



Northern Illinois Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Minutes of the 2023 NIS Assembly

**NORTHERN ILLINOIS SYNOD
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
THIRTY-FIFTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY
JUNE 16-17, 2023**

PLENARY SESSION I – Friday, June 16th

Opening of the Assembly

After a note of welcome, Bishop Stacie Fidler and Rev. Dr. Charlene Rachuy Cox led us in an opening liturgy followed by the Hymn, “Canticle of the Turning” with a procession. Order for the Opening of the Assembly with land acknowledgement was presented by Bishop Fidler. Bishop Fidler introduced the purpose of the event followed by introductions of people seated on the platform and guests in the audience. A video greeting was presented by Augustana College President Dr. Andrea Talentino.

Credentials Report

Bishop Fidler called on Rev. Jennifer Ohman-Rodriguez, Chairperson of the Credentials Committee, to give the credentials report as follows:

- 213 Lay Members (68%)
- 102 Rostered Members (32%)
- Total of 315 Voting Members

A quorum was established.

Bishop Fidler led us through the procedures for speaking at the microphones and voting followed by a test vote on Slido.

Approval of Agenda

Bishop Fidler called on Secretary Cantrell to present the agenda.

Bishop Fidler instructed the assembly that items could be pulled from the agenda and the consent agenda at this time.

ACTION SA-23-06-01 Secretary Cantrell made a motion on behalf of the synod council that the agenda for the Synod Assembly prepared by the synod council and found in the Bulletin of Reports on the synod website, be adopted, as the agenda for the 2023 Northern Illinois Synod Assembly. The motion was approved.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Bishop Fidler called on Secretary Cantrell to present the consent agenda.

ACTION SA-23-06-02 Secretary Cantrell on behalf of the Synod Council, moved that the Consent Agenda which includes the Rules of the Assembly, Committee Appointments, and the 2022 Synod Assembly Minutes found in the Bulletin of Reports be adopted as the Consent Agenda of the 2023 Northern Illinois Synod Assembly.” The consent agenda was approved.

Keynote Speaker

Rev. Dr. Charlene Rachuy – Cox shared a message based on Isaiah 43 focusing on, “but now...I love you and you are mine.” She also referred to the poem by Mary Oliver, “A Summer’s Day.”

Portico Presentation

Bishop Fidler called on Ms. Jennifer Prinz to give a report on Portico.

Bishop’s Report

Bishop Fidler called on synod Vice President Ms. Minnette Willard to take the chair so she could give us her report with these highlights:

- Pathways Discernment Coach – Rev. Mark Juliot
- Faithful Innovations Lab and Vital Congregational Work – DEM Rev. Josh Ebener
- Introduction of Rev. Jose Pilar, former president of the Lutheran Church of Guatemala. He will oversee a joint Latino ministry in the Quad Cities with the partnership of the Northern Illinois Synod and the Southeastern Iowa Synod. Rev. Pilar greeted the assembly.
 - Bishop asked how we can support Rev. Pilar in his work with these suggestions:
 - Mission Team – one time
 - Mission Partners – reoccurring gift
 - Mission Dreamers – gift to the Innovation Team Fund

The assembly offered its thanks for the Bishop’s report with applause. Vice President Willard returned the chair to Bishop Fidler.

Lutheran Outdoor Ministry Center Video

Synod Treasurer’s Report

Bishop Fidler called on Treasurer Ms. Tammie Farley to give her report. The assembly offered its thanks to Treasurer Farley with applause.

Presentation of the Proposed Budget for 2024

Bishop Fidler invited Treasurer Farley to introduce the proposed NIS Budget for 2024 which will be voted on in Plenary Session 2.

Resolution R1

Bishop Fidler called acting chair of the Resolution’s committee, Rev. Andrew Kayes, to read the “resolved” sections of Resolution 1 – Growing in Faith: The diakonia Program.

