

**ELCA Southeastern Synod Assembly**  
**May 26-28, 2017**  
**Chattanooga Convention Center**  
**Chattanooga, Tennessee**  
**Final Minutes**

**FRIDAY, MAY 26, 2017**

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

Prior to the first Plenary Session, assembly participants had the opportunity to engage in pre-assembly workshops. Among those were the following: a showing and discussion of the video “Before the Flood” by National Geographic, Boundary Training for Rostered Ministers, Building Community in the Digital Age, and Learning and Living Justice: Examining Racism and Moving Forward Together in Christ.

**Call to Order**

The Rev. H. Julian Gordy, bishop, called the 2017 Southeastern Synod Assembly to order at 12:04 p.m. (EDT).

**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 thirty years of ministry together as the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
- Give witness to our unity in Christ, by the way we treat each other and conduct our business;
- Share in God’s mission through the work of our congregations, our partner 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. Stacey Parvin. Pastor Parvin serves as pastor of the historic Beth-Eden Lutheran Church in Louisville, MS, as well as a Coordinator for Lutheran Disaster Response in Mississippi. She is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church and serves Beth Eden under the full communion agreement that the ELCA and the United Methodist Church share. Pastor Parvin graduated from the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, where she also later worked advising Lutheran students. She is married to Bob Fuller, who is Assistant Professor of Education at the W – the Mississippi University for Women. They are parents to Evelyn, Caroline and Clara. Together, they try to do justice, love kindness, and journey humbly with God.

Pastor Parvin opened the meeting with prayer.

## **Report of the Credentials Committee**

Bishop Gordy called to the podium Ms. Liz Linke, member of Amazing Grace, Lawrenceville, and the chair of the Credentials Committee, to provide the initial report of the Credentials Committee.

Ms. Linke stated that the total number of voting members pre-registered was 348 and the total number of voting members in attendance was 181.

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

## **Adoption of the Agenda**

*(Tab A)*

Bishop Gordy introduced the proposed action.

**SESA 2017.01.**

**To adopt the agenda for the four plenary sessions and two workshop sessions as the Orders of the Day.**

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

*(Tab I, Exhibit 1)*

Bishop Gordy informed the assembly that the only changes that were made to this assembly's proposed rules were those that were necessary to reflect the changes in the names of the roster that were approved by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. He explained that "Ministers of Word and Sacrament" is the new name for the roster of ordained pastors in the ELCA and that "Ministers of Word and Service" is the new name for deacons, who were previously either consecrated or commissioned. The Word and Service roster replaces the three previous lay rosters in the ELCA: associates in ministry, diaconal ministers and deaconesses. Bishop Gordy asked the assembly to vote on the recommended Rules of Organization and Procedure.

## **SESA 2017.02.**

### **To adopt the Rules of Organization and Procedure recommended by the Synod Council.**

#### **Introduction of the Parliamentarian**

Bishop Gordy introduced the assembly's parliamentarian. The Reverend Dr. Warren Casiday was serving in that role for the seventh 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. Pastor Casiday is also a member of the National Association of Parliamentarians and serves as the Parliamentarian for the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ and for the Western Association of the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ.

#### **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.

#### **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.

Bishop Gordy opened his report with introductions and thanks. He introduced the directors of evangelical mission, Mr. Wayne Fell and the Rev. Ron Bonner, the latter of whom would introduce a new task force, the Bishop's Multicultural Task force. The bishop asked congregations and ethnic communities to identify participants for the task force and talk to Pastor Bonner about the task force. Bishop Gordy announced that staff members Jeanette Burgess, administrative liaison for leadership, and Michelle Angalet, assistant to the bishop, are now deacons, following the previously mentioned action of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. All deacons present would be recognized, he said, at Sunday's worship. Bishop Gordy also introduced the Rev. Jill Henning, coordinator of the work of 17 deans, and explained the role deans played in the synod.

Bishop Gordy updated the assembly on the upcoming move of the synod office. Due to the sale of the building in which the synod rents space, the office must be vacated by September 30. The office would be moving twice, once to temporary facilities and then to renovated space at St. John's, Atlanta. Bishop Gordy asked that synod members keep praying for staff during this transition and move. He acknowledged the generous gifts that had been received for the

costs of the move, as well as the assembly offerings, part of which would help finance the move. Additional donations, he remarked, are always welcome.

Bishop Gordy went on to acknowledge two ELCA Church Council members from the Southeastern Synod: Mr. Gary Pedersen, member of Christ our Shepherd, Peachtree City, and the Rev. William Flippin, pastor of Emmanuel Lutheran, Atlanta. Pastor Flippin also recently had been elected to serve on the Lutheran World Federation council, along with ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton when the council next met in Namibia.

Bishop Gordy expressed his gratitude to all the volunteers who help make the assembly happen and to the staff of the Chattanooga Convention Center. He offered thanks to voting members and visitors for their participation.

Bishop Gordy then turned to the assembly's theme: "Church for the Sake of the World." He pointed out that during this year of commemorating the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation, this church was not just looking back, but was looking to the present as well as the future. Among the ways the assembly was doing this was through its focus on advocacy, which would be evident not only in the report from the Advocacy Council, which would be heard later in the assembly, but through the giving of the first Graetz Advocacy award to Robert and Jean Graetz for their lifelong devotion to civil rights and justice for all people.

Bishop Gordy indicated that the three Bible studies would help the assembly think about what it means to be church for the sake of the world. That concept would also be reflected in the report of the ELCA churchwide representative, the Rev. Kevin Strickland, assistant to the ELCA bishop and executive for worship as well as a member of the Southeastern Synod.

Bishop Gordy cited the work of Operation Song, which would be heard that evening as another example of being church for the sake of the world, as would the next evening's Brush Arbor, an experience out of African American tradition.

In addition to 2017 being the year to remember the Reformation, it is also the Year of Care for Creation, Bishop Gordy reminded the assembly. Care for Creation would be emphasized during workshops and worship, through Pastor Matt Steinhauer's Tennessee liturgy. Bishop Gordy emphasized that assembly participants gather every day around Word and Sacrament to remember why we are here and to praise the One who called us together. He expressed his gratitude to the assembly's worship team and to those who would be preaching at the worship services. What pastors say on Sunday morning is critically important in this church, he declared. When pastors pay careful attention both to the text of Scriptures and to their own context, then they are feeding God's people with the bread of life and giving them God's Word, so that the spirit of Jesus is walking through the congregation. The proclaimed word convicts, challenges, comforts, and changes. Bishop Gordy added that preaching both Law and Gospel in today's context means speaking out on behalf of the people and the world God loves. Lutherans are good at ministries of mercy, he said, but not so good at ministries of justice, which address the causes of the world's sufferings.

Bishop Gordy continued by saying that it is God's work to feed the hungry but also to find out why some are always hungry. When the reasons are uncovered, it is God's work to advocate for those bearing the burden of injustice. Mercy and justice are both part of our Lutheran heritage. He concluded, "That's the truth that Robert and Jean Graetz lived in Alabama

in the 1950s. When we advocate now for those who need help, we are following Jesus and being church for the sake of the world.”

## **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 called attention to the information available in Tab D and reminded voting members that while nominations from the floor were permitted, the persons nominated must meet the demographic criteria established for the position. She also advised those nominated that their biographical information needed to be submitted by 2:30 p.m. that afternoon.

Bishop Gordy informed the assembly that at the end of Ms. Schwartz’s report, voting members would have the opportunity to nominate people for two at-large positions on the Synod Council. However, any nominees would be contingent on the demographic criteria established for the positions, which would be based on the demographics of those otherwise elected to the council.

Ms. Schwartz announced that the Synod Council, to whom the responsibility was given by the constitution, had nominated the Rev. Randy Jones as synod secretary. Bishop Gordy opened the floor for further nominations. There being none, he declared that Pastor Jones was elected as synod secretary.

### **SESA 2017.03.**

**To elect the Rev. Randy Jones, Messiah, Montgomery, AL, as secretary of the ELCA Southeastern Synod.**

Bishop Gordy reminded the assembly that last year it had approved a bylaw amendment to allow the Synod Council to authorize the synod youth organization to nominate at least one person for the youth position on the Synod Council. Ms. Schwartz announced that the Southeastern Synod Lutheran Youth Organization (SESLYO) had nominated Ms. Rebecca Parsons. Bishop Gordy opened the floor for further nominations. There being none, he declared that Ms. Parsons was elected to the Synod Council as the youth member.

### **SESA 2017.04.**

**To elect Ms. Rebecca Parsons, Trinity, Lilburn, GA, to the Synod Council as the youth member.**

Ms. Schwartz turned to elections for four members of the Discipline Committee. She explained that two of the positions were designated for clergy, without regard for gender. One position is designated for a lay male and one is designated for a lay female person of color or whose primary language is other than English. Ms. Schwartz indicated that the Nominating Committee had nominated the Rev. Deryck Durston and the Rev. Pamela Smith for the two clergy positions. Bishop Gordy opened the floor for further nominations. There being none, he declared that Pastors Durston and Smith had been elected to the Discipline Committee.

**SESA 2017.05.**

**To elect the Rev. Deryck Durston, Decatur, GA, and the Rev. Pamela Smith, First, Nashville, TN, to the Discipline Committee.**

Ms. Schwartz stated that the Nominating Committee had nominated Mr. Robert Schwartz for the lay male position on the Discipline Committee. Bishop Gordy opened the floor for further nominations. There being none, he declared that Mr. Robert Schwartz had been elected to the Discipline Committee.

**SESA 2017.06.**

**To elect Mr. Robert Schwartz, Amazing Grace, Lawrenceville, GA, to the Discipline Committee.**

Ms. Schwartz indicated that the Nominating Committee had nominated Ms. Santha Jetty for the lay female position on the Discipline Committee. Bishop Gordy opened the floor for further nominations. There being none, he declared that Ms. Santha Jetty had been elected to the Discipline Committee.

**SESA 2017.07.**

**To elect Ms. Santha Jetty, Christ the King, Norcross, GA, to the Discipline Committee.**

Ms. Schwartz announced that the assembly would be electing five members to the Consultation Committee. Two of those positions are designated for clergy, without gender specification; two are designated for lay males, and one designated for a lay female. She informed the assembly that the Nominating Committee had nominated the Rev. James Thomas and the Rev. Fritz Weise for the clergy positions. Bishop Gordy opened the floor for further nominations. There being none, he declared that Pastor Thomas and Pastor Weise had been elected to the Consultation Committee.

**SESA 2017.08.**

**To elect the Rev. James Thomas, Ebenezer, Columbia, SC, and the Rev. Fritz Weise, Christ Our Shepherd, Peachtree City, GA, to the Consultation Committee.**

Ms. Schwartz stated that the Nominating Committee had nominated Mr. Terry Fletcher and Mr. Mike Franklin for the lay male positions on the Consultation Committee. Bishop Gordy opened the floor for further nominations. There being none, he declared that Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Franklin had been elected to the Consultation Committee.

