in their recovery and in their coping, and the families of those who have lost their lives in service and who continue to live with pain and loss.
- Remembering that injuries of the mind, spirit, and relationships do not show as clearly as physical injuries, offer rituals of healing and reconciliation for active duty members, reservists, and members of the National Guard upon their return from deployment or special duty, and periodically thereafter.

Bishop Gordy opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Dave Barkoff, St. Luke, McDonough, GA, raised a point of information, asking about the difference between a resolution and a memorial. Bishop Gordy explained that a resolution was directed to the synod and its congregations and ministries, while a memorial was directed to the Churchwide Assembly.

There being no further speakers, Bishop Gordy called for a vote on the resolution.

SESA 2016.17

To approve the following memorial:

A Memorial Concerning Military Personnel, Veterans, and their Families (2015-08) RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage congregations of the ELCA to offer their gratitude and support to all military personnel, veterans, and their families and friends with tangible expressions of care and encouragement in one or more of the following ways:

- **Express our gratitude often and remain especially attentive to those currently serving in the Armed Forces and veterans, including military and federal chaplains.**
- **Present copies of *The Prayer Book for the Armed Services* (Augsburg Fortress), a companion to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* designed for those serving in uniform, veterans, and their families, to military personnel and their families, and donate additional copies of the prayer book to military chaplains.**
- **Regularly lift up in prayer those who are serving and those who have served, and pray especially with and for soldiers and the families of those who have been wounded or killed in the line of duty.**
- **Give ongoing support to, and hold in constant prayer, the military chaplains who, on our behalf, bring the Means of Grace in the name of Christ Jesus to the 1.2 million women and men in the Armed Forces, as well as to those in veterans hospitals, and wherever else they are called to serve.**
- **Explore and facilitate congregational, cluster, conference, and/or synodical events that equip individuals and congregations to offer needed care and support for returning veterans such as the ELCA “Care for Returning Veterans,” Congregational Centurions, and other efforts to receive those returning home with open hearts and arms.**
- **Lift up the vocational call of those who serve in the Armed Forces and raise up the need in our congregations for those who may hear the call of the Spirit of God and the church to serve as ordained military and federal chaplains of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.**
- **Designate one Sunday each year to remember those in military uniform, veterans who have served, the wounded, and their families in their recovery and in their coping, and the families of those who have lost their lives in service and who continue to live with pain and loss.**
- **Remembering that injuries of the mind, spirit, and relationships do not show as clearly as physical injuries, offer rituals of healing and reconciliation for active duty members, reservists, and members of the National Guard upon their return from deployment or special duty, and periodically thereafter.**

Bishop Gordy commented that it was appropriate that the memorial was passed on Memorial Day weekend. He recognized Mr. Jeff Hill, St. Andrew, Franklin, TN, who had been appointed to be part of the Congregational Centurion program to care for military personnel and families. He also commended *The Prayer Book for the Armed Forces* as a good resource.

Pastor Jones introduced memorial 2016-09, “A Memorial Concerning African Descent Lutheran Lives Matter.” He read the resolved clauses and stated that the committee recommended its adoption.

Moved;

Seconded: To approve the following memorial:

A Memorial Concerning African Descent Lutheran Lives Matter (2016-09)

Whereas, the United Nations declared 2015-2024 to be the “International Decade for People of African Descent”; and

Whereas, African American, African Caribbean, and African national communities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are gifted and culturally diverse, representing more than 200 million people living in the Americas; and

Whereas, whether as descendants of the transatlantic slave trade or as more recent migrants, people of African Descent constitute some of the poorest and most marginalized groups with limited access to quality education, health services, housing, and Social Services; and

Whereas, people of African Descent represent 13% of the total population of the United States of America, and within the ELCA there are more than 46,100 members that identify as people of African Descent, or 1.9% of the ELCA’s total membership; and

Whereas, as the ELCA prepares to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, the political, social, and economic injustices affecting African Descent communities still remain largely invisible to a society that appears to many to be indifferent to black life; and