Be it resolved that this Assembly of the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

1. Affirm and celebrate that **Growing in Faith: The diakonia™ Program** is in partnership with NIS for adult faith formation and as a foundational resource for Synodically Authorized Ministers.
2. With the assistance of the Synod, fund special projects for the ongoing ministry of **diakonia™** (e.g., publicity, national website administrator, retreats, scholarships), with the possibly having an annual **diakonia™** Sunday offering.
3. Encourage rostered leaders to invite parishioners to take part in this program of faith formation.”

Bishop Fidlar instructed the assembly that we only discuss the “Resolved” sections of the resolution.

Discussion included:

Ms. Donna Kelly of Shepherd of the Prairie, Huntley – speaking in support of R1.

Rev. Scott Benolkin of Shepherd of the Valley, Rockford – speaking in support of R1.

Rev. Jonathan Black of First Lutheran, Plano – Point of Order to increase of budget to support the program if the resolution passes.

Rev. Kayes said the Synod leadership will determine the funding.

The assembly joined in prayer regarding voting on Resolution 1.

ACTION SA-23-06-03 The motion to approve Resolution R1 was passed.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service Video

Introduction of the General Ballot

Bishop Fidlar called on Ms. Nancy Lillevold to introduce the general ballot and instructions for voting.

Bishop Fidlar called on Rev. Ryan Mackey to read the ballot:

Synod Vice President – Elect One

Ms. Minnette Willard (First, DeKalb- NE Conference)

Synod Treasurer (Lay or Rostered Male or Female-4-year term) Vote for 1

Ms. Lori Whalen (First – Ohio- South Conference)

Synod Secretary (Lay or Rostered Male or Female-4-year term) Vote for 1

The Rev. Lu Cantrell (Peace, Morris, East Conference)

Deacon Laura Gorton (Christ, Belvidere, North Conference)

Synod Council Members Elect 6

Young Adult, 18-30 Years old (Lay or Rostered, Male or Female) 3 Year Term – Vote for 1

Ms. Katie Mehlretter (Shepherd of the Hills, Scales Mound, Northwest Conference)

Youth – Confirmed- 18 Years old. (Lay Male or Female) 1 Year Term – Vote for 1

Mr. Alex Chenoweth (Peace, New Lenox-East Conference)

Lay Female – 3 Year Term – Vote for 1

Ms. Christina King (First, Galesburg- Southwest Conference)

Lay Female – 3 Year Term – Vote for 1

Ms. Rhonda Copeland (Calvary, New Windsor-Southwest Conference)

Ms. Jeana Fors (Bethany, Woodhull- Southwest Conference)

Lay Male – 3 Year Term - Vote for 1

Mr. Jason Gustafson (Cambridge, Cambridge – West Conference)

Mr. Brandon Graves (Salem, Sycamore - Northeast Conference)

Rostered Female – 3 Year Term - Vote for 1

Rev. Joy Alsop (Faith, Rochelle, Central Conference)

Rev. Dr. Jana Howson (Faith, Joliet-East Conference)

Congregational Life Committee-Elect 3

Lay Female (3-Year term) vote for 1

Ms. Jackie Mansholt (St. John, Joliet-East Conference)

Ms. Kelly Van Fleet (Peace, Morris-East Conference)

Lay Male (3-Year term) Vote for 1

Mr. Greg Bruner (Light of Christ-Algonquin-Northeast Conference)

Rostered Male (3-Year term) Vote for 1

Rev. Ryan Mackey (Shepherd of the Prairie, Huntley-Northeast Conference)

Global Mission Committee – Elect 3

Lay Female (3-Year term) Vote for 1

Ms. Janet Larson (First, Geneseo-West Conference)

Lay Male (3-Year term) Vote for 1

Mr. Mike Wadle (First, DeKalb-Northeast Conference)

Rostered Female (3-Year term) Vote for 1

Rev. Janet Hunt (First, DeKalb-Northeast Conference)

Ministry Support Committee –Elect 3

Lay Male (3-Year term) Vote for 1

Mr. Jim Cantrell (Peace, Morris-East Conference)

Dr. Randy Mullin (First, Geneseo-West Conference)

