

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT – SYNOD ASSEMBLY 2024

Grace and peace to you, faithful servants gathered in assembly! It has been two years since we have gathered to do the business of the synod. Last year, rather than business meetings, we sponsored Gatherings where we could worship and learn together in fellowship. After the COVID restrictions of the previous years, it was a joy to be together in this way. Now, however, it is back to business.

The Synod Assembly is the highest legislative authority in the synod, and as such, you have some important business to do:

- approve a spending plan/budget,
- consider resolutions, and
- elect members of Synod Council, the Committee on Discipline, and the Consultation committee, as well as voting members to Churchwide Assembly.

While *you* are the highest legislative body, the Synod Council is the board of directors, serving as the interim authority between meetings of the Assembly. At our 2022 Synod Assembly, we approved three memorials to Churchwide Assembly:

- A request for Portico Services and the Conference of Bishops to review the requirements of the Portico Disability program for persons suffering mental illness, with specific attention to be given to the ways in which timing related to the rostered minister's resignation affects potential eligibility for coverage and that a report of this review be given to the Church Council by its 2023 fall meeting.
- That the Churchwide Assembly encourage all individual ELCA members, as well as congregations, synods, ministries, colleges, seminaries, camps, associate organizations, and partners, to “**support creative programs resulting in reparations for stolen lands**” in partnership with Indigenous peoples, including returning land (and any structures built on it) to Native tribes, and when direct return is not feasible or desirable by the tribes, to return the proceeds from the sale of the land to the ELCA Native American Ministry Fund or other local Native-led ministries or organizations.
- That the 2022 Churchwide Assembly empower the ELCA Church Council to conduct a comprehensive audit of the Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA, and related governance documents, with special attention to **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility**.

All of these (with some amendments) were also passed at Churchwide Assembly. The NWWA Synod Council took these resolutions as indicators of what our Synod Assembly valued, and we have spent the last two years working toward policies that encourage Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, as well as reparations for stolen land and better relationships with our Indigenous neighbors. Here are some of the things we have been doing:

- We created a working document for congregations closing or disposing of land that included considering returning the property to the appropriate tribal organization. We are currently in discussion with the Upper Skagit, for example, over some property in Concrete.

- We have formed a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Assessment Team to begin work on an audit/assessment of our Synod governing documents and structures that may perpetuate racist ways of being.
- We have formed a Policy Review Committee to do a comprehensive review of our current policies.
- We have recommitted ourselves to be a Reconciling in Christ synod.
- We have dispersed the last rounds of Grace Grants, with an eye to addressing some of the inequities in our system and encouraging new and innovative ministries.
- We continue to have an active Strategic Team for Authentic Diversity that meets regularly and provides resources for individuals and congregations.
- We continue to empower lay leadership through programs like LiVE (Living into Vocational Engagement). In their own words, “The LiVE Project is a community of lay leaders who wish to take seriously the gifts and challenges of being a disciple of Jesus for today’s world.” LiVE has sponsored several online workshops, bible studies, and in-person retreats.

I look forward to hearing from the Assembly this year as to what priorities have risen to the surface over the last two years.

At the 2022 Synod Assembly, you also elected me to a second four-year term as Vice President. As VP, it is my job to chair the council, making me the chairperson of the board to the bishop’s CEO. In addition to running council meetings, I attended the 2023 Churchwide Assembly and traveled to Chicago in March of 2024 to meet with synod vice presidents from around the country. Additionally, I have taken a leadership role in the Synod VP cadre, helping to plan and facilitate our monthly Zoom meetings. This year the Region 1 Governing Board also approved a new governing document and as the vice president of the synod on whose territory our financial services office is located, I am responsible for approving expenditures on behalf of the Region 1 board.

Next year, we will hold a two-day assembly because we will be engaging in the Bishop Call Process. Also, although my term does not end until 2026, because that year is scheduled to be another gathering year, we may elect my successor at the 2025 Synod Assembly, which will give us a one-year transitional period. Hopefully, this will lead to a smooth transition in leadership.

Thank you again for your participation in Synod Assembly; your leadership is very much appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

Kay Edgerton, Synod Vice President