**SESA 2017.09.**

**To elect Mr. Terry Fletcher, Ascension, Jackson, MS, and Mr. Mike Franklin, Holy Trinity, Nashville, TN, to the Consultation Committee.**

Ms. Schwartz announced that the Nominating Committee had nominated Ms. Ami Layton for the lay female position on the Consultation Committee. Bishop Gordy opened the floor for further nominations. There being none, he declared that Ms. Layton had been elected to the Consultation Committee. Bishop Gordy opened the floor for further nominations.

**SESA 2017.10.**

**To elect Ms. Ami Layton, Amazing Grace, Lawrenceville, GA, to the Consultation Committee.**

Bishop Gordy told voting members that because a clergy person had been elected as synod secretary (a member of the Synod Council), both of the at-large positions for Synod Council must be designated for lay people. Ms. Schwartz informed the assembly that the Synod Council had nominated the following people for a two-year term on the Synod Council, contingent on at least one of the at-large positions being designated for a lay male without regard to color or language or a lay person of either gender without regard to color or language: Mr. James Drinnon, Redeemer, Savannah, GA; Mr. Mike Franklin, Holy Trinity, Nashville, TN; Mr. Henry Harris, Christus Victor, Ocean Springs, MS, and Mr. Imran Siddiqui, St. John's, Atlanta, GA. Bishop Gordy opened the floor for further nominations. The Rev. Michael Jannett, Advent, Murfreesboro, TN, nominated Mr. Richard Bates, Advent, Murfreesboro, TN and the nomination was seconded. The Rev. Ann Bassett, Peace, Spring Hill, TN, nominated Mr. Jonathan Saddler, Peace, Spring Hill, TN and the nomination was seconded. Nominations were then closed.

Ms. Schwartz indicated that the Synod Council had nominated the following people for a two-year term on the Synod Council, contingent on at least one of the at-large positions being designated for a lay female without regard to color or language or a lay person of either gender, without regard to color or language: Dr. Santha Jetty, Christ the King, Norcross, GA; Deacon Linda Larson, St. Paul's, Savannah, GA; and Ms. Roxane Thompson, St. Stephen's, Decatur, GA. Bishop Gordy opened the floor for further nominations. Deacon Allison Ward, Redeemer, Savannah, GA, nominated Ms. Deborah Baumgartner, Good Shepherd, Woodstock, GA. The nomination was seconded, then nominations were closed.

Ms. Schwartz stated that the Synod Council had nominated the following people for a two-year term on the Synod Council, contingent on at least one of the at-large positions being designated for a lay person of color or whose primary language was other English: Mr. Henry Harris, Ms. Santha Jetty, Mr. Imran Siddiqui, and Ms. Roxane Thompson. Bishop Gordy opened the floor for further nominations. There being no further nominations, the nominations were closed.

Bishop Gordy stated that elections for Synod Council members would take place later in the assembly. Ms. Schwartz reminded those who had been nominated from the floor to submit their biographical information by 2:30 p.m. that afternoon. Ms. Schwartz then declared that the report of the Nominating Committee was complete.

## **Bible Study**

Bishop Gordy introduced the leader of the first Bible study for the assembly: the Rev. Dr. David Ratke, professor of religious studies at Lenoir-Rhyne University and dean of the College of Theology, of which Lutheran Southern Theological Seminary is a part.

Dr. Ratke prefaced his Bible study with an expression of gratitude to the Southeastern Synod and Region 9 for their exceptional generosity and commitment to the mission and ministry of the seminary.

Dr. Ratke stated that he was going to focus on the assembly's theme of being church for the sake of the world. Based on his own experience of growing up in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, he commented that for many Lutherans there is a tendency to think about Luther and the Lutheran understanding of the faith as a matter of the heart, spirit, or head. They tend not to think about the kinds of themes Bishop Gordy had presented in his report—themes of justice and advocacy for our neighbors. Dr. Ratke declared that Luther was deeply interested in being church for the sake of the world.

Dr. Ratke pointed out that one example of Luther's concern for the neighbor was his abhorrence of indulgences, which took money out of people's pockets and gave them false hope. He compared the practice to today's lotteries. Dr. Ratke encouraged assembly participants to read Luther's descriptions of discipleship in his commentary on Galatians and his "Ordinance on a Common Chest. Luther, he said, taught that there is no greater service of God than Christian love, which helps and serves the needy.

Dr. Ratke then challenged the assembly: "Consider your own call, brothers and sisters of the Southeastern Synod." He asked them to think about and discuss the following questions: "What do Luther's reflections on the sale of indulgences mean for our call? What are the things in your community that keep others from knowing God and finding hope in their lives? Can you think of ways your church and congregation can make a difference in your community and how?"

At the end of the Bible study, Bishop Gordy thanked Dr. Ratke and presented him with an ELCA Good Gift of honey bees, which, because they are endangered are a reminder of this year of Care for Creation.

## **Update on Lutheranch from NovusWay**

Bishop Gordy welcomed to the dais Mr. Keith Johnson, executive director of NovusWay, a partner in ministry with the Southeastern Synod. Mr. Johnson presented a brief overview of the work of NovusWay, which is carried out through outdoor ministries at Lutheridge, Lutherock, Luther Springs, and Lutheranch. He thanked the people of the Southeastern Synod for their ongoing support, especially of Lutheranch. He announced that the McKanna-Sandrock Retreat Center would be open for business this summer and dedicated on Saturday, August 5. He asked assembly participants to help "Complete the Dream" and raise the \$54,500 needed to complete the goal for Lutheranch. A NovusWay gala would be held at the Hilton Northeast in Atlanta on August 19. He also encouraged people to come out and use Lutheranch and its new facilities.

At the end of the presentation, Bishop Gordy asked Mr. Johnson to remain on the dais. Bishop Gordy informed the assembly that Mr. Johnson had announced his intention to retire in early 2018 and the synod desired to thank him for his work and partnership. Bishop Gordy read the resolution of thanks that the Synod Council has passed the previous day (SC2017.05.04):

### **Resolution of Thanks for Mr. Keith Johnson**

To give thanks to God for the long-time partnership in ministry between the Southeastern Synod and NovusWay and its predecessor organizations, and especially for the most recent fruit of that partnership: the McKanna-Sandrock Retreat Center at Lutheranch;

To say, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” to Mr. Keith Johnson, executive director of NovusWay, for his many years of service to that organization and the church; and

To wish him well as he moves into God’s future and new ways of living out his faith.

Bishop Gordy gave thanks for Mr. Johnson and his 24 years of work on behalf of Novus Way and its deep partnership with the synod.

### **Greetings from the Southeastern Synod Green Team**

Bishop Gordy asked retired Pastor Ed Wolff to bring a greeting from the Green Team and a brief overview of the resources the team has assembled for congregations and individuals, which would be available throughout the assembly.

Pastor Wolff informed the assembly that the Reformation and Care of Creation go together, as Luther reminds us when he said: “Now if I believe in God’s Son, all creatures will appear to me 100 times more beautiful than before.” He announced that the Green Team would be in Room 11 for conversation, information, advocacy, and short presentations during the assembly. The table outside the room held information on resources.

### **Greetings and Report from SESLYO**

Bishop Gordy introduced Ms. Emma Grace Liner, St. Paul, Maryville, TN, outgoing chair of SESLYO, and Mr. Phillip Tyler, also from St. Paul, who is the chair-elect. Together they brought the report from SESLYO, which reviewed the year’s events and previewed the events to come.

### **Recognition of Rostered Ministers’ and Congregation Anniversaries**

Bishop Gordy named four congregations in the synod that were celebrating significant anniversaries. He asked members of those congregations to stand to be recognized:

- Reformation Lutheran Church, Greeneville, TN, established in 1892, celebrating 125 years of ministry;

- Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Kingsport, TN, established in 1917, celebrating 100 years of ministry;
- Rock of Ages Lutheran Church, Stone Mountain GA, celebrating 50 years of ministry; and
- Grace Lutheran Church, Bessemer, AL, celebrating 50 years of ministry.

Bishop Gordy then recognized those who have retired since the 2016 Synod Assembly:

- The Rev. Ronald C. Grunke, last served Holy Trinity, Marietta, GA;
- The Rev. Harvey L. Huntley, Region 9 Coordinator.

Bishop Gordy and the assembly then gave thanks for the service anniversaries of the following rostered leaders:

Five Years – 2012

Deacon Allison R. Ward  
 Deacon Mary A. Houck  
 Pr. Will R. Rogers, Sr.  
 Pr. Beverly Shaw

Ten Years – 2007

Pr. Morgan Gordy  
 Pr. Michael L. Jannett  
 The Rev. Kevin A. Martin

Fifteen Years - 2002

Pr. Dirk G. Lange  
 Pr. Richard E. Roberts

Twenty Years - 1997

Deacon Judith A. Aebischer  
 Pr. Robert M. Blanton  
 Pr. Jason W. Talsness  
 Pr. Kathleen W. Yates

Twenty-five Years – 1992

Pr. David E. Smedley, Jr.

Thirty Years – 1987

Pr. Laurie W. Bentley  
 Deacon Stella B. Blenner  
 Deacon Jeanette M. Burgess  
 Pr. Barbara J. Hunter  
 Deacon L. Kay Shackelford

Thirty-five Years – 1982

Pr. Peter J. Hartmann  
Deacon Edie M. Hockspeier  
Pr. Michael E. Jenkins  
Pr. J. Stephen Misenheimer  
Pr. W. James Nelson  
Pr. Marti D. Reynolds  
Pr. Larry K. Richardson  
Pr. John P. Rossing

Forty Years – 1977

Pr. Gerald D. Bultman  
Pr. David G. Osborne  
Pr. David H. Rasmussen

Forty-five Years – 1972

Pr. John G. Anderson  
Pr. David E. Hardy  
Pr. Douglas H. MaGinn  
Pr. John S. Sims

Fifty Years – 1967

Pr. Edelmiro Cortés  
Pr. Thomas Kenny  
Pr. Sterling D. Nelson  
Pr. Dr. John W. Swyers  
Pr. Charles J. Thomas

Fifty-five Years – 1962

Pr. John E. Lekander  
Pr. Dr. Charles A. Thompson

Sixty Years – 1957

Pr. James B. Christ  
Pr. Arthur N. Forsberg  
Pr. Joseph W. Holt  
Pr. Gordon L. Johnson  
Pr. Charles G. Komschlies

Sixty-five Years – 1952

Pr. Carl Berkobin

**Total Years of Rostered Ministry = 1645**

## **Announcements**

At the request of Bishop Gordy, Ms. Doris Underwood, synod vice president, provided announcements to the assembly.

## **Closing Prayer**

The Rev. Stacey Parvin, chaplain, closed the plenary session with prayer.

## **Recess**

The first plenary session of the 2017 Southeastern Synod Assembly concluded at 2:30 p.m. (EDT). 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 Operation Song and Beer and Hymns began at 8:00 p.m.

The workshops included the following: Circle of Welcome—Welcoming Congregations: Two New Initiatives for Congregational Engagement with Refugees and Migrants; Exploring the Occasional Services; Faith and Public Life; Gathering for Spouses of Rostered Ministers; Good News in the Digital Age; Green Team Resource Room; How Can I Help after a Disaster?; Luther the Reformer: Future Possibilities and Challenges; Resolutions and Memorials; Sharing Your Faith; Sin Boldly: Empowering Pastors and Laity To Use Their Gifts; Stewardship and Health: A Faith-Based Response to Emerging Public Health Threats; Synod Compensation Guidelines for Ministry; This Changes Everything!; Transformational Ministry 2.0 Coming to Southeastern Synod; What Every Congregation Needs to Know about the Call Process—Sooner or Later.

