

Minutes of the 36th Allegheny Synod Assembly
June 15, 2024
Blair County Convention Center
Go Tell It In the Mountains

Welcome

Bishop Paula Lebo opened the 36th Allegheny Synod Assembly at 8:38AM

Report of Registration/Quorum

Delegate Count	
Clergy.....	40
Deacon	1
Vicars.....	3
Laity	
Male.....	31
Female.....	51
Officers.....	4
Synod Council.....	3
 Total Delegate Count ¹	133
Visitors.....	20
 Total Present.....	153

Adoption of the 2023 Minutes, the Agenda & the Rules

Upon motion by Gary Gable, seconded Pr. Tyler Graham

- **SA24.06.01** - to adopt the minutes of the 2023 Allegheny Synod Assembly as presented... the motion is adopted

Upon motion by Bishop Lebo, seconded by Pr. Scott Schul

- **SA24.06.02** – to adopt the agenda for the 2024 Allegheny Synod Assembly... the motion is adopted

Upon motion by Pr. Carolyn Hetrick, seconded by Pr. Paul Tomkiel

- **SA24.06.03** – to adopt the Rules of Procedure for the Allegheny Synod Assembly ... the motion is adopted (2024 Bulletin of Reports - pages 7&8)

¹ In accordance with provision **S7.14** of the Allegheny Synod Constitution, one-third of the members of the Synod Assembly shall constitute a quorum.

Upon motion by Pr. David Wright, seconded by Pr. Ben Hoffman

- **SA24.06.04** - To extend voice & vote for the 2024 Allegheny Synod Assembly to the UCC clergy (Pr. Julie Holm & Pr. Dick Henry) present & the ELCA Vicars (Vic Jennifer Bobolsky, Vic Christy Harford, Vic Penny Koontz, Vic Claudia Plows, Vic Josh Spangler, Vic Steve Koths) present ... the motion is adopted

Introductions

- Mr. Chris Reighard – Interim CEO Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries
- Synod Officers – VP Ann Ferry, Treasurer Paula Nihoff, Secretary Dave Finney
- Pr. Tim Spence - Synod Assembly Parliamentarian
- Pr. Kevin Shock - Assistant to the Bishop/DEM
- Michelle Bossler - Allegheny Synod Office Manager
- Jeanne Fleegel - Assembly Committee Chair
- Pr. Kathy Popp – Chair of Reference & Counsel Committee
- Sue Ellen Spots – Director for Evangelical Mission
- Sister Mary Ann Brock – ELCA Foundation

Report of the Synod Treasurer – Paula Nihoff

- We offer our sincere thanks to past Treasurer Bill Layton
- Moving forward with an emphasis on simplicity of reporting
- Addressing the current year's approved budget
- Adopting the 2025 - 26 budget

Upon motion by the Finance Team

- **SA24.06.05** – to accept an amendment to the 2025-26 fiscal year budget, correcting an error in calculations... the motion is adopted

Upon motion of the Synod Council (**SC24.05.05**)

- **SA24.06.06** – to adopt the amended 25-26 Fiscal Year Budget ... the motion is adopted

Upon motion & recommendation of the Synod Council (**SC24.05.04**)

- **SA24.06.07** – to adopt the 2025 Compensation & Benefits Manual... the motion is adopted

The First Ballot – will consider nominations for Synod Council, the Discipline Committee, the Consultation committee & the Mission Endowment Committee.

- 1) Panel for Synod Council
- 2) Panel for Secretary
- 3) Panel for Churchwide Assembly Voting Members
- 4) Panel for Mission Endowment Committee
- 5) Panel for Consultation Committee
- 6) Panel for Discipline Committee

Report of the Synod Vice President – Ann Ferry

- Ann delivered a spoken message to the Assembly.

Report of the Synod Secretary – Dave Finney (2024 Bulletin of Reports, page 45)

- Secretary Finney is retiring from the office of the Secretary (effective June 30, 2024) following 12-years of service. Dave delivered a brief farewell message to the Assembly; including factual information, along with several items of whimsy.