Whereas, the legacy of slavery, post-Reconstruction “Jim Crow” laws, and racial subordination in the United States remain a serious challenge as there has been inadequate commitment to recognition and reparations for people of African descent; and

Whereas, despite many advances by people of African Descent within the ELCA and society, racism and racial discrimination, both direct and indirect, *de facto* and *de jure*, continue to manifest themselves in inequality and disadvantage; and

Whereas, despite the fact that the 1993 ELCA CWA adopted the social statement, “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity & Culture” as a confession of the sin of racism, Black Liberation Theology is still often rejected and avoided in many Lutheran academic institutions; and

Whereas, many African Descent rostered leaders acquire higher education debt, wait longer to receive calls, and are less likely to receive full-time calls or to reach synod compensation guidelines; and

Whereas, many African Descent ELCA congregations were birthed in a situation of “white flight,” which resulted in a divestment from urban areas and the removal of vital socio-economic resources, leaving behind deteriorating, debt-filled buildings with shrinking memberships; and

Whereas, this abandonment was due, in part, to the systemic and structural issues of discrimination and lack of full inclusion of our gifts of leadership and worship styles; and

Whereas, the Lutheran African Descent community is within a denomination that affirms, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; for all of you are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28)” and believes itself called to be a church that embraces all people and confronts racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, age, gender, familial, sexual orientation, physical, personal, and class barriers that often manifest themselves in unjust treatment, inequalities, exclusion, and violence; and

Whereas, the ELCA constitution states “Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every ordained minister shall: speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God’s love for the world” (7.31.12.a.7); and

Whereas, justification by faith is a principle of scripture and Lutheran identity for all races, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, sexual orientation, class, cultures or nationalities; now, therefore, be it **RESOLVED**, that the Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to include as part of its observance of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation and the commemoration of the United Nation's International Decade of People of African Descent the following actions:

1. Direct the Church Council to create a "Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community" similar to the "Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community" (4/18/1994) acknowledging the Lutheran church's complicity in the 400+ years of slavery and the oppression of other marginalized groups; that people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade, and colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences; and that the ELCA has perpetuated racism and discrimination through attitudes, actions, policies and practices these communities still endure; and that the Church Council bring this "Declaration" to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for its consideration and action with a recommendation to include this declaration in the governing documents of the ELCA;
2. Direct the Church Council to direct the Advisory Committee on Theological Education in partnership with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging, and incorporating academic exploration of Black Liberation Theology across ELCA educational expressions, to allocate funds for the development of resources, and to accomplish this by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly; and
3. Direct the Church Council to direct the Domestic Mission unit of the ELCA to work in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association to increase the number of African Descent leaders, congregations, and communities served by 10%, thereby renewing its commitment (see African Descent Strategy, CWA, 2005) to create, sustain, reinvest in, and support this plan of action by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly and to encourage synods and congregations to do likewise.

Bishop Gordy opened the floor to debate.

The Rev. Ron Bonner, Atonement, Atlanta, GA, spoke of the ELCA's original intention to be 10% persons of color by 1998 and stated that it is still 96% white. He pointed out that the ELCA needs resources, processes, and programs to achieve its goal of inclusivity.

The Rev. Everett Flanigan, Christ Our Hope, Riverdale, GA, called the resolution consistent with the Lutheran goals of doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God.

Ms. Elise Armand, Atlanta Bar Church, Atlanta, GA, proposed an amendment. It was seconded.

Moved;

Seconded: To delete the word "congregations" in point 3 of the Resolved clause.

Speaking to her amendment, Ms. Armand advocated for diverse rather than single-ethnicity congregations.

Ms. Gwen Flowers-Taylor, St. John's, Griffin, GA, explained that the intention of that sentence is not to cause segregation. The intent of this entire request is to bring togetherness.

The Rev. Tiffany Chaney, pastor-developer of Gathered by Grace, Montgomery, AL, stated that the purpose of the sentence was to create congregations that are culturally relevant for people of African descent.