Rostered Female (3-Year term) Vote for 1

Rev. Karen Tews (Good Shepherd, Lena-Northwest Conference)

Rev. Julane Nease (United, Rockford-North Conference)

Rostered Male (3-Year term) Vote for 1

Rev. David Russell (Scenic Hills Parish-Northwest Conference)

Outreach Committee – Elect 2

Lay Female (3-Year term) Vote for 1

Ms. Lisa Gerloff-Banker (Grace, Woodstock-Northeast Conference)

Ms. Emily Fredrickson (First, Ohio-South Conference)

Rostered Female (3-Year term) Vote for 1

Rev. Amanda Dahlseng-Monroe (Grace, Loves Park-North Conference)
Rev. Robin Luckey (Lord of Love, Galena-Northwest Conference)

Social Ministry Committee-Elect 4

Lay Female (3-Year term) Vote for 1

Ms. Donna Kelly (Shepherd of the Prairie, Huntley-Northeast Conference)

Lay Male (3-Year term) Vote for 1

Mr. Paul Lockwood (Grace, Woodstock-Northeast Conference)

Rostered Female (3-Year Term) Vote for 1

Rev. Carol Soderholm (Trinity, Milledgeville-Northwest Conference)

Rev. Joanna Patterson (Faith, South Beloit-North Conference)

Rostered Male (3-Year term) Vote for 1

Rev. Scott Ralston (Faith, Forreston-Central Conference)

Consultation Committee -Elect 4

Lay Female – 6 Year Term- Vote for 1

Ms. Kearsti-Ray Knowles (Trinity, Mt. Morris-Central Conference)

Ms. Janet Schultz (Zion, Belvidere-North Conference)

Lay Male (6-Year term) Vote for 1

Mr. Melvin Ehrler (Shepherd of the Hills, Scales Mound-Northwest Conference)

Rostered Female (6-Year term) Vote for 1

Rev. Hope Johnson (Bethany, Leland, South Conference)

Rostered Male (6-Year term) Vote for 1

Rev. Zach Baer (Living Waters, Crystal Lake-Northeast Conference)

Rev. Jamie Gallagher (First, Monmouth-Southwest Conference)

Committee on Discipline –Elect 4

Lay Female (6-Year term) Vote for 1

Ms. Grace Heimerdinger-Bakke (St. John, Pearl City-Northwest Conference)

Lay Male (6-Year term) Vote for 1

Mr. Doug Murray (St. Paul, Streator-South Conference)

Mr. David Kromphardt (St. John's, Peru-South Conference)

Rostered Female (6-Year term) Vote for 1

Rev. Gwen Sefrhans-Murphy (St. Paul, Orion-West Conference)

Rostered Male (6-Year term) Vote for 1

Rev. Dr. Jon Pedersen (Shepherd of the Hills, Lockport-East Conference)

Rev. Dave Hedlin (Peace, New Lenox-East Conference)

Bishop Fidlar asked if there were any nominations from the floor. Seeing none, Bishop Fidlar declared nominations closed and voting open with directions on voting.

Announcements

Bishop Fidlar invited Assistant to the Bishop Rev. Jennifer Beamsley to bring us announcements.

Lunch Prayer

Bishop Fidlar led us in a prayer for lunch and the closing of the first plenary session.

PLENARY SESSION 2– Saturday, June 17th

Gathering Hymn and Opening Ritual of Longing and Hope

Bishop Fidler led the assembly in a time of worship, commemoration of the Emmanuel Nine and an acknowledgement of Juneteenth.

Credentials Report

Bishop Fidler called on Rev. Jennifer Ohman-Rodriguez for the credentials report.

225 Lay Members (66%)

117 Rostered Members (34%)

Total of 342 Voting Members

A quorum has been established.

Vice President Report

Bishop Fidler called Vice President Ms. Minette Willard to share her report with the assembly. The assembly received her report and showed appreciation with applause.

Mission Investment Fund Video

Resolution R2

Bishop Fidler called acting chair of the Resolution’s committee, Rev. Andrew Kayes, to read the “resolved” sections of Resolution R2 – Memorialize Churchwide to Update the Social Statement on Abortion.