**SATURDAY, MAY 27, 2017**

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

**Call to Order**

The Rev. H. Julian Gordy, bishop, called the second Plenary Session of the 2017 Southeastern Synod Assembly to order at 8:33 a.m. (EDT).

**Opening Prayer: Assembly Chaplain**

At Bishop Gordy's request, the Rev. Stacey Parvin, assembly chaplain, opened the session with prayer.

**Report of the Credentials Committee**

Bishop Gordy called to the podium Ms. Liz Linke, member of Amazing Grace, Lawrenceville, and the chair of the Credentials Committee, to provide the second report of the Credentials Committee. Ms. Linke stated that the total number of voting members in attendance was 337.

**Election Procedure**

*(Tab D)*

Bishop Gordy called on Deacon Allison Ward, member of Redeemer, Savannah, GA, and chair of the Elections Committee, to provide information on election procedures to the assembly. Deacon Ward announced that on the previous evening the following people had been nominated for a position on the Synod Council by their conferences: Mr. James Drinnon, Redeemer, Savannah, GA, Conference 1; the Rev. Michelle Kuhlmann, Grace, Carrollton, GA, Conference 2; Mr. Imran Siddiqui, St. John's, Atlanta, GA, Conference 3; the Rev. Kim Stover, All Saints, Lilburn, GA, Conference 4; and the Rev. Tim Morgan, Faith, Cleveland, GA, Conference 5. In addition, Deacon Ward said, Conference 8 had nominated the Rev. Monica Weber, Epiphany Collierville, TN, to fill a one-year unexpired term on the Synod Council.

Bishop Gordy called for and received a second on these nominations. The assembly then voted on the motion to elect.

**SESA 2017.11.**

**To elect the following people to two-year terms on the Southeastern Synod Council:**

**Mr. James Drinnon, Redeemer, Savannah, GA, Conference 1;  
Rev. Michelle Kuhlmann, Grace, Carrollton, GA, Conference 2;  
Mr. Imran Siddiqui, St. John's, Atlanta, GA, Conference 3;  
Rev. Kim Stover, All Saints, Lilburn, GA, Conference 4;  
Rev. Tim Morgan, Faith, Cleveland, GA, Conference 5; and**

**To elect the following person to fill an unexpired one-year term on the  
Southeastern Synod Council:  
Rev. Monica Weber, Epiphany Collierville, TN,**

Deacon Ward explained that because of the demographics of those nominated by the conferences and elected by the Synod Council, it was necessary to designate both of the at-large openings on the Synod Council to be filled by lay females. She called attention to the biographical information available on the four nominees, then provided instructions on voting by ballot in the elections for two at-large Synod Council positions. Bishop Gordy called for questions. There being none, Pastor Parvin prayed, after which ballots were distributed.

### **Recognition of Pastors New to the Synod**

While the voting process took place, Bishop Gordy recognized pastors who are serving their first call in the Southeastern Synod or who are new to the synod: the Rev. L. Cuttino Alexander, Christus Victor, Ocean Springs, MS; the Rev. Karen M. Boda, Faith, Clay, AL; the Rev. William W. Bruggeman, Jr. (retired), recently moved to Savannah, GA; the Rev. Uijin Hwang, Incarnation, Marietta, GA; the Rev. Terri R. Landers, Spirit of Peace, Richmond Hill, GA; the Rev. Joshua Linman, Christ the King, Peachtree Corners, GA; the Rev. Richard H. Mueller, Holy Trinity, Daphne, AL; the Rev. Gordon H. Myers, Living Word, Arlington, TN; the Rev. Karen S. Slappey, Redeemer, Atlanta, GA; the Rev. Monica L. Weber, Epiphany, Collierville, TN; the Rev. Timothy N. Wrenn, Christ, Marietta, GA.

### **Bible Study**

Bishop Gordy welcomed to the dais Deacon Melanie Johnson, program manager for volunteer, congregation, and community engagement, Refugee and Immigration Services, Lutheran Services of Georgia, who also serves as a deacon at Rock of Ages, Stone Mountain, GA. Deacon Johnson presented the second of the assembly's Bible Studies.

Deacon Johnson stated the primary resources she used to prepare for the study were *New Voices of the Reformation* and the Augsburg Fortress Book of Faith Bible studies of Jeremiah and Galatians. Deacon Johnson talked about the long history of drawing lines of distinction between insiders and outsiders, particularly about what is Christian and what is not. The distinctions often were made to tighten the boundaries of Christianity, to incite fear, or derogate enemies. Outsider groups, at various times, included Muslims, Jews, the poor. Sometimes the boundaries drawn also were within Christianity, between Roman Catholics and Protestants, between different types of Protestants.

Deacon Johnson asked the assembly to consider who are the many outsiders we as church encounter today. We need to keep them in mind. She spoke of her experiences every day encountering people who might be considered outsiders. Deacon Johnson urged assembly participants to keep outsiders in their hearts and minds as they explored the passage from Jeremiah 31:31-34 on making a new covenant. That covenant, she pointed out, is grounded in God's forgiveness. There is no call for repentance or return to obedience. It is grounded in relationship with God and God's forgiveness. It begins and ends with God. It's grace.

Turning to Galatians 3:23-29, Deacon Johnson reminded the assembly that because Christians participate in the new covenant through Jesus Christ in baptism, we are all children of God through faith. For this we can be thankful to God. The initiative is God's alone and is really good news.

Deacon Johnson declared that because we have been loved and forgiven, we can consider how God is calling us to act with and among those many outsiders today. To be a church that is ever reforming, a church for the sake of the world, to be people who live by faith, she asked: How is God calling us to act with and among those on the boundaries, whom God loves? She concluded: we should love the outsiders among us as Jesus loved us.

At the conclusion of the Bible Study, Bishop Gordy thanked Deacon Johnson for her leadership and her work among refugees and immigrants. He presented her with an ELCA Good Gift of bees.

### **Report from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and AMMPARO**

Bishop Gordy invited to the dais the Rev. Kevin Jacobson, assistant director for outreach at Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) and Ms. Mary Campbell, program director for the ELCA strategy to accompany migrant minors for protection, advocacy, representation, and opportunities (AMMPARO).

Through a slide presentation, Pastor Jacobson and Ms. Campbell, reminded the assembly that most American Lutherans today are the descendants of immigrants and refugees, and they showed examples of the people with whom they work. They detailed services provided by LIRS and ELCA ministries. Ms. Campbell declared that this church does not settle refugees because they are Lutheran but because we are Lutheran, and we witness to God's love for all people. LIRS and the ELCA stand with and advocate for refugees, transforming communities through ministries of welcome and justice. They introduced two new initiatives for congregational engagement with refugees and migrants: Circle of Welcome and Welcoming Congregations, and they asked assembly members to reflect on how their congregations can get involved.

At the end of their presentation, Bishop Gordy presented Pastor Jacobson and Ms. Campbell with ELCA Good Gifts of bees.

### **Consideration of Resolution from the Synod Council**

*(Tab G)*

Bishop Gordy explained that at its meeting the previous day, the Synod Council had approved a resolution for presentation to the assembly (SC2017.05.14). He asked the chair of the Synod Council, Vice President Doris Underwood, to read the resolution, which would be presented to the assembly now but not considered until Plenary 3. Vice President Underwood asked the assembly's permission to read only the "Resolved" clauses, which is what it would be voting on, and received it. She presented the following resolution (2017-03):

#### **A Resolution of Welcome for our Refugee Neighbors**

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod will encourage all congregations of the synod to support and engage in the ongoing work of welcoming refugees through Lutheran

Immigration and Refugee Service, Lutheran Services of Georgia, and various partner organizations and ministries within the confines of this Synod; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod recommit to being an advocate and justice seeker for refugees, request that the synodical bishop communicates our concerns to our members of Congress and other federal, state, and local elected officials, and encourage all congregations and their members to express their concern for refugees to their elected officials; and be it further

RESOLVED, that all congregations of the Southeastern Synod be encouraged to pray for the displaced and refugees around the world, for aid and resettlement organizations, for just and humane governmental policies that reflect our nation's core values of welcome and inclusivity, and for a world where no one need flee their home for fear of violence, oppression, or economic hardship; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that each congregation and synodical leadership be encouraged to celebrate and give thanks for the rich and diverse gifts refugees bring to our communities, our states, and our nation by annually hosting a Refugee Sunday ([www.lirs.org/refugeesunday](http://www.lirs.org/refugeesunday)).

### **Greetings from Lutheran Services of Georgia**

Bishop Gordy welcomed to the dais the Rev. John Moeller, the new chief executive officer of Lutheran Services of Georgia (LSG). Bishop Gordy informed the assembly that Pastor Moeller is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church and brings more than 25 years of nonprofit leadership experience to LSG.

Pastor Moeller expressed his joy about working with the Southeastern Synod and hearing about the wonderful ministries the synod does. He informed the assembly that LSG, in addition to working with refugees and immigrants, serves children in the custody of the state, places special needs children in foster homes, and helps find families that want to foster and adopt children. Pastor Moeller stated that his agency works also with developmentally delayed and disabled adults, who often live in state-run nursing homes and other facilities and helps find homes for them. He explained that LSG operates in Georgia, but is also a resource for those in other states. He concluded by sharing his dream of a day when there are LSG resources spread across the entire Southeastern Synod.

### **Update on the Advocacy Council**

Bishop Gordy called upon Mr. Hilton Austin, St. John's, Atlanta, GA, to update the assembly on the synod's advocacy efforts. Mr. Austin remarked that it had been an exciting year in advocacy for the Southeastern Synod. It had received the first of three years of World Hunger grants for advocacy. New ready benches are coming alive. Congregations are developing advocacy teams. Mr. Austin said that the newest advocacy development in the synod is the Advocacy Policy Council. It began meeting in January, with two people from each state in the synod talking about policy and strategies. The Advocacy Policy Council members included the Rev. Tiffany Chaney and Ms. Carla Crowder from Alabama; Ms. Roxanne Thompson and Deacon Melanie Johnson from Georgia; the Rev. Tom Clark and the Rev. Stacey Parvin from Mississippi; and Ms. Dawn Bennett and the Rev. Matt Steinhauer from Tennessee.

Mr. Austin declared that God is calling us out of comfort zones and complacency, out of the once-safe place of silence for a time such as this. Division, hate, and anger are the rule of the day. If there were ever a time for the church to be the voice of reconciliation, it is now. We must take action. He commented that Lutherans do a good job of taking care of people, but advocacy is about addressing the root causes of hunger and poverty, which can only be changed by public policy. Citing Luther, Mr. Austin reminded the assembly that the Word of God comes to change and renew the world. In conclusion, Mr. Hilton pointed out the information and resources for advocacy available on the web, including a guide for congregational advocacy.