Ms. Shannon Racovitch, St. John's, Brunswick, GA, asked how the percentage of persons of color is counted. Bishop Gordy replied that the information is garnered from the annual parochial reports.

Mr. Mike Franklin, Holy Trinity, Nashville, TN, announced that he had recently been appointed synod statistician. One of his duties was to ensure the completion of parochial reports. He inquired about the definition of congregations of African descent. Bishop Gordy responded that it is people of African descent who are counted, not congregations, which are open to everyone.

Pastor Tiffany Chaney, pastor-developer of Gathered by Grace, Montgomery, AL, and member of the ELCA's African-descent strategy team, explained that the ELCA as a whole obtains information through the churchwide research and evaluation department. To get an overall picture, the percentage of people of a certain category that are reported in congregations, the kinds of worship resources used in those congregations, the number of congregations served by people of African descent, and other factors are considered.

Bishop Gordy responded that the Research and Evaluation team in the churchwide organization can help answer questions like these.

Ms. Elise Armand, Bar Church of Atlanta, GA, asked a parliamentary question concerning whether Pastor Chaney could offer her amendment immediately. Bishop Gordy replied in the negative because hers was not an amendment to the amendment.

The Rev. Kim Stover, All Saints, Lilburn, GA, using a yellow card, stated that he wanted to move the previous question.

Bishop Gordy informed him that it appeared that the assembly was ready to vote on the proposed amendment. There being no further speaking, the assembly proceeded to a vote.

Moved;

Seconded;

Failed: To delete the word "congregations" in point 3 of the Resolved clause.

Ms. Gwen Flowers-Taylor, St. John's, Griffin, GA, commented that all people are of African descent. The memorial should be about all people of color.

Pastor Tiffany Chaney, pastor-developer of Gathered by Grace, Montgomery, AL, declared that the memorial spoke specifically to the injustices and inequities that people of African descent experience.

Ms. Gwen Flowers-Taylor, St. John's, Griffin, GA commented that the memorial is about black people in America, but it should also be about Hispanic people. It is vague about who is being represented.

Pastor Bonner explained that people of African descent have an organization in the ELCA that is officially recognized and has a voice. This memorial is specific to one group. Last week all the multicultural groups met and agreed that this memorial should go forward. It is specific to black people as the African-descent community. We are looking for inclusion in congregations, seminaries, resources, educational materials, and perspectives.

Ms. Linda Walling, Christ Our Hope, Riverdale, GA, inquired whether the memorial would go to the Churchwide Assembly with the Whereas clauses intact. Bishop Gordy replied that it was unlikely because the ELCA Memorials Committee would draft a proposed action for the assembly based on all the memorials it had received and focused on the Resolved clauses.

The Rev. Steve Hilgeman, Redeemer, Savannah, GA, expressed his discomfort with some of the statements in the memorial. To call the ELCA racist causes me grief, he said. This memorial casts a broad net. It blames people who haven't done anything wrong. He preferred that the committee invite more people into the discussion in order to determine how best to address the issues.

The Rev. Brian Hooper spoke in favor of the memorial as a gay man who knows what it is to wait. He wanted to honor the work of the group that brought this memorial to the assembly. He saw the memorial as simply taking a step forward in including everyone.

Mr. Edwin Bryant, Christus Victor, Ocean Springs, MS, proposed an amendment. It was seconded.

Moved;

Seconded: To amend point 3 of the Resolved clause by adding the words "membership in" just before the word "congregations."

Speaking to his motion, Mr. Bryant said that it spoke to the concerns expressed about specifically African American congregations.

Ms. Elise Armand agreed that it solved the ambiguity about which she had been worried.

The assembly approved allowing Ms. Rebecca Kolowé to speak as an expert. She stated that congregations are not really about membership. The amendment would limit what this church is trying to do.

There being no further speaking on the proposed amendment, Bishop Gordy called for a vote on it. The voice vote was inconclusive, so a division of the house was called for.

Moved; (Yes-125; No-95)

Seconded;

Approved: To amend point 3 of the Resolved clause by adding the words "membership in" just before the word "congregations."