Be it resolved that the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America requests that Churchwide leaders revise, update, or create a new Social Statement on Abortion; and

Be it further resolved, this process should include the partnership of women clergy, women deacons, and lay women of our Synods and congregations.

Discussion included:

Rev. Julane Neese of United Lutheran, Rockford speaking in support of R2.

Mx. Samuel Carrington of 1st Lutheran, Galesburg asked how a woman is defined and will there be an emphasis on those who have uteruses or those who identify as women.

Bishop Fidler described the process of what would happen once the document is submitted to churchwide and that they will seek the broadest group.

Ms. Kearsti-Rae Knowles of Trinity Lutheran, Mt. Morris said we need to be very intentional in the language we use when we present this to churchwide.

Bishop Fidler asked Ms. Knowles if she was making a motion to write out a suggested amendment and bring it forward.

Mr. Brandon Graves of Salem, Sycamore presented an amendment as follows:

Be it resolved that the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America requests that Churchwide leaders memorializes the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to revise, update, or create a new Social Statement on Abortion; and

The motion was seconded.

Ms. Lori Dhabalt of St. Paul of Orion asked if there was a copy of the current social statement in the bulletin of reports. Bishop Fidler directed the assembly to the NIS website.

The amendment passed.

Ms. Melanie Chavin of Salem Lutheran, Sycamore and Rev. Makayla Dahleen of St. Paul, Sterling proposed an amendment to include medical professionals.

Bishop Fidler introduced the ELCA Youth Gathering Video and the Global Mission Committee Video as the amendments were being drafted.

Ms. Kearsti-Rae Knowles of Trinity Lutheran, Mt. Morris presented an amendment as follows:

Be it further resolved, this process should include ~~the partnership of women clergy, women deacons, and lay women~~ the partnership of clergy, deacons, and lay people who have uteruses or have had uteruses, and medical professionals including genetic counselors, perinatologist/maternal fetal medicine doctors, NICU providers, fetal palliative care providers, and OBGYNs of our Synods and congregations.

Motion is seconded.

Further discussion:

Rev. Don Knowles of Calvary, Moline and St. James Lutheran, Rock Island speaking against the amendment.

Ms. Gretchen Sprinkle of Salem, Sycamore speaks in support of the amendment.

Rev. Jacob Gawlik of St. John's, Sterling asked a clarification question.

Rev. Janet Hunt of 1st Lutheran, Dekalb speaking in support of the amendment.

Mx. Samuel Carrington of 1st Lutheran, Galesburg – speaking in favor of the amendment.

Ms. Lori Whalen of 1st Lutheran, Ohio made a correction to the grammar.

Mr. Brandon Graves of Salem, Sycamore made a motion to end debate.

Second was given.

The motion to end debate on the amendment was passed.

The amendment passed.

Further discussion:

Rev. Ron Larson of Trinity of Mt. Morris shared a personal story asking that voices of those whose lives were saved be considered in the conversation of revising the social statement [on abortion].

Rev. Janet Hunt of 1st Lutheran, Dekalb stated that the wheels of the Church move slowly. She encouraged us to follow the example of the North Conference as we work with each other.

Rev. Frank Langholf of Emmanuel, Rockford speaking in support of the resolution.

Rev. Sarah Wilson of St. Barnabas, Cary speaking in support of the resolution.

Ms. Christina King of 1st Lutheran, Galesburg called the question.

A motion of calling the question and ending debate was made and seconded.

Motion passed.

Bishop Fidler led the assembly in prayer before the vote on R2.

The vote was done by Slido with the results as follows:

Yes – 94%

No – 6%

ACTION SA-23-06-04 The motion to approve Resolution R2 as amended was passed.

LSTC Video

Secretary and Synod Council Report

Bishop introduced Secretary Cantrell's video report which was received by the assembly and acknowledged by applause. Bishop Fidler noted that Synod Council report was included in the Bulletin of Reports and received by the assembly.