Report of Bishop Lebo (2024 Bulletin of Reports, pages 34 & 35)

- We are moving into new territory on how to do ministry.
- We celebrate the ordinations of our new pastors.
- We bid farewell & best wishes to several congregations leaving the Allegheny Synod thru disaffiliation & closure.
- We gave thanks for the ways that our recently deceased Pastors touched our lives.
- We continue to nurture the partnership we have with the Upper Susquehanna and Northwestern PA Synod, for tri-Synodical learning for those interested in becoming lay worship leaders... we authorized six new lay worship leaders who were trained in this new model.
- I am deeply grateful for Pastor Kevin, Michelle and Sue Ellen and the gifts they share with our Synod. I look forward to the ways we will become more focused on our mission to invite people to love one another and live into the gracious welcome of our Lord.

Report of Assistant to the Bishop; Kevin Shock (2024 Bulletin of Reports, page 36)

- Our vision statement is that target in the distance to aim toward
 - What are the thing that you do to show love to people?
 - What are the things that people do to show love to you?
 - What are things that Jesus does to show love to people?

Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission; Sue Ellen Spotts (2024 Bulletin of Reports, page 37)

- Joshua 1:9, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”
- Recently, a friend shared a prayer of Fr. Pedro Arrupe, a twentieth century Jesuit priest. I have found insight and encouragement in its words, and so I share it with you:
 - “Grant me, O Lord, to see everything now with new eyes, to discern and test the spirits that help me read the signs of the times, to relish the things that are yours and to communicate them to others.”

Report of the ELCA Foundation; Sister Mary Ann Brock (2024 Bulletin of Reports, page 41)

Report of Reference & Counsel – Pr. Kathy Popp

We will consider 1 Resolution & 1 Memorial (*2024 Bulletin of Reports, pages 114 & 115*)

- † ***Resolution*** - *Regarding the Authorized Lay Worship Leader Program in the Allegheny Synod*
 - Reference & Counsel recommends the passage of this resolution.
- † ***Memorial*** – *Clergy Health Insurance Costs*
 - Reference & Counsel has edited the Memorial... changing the phrase “to direct” to the phrase “to request.” R&C recommends passage of the Memorial with the aforementioned edits.

Upon motion by the Reference & Counsel Committee

- **SA24.06.08** – to adopt both the Memorial & the Resolution & to convey the Memorial on to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly... the motion is adopted

Report of the First Ballot

Q1 – Synod Council (clergy) 3-year term, elect 3

- 341 votes cast, 58 minimum to elect
 - Pr. Tyler Graham – 96 votes
 - Pr. Nancy Hoover – 91 votes
 - Pr. Marty Jo Irvin Stellabotte – 88 votes
 - Pr. Mark Fischer – 66 votes
- Pr. Tyler Graham, Pr. Nancy Hoover & Pr. Marty Jo Irvin Stellabotte are each elected to a 3-year term on Synod Council

Q2 – Synod Council (lay female) 3-year term, elect 1

- 122 number of valid ballots
 - Margaret (Peggy) Thatcher – 122 votes
- Margaret Thatcher is elected to a 3-year term on Synod Council

Q3 – Synod Council (lay male) 3-year term, elect 2

- 122 number of valid ballots
 - Austin Berlair – 122 votes
- Austin Berlair is elected to a 3-year term on Synod Council

Q4 – Synod Council (youth member) 2-year term, elect 1

- No nominations received

Q5 – Synod Secretary, 4-year term, elect 1

- 121 number of valid ballots
 - Pr. Becky Horn – 121 votes
- Pr. Becky Horn is elected to a 4-year term as Synod Secretary

Q6 – Churchwide Assembly voting members, Clergy, elect 2

- 242 votes cast, 62 needed to elect
 - Pr. Mark Fischer – 35 votes
 - Pr. Marty Jo Irvin Stellabotte - 75 votes
 - Pr. Traci Marriot – 65 votes
 - Pr. Tyler Graham - 67 votes
- Pr. Tyler Graham & Pr. Marty Jo Irvin Stellabotte were each elected as Clergy voting members to the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly

Q7 – Churchwide Assembly voting members, lay female, elect 1

- 124 votes cast, 63 needed to elect
 - Susan Barclay - 46 votes
 - Christy Harford – 55 votes
 - Claudian Plows – 23 votes
- There was no election on this ballot

Q8 – Churchwide Assembly voting members, lay male, elect 2

- 238 votes cast, 62 needed to elect
 - Timothy Albright – 50 votes
 - Terry Bender – 51 votes
 - Ben Hoffman – 85 votes
 - Jacob Koch – 52 votes
- Ben Hoffman was elected on this ballot