### **Presentation of the Robert S. and Jean E. Graetz Advocacy Award**

Bishop Gordy announced that at its meeting the previous day the Southeastern Synod Council approved the establishment of the Robert S. and Jean E. Graetz Advocacy Award (SC2017.05.03). He explained that Pastor and Mrs. Jean Graetz, who are members of Messiah, Montgomery, AL, had devoted their lives to work for civil and human rights. Their courage and faithfulness to the Gospel, lived out in their work, is the inspiration for this award, he said, which will be given in the future to others named by the Southeastern Synod Council, who set an example of Christian witness on behalf of the most vulnerable in our midst. He added that, when possible, a financial gift will also be presented to the recipient to be designated to an acceptable ministry or non-profit advocacy organization in their honor. This year the Advocacy Council has awarded \$1,000 to Robert and Jean Graetz. Bishop Gordy said that they have asked that this money be given to Lutheran World Relief for the purpose of building water wells in Tanzania.

The Rev. Randy Jones, pastor of Messiah, Montgomery, AL, provided details of the lives and work of Pastor and Mrs. Graetz to the accompaniment of pictures and a video about them:

The Rev. Robert S. Graetz Jr. was born on May 16, 1928, in Clarksburg, West Virginia. His German grandfather was an ardent Lutheran, who prepped his grandson for a life in the ministry. Robert went on to attend Capital University in Ohio, focusing on pre-theological studies, and later graduated from Trinity Lutheran Seminary. He served as vicar at Los Angeles Community Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, California.

Jeannie E. Graetz was born on December 24, 1929, in Springfield, Pennsylvania. After graduation from high school, she worked in a local drugstore before enrolling at Capitol University in Ohio, where she met Robert. After returning to Montgomery, she enrolled at Alabama State University, and in 2015, at the age of 85, she was awarded her Bachelor's Degree in Education. She is believed to be the oldest undergraduate ever to graduate from Alabama State University.

Robert and Jeannie were married, in 1951, and recently celebrated their 65<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. They have seven children and some 60 or 70 grand and great-grandchildren.

Upon his graduation from Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Pr. Graetz was asked by the American Lutheran Church to be the pastor at Trinity Lutheran

Church in Montgomery, Alabama, an African-American Church. Pr. Graetz was serving as pastor of Trinity when the bus boycotts began in 1955. Pr. Graetz was a member of the executive committee of the Montgomery Improvement Association. During the boycotts the Graetz family were targeted by the Ku Klux Klan for his involvement in the boycotts. Their car was vandalized and their home, the church parsonage, was bombed twice. By the grace of God no one was injured in the attacks.

Pr. Graetz later served various churches in Ohio and Washington, D.C. In 2005 Pr. Graetz and Jeannie moved back to Montgomery and began working as the directors of the National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture at Alabama State University, an historic African-American University. The annual Robert and Jean Graetz Symposium on Human Rights and Reconciliation at Alabama State began in 2006 in their honor. Pr. Graetz and Jeannie continue to give of themselves on behalf of civil rights and justice for all to this day.

Pr. Graetz has written two books: “A White Preacher’s Memoir: The Montgomery Bus Boycott” and “A White Preacher’s Message on Race and Reconciliation: Based on His Experiences Beginning with the Montgomery Bus Boycott.”

Bishop Gordy told the assembly that several weeks ago Pastor Graetz and Jeanie were informed that we had established this award in their honor and that they would be the first recipients. Though Pr. Graetz’ health has kept him from getting out as much as he would like to of late, they were excited to make the trip and to be with us to accept the award. Unfortunately, Bishop Gordy said, Pastor Graetz was hospitalized with an acute illness not long after that and remains hospitalized today. Your prayers for his continued recovery are appreciated by Pr. Graetz, Jeannie, and their family. In their place, we have invited the members of Messiah, Montgomery, AL, where the Graetzes are members, to come to the dais and accept this award on their behalf.

Bishop Gordy presented the award, saying “The legacy of their work provides a vision for what it means to be church for the sake of the world. On behalf of a grateful Assembly, please accept this award on behalf of The Rev. Robert and Mrs. Jean Graetz.” The assembly responded with sustained applause.

The Rev. Ron Bonner, director for evangelical mission, read proclamations in honor of Pastor Robert and Jean Graetz from Mayor Todd Strange on behalf of the city of Montgomery, Mayor Andy Burke on behalf of the city of Chattanooga, and U.S. Representative Terry A. Sull.

### **Greetings from Bishop James Arends and the LaCrosse Area Synod**

Bishop Gordy reminded the assembly that the ELCA’s La Crosse Area Synod is the companion synod of the Southeastern Synod and that its Bishop Arends often was present at the assembly. Although he was not able to be present this year, Bishop Arends had sent a video with his greetings and that of his synod, which was shared with the assembly.

## **Announcements**

At the request of Bishop Gordy, Ms. Doris Underwood, synod vice president, provided announcements to the assembly.

## **Closing Prayer**

The Rev. Stacey Parvin, chaplain, closed the plenary session with prayer.

## **Recess**

The second Plenary Session of the 2017 ELCA Southeastern Synod Assembly recessed at 10:37 a.m.

Following the recess, members of the assembly participated in the second Workshop Session. Among the workshops in that session were the following: Circle of Welcome— Welcoming Congregations: Two New Initiatives for Congregational Engagement with Refugees and Migrants; Empathy and the Gospel; Exploring the Occasional Services; Faith and Public Life; Faith, Sexism, and Justice; Good News in the Digital Age; Green Team Resource Room; How Can I Help after a Disaster?; How Does Your Congregation Encourage (or Discourage) Healthy Leaders?; Listen! God Is Calling; Managing Risks: Steps Toward the Best Congregational Practices; Sin Boldly: Empowering Pastors and Laity To Use Their Gifts; This Changes Everything!; Transformational Ministry 2.0 Coming to the Southeastern Synod.

During lunch, three specialized conversations were held: Rostered Leaders in Specialized Pastoral Care and Other Non-Congregational Ministries; Help! I Need Ideas!; and Council Presidents. Following lunch, assembly members gathered for worship.

**SATURDAY, MAY 27, 2017**

**PLENARY SESSION 3 (3:30-6:00 P.M.)**

**Call to Order**

The Rev. H. Julian Gordy, bishop, called the third Plenary Session of the 2017 Southeastern Synod Assembly to order at 3:34 p.m. (EDT).

**Opening Prayer: Assembly Chaplain**

At Bishop Gordy's request, the Rev. Stacey Parvin, assembly chaplain, opened the session with prayer.

**Report of the Credentials Committee**

Bishop Gordy called to the podium Ms. Liz Linke, member of Amazing Grace, Lawrenceville, and the chair of the Credentials Committee, to provide the second report of the Credentials Committee. Ms. Linke stated that the total number of voting members in attendance was 350.

**Recognition of New Seminary Graduates**

Bishop Gordy called the assembly's attention to new seminary graduates who had been assigned to the Southeastern Synod:

- Ms. Carolyn Hayford, member of Shepherd of the Hills, Birmingham, AL; Lenoir-Rhyne Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (LR/LTSS);
- Mr. Richard Hogg, member of Atonement, Atlanta, GA; Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) and LR/LTSS;
- Ms. Eun Young Kim, mission developer for Hope International, Doraville, GA, and member of Christ the King, Peachtree Corners, GA; ITC, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur; LR/LTSS;
- Mr. Jin Kyung Ko, member of Christ the King, Peachtree Corners, GA; ITC, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur; LR/LTSS;
- Mr. Andrew Lewis, member of Messiah, Decatur GA; Candler Theological Seminary and LR/LTSS;
- Mr. Alberto Sifontes, member of Iglesia Lutherans de Cristo; TEEM candidate at Pacific Lutheran Seminary, Berkeley, CA.

## **Synod Office Volunteers**

Bishop Gordy recognized and gave thanks for the work of the synod office volunteers: Ms. Bernice Bland and Ms. Margery Keller from Living Grace, Tucker, GA, and Ms. Paulette Alderfer from Good Shepherd, Woodstock, GA.

## **2018-19 Ministry Funding Plan**

*(Tab E)*

Bishop Gordy called on Treasurer Lee Smith, member of Messiah, Madison, AL, and Mr. Fred Weinholt, member of Trinity, Hixson, TN, and chair of the Budget and Finance Committee, to present the 2018-19 Ministry Funding Plan.

Treasurer Smith explained that, in putting together the proposal for 2018-19, the Budget and Finance Committee set the goal for 2018 mission-support income at the same level as the initial 2017 estimate. He acknowledged that the income estimate is ambitious since it is more than the actual mission-support contributions received for 2016-17.

Treasurer Smith presented five charts concerning the budget. The first was a summary of the synod's proposed expenses for 2018. The second was an income chart of the income of the ELCA churchwide organization, showing that the Southeastern Synod's mission support, when added to that of the other 64 synods, constitutes almost half of the unrestricted income of the ELCA's churchwide organization. The third chart showed the most recent expense proposal for the ELCA churchwide organization. Mr. Smith pointed out that 40% of all gifts support relief and development as well as the growth of the ELCA in the U.S. In addition, some of the funds the synod sends to the churchwide organization come back to the synod to support its missions and the work of its directors for evangelical mission. The fourth chart showed the proposed sources of income to support the synod's ministries in 2018, almost 96% of which comes from congregational and individual contributions. The last chart displayed the proposed Ministry Funding Plan by programmatic areas. Treasurer Smith called attention to the narrative description of the programmatic areas on page E-11. He then reviewed the specifics of the 2018-19 Ministry Funding Plan (pages E-9 and E-10).

Bishop Gordy called for questions. Pr. Mark Beatty, chair of the Compensation Committee, stated that the Compensation Committee has included the bishop and rostered synod staff in the compensation guidelines and asked how close the synod was to meeting the guidelines for them. He also thanked the Synod Council for its commitment to address compensation equity. Treasurer Lee Smith replied that the Budget and Finance Committee had allocated as much in the spending plan for salary, housing, and benefits as was practical, with an additional increase in budget level 2. He added that the synod was doing the best it could to meet guidelines.

There being no further questions, Bishop Gordy informed the assembly that the proposed 2018-19 Ministry Funding Plan had been recommended to the assembly by the Synod Council. Since it came from the council, no second was necessary. Bishop Gordy called for a vote on the 2018-19 Ministry Funding Plan.

**SESA 2017.12.**

**To adopt the 2018 Ministry Funding Plan recommended by the Synod Council.**

**Election Procedure**

*(Tab D)*

Bishop Gordy called on Deacon Allison Ward, member of Redeemer, Savannah, GA, and chair of the Elections Committee, to provide to the assembly the results of the ballot for two at-large positions on the Synod Council, which had been taken in Plenary 2.

Deacon Ward stated that 289 valid ballots and no invalid ballots had been cast. The number of votes needed for election was 145. The results were as follows:

Deborah Baumgardner-160

Santha Jetty-139

Linda Larson-129

Roxann Thompson-128

Bishop Gordy declared that Ms. Deborah Baumgartner, Good Shepherd, Woodstock, GA, had been elected to an at-large position on the Synod Council, and Dr. Santha Jetty, Christ the King, Norcross, GA, and Deacon Linda Larson, St. Paul's, Savannah, GA, would participate in a run-off ballot for the second position.