Churchwide Report

Bishop Fidler introduced Mr. Nick Kiger, the churchwide representative, to present his report. The assembly received his report and responded with applause.

Action on Proposed Budget

Bishop Fidler called Treasurer Farley to the podium and asked Secretary Cantrell to read the motion from the Synod Council to adopt the 2024 budget.

Discussion as follows:

Rev. Carol Solderholm of Trinity, Milledgeville speaking against the budget specifically cutting social services.

Ms. Christina King of 1st Lutheran, Galesburg speaking in favor of the budget.

Rev. Don Knowles of Calvary, Moline and St. James, Rock Island speaking against the budget but instead make an effort to increase benevolence.

Mr. Larry Mine of St. James, Forreston suggest all congregations to find ways to give more to LOMC.

Rev. Bree Truax of Immanuel, Rock Falls speaking in favor of the budget.

Bishop Fidlar led the assembly in prayer.

ACTION SA-23-06-05 Secretary Cantrell on behalf of the Synod Council, moved that the budget prepared by the Finance Committee and adopted by the Synod Council, as it appears in the Bulletin of Reports, to be adopted as the budget for Fiscal Year 2024 for the Northern Illinois Synod.” The motion was approved.

Election Report of General Ballot

Bishop Fidlar invited Ms. Lillevold to present the results of the General Ballot and are as follows:

Synod Officers

Synod Vice President - Ms. Minnette Willard (First, DeKalb- NE Conference)

Synod Treasurer - Ms. Lori Whalen (First – Ohio- South Conference)

Synod Secretary - The Rev. Lu Cantrell (Peace, Morris, East Conference)

Synod Council Members

Young Adult, 18-30 Years old - Ms. Katie Mehlretter (Shepherd of the Hills, Scales Mound, Northwest Conference)

Youth – Confirmed- 18 Years old - Mr. Alex Chenoweth (Peace, New Lenox-East Conference)

Lay Female - Ms. Christina King (First, Galesburg- Southwest Conference)

Lay Female – Ms. Rhonda Copeland (Calvary, New Windsor-Southwest Conference)

Lay Male – Mr. Brandon Graves (Salem, Sycamore - Northeast Conference)

Rostered Female – Rev. Joy Alsop (Faith, Rochelle, Central Conference)

Congregational Life Committee

Lay Female - Ms. Kelly Van Fleet (Peace, Morris-East Conference)

Lay Male - Mr. Greg Bruner (Light of Christ-Algonquin-Northeast Conference)

Rostered Male - Rev. Ryan Mackey (Shepherd of the Prairie, Huntley-Northeast Conference)

Global Mission Committee

Lay Female - Ms. Janet Larson (First, Geneseo-West Conference)

Lay Male - Mr. Mike Wadle (First, DeKalb-Northeast Conference)

Rostered Female - Rev. Janet Hunt (First, DeKalb-Northeast Conference)

Ministry Support Committee

Lay Male - Dr. Randy Mullin (First, Geneseo-West Conference)

Rostered - Rev. Karen Tews (Good Shepherd, Lena-Northwest Conference)

Rostered Male - Rev. David Russell (Scenic Hills Parish-Northwest Conference)

Outreach Committee

Lay Female - Ms. Lisa Gerloff-Banker (Grace, Woodstock-Northeast Conference)

Rostered Female - Rev. Robin Luckey (Lord of Love, Galena-Northwest Conference)

Social Ministry Committee

Lay Female - Ms. Donna Kelly (Shepherd of the Prairie, Huntley-Northeast Conference)

Lay Male - Mr. Paul Lockwood (Grace, Woodstock-Northeast Conference)

Rostered Female - Rev. Joanna Patterson (Faith, South Beloit-North Conference)

Rostered Male - Rev. Scott Ralston (Faith, Forreton-Central Conference)

Consultation Committee

Lay Female – Ms. Kearsti-Ray Knowles (Trinity, Mt. Morris-Central Conference)

Lay Male - Mr. Melvin Ehrler (Shepherd of the Hills, Scales Mound-Northwest Conference)

