**TEXAS-LOUISIANA GULF COAST SYNOD**

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**

**2018 Synod Assembly**

**Date of Meeting:** May 17-19, 2018

**Venue:** Hilton North, Houston Texas

**Minutes of Meeting**

(Actions of the Assembly in **bold)**

***Thursday***

1. Vice-President Robert Rivera called the meeting to order at 1:53p. After introducing the Conference Deans and the Synod Council, he gave an outline of the day’s events.

2. **The consent agenda was approved.**

3.. Pr. Charles Parnell presented the credentials report. There were 112 lay voting members, 68 clergy - 62.2% and 37.78%, respectively. **The report was accepted by the Assembly**, and a quorum was present.

4. John Turnquist gave the report of the Nominations Committee. After all of the nominees were presented, Vice-President Rivera closed the nominations.

5. We received the first of three keynote addresses from Dr. Rich Melheim. These addresses will focus on “Faith 5”, or (1) SHARE highs and lows; (2) READ a Bible verse or story; (3) TAlk about how the Bible readingv might relate to your highs and lows; (4). PRAY for open another’s highs and lows; and (5) BLESS open another. “No enduring society has ever done what we are doing, namely, pushing our elders aside.”

6. We heard from Molly Beck Dean, the Director of the ELCA Youth Gathering and our churchwide representative, Lynnae Schatz, and Cody Miller about what is happening with the 2018 Youth Gathering here in Houston. It fairly boggles the mind to contemplate about 30,000 youngsters descending upon this city. How exciting!

7. We received heartfelt thanks from Pr. Deb Grant, Faith LC, Dickinson, for all of the post-Harvey assistance her parish received.

8. Pr. Blair Lundborg introduced our pastors new to the Synod and our new deacon and seminarians.

9. Pr. Andrew Bell moved that all nominees who were running unopposed be elected by acclamation.  **That motion was approved by the Assembly.** We then proceeded to cast ballots for Churchwide Assembly Voting member both clergy female and clergy male.

10. Bishop Mike began his report by showing a LEAD video. What was most exciting about this video was that it was filmed at a LEAD event in Maryland, which clearly shows the ever-expanding influence of this flagship leadership organization. He then noted that church attendance has been in decline since 1962 and urged the Assembly attendees to believe “it is not your fault”. He mused whether the church was “dying” or just being “pruned”. He then discussed each of the four prongs of the current strategic planning effort: (1) deepening faith, (2) radical hospitality; (3) bold leaders; and (4) adaptive structures.

***Friday***

1. We were graced by a warm and welcoming devotion from Lutherhill.

2. Dr. Melheim made the second of his presentations on faith formation. It was truly remarkable that a presentation that included a lot of information on brain hormones was so spiritual! He noted that, since 1990, SCS attendance had gone from over 1 million attendees to just over 180,000 attendees, a decline of about 90%. He emphasized again that we are misusing our elders and advocated putting both elders and youth in the same room for faith formation.

3. Pr. Parnell presented the credentials report. We had 124 lay voting members, 79 clergy voting members. thus 61.08% lay, 38.92% clergy. **The Assembly accepted the report,** and we had a quorum.

4. Pr. Bell presented the results of the last balloting. We then cast ballots for the run-off elections for these two positions.

5. Pr. Janelle Hooper led a team report on our thriving campus ministry programs.

6. Pr. Chris Markert gave the Mission Catalyst report. Of some interest was his proclamation the 71 % of our new missions were doing ethnic-specific ministry. To most enthusiastic applause, he also announced that the Synod Council has issued a Call to Specialized Ministry to Ele Clay to be the Redevelopment Pastor at Covenant Lutheran Church, Houston , and that she had accepted that call.

7. Ms. Clay then regaled us with a variety of post-Harvey stories that underscored the vitally important gifts that volunteers from throughout the region and the country brought to our recovery efforts.

8. Kathy Collins then presented the Treasurer’s Report. First up was the audit report, which she demonstrated was a “clean” audit, **and which was then adopted by the Assembly.** Next she present the proposed 2019-2020 budget (on which we will vote tomorrow) noting that it is a flat budget with the 2017-2018 budget.

9. We received reports from the leaders of our companion synod teams. It is quite remarkable how much can be accomplished with lots of prayers and a few human and $ resources.

10. Pr. Bell presented the results of the latest balloting. **With 102 votes, Pr. Kerry Nelson was elected a voting member to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. Both Pr. Tracey Breashers Scultz and Pr. Adriana Johnson received 86 votes. Pr. Tracey then conceded the election, and Pr. Adriana was declared the winner.** Thus the elections were complete. Here are the successful nominees: Synod Council (Carol Flores, Pr. Marcia Kifer, Margaret Grizzaffi), and ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member (Lynnae Schatz, Angela Bell, Dennis Meszaros, John Turnquist, Pr. Adriana Johnson, Pr. Kerry Nelson, Deidre Hayes, and Cody Miller).

11. Dr. Melheim captivated us once again. Of interest here was his statement that “a picture is worth a 1,000 words” is wrong – since the eye receives at 7 million bps and the ear at 10,000 bps, truly one picture is worth 700,000 words!

12. We heard from Clarence Smith, who is a member of the ELCA Church Council, and again from Molly Beck Dean. Among the facts she presented was that 2017 was a record year for ELCA World Hunger, which took in $21.3 million $255,000 (or 12% of that total) of which came from our Synod Harvey notwithstanding.

13. We heard presentations from Bill Mintz and Lizbeth Johnson, Lutheran Foundation of the SW.

14. Pr. Lundborg shared with us the growing need in our Synod to do ministry in creative ways. He noted that of the eighteen congregations currently in the call process, only five had the financial wherewithal to call a full-time pastor. He also presented the draft 2019 Compensation Guidelines.

***Saturday***

1. Bishop Mike called the Assembly to order at 8:45a.

2. We viewed a video on Federal chaplaincy.

3. He revealed that the site of the 2019 Synod Assembly is Kinsmen Lutheran Church, Houston.

4. The Assembly **stood down** for the Lutherhill Board meeting. **We reelected one Board member and elected one new Board member.**  Matt Kindsvatter, Lutherhill Executive Director, discussed and described an upcoming Lutherhill Capital Campaign to secure funds to build a new retreat center and a new dining so that Lutherhill’s ability to host large groups would be significantly enhanced.

5. At the conclusion of the Lutherhill meeting, Bishop Mike reconvened the Assembly.

6. Pr. Parnell presented the credentials report, which showed there were 125 lay voting members present, and 80 clergy voting members, or 60.98% and 39.02%, respectively. **The report was accepted** **by the Assembly** – a quorum was present.

7. **The Assembly approved the 2019 Compensation Guidelines that Pr. Lundborg had presented Friday afternoon.**

8. **The Assembly approved the 2019-2020 Synod Budget that Treasurer Collins had presented on Friday afternoon.**

9. We heard Dr. Melheim’s final address where he underscored once again the criticality for the church of intergenerational faith formation. One of his parting bywords: “effective neurological Christian education”.

10. We had a rollicking closing worship service led by Pr. Hooper, and then Bishop Mike brought the Assembly to a close.

Respectfully and prayerfully submitted,

John Turnquist

Secretary