**SESA 2017.13.**

**To elect Ms. Deborah Baumgartner, Good Shepherd, Woodstock, GA, to a two-year term on the Synod Council.**

Bishop Gordy called on Pastor Stacey Parvin. The assembly chaplain prayed prior to the distribution of the second ballot. The assembly voted on the remaining position on the Synod Council.

**Bible Study**

Bishop Gordy invited the Rev. Tiffany Chaney, mission developer of Gathered by Grace, Montgomery and Tuscaloosa, AL, to present the final Bible study of the assembly. He commented that Pastor Chaney is bi-vocational, serving also as system director of business development for Baptist Health, a three-hospital health system based in Montgomery.

Pastor Chaney announced that her Bible study was titled, "The Many Voices of Women." She began by emphasizing how important it is to include the many women whose voices or stories are heard in Scripture, whether they are given a name or not in the text. They are all part of God's story. Pastor Chaney highlighted the significance of Mary Magdalene and her voice, particularly in John's account of the resurrection (John 20:10-18). She asked assembly participants to read and discuss Dr. Andrea Walker's reflections on this text from the perspective of being in Madagascar where young women are prostituted by their families so that they all can

have an income on which to live. Pastor Chaney asked what implication her reflections had for being church for the sake of the world.

Pastor Chaney pointed out that Jesus did not follow the custom of his time of stifling women's voices. In fact, he freed them. This was also true, she said in the Reformation. Luther advocated for maiden schools, which allowed for study of music and math as well as other subjects. Pastor Chaney indicated that even today, when the percentage of men and women in seminary is almost equal, voices of women are still stifled in this church. Some congregations will not consider a woman candidate for pastor. Women are more likely to serve as an assistant or associate, or as chaplains, rather than as senior pastors. Women report experiencing discrimination and harassment in their congregation or ministry site as well as in the call process. Ethnic women also experience racial discrimination.

Pastor Chaney declared that this church has an opportunity to grow and do better than it has in the past. The voices of women can bring revelations, so the people of this church should open themselves to their voices. Pastor Chaney concluded her Bible study by expressing her excitement to hear how the Lord will speak through the many voices of women, and she encouraged the assembly to keep listening for and to them. She closed the study with prayer.

At the end of her presentation, Bishop Gordy presented Pastor Chaney with an ELCA Good Gift of bees. Bishop Gordy then turned over the chair to Vice President Doris Underwood.

## **2018 Compensation Guidelines**

Vice President Underwood called on the Rev. Mark Beatty (on leave from call), chair of the synod's Compensation Guidelines Committee, to present the 2018 guidelines. Pastor Beatty informed the assembly that the guidelines remained the same as the 2017 one, except for a recommendation of a 2% cost-of-living increase. There being no discussion nor questions, Vice President Underwood called for a vote.

### **SESA 2017.14.**

**To adopt the 2018 Compensation Guidelines recommended by the Synod Council.**

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

Vice President Underwood welcomed to the dais Mr. Jerry Johnson, regional manager for the ELCA's Mission Investment Fund (MIF). She thanked Mr. Johnson and the MIF for their many years of support for the Southeastern Synod assemblies. Through a brief video, Mr. Johnson presented stories about the work of the MIF in building and restoring ELCA congregations like St. Matthew in Charleston, SC, work made possible by the investment of individuals and congregation in MIF.

## **Green Team Presentation on Care for Creation**

Vice President Underwood called on the Rev. Patti Axel, Nativity, Bethlehem, GA, who brought an update on the work of the Green Team. Pastor Axel thanked the worship team for the beautiful creation focus of the worship earlier that afternoon. She challenged individuals and congregations to consider what they could do to demonstrate earth stewardship and offered them

resources (and interest-free loans) in order to make simple changes that could have large impacts on the environment.

## **Report of the Churchwide Representative**

Vice President Underwood welcomed home the Rev. Kevin Strickland, assistant to the ELCA bishop and executive for worship as well as representative from the churchwide organization to the Southeastern Synod.

Pastor Strickland's report focused on witnessing to God and being church for the sake of the world. He declared that, contrary to many reports, the church is not dying. The church is the living, breathing body of Christ. However, the institution of church is changing; it needs to. Pastor Strickland said that the world still deserves to hear the Gospel, the joy that resides in the living and breathing word of love. It still needs to hear that God is love. Yesterday's Gospel text for Ascension Day said: "You are witnesses of these things." You and me and those in the congregations of this synod and this church and all over the world—we are witnesses of these things.

Pastor Strickland asked: What are "these things"? They are the joy of the Gospel, the challenges, and the things yet to come. Each of us can make a difference in the world by the way we witness to God with our lives. Pastor Strickland named many members of the Southeastern Synod and how they were witnessing to God through their vocations and their work for the sake of the world. He thanked the Southeastern Synod for the witness enabled by the continuing gift of 50% of undesignated income to the larger church, some of which came back to aid the synod's ministries.

A video from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton concerning the ministries of the ELCA was shown. Pastor Strickland then reviewed other ways the ELCA is witnessing to God and being church for the sake of the world:

- Commemorations throughout the church of Martin Luther and 500 years of the Reformation, including worship at the National Cathedral on October 31, 2017;
- Ongoing inter-religious and ecumenical work;
- "Called Forward Together in Christ: Strategic Directions for 2025," which include two priorities for the coming year: congregational vitality and leadership;
- Advocacy, especially for immigrants;
- Global Mission relationships, missionaries, Young Adults in Global Mission;
- ELCA Foundation;
- the social statement process concerning Women and Justice;
- the Human Rights Social Message.

In closing, Pastor Strickland encouraged members of the Southeastern Synod to continue to witness to God and serve the world. He thanked them again for their generous support of the wider church.

As a token of the synod's gratitude for his ministry, Vice President Underwood presented Pastor Strickland with an ELCA Good Gift of bees. She then returned the chair to Bishop Gordy.

## **Consideration of Resolutions and Memorials**

*(Tab G)*

Bishop Gordy called on the Rev. Randy Jones, chair of the Reference and Counsel Committee, to lead the assembly in its consideration of resolutions and memorials. For the assembly's benefit, Bishop Gordy reviewed the procedures for consideration and asked Pastor Parvin, assembly chaplain, to lead the assembly in prayer. After she had done so, Bishop Gordy asked Pastor Jones to begin consideration of the first resolution.

Pastor Jones thanked the members of the Reference and Counsel Committee and lauded the benefits of the earlier deadline for submission, which permitted a more thorough review by the committee of submitted resolutions and memorials. He reminded the assembly that there were four appropriate sponsors for resolutions and memorials: the Synod Council, conferences, congregations, and 15 pastors. Pastor Jones then read the "Resolved" clauses of the first resolution to be considered and stated that the Reference and Counsel Committee recommended adoption.

### **2017-01**

#### **A Resolution Concerning the Role of the Church in Combating Antimicrobial Resistance**

WHEREAS, the Southeastern Synod has designated 2017 as the year for Care for Creation, noting that the improper use of resources is a factor in exacerbating already difficult circumstances for millions that contribute to wide disparities in wealth as well as poverty, hunger, and social inequity; and

WHEREAS, we are reminded throughout Scripture that we are called to love and to care for all of creation in a manner similar to how God loves and cares for us, promoting stewardship of all the resources with which we have been blessed; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA affirmed a commitment to the care for creation and the call to be good stewards of all of creation through the Social Statement on Caring for Creation; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA affirmed the role of the church to "pioneer new ways of addressing emerging social problems..." through the Social Statement on the Church in Society; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA affirmed the call of the church to be active in advocating for quality and sustainable healthcare for all through the Social Statement on Caring for Health; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA supports a comprehensive approach to health care as a shared endeavor among individuals, churches, government, and the wider society, and equitable access for all people to basic health care services and to the benefits of public health efforts; and

WHEREAS, the role of the church and faith-based organizations has repeatedly been cited as playing a crucial role in the successful response to public health emergencies; and

WHEREAS, most recently faith-based organizations were cited by the U.S. government in multiple after-action reports as being key to the response to the Ebola crisis in East Africa; and

WHEREAS, proper stewardship of resources is not limited simply to things like fuel and water but is inclusive of the proper stewardship of medicines and of doing what we can to ensure not only our own health and well-being but the health and well-being of our brothers and sisters; and WHEREAS, the growing prevalence of drug-resistant diseases will increasingly impede progress on ELCA commitments to work for and support health care for all people; and WHEREAS, while currently 700,000 people per year die from drug-resistant diseases—and that number is expected to rise to 10 million by 2050—the overall impact of drug-resistant disease goes beyond fatalities to include long-term impacts on the ill individual, the larger family unit, and the community; and WHEREAS, drug-resistant diseases can result in longer illness, more complex illness, more doctor visits, and the need for more—and more costly—medicines, often with more severe side effects; and WHEREAS, drug-resistant diseases also put at risk modern medical advances such as surgery, transplants, and chemotherapy, due to the threat of infection; and WHEREAS, the total cost for antimicrobial related illnesses is expected to rise to 100 trillion dollars by 2050 (<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs194/en/>); and WHEREAS, while the impacts of drug-resistant disease will be felt by all people, rich and poor alike, the burden of infections and the greatest economic impacts will be largely borne by the most vulnerable in society, exactly the people whom Christ calls the church to care for and to stand with; and WHEREAS, the World Health Organization finds that improper usage of medication, over-prescribing of medication, lack of access to medicine or access to poor quality medicine contribute to the development of drug-resistant disease; and WHEREAS, addressing the inadequate access to sanitation (lack of clean water and electricity) in community and healthcare settings would reduce the infectious disease burden, lessen the demand for medicines, and ultimately help preserve the long-term efficacy of medicines; therefore, be it RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Council request that the Synod’s Green Team and the Advocacy Team study and take action to address the emergence and spread of drug-resistant disease and address the associated health, social, and development impact of such illnesses; and be it further RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Council request that the ELCA Church Council work to engage with its ecumenical partners, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, to identify areas of mutual interest and future collaboration on this issue; and be it further RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Council request that the ELCA Church Council include information regarding the fight against antimicrobial resistance in existing churchwide efforts to eliminate health disparities (e.g., clean water initiatives, malaria prevention, etc.); and be it further RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Council request that the synod’s Green Team work through the bishop’s office to engage its partner synods, domestically and internationally, to promote awareness and share ideas concerning best practices to combat antimicrobial resistance.

Bishop Gordy opened the floor for discussion of the resolution.

Mr. Steve Schrader, Shades Valley, Birmingham, AL, stated that he had non-substantive edits to the resolution. Bishop Gordy replied that, if the resolution passed, the secretary would incorporate them into the final draft of the resolution.

Ms. Elaine Schwarz, Amazing Grace, Lawrenceville, GA, pointed out that it was beyond the capabilities of the synod's Green Team and Advocacy Team to do what the first resolution asks. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) would have the capacity. She proposed striking the first "Resolved" clause.

**Moved;**

**Seconded: To strike the first "Resolved" clause of the resolution.**

Speaking against the amendment, Mrs. Pat Bryant, Christus Victor, Ocean Springs, MS, said that the problem that the resolution addresses is big and ongoing; it is not going away. Any suggestions of how to apply ourselves to the problem is something we should be looking at. It is not solely the province of the CDC. It is also a social problem.