Q9 – Churchwide Assembly voting members, young adult (age 18 – 30)

- No nominations were received

Q10 – Churchwide Assembly voting members, a person of color or whose first language is other than English

- No nominations were received

Q11 – Consultation Committee

- Clergy female – vote for 1
 - No nominations received
- Clergy male – vote for 1
 - No nominations received
- Lay male – vote for 1
 - Timothy Albright
- Lay female – vote for 2
 - No nominations received
- Timothy Albright is elected to a 6-year term on the Consultation Committee.

Q12 – Discipline Committee

- Clergy female – vote for 1
 - No nominations received
- Lay female – vote for 3
 - Christy Harford
- Lay male – vote for 3
 - No nominations received
- Christy Harford is elected to a 6-year term on the Discipline Committee.

Q13 – Mission Endowment Committee

- Elect to a 2-year term – vote for 2
 - No nominations received
- Elect to a 1-year term – vote for 1
 - No nominations received

Report of the Second Ballot

Q14 - Churchwide Assembly voting members, lay female, elect 1

- Christy Harford is elected

Q 15 - Churchwide Assembly voting members, lay male, elect 2

- Jacob Koch is elected

Video Presentations

- ELCA Synod Assembly Video
- A Tend Bible Podcast presentation (Bible Study)

Go Tell It In the Mountains Report – Bishop Emeritus Gregory Pile

In September 2023, Lilly Endowment approved 81 grants to organizations across the United States through its Compelling Preaching Initiative. The aim of the initiative is to help Christian pastors strengthen their preaching so they can better inspire, encourage and guide people to live their faith more fully.

Ranging from \$275,400 to \$1.25 million, the grants will fund programs at a variety of organizations, including congregations, theological schools, faith-affiliated colleges and universities and media organizations, church resourcing organizations, denominational judicatories, parachurch organizations and other church networks. These organizations reflect diverse Christian communities, including Anabaptist, Black Church, Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox Christian, Pentecostal and Protestant traditions.

The Lilly Endowment Compelling Preaching Initiative has provided an exciting opportunity for 3 Pennsylvania Appalachian Lutheran synods to turn dreams into action. The Allegheny

Synod, the Northwestern PA Synod & the Upper Susquehanna Synod are excited to be in partnership for this grant.

We anticipate impacting three important goal areas that will guide the key activities of our project:

- 1) Ordained and lay preachers will be equipped to utilize traditional and non-traditional techniques including different modes of delivery to develop skills and practices that will make the gospel message more compelling.
- 2) Aspiring preachers will be recruited and engaged in a variety of compelling preaching strategies that educate, empower, and support competency in their ministry.
- 3) Existing members of congregations and new community audiences within our three Lutheran partner synods will respond to compelling preaching opportunities and content by integrating the gospel message into their attitudes, actions and ministries in daily life.

We are launching the Go Tell It In The Mountains initiative today... enhancing the proclamation of Jesus in each of our 283 congregations.

Partner Presentations

- † ***Sequanota Lutheran Conference Center and Camp*** – Pr. Nathan Pile; spoke on a mental health crisis among young adults & Sequanota's role in providing healthier paths forward. (*2024 Bulletin of Reports, pages 97 - 108*)
- † ***United Lutheran Seminary*** – Dr. Guy Irwin (via video) addressed the realities in theological education. Enrollment is ½ of the level from 20-years ago. Geographic limitations are inhibiting unencumbered assignments post-graduation. Alternative routes to ordination are being tailored to specific communities. (*2024 Bulletin of Reports, page 110*))
- † ***Breezewood Trucker/Traveler Ministry*** – Chaplain Bruce Maxwell.
- † ***LAMPa*** – Susan Barclay & Pr. Becky Horn – seeking the common good here in Pennsylvania. Ann Ferry was the recipient of the Advocate of the Year Award. (*2024 Bulletin of Reports, page 89*)
- † ***Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State*** – Pasquerilla Center @ PSU. (*2024 Bulletin of Reports, page 90*)

Afternoon Prayer with Closing of the Assembly

Bishop Paula Lebo declared the 36th Allegheny Synod Assembly closed at 3:30PM