There being no further speaking to the memorial as amended, Bishop Gordy called for the vote.

SESA 2016.17

To approve the following memorial, as amended:

A Memorial Concerning African Descent Lutheran Lives Matter (2016-09)

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to include as part of its observance of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation and the commemoration of the United Nation's International Decade of People of African Descent the following actions:

- 1. Direct the Church Council to create a "Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community" similar to the "Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community" (4/18/1994) acknowledging the Lutheran church's complicity in the 400+ years of slavery and the oppression of other marginalized groups; that people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade, and colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences; and that the ELCA has perpetuated racism and**

discrimination through attitudes, actions, policies and practices these communities still endure; and that the Church Council bring this “Declaration” to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for its consideration and action with a recommendation to include this declaration in the governing documents of the ELCA;

- 2. Direct the Church Council to direct the Advisory Committee on Theological Education in partnership with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging, and incorporating academic exploration of Black Liberation Theology across ELCA educational expressions, to allocate funds for the development of resources, and to accomplish this by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly; and**
- 3. Direct the Church Council to direct the Domestic Mission unit of the ELCA to work in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association to increase the number of African Descent leaders, membership in congregations, and communities served by 10%, thereby renewing its commitment (see African Descent Strategy, CWA, 2005) to create, sustain, reinvest in, and support this plan of action by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly and to encourage synods and congregations to do likewise.**

Bishop Gordy announced that \$1000 dollars and many needed food and household items had been donated to the ministry Three Hots and a Cot.

Pastor Jones read a resolution of thanks (2016-10) and stated that the committee recommended its adoption.

Moved;

Seconded: To approve the following resolution:

A Resolution of Thanks at the 2016 Assembly of the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA (2016-10)

Resolved, that the voting members of the 2016 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 Yap from the Lutheran Church in Singapore; Bishop Kee and Secretary Low from the Lutheran Church in Malaysia; the Rev. Dr. Mary Sue Dreier; Mr. Carlos Peña; and those representing NovusWay for their presence among us because their witness to us is a reminder that the Church is larger and has a brighter future than any of us can ever imagine; and be it further

Resolved, that we give thanks to all those who offered their service to this synod 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 Kiswahili Worshiping Community, Nashville, TN, for the handmade assembly bags and to our congregations and voting members for donating \$1000 and requested items for Three Hots and a Cot, as well as \$5633.02 to the Endowed Chair for Lutheran Studies at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, and be it further

Resolved, that we offer thanks to the those who took care of us throughout this assembly: the Synod Assembly Committee; the various other assembly committees; the parliamentarian, the Rev. Warren Casiday; the chaplain, the Rev. Dr. Brian Hooper; the worship team, volunteers, and musicians; the ELCA Mission Investment Fund and the Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta for financial support of this gathering and their ongoing partnership with us in the Gospel; and the hotel and convention center staff and technical crew.

There being no speaking to the resolution, Bishop Gordy called for a vote

SESA 2016.18

To approve the following resolution:

A Resolution of Thanks at the 2016 Assembly of the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA (2016-10)

Resolved, that the voting members of the 2016 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 Yap from the Lutheran Church in Singapore; Bishop Kee and Secretary Low from the Lutheran Church in Malaysia; the Rev. Dr. Mary Sue Dreier; Mr. Carlos Peña; and those representing NovusWay for their presence among us because their witness to us is a reminder that the Church is larger and has a brighter future than any of us can ever imagine; and be it further

Resolved, that we give thanks to all those who offered their service to this synod 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 Kiswahili Worshiping Community, Nashville, TN, for the handmade assembly bags and to our congregations and voting members for donating \$1000 and requested items for Three Hots and a Cot, as well as \$5633.02 to the Endowed Chair for Lutheran Studies at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, and be it further Resolved, that we offer thanks to the those who took care of us throughout this assembly: the Synod Assembly Committee; the various other assembly committees; the parliamentarian, the Rev. Warren Casiday; the chaplain, the Rev. Dr. Brian Hooper; the worship team, volunteers, and musicians; the ELCA Mission Investment Fund and the Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta for financial support of this gathering and their ongoing partnership with us in the Gospel; and the hotel and convention center staff and technical crew.

Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta Report

(Tab B-11)

Bishop Gordy reminded the assembly that in 2011, the Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta (LTCA) became a ministry of the Southeastern Synod in partnership with the Domestic Mission unit of the churchwide organization and the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. He called on the Rev. Dr. Everett Flanigan, who as of March 31 began serving LTCA on a full-time basis, for a brief report on the work of LTCA.

Pastor Flanigan identified several focus areas for LTCA: equipping leaders for the church, the Atlanta Lutheran Formation Experience and Lutheran studies; TEEM; lay theological studies and continuing education; Public Theology and conversations. In these areas, LTCA sponsors classes, workshops, conversations, immersions, and special worship services, particularly the MLK commemoration. He invited everyone to participate in the programs that LTCA offers.

Amendments to the Synod's *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions*

(Tab F)

Bishop Gordy asked Secretary Ruth Hamilton to introduce the proposed amendments to the Southeastern Synod *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions*. Pastor Hamilton read the proposed resolutions and provided a rationale for them. Bishop Gordy opened the floor for debate.

Mr. David Barnes, Redeemer, Atlanta, GA, asked whether the terms of all Synod Council members, including the youth and young adults, are the same. Bishop Gordy responded affirmatively.

There being no further speaking, the assembly proceeded to vote.

SESA 2016.19

To adopt the following amendments to the Southeastern Synod *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions*:

S9.01.12.c. The Synod Council annually may authorize a synod-wide youth organization to nominate at least one person for the youth position on the Synod Council. The person nominated shall be a voting member of a congregation of this synod in at least the tenth grade. No person shall be nominated for the youth position who cannot complete his or her term prior to graduation from high school. Nominations shall be reported to the synod office at least three weeks prior to the next Synod Assembly, at which elections will take place. If the Synod Council does not authorize a youth organization to make such nomination, then the Nominating Committee shall serve as the nominating body.

S9.01.11b Should the Synod Council not authorize a youth organization to nominate at least one person for the youth position on the Synod Council, the Nominating Committee shall nominate at least two persons for the youth position on the Synod Council. The person nominated shall be a voting member of a congregation of this synod in at least the tenth grade. No person shall be nominated for the youth position who cannot complete his or her term prior to graduation from high school.

S11.01.24. Candidacy Committee

a. A Candidacy Committee shall be composed of twelve-~~thirteen~~ fifteen members elected by and accountable to the Synod Council. Members shall be limited to six-year terms with two-~~three~~ three persons to be elected each year. Members shall not be eligible for re-election to consecutive terms.

Southeastern Synod Lutheran Youth Organization Report

(Tab B-8)

Bishop Gordy invited to the podium Southeastern Synod Lutheran Youth Organization (SESLYO) leaders for a report. He introduced Miss Lauren Luetgers, who serves as the current chair, and is a member of Cross of Life, Roswell, GA, and Miss Emma Grace Liner, Messiah, Knoxville, who is chair-elect. The young women reviewed the work of SESLYO for the past

year, offered a preview of its ministry for the coming year, and introduced a video about the What SESLYO means to those who participate in it.

Greetings from the Southeastern Synod Women of the ELCA

(Tab C)

Bishop Gordy welcomed to the dais Ms. Margery Kellar, secretary of the Southeastern Synod Women of the ELCA. Ms. Kellar, a member of Living Grace, Tucker, GA, brought greetings on behalf of this ministry. Ms. Kellar reviewed the opportunities for women the organization offers as well as its opportunities to serve others. Among other ministries, she highlighted the creation and gift of stoles to women ordained recently, including Pastors Katherine Museus, Bonnie Lanyi, and Susan Thisell.

Extension of Plenary Session

Bishop Gordy asked for and received the agreement of the assembly to extend the plenary session by 15 minutes.