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

**Moved;**

**Seconded;**

**Approved (Yes-141; No-108): To strike the first "Resolved" clause of the resolution.**

The Rev. Tiffany Chaney, Gathered by Grace, Montgomery, AL, commented that she viewed the project via her position in the health system as well as in the church. People in both institutions had the responsibility of using antibiotics properly and communicating that necessity to others.

### **Extension of Plenary Session**

Bishop Gordy proposed a 15-minute extension to the plenary session. The assembly approved the extension.

### **Consideration of Resolutions and Memorials (continued)**

*(Tab G)*

The Rev. Dena Lane, Nativity, Austell, GA, inquired why the Roman Catholic Church was singled out in the resolution. Bishop Gordy replied that Roman Catholics have taken lead in raising this antimicrobial issue worldwide.

The Rev. Dale Sillik, Trinity, Lilburn, GA, proposed an amendment: to strike "Green Team" and replace with "Health Ministry." He said that this was more a health concern than a "green concern."

**Moved;**

**Seconded: To strike "Green Team" and replace with "Health Ministry."**

Bishop Gordy called for a vote, and the amendment was approved.

**Moved;**

**Seconded;**

**Approved:** To strike “Green Team” and replace with “Health Ministry.”

Ms. Elaine Schwarz, called the question.

**Moved;**

**Approved:** To end debate.

**Bishop Gordy called for a vote on the resolution as amended.**

**SESA 2017.15.**

**To adopt the following resolution (2017-01):**

**A Resolution Concerning the Role of the Church in Combating Antimicrobial Resistance**

**RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Council request that the ELCA Church Council work to engage with its ecumenical partners, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, to identify areas of mutual interest and future collaboration on this issue; and be it further**

**RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Council request that the ELCA Church Council include information regarding the fight against antimicrobial resistance in existing churchwide efforts to eliminate health disparities (e.g., clean water initiatives, malaria prevention, etc.); and be it further**

**RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod Council request that the synod’s Health Ministry Task Force work through the bishop’s office to engage its partner synods, domestically and internationally, to promote awareness and share ideas concerning best practices to combat antimicrobial resistance.**

### **Election Procedure**

*(Tab D)*

Bishop Gordy called on Deacon Allison Ward, member of Redeemer, Savannah, GA, and chair of the Elections Committee, to provide to the assembly the results of the ballot for the remaining at-large position on the Synod Council, which had been taken earlier in Plenary 3.

Deacon Ward stated that 290 valid ballots and no invalid ballots had been cast. The number of votes needed for election was 146. The results were as follows:

Santha Jetty-148

Linda Larson-142

Bishop Gordy declared that Dr. Santha Jetty had been elected to an at-large position on the Synod Council.

**SESA 2017.16.**

**To elect Dr. Santha Jetty, Christ the King, Norcross, GA, to a two-year term on the Synod Council.**

Bishop Gordy thanked Deacon Ward and the rest of the members of the Elections Committee for their work.

**Announcements**

At the request of Bishop Gordy, Ms. Doris Underwood, synod vice president, provided announcements to the assembly.

**Closing Prayer**

The Rev. Stacey Parvin, chaplain, closed the plenary session with prayer.

**Recess**

The third Plenary Session of the 2017 ELCA Southeastern Synod Assembly recessed at 6:14 p.m.

Following recess and dinner, assembly participants were invited to participate in a Brush Harbor event.

**SUNDAY, MAY 28, 2017**

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

**Call to Order**

The Rev. H. Julian Gordy, bishop, called the fourth Plenary Session of the 2017 Southeastern Synod Assembly to order at 10:07 a.m. (EDT). Prior to the opening of Plenary Session 4, assembly participants had gathered for worship.

**Opening Prayer: Assembly Chaplain**

At Bishop Gordy's request, the Rev. Stacey Parvin, assembly chaplain, opened the session with prayer.

**Report of the Credentials Committee**

Bishop Gordy called to the podium Ms. Liz Linke, member of Amazing Grace, Lawrenceville, and the chair of the Credentials Committee, to provide the fourth report of the Credentials Committee. Ms. Linke stated that the total number of voting members in attendance was 350, 216 of whom are lay and 134 of whom are clergy. In addition, there were 80 visitors and 46 volunteers present for a grand total of 476.

**Report of the Disaster Ministry Committee**

Bishop Gordy invited the Rev. P. Morgan Gordy, Christ, Nashville, to bring the report of the Disaster Ministry Committee. Pastor Morgan reviewed the work of the committee during the previous year as well as its current work. Among the activities she mentioned were the following:

- Monthly meetings to plan and conduct disaster preparedness activities and respond to disasters in the synod;
- Disaster coordinator training;
- Workshops at Synod Assemblies;
- A Disaster Ministry Team mission trip to do disaster recovery work in Mississippi;
- Consultation and assessment assistance within the synod after fires, tornados, hurricanes, and floods.

Pastor Gordy also announced that Mr. John Boettner is the incoming chair of the Disaster Ministry Committee. She continued her report by saying that to respond to disasters such as the ones mentioned, the Disaster Minister Committee established the position of volunteer recruitment and connecting coordination, and Deacon Ellen Koester, Lutheran Services in Tennessee, had been contracted to serve in this capacity. She will help connect volunteers to places in the synod where they can be a part of the disaster response.

Concerning upcoming work, Pastor Gordy indicated that a FEMA disaster chaplain training would be offered July 19-21 in Atlanta. More information about that training is

available on the Disaster Ministry display table. She emphasized that it is important to develop a roster of FEMA certified rostered leaders to be able to respond in the event of a disaster.

In closing, Pastor Gordy thanked individuals and congregations for their ongoing support of disaster ministry. She expressed gratitude for the committee's partners in ministry: Lutheran Services in Tennessee, Lutheran Services of Georgia, and Lutheran Disaster Relief.

### **Report of the Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta**

Bishop Gordy called on the Rev. Dr. Everett Flanigan, administrative dean of the Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta (LTCA) for a report on the center's work.

Pastor Flanigan explained that the purpose of LTCA is to provide theological education to lay persons as well as candidates for rostered ministry. Based at the Interdenominational Theological Center, it works with candidates in the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) and the Southeastern Synod Lutheran Formation Experience (SSLFE) as well as others. Through a slide presentation, Pastor Flanigan detailed some of the center's recent activities. He also talked about upcoming events.

Following the presentation, Bishop Gordy thanked Pastor Flanigan for his work and that of LTCA.

### **Presentation on Suicide Prevention**

Bishop Gordy welcomed to the dais Mr. Jerry Weyrauch, member of the Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Marietta, GA. Bishop Gordy informed the assembly that Mr. Weyrauch and his wife Elsie, following the death of a daughter 30 years ago, have made suicide prevention their lives' ministry. They have worked with the ELCA churchwide office to develop the Social Message on Suicide Prevention, establish within the ELCA Foundation the Suicide Prevention Endowment Fund, create the independent Lutheran organization Lutheran Suicide Prevention Ministry, and in 2016, introduced a resolution at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly seeking the doubling of the federal investment in suicide prevention research.

Mr. Weyrauch opened his remarks by thanking Bishop Gordy and the assembly for the opportunity to raise the profile of efforts toward the prevention of suicide. He showed the assembly a video-enhanced PowerPoint that provided facts about suicide; the views of an Episcopalian counselor on mental health, suicide, and faith; and a charge from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton to break the silence concerning suicide.

Following the video presentation, Mr. Weyrauch challenged members of the synod to get involved in the ministry of suicide prevention. He said that faith communities have an extremely important role in raising awareness and advocacy about suicide prevention and other mental health issues and concerns, and he gave examples of how people could get connected and involved in prevention efforts. Mr. Weyrauch concluded by saying, "Life is precious and is a gift from God. We as members of the body of Christ can respond with compassion and action to those members of Christ's body who feel hopeless and alone. It is time for the church to break the silence."

At the end of Mr. Weyrauch's presentation, Bishop Gordy added ways of carrying out this ministry. He informed the assembly that rostered ministers could take the six-hour online course

called suicide prevention for clergy; congregations could work with the Lutheran Suicide Prevention Ministry when they are asked to bring suicide prevention to their members; and everyone can help the Southeastern Synod continue to lead the ELCA in breaking the silence about suicide. Bishop Gordy added that the video and the information on the online course for rostered ministers would be posted on the assembly website soon. Bishop Gordy thanked Mr. Weyrauch for his dedication to and untiring work on the ministry of suicide prevention.

## **Consideration of Resolutions and Memorials (continued)**

*(Tab G)*

Bishop Gordy asked the Rev. Stacey Parvin to pray before the assembly began further consideration of resolutions and memorials. After she had done so, the Rev. Randy Jones, chair of the Reference and Counsel Committee introduced the second resolution. He announced that the committee recommended adoption of the resolution.

### **2017-02**

#### **A Resolution Regarding the ELCA Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice: One in Christ**

WHEREAS, in faith we are all called to “do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God” (Micah 6:8); and

WHEREAS, the 2009 Churchwide Assembly authorized a social statement process “on the topic of justice for women in church and society,” and the ensuing task force has diligently worked toward a social statement; and

WHEREAS, listening events by task force members and process builders were held across the ELCA from 2013-2016, encouraging open, honest, and empowering conversations about sexism and its negative impact; and

WHEREAS, the study document “Faith, Sexism, and Justice: Conversations toward a Social Statement” was released in July 2016 for discussion, dialog, and feedback through August 31, 2017; and

WHEREAS, responses to and comments on the social statement draft are valued by members of the Task Force in building a document reflecting the whole of the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, a defined response period to the Draft of a Social Statement on Women and Justice has been established from its release in mid-November 2017 to October 2018; therefore, be it **RESOLVED**, that ELCA congregations, groups, members, and church-related institutions in the Southeastern Synod be encouraged to use the study document “Faith, Sexism, and Justice: Conversations toward a Social Statement” and respond to it prior to August 31, 2017; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that ELCA congregations, groups, members, and church-related institutions in the Southeastern Synod be encouraged to read, discuss, and respond to the Draft of a Social Statement on Women and Justice as proposed by the ELCA’s Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ.

Bishop Gordy opened the floor for discussion of the resolution.

The Rev. Susan Thisell, Good Shepherd, Garden City, GA, raised a question about the deadline for submitting comments on the study document. She reported that a presenter at the workshop on the proposed statement indicated that responses would be received until the end of this year.

At Bishop Gordy's invitation, the Rev. Kevin Strickland, ELCA churchwide representative, responded that it was preferable to submit responses by the August 31, 2017, deadline so that they could be considered by the Conference of Bishops and the ELCA Church Council at their meetings this fall, but that the committee can continue to receive feedback throughout the year.