Rostered Female - Rev. Hope Johnson (Bethany, Leland, South Conference)

Rostered Male - Rev. Zach Baer (Living Waters, Crystal Lake-Northeast Conference)

Committee on Discipline

Lay Female - Ms. Grace Heimerdinger-Bakke (St. John, Pearl City-Northwest Conference)

Lay Male - Mr. David Kromphardt (St. John's, Peru-South Conference)

Rostered Female - Rev. Gwen Sefrhans-Murphy (St. Paul, Orion-West Conference)

Rostered Male - Rev. Dr. Jon Pedersen (Shepherd of the Hills, Lockport-East Conference)

LSSI Report

Bishop Fidlar invited Mr. Mark Stutrud from LSSI to share his report.

Wartburg Seminary Video

Compensation Guidelines

Bishop Fidlar called on Secretary Cantrell to make a motion on behalf of the Synod Council to adopt the Compensation Guidelines for 2024.

Discussion included:

Rev. Jacob Gawlik of St. John's, Sterling asked the chair to speak why family leave and sabbaticals are not considered vacation.

Bishop Fidlar called on Rev. Vince Marolla chair of the Ministry Support Committee to address the question.

Rev. Marolla stressed the importance of family leave and is very different from vacation. He mentioned that sabbatical is much the same.

Rev. Katie Gallagher of Faith, Wataga speaking in support of Rev. Marolla's comments.

Bishop Fidlar led the assembly in prayer prior to the vote.

ACTION SA-23-06-06 Secretary Cantrell on behalf of the Synod Council, moved to approve the proposed 2024 Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Ministers. The motion was approved.

Constitution Changes

Bishop Fidler called on Secretary Cantrell to make a motion on behalf of the Synod Council to adopt the Constitution Changes as received from the 2022 Churchwide Assembly.

There was no discussion.

ACTION SA-23-06-07 Secretary Cantrell on behalf of the Synod Council, moved to approve the proposed changes to the Northern Illinois Synod Constitution, as received from the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. The motion was approved.

Courtesy Committee Report

Rev. Julane Neese invited Dn. Laura Gorton and Rev. Michael Thomas to present the Courtesy Committee Report.

Announcements

Bishop called on Assistant to the Bishop Jen Beamsley to present announcements.

Conclusion to the Purpose of the Event

Bishop Fidler and Rev. Dr. Cox led us through litany for the conclusion of the event.

Order for the Closing of Synod Assembly

Bishop Fidler asked for a motion and second to close the assembly.
Motion carried.

Installation of Called Staff and Affirmation of Vocation

ACTION SA-23-06-01 Secretary Cantrell made a motion on behalf of the synod council that the agenda for the Synod Assembly prepared by the synod council and found in the Bulletin of Reports on the synod website, be adopted, as the agenda for the 2023 Northern Illinois Synod Assembly. The motion was approved.

ACTION SA-23-06-02 Secretary Cantrell on behalf of the Synod Council, moved that the Consent Agenda which includes the Rules of the Assembly, Committee Appointments, and the 2022 Synod Assembly Minutes found in the Bulletin of Reports be adopted as the Consent Agenda of the 2023 Northern Illinois Synod Assembly.” The consent agenda was approved.

ACTION SA-23-06-03 The motion to approve Resolution R1 was passed.

ACTION SA-23-06-04 The motion to approve Resolution R2 was passed.

ACTION SA-23-06-05 Secretary Cantrell on behalf of the Synod Council, moved that the budget prepared by the Finance Committee and adopted by the Synod Council, as it appears in the Bulletin of Reports, to be adopted as the budget for Fiscal Year 2024 for the Northern Illinois Synod.” The motion was approved.

ACTION SA-23-06-06 Secretary Cantrell on behalf of the Synod Council, moved to approve the proposed 2024 Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Ministers. The motion was approved.

ACTION SA-23-06-07 Secretary Cantrell on behalf of the Synod Council, moved to approve the proposed changes to the Northern Illinois Synod Constitution, as received from the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. The motion was approved.