Southeastern Synod Disaster Ministry Committee Report

(Tab C)

Bishop Gordy invited the Rev. Morgan Gordy, Christ, Nashville, TN, who is also the chair of the Southeastern Synod's Disaster Ministry Committee, to update the assembly on the recovery work that is going on, as well as the work of the Disaster Ministry Committee.

Pastor Gordy thanked those working on disaster preparedness and volunteers, those who assist in times of disaster, those who participated in preparedness training, and those who provide financial support. She spoke of the need for all congregations to be prepared for disaster so that they can help their communities, and she called for the identification and training of more volunteers.

Pastor Gordy talked about the planned assistance in response to spring floods in Mississippi, calling for continued prayers for those affected and those in recovery. She invited people to like the new disaster response Facebook page: [Sesynoddisasterresponse](#).

Thanks to Outgoing Synod Council Members and Deans

Bishop Gordy announced that people completing special service in the synod would now be recognized and thanked. The first group included outgoing deans: The Rev. Scott Peterson, the Rev. Barb Koch, and the Rev. Susan Montgomery.

Treasurer Lee Smith then presented outgoing members of the Synod Council with a certificate of thanks for their leadership and service: the Rev. Randy Jones, Mr. Keith James, the Rev. Laura Shally, Mr. Michael Huseh, the Rev. Eric Murray, and the Rev. Norbert Hahn.

Bishop Gordy expressed his gratitude to members of the Credentials Committee, the Elections Committee, the Minutes Committee, and the Reference and Counsel Committee, and the Worship Team. He offered thanks to all of the Assembly Committee volunteers: Chair Ms. Bernice Bland, Ms. Linda Few, Pr. Darryl Kiehl, Ms. Barbara Schwanebeck, Mr. Jim Ward, and Ms. Lorraine Dorough.

2017 Assembly

Bishop Gordy announced that the 2017 Synod Assembly would return to Chattanooga, TN, and assemblies would be held there through 2022.

Bishop Gordy asked the Rev. Paul Summer, director for development for Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (LTSS), to come to the dais as he announced that the total assembly worship offerings were \$5,633.02. This sum would be given to LTSS for the Endowed Chair in Lutheran Studies position. Bishop Gordy thanked the assembly members for their generosity. Pastor Summer expressed his gratitude for the offering, the synod's annual budget support, and its prayers for the ongoing mission of the seminary.

Bishop Gordy reviewed some highlights of the assembly and thanked the voting members for the wonderful spirit that had pervaded the assembly

Installation of Persons Elected

Bishop Gordy asked Synod Secretary Ruth Hamilton, to read the names of those being installed to office. Those installed were the following:

- Elected to the Consultation Committee: Pastor Carla Hope Knobler and Pastor Scott Seeke;
- Elected as Nominees for the ELCA Church Council: Mr. Hilton Austin and Mr. Gary Pederson;
- Elected to the Synod Council: Pastor Kim Stover, Mr. Richard Anger, Mr. Jed Deason, Pastor Lewis Groce, Mr. Edwin Bryant, Ms. Emily Jackson, Pastor Delmer Chilton, Ms. Rundi Ream;
- Elected previously to the SELYO board: Ms. Emma Liner, Mr. Philip Tyler, Ms. Bridie Ryan, Ms. Emily Nord, Mr. Scott Lindquist, Mr. Akugbe Imudia, Ms. Rachel Cornette, Ms. Elise Dawson, Ms. Savannah Harvil, Ms. Chantel Felix, Ms. Claire Fitzpatrick, Ms. Anna Murray, Ms. Danie Blue, Mr. Tyler McIntyre, Ms. Jill Boyer, Ms. Kari Pitchko, Mr. Ben Witcher, Ms. Catalina Ontiveros, Mr. Chawn Felix, Ms. Sue Tyler, Ms. Rachel Alley.

Closing of an Assembly

(Tab J-2)

Bishop Gordy led participants in the order for the closing of an assembly.

Adjournment

The 2016 Assembly of the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America adjourned at 12:18 p.m.