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

**SESA 2017.17:**

**To adopt the following resolution (2017-02):**

**A Resolution Regarding the ELCA Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice:**

**One in Christ**

**RESOLVED, that ELCA congregations, groups, members, and church-related institutions in the Southeastern Synod be encouraged to use the study document "Faith, Sexism, and Justice: Conversations toward a Social Statement" and respond to it prior to August 31, 2017; and be it further**

**RESOLVED, that ELCA congregations, groups, members, and church-related institutions in the Southeastern Synod be encouraged to read, discuss, and respond to the Draft of a Social Statement on Women and Justice as proposed by the ELCA's Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ.**

Bishop Gordy asked the Rev. Randy Jones, chair of the Reference and Counsel Committee, to introduce the third resolution. Pastor Jones read it and announced that the committee recommended adoption of the resolution.

**2017-03**

**A Resolution of Welcome for Our Refugee Neighbors**

WHEREAS, today there are more than 65 million people displaced from their homes by war, violence, persecution, economic and social dislocations, and other factors—more than at any time since the end of World War II; and

WHEREAS, more than 21 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 church in the United States was founded by immigrants, and 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, the current administration’s Executive Orders seek to reduce the number of refugees admitted into the United States by more than 50 percent in FY 2017 and ban citizens from six majority Muslim countries from entering the United States; and  
WHEREAS, recognized hate groups in the U.S. are disseminating misinformation to fuel fear and incite actions against refugees and those that provide services to assist them; and  
WHEREAS, out of a shared concern to protect the homeland, refugees undergo extensive vetting by multiple U.S. government agencies that often takes 18-24 months and defaults to deny admission to the issue if there is any discrepancy or question;<sup>1</sup> and  
WHEREAS, God’s love for the stranger and our calling to love and serve the neighbors that God gives to us are central to the Biblical narrative, including Exodus 22:21: “You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” and 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 U.S. are sometimes struggling with the tension between their desire to welcome newcomers and fears for the change this brings in local communities; and  
WHEREAS, the Lutheran Church throughout its history has been a church composed in part of immigrants and refugees; therefore, be it  
RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod encourage all congregations of the synod to support and engage in the ongoing work of welcoming refugees through Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Lutheran Services of Georgia, and various partner organizations and ministries within the confines of this synod; and be it further  
RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod recommit to being an advocate and justice seeker for refugees, request that the synodical bishop communicate our concerns to our members of Congress and other federal, state, and local elected officials, and encourage all congregations and their members to express their concern for refugees to their elected officials; and be it further  
RESOLVED, that all congregations of the Southeastern Synod be encouraged to pray for the displaced and refugees around the world, for aid and resettlement organizations, for just and humane governmental policies that reflect our nation’s core values of welcome and inclusivity, and for a world where no one need flee their home for fear of violence, oppression, or economic hardship; and be it finally  
RESOLVED, that each congregation and synodical leadership be encouraged to celebrate and give thanks for the rich and diverse gifts refugees bring to our communities, our states, and our nation by annually hosting a Refugee Sunday ([www.lirs.org/refugeesunday](http://www.lirs.org/refugeesunday)).

Bishop Gordy opened the floor for discussion.

Deacon Melanie Johnson, Rock of Ages, Stone Mountain, GA, spoke in favor of the resolution because it spoke to the worst refugee crisis since WWII. With 65 million people displaced around the world, the ministries of justice and mercy have never been more needed, she declared.

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<sup>1</sup> See Trump Administration Department of Homeland Security assessment “Citizenship Likely an Unreliable Indicator of Terrorist Threat to the United States” <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3474730-DHSintelligence-document-on-President-Donald.html> ; Terrorism and Immigration: A Risk Analysis, The Cato Institute, [https://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa798\\_1\\_1.pdf](https://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa798_1_1.pdf) ; and U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/j/prm/ra/admissions/> .

The Rev. Paul Summers offered an amendment to add a “Resolved” clause after the first “Resolved” clause that would include the ELCA AMMPARO strategy.

**Moved;**

**Seconded:** To amend the resolution by addition: “RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod encourage congregations in the synod to inform themselves about the ELCA AMMPARO Strategy and to commit to living out its mission; and be it further...”

The Rev. Nancy Christiansen, St. John’s, Atlanta, GA, proposed to amend the amendment by adding the LIRS Circle of Welcome program.

**Moved;**

**Seconded:** To amend the proposed amendment by addition: “RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod encourage congregations in the synod to inform themselves about the ELCA AMMPARO Strategy and the LIRS Circle of Welcome Program and to commit to living out its their missions; and be it further...”

Mr. Mike Franklin, Holy Trinity, Nashville, TN, speaking to both amendments, stated that they did not speak to the initial cause of the resolution and might not fit with its original intention.

Bishop Gordy replied that if the assembly thought that was the case, it could defeat the amendments. There being no further discussion, he called for a vote on the amendment to the amendment.

**Moved;**

**Seconded;**

**Approved:** To amend the proposed amendment by addition: “RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod encourage congregations in the synod to inform themselves about the ELCA AMMPARO Strategy and the LIRS Circle of Welcome Program and to commit to living out its their missions; and be it further...”

Bishop Gordy then asked the assembly to vote on the original amendment as amended.

**Moved;**

**Seconded;**

**Approved:** To amend the resolution by addition: “RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod encourage congregations in the synod to inform themselves about the ELCA AMMPARO Strategy and the LIRS Circle of Welcome Program and to commit to living out their missions; and be it further...”

Mr. Rob Blackburn, Messiah, Knoxville, TN, raised a concern using a yellow card. He pointed out that the resolution uses the terms “migrants,” “refugees,” and “Immigrants” interchangeably. He suggested that the resolution ought to be more specific so that it provided clarity about what was being asked for whom.

Bishop Gordy responded that his was a good question, saying that these terms often are used interchangeably and sometimes erroneously so. He stated that what was intended in the resolution was the definitions found on the LIRS website and directed Mr. Blackburn to that site.

There being no further discussion, Bishop Gordy asked the assembly to vote on the resolution as amended.

**SESA 2017.18:**

**To adopt the following resolution (2017-03):**

**A Resolution of Welcome for Our Refugee Neighbors**

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod encourage all congregations of the synod to support and engage in the ongoing work of welcoming refugees through Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Lutheran Services of Georgia, and various partner organizations and ministries within the confines of this synod; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod encourage congregations in the synod to inform themselves about the ELCA AMMPARO strategy and the LIRS Circle of Welcome program and to commit to living out their missions; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Synod recommit to being an advocate and justice seeker for refugees, request that the synodical bishop communicate our concerns to our members of Congress and other federal, state, and local elected officials, and encourage all congregations and their members to express their concern for refugees to their elected officials; and be it further

RESOLVED, that all congregations of the Southeastern Synod be encouraged to pray for the displaced and refugees around the world, for aid and resettlement organizations, for just and humane governmental policies that reflect our nation's core values of welcome and inclusivity, and for a world where no one need flee their home for fear of violence, oppression, or economic hardship; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that each congregation and synodical leadership be encouraged to celebrate and give thanks for the rich and diverse gifts refugees bring to our communities, our states, and our nation by annually hosting a Refugee Sunday ([www.lirs.org/refugeesunday](http://www.lirs.org/refugeesunday)).

Bishop Gordy asked Pastor Jones to introduce the last resolution. Pastor Jones read it and stated that the committee recommended approval. The resolution passed by acclamation:

**SESA 2017.19**

**To adopt the following resolution (2017-04):**

**A Resolution of Thanks at the 2017 Assembly of the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA**

BE IT RESOLVED, that the voting members of the 2017 Assembly of the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America offer gratitude to God for calling us to be the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a church for the sake of the world. We give thanks as well for the gift of serving the world as Lutherans for 500 years, and for the Reformers of the church in every age, including our own; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we give thanks and prayerful support to our bishop, officers, synod staff, and 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 give thanks for the ministries of the congregations of this synod and all their leaders, of the Southeastern Synod Women of the ELCA, and of the Southeastern Lutheran Youth Organization; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we offer thanks for those who during this assembly reminded us of our role and relationship with all of God's people, including Bible study leaders the Rev. Dr. David Ratke, Deacon Melanie Johnson, and Pastor Tiffany Cheney; the Rev. Kevin Strickland of the churchwide organization; the Rev. Kevin Jacobson of LIRS; Ms. Mary Campbell, program director for AMMPARO; Lutheran Suicide Prevention Ministries; the Green Team, and the Advocacy Council, and especially we give praise and thanks for the lifelong witness of Robert S. and Jean E. Graetz; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we give thanks to all those who offered their service to this church through the election process, to those who were elected, and to those who continue to serve. We are also grateful for all those who served during this assembly, including the chairs and members of the Synod Assembly Organizing Committee; the other Assembly committees; our Synod Parliamentarian, Pastor Warren Casiday; our Synod Assembly chaplain, Rev. Stacey Parvin; the Synod Assembly worship team, volunteers, and musicians; and workshop leaders and participants; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we offer thanks to our other partners in ministry: NovusWay and Mr. Keith Johnson, the ELCA Mission Investment Fund, and Thrivent Financial for their financial support of this gathering and their ongoing partnership with us in the Gospel and, be it finally

RESOLVED, that we offer thanks to those who took care of us throughout this Assembly, particularly Linda Few and the tech crew and the hotel and convention center staff.

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

Bishop Gordy welcomed to the dais, Ms. Louise Iconis, member of St. John's, Atlanta, GA, and president of the Southeastern Synod Women of the ELCA (WELCA). Ms. Iconis spoke of the many opportunities for service through her organization, including quilts and care kits for Lutheran World Relief and feminine hygiene products for Girls International. Southeastern Synod WELCA also provided scholarships through the Fund for Leaders. They learned about issues of justice on Rachel's Day every May. They raised money for Disaster Relief, Katie's Fund and international companion synods.

Ms. Iconis informed those present that the Southeastern Synod would send five delegates to "All Anew," the WELCA Triennial Convention. It would be followed by a Gathering, July 13-16, 2017, at the Minneapolis Convention Center, open to all women. She also invited those present to attend the Southeastern Synod Women of the ELCA convention, meeting under the theme "Reform, Rejoice, Renew" in honor of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ordination of women in this church. The convention will be held at Opryland in Nashville, TN, September 15-17, 2017.

Ms. Iconis also presented stoles as gifts from the synod WELCA to the women added to the roster since last assembly: Pr. Monica Weber, Pr. Karen Boda, and Pr. Karen Slappy. Ms. Iconis concluded her report by directing those who want to learn more about the activities of the Southeastern Synod Women of the ELCA to the newsletter or the synod's website.

## **Proposed Constitution and Bylaw Amendments**

(Tab F)

Bishop Gordy called on the Rev. Ruth E. Hamilton, synod secretary to present the proposed amendments to the Southeastern Synod Constitution. Secretary Hamilton called attention to the proposed amendments and explained the rationales behind the changes. Bishop Gordy called for discussion. There being none, he proceeded to a vote on the proposed amendments.

### **SESA2017.20**

**To adopt *en bloc* the amendments to the constitution recommended by the Synod Council:**

**S7.11.01.** The time and place of the Southeastern Synod Assembly shall be determined by the Synod Council. The time and place for the next regular assembly normally shall be announced at least six months prior to the assembly.

**S7.22.** ~~The~~ This synod may establish processes that permit retired ~~ordained-rostered~~ ministers, retired associates in ministry, retired deaconesses, and retired diaconal ministers on the roster of this synod to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †S7.21.c. above. ~~The synod may establish processes that permit ordained ministers, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers who are on leave from call,~~ or those designated as disabled, or on leave from call, on the roster of the synod to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †S7.21.c. above. If the synod does not establish processes to permit the rostered ~~leaders-ministers~~ specified above to serve as voting members, they shall have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly.

**S7.24.** ~~Ordained ministers~~ Ministers under call on the rosters of this synod shall remain as members of the Synod Assembly so long as they remain under call and so long as their names appear on the rosters of ordained ministers of this synod. Associates in ministry, deaconesses of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and diaconal ministers of this church serving under call on the roster of this synod shall remain as members of the Synod Assembly so long as they remain under call and so long as their names appear on the official lay roster of this synod. Lay members of the Synod Assembly representing congregations shall continue as such until replaced by the election of new members or until they have been disqualified by termination of membership. Normally, congregations will hold elections prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

**S7.27.** This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council to grant an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full

communion has been declared and established by the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America the privilege of both voice and vote in the Synod Assembly during the period of that ~~ordained~~ minister's service in a congregation of this church.

**S8.55.** Should the vice president, secretary, or treasurer die, resign, or be unable to serve, the bishop, with the approval of the Executive Committee of the Synod Council, shall arrange for the appropriate care of the responsibilities of the officer until an election of a new officer can be held or, in the case of temporary disability, until the officer is able to serve again. The term of the successor officer, elected by the next Synod Assembly, shall be four years. If the treasurer is appointed by the Synod Council, the Synod Council shall appoint a new treasurer to a four-year term.

**S10.03.** The functions of the Synod Council shall be to:

...

d. Provide for an annual review of the roster of ~~ordained~~ ministers of Word and Sacrament and the roster of ministers of Word and Service and of other official rosters, receive and act upon appropriate recommendations regarding those persons whose status is subject to reconsideration and action under the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and make a report to the Synod Assembly of the Synod Council's actions in this regard.

e. Issue letters of call to ~~ordained~~ rostered ministers and letters of call to associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers as authorized by Chapter 7 of the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**S11.11.** This synod shall in its bylaws or by continuing resolution establish a process to ensure that the members of its committees and other organizational units will be persons possessing the necessary knowledge and competence to be effective members of such units, and to meet the requirements of †S6.04. With the exception of ~~ordained~~ ministers on the rosters of this synod who reside outside the territory of this synod, each member of a committee of this synod, or any other organizational unit created by this synod, shall be a voting member of a congregation of this synod.

**S13.11.** When a ~~pastor or when an associate in ministry, deaconess, or diaconal~~ rostered minister resigns, the Congregation Council shall receive the letter of resignation, report it to the congregation, and at once notify the bishop of this synod.

**S13.12.** A congregation under financial obligation to its former ~~pastor or associate in ministry, deaconess, or diaconal~~ rostered minister shall make satisfactory settlement of the obligation before calling a successor.

## Chapter 14.

### ~~ORDAINED MINISTERS AND LAY~~ **ROSTERED MINISTERS**

#### **S14.10. Ministers of Word and Sacrament**

**S14.013.** The pastor (a) shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members

excluded from the congregation, (b) shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to this synod, and (c) shall become a member of the congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.

**S14.014.** Whenever members of a congregation move to such a distance that regular attendance at its services becomes impractical, it shall be the duty of the pastor to commend them, upon their consent, to the pastoral care of a Lutheran congregation nearer to their place of residence.

**S14.015.** Each ~~ordained minister of Word and Sacrament~~ on the roster of this synod shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

**S14.127.** No ~~ordained minister of Word and Sacrament~~ shall accept a call without first conferring with the bishop of this synod. ~~An ordained minister of Word and Sacrament~~ shall respond with an answer of acceptance or declination to a letter of call within 30 days of receipt of such call. In exceptional circumstances with the approval of the bishop of this synod and the chair of the Congregation Council of the congregation issuing the call, an additional 15 days may be granted to respond to a letter of call.

**S14.215.** All ~~ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament~~ under a call shall attend meetings of the Synod Assembly, and the pastors of congregations shall also attend the meetings of the conference, cluster, coalition, or other area subdivision to which the congregation belongs.

**S14.30. Official Rosters of Laypersons Ministers of Word and Service**

**S14.33.** The minister of Word and Service shall become a member of the congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the minister of Word and Service shall hold membership in one of the congregations.

**S14.34.** Each minister of Word and Service on the roster of this synod shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

**S14.42.** No minister of Word and Service shall accept a call without first conferring with the bishop of this synod. A minister of Word and Service shall respond with an answer of acceptance or declination to a letter of call within 30 days of receipt of such call. In exceptional circumstances with the approval of the bishop of this synod and the chair of the Congregation Council of the congregation issuing the call, an additional 15 days may be granted to respond to a letter of call.

**S14.47.** All ministers of Word and Service under a call shall attend meetings of the Synod Assembly, and the ministers of Word and Service of congregations shall also attend the meetings of the conference, cluster, coalition, or other area subdivision to which the congregation belongs.

**S7.22.01.** Each retired ~~ordained minister of Word and Sacrament~~ and each ~~ordained minister of Word and Sacrament~~ on leave from call on the roster of this synod who submits the required report of his or her ministry to the bishop in accordance with provision **S14.05.** shall be a voting member of the Synod Assembly.

**S7.22.02.** The Synod Council shall determine the number of retired ~~ordained~~ ministers of Word and Sacrament and ~~ordained~~ ministers of Word and Sacrament on leave from call who may be voting members of the Synod Assembly and adjust the formula for lay representation from congregations so that at least 60 percent of the voting membership of the Synod Assembly shall be composed of lay persons.

**S7.22.03.** Each retired or on leave from call ~~rostered person other than ordained ministers~~ minister of Word and Service, on the roster of this synod who submits the required report of his or her ministry to the bishop shall be a voting member of the Synod Assembly.

**S7.25.01.** Certain ~~ordained~~ ministers of Word and Sacrament, such as ELCA rostered seminary professors assigned to this synod, may be voting members of the Synod Assembly while not being voting members of a congregation of this synod. All other voting members of the Synod Assembly must be voting members of congregations of this synod.

**S7.2728.** Duly elected voting members of the Synod Council who are not otherwise voting members of the Synod Assembly under †S7.21. shall be granted the privilege of both voice and vote as members of the Synod Assembly.

**S11.01.24.** Candidacy Committee

...

b. This committee shall:

...

4) coordinate the evaluation, guidance, and approval activities of this synod with other expressions of this church, especially with the Division for Ministry Domestic Mission unit of this church;

...

**S11.01.32.** Reference and Counsel Committee

... b. This committee shall

- 1) receive, review, and recommend action on motions and proposed resolutions submitted to the Synod Assembly for consideration; and
- 2) be available to the bishop and delegates voting members for consultation and assistance in preparing resolutions for actions by the Synod Assembly.

**S11.01.33.** Credentials Committee

a. A Credentials Committee shall be composed of six members elected by the Synod Council. A single term for such members shall be no longer than one year. No member may serve more than three consecutive terms. The Synod Council shall elect committee members from among the membership of the next following Synod Assembly to serve on this committee.

b. This committee shall:

- 1) report the official attendance at the Synod Assembly by category, i.e., ministers of Word and Sacrament, clergy, lay persons (including ministers of Word and Service), associates in ministry, visitors, and other categories that may

- be required by the Synod Assembly;
- S11.02.01.** The Consultation Committee of this synod shall consist of 12 persons, of whom six shall be ~~ordained~~ ministers of Word and Sacrament and six shall be lay persons.
- S12.01.34.** The cluster dean shall:
- serve as the communication link between the bishop and the cluster;
  - provide pastoral care and consultation to congregations, ~~pastors, associates in ministry~~ rostered leaders, and their families;
  - at the bishop's request, represent the bishop and this synod at churchwide, synodical, conference, cluster, coalition, and congregational worship services and special events (e.g., conference assemblies, call committee meetings, installations, groundbreaking, dedications, funerals, and agency meetings); and
  - at the bishop's request, represent the bishop and this synod at ecumenical events and meetings.
- S12.01.3435.** The cluster dean is encouraged to enlist others to assist in the tasks of the office.

Following the vote, Bishop Gordy presented Secretary Hamilton with an ELCA Good Gift of bees as a token of thanks for her service.

### **Recognition of Outgoing Synod Council Members**

Bishop Gordy asked outgoing members of the Synod Council to come forward and receive a certificate of thanks for their faithful work. Those members were the Rev. Karen Boda, Ms. Elise Dawson, the Rev. Katherine Museus, Deacon Linda Larson, and Mr. Mike Franklin.

### **Recognition of Synod Assembly Committee Members**

Bishop Gordy asked the members of the four assembly committees—Credentials, Elections, Minutes, and Reference and Counsel—to stand up and be recognized. He also recognized the Assembly Committee volunteers: Ms. Bernice Bland, Ms. Linda Few, the Rev. Stan Combs, the Rev. Daryl Kiehl, Mr. Jim Ward, and Ms. Loraine Dorough. He thanked all of them as well as Ms. Barbara Schwanebeck, assembly registrar, and her husband Chris for their work.

### **Unfinished Business**

Bishop Gordy announced that the Synod Assembly would be held again in Chattanooga in 2018, as well as in 2019, 2020, and 2021. He informed the assembly that \$7,447.67 had been received from worship offerings, to be divided between the Disaster Ministry Committee, the Advocacy Council, and the synod office's move.

### **Installations of Persons Elected**

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

Synod Secretary: The Rev. Randy Jones

Synod Council: Mr. James Drinnon, the Rev. Michelle Kuhlman, Mr. Imran Siddiqui, the Rev. Kim Stover, the Rev. Tim Morgan, the Rev. Monica Weber, Ms. Rebecca Parson, Ms. Deborah Baumgartner, Dr. Santha Jetty

Consultation Committee: the Rev. Dr. James Thomas, the Rev. Fritz Wiese, Mr. Terry Fletcher, Mr. Mike Franklin, Ms. Ami Layton

Discipline Committee: the Rev. Deryck Durston, the Rev. Pamela Smith, Mr. Robert Schwartz, and Dr. Santha Jetty

SESLYO Board (Elected prior to the assembly): Mr. Philip Tyler, Ms. Kendall Casteel, Ms. Emma Liner, Mr. Scott Linqvist, Mr. Akugbe Imudia, Ms. Chantal Felix, Ms. Ashleigh Henning, Ms. Nellie Collier, Ms. Michelle Strand, Ms. Ashlyn Martin. Advisors: Mr. Chris Smith, Ms. Catalina Ontoveros, Mr. Chawn Felix, the Rev. Kevin Martin, Ms. Sue Tyler.

## **Announcements**

Bishop Gordy made announcements concerning the pick-up of Reformation t-shirts and the posting of assembly information on the Southeastern Synod website.

## **Closing of the Assembly**

*(Tab J)*

Bishop Gordy led the assembly in the order for closing the assembly.

## **Adjournment**

The 30<sup>th</sup> ELCA Southeastern Synod Assembly adjourned at 11:38 a.m. (EDT).