



2021 Northeastern Minnesota Synod Highlights from the Online Assembly

Friday evening, April 30 - Saturday morning, May 1

Theme: *LOVE IGNITES US*

Key verse: *2 Corinthians 5:14-15*

For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

The 34th Annual Synod Assembly of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod began with Bishop Amy Odgren welcoming the voting members and guests to the Online Assembly. The prerecorded **Opening Worship** service began with a Recognition of the Land and Thanksgiving for Holy Waters followed by the Opening of the Assembly by Bp. Odgren. Synod Council Vice-President Rachel Berry gave updates and announcements. Anne Laechel, Registrar provided the Credentials Report for Friday evening: 282 total voting members consisting of 168 Lay, 7 Deacons, 77 Pastors under call, 6 retired pastors, 15 Synod Authorized Ministers and 9 Synod Council members. Newly appointed and newly elected Synod Council Secretary Paula Jackson was introduced.

The 2021 Agenda, Assembly Rules & Procedures and the 2020 Synod Assembly Minutes were all adopted.

Keynote Address

Bishop Odgren introduced our Keynote Speaker for Friday evening, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton who “Zoomed In” live to give thanks and encouragement for the ministries being carried out in the Northeastern Minnesota Synod. Presiding Bishop Eaton recognized the various ministries, especially taking note of the Together Here/Anti-Racism Team work which is leading the way in the ELCA for education and building relationships with Indigenous Communities of which there are five federally recognized Tribal Reservations sharing land with the Northeastern Minnesota Synod. Eaton also lifted up the partnership of Lutheran Social Service (LSS) whose services touch 1 in 50 people everywhere throughout the United States. She thanked the Northeastern Minnesota Synod for their continuing generosity.

An ELCA Covid Relief Fund was set up and the response was overwhelming. Many congregations and ministries were able to receive extra financial help including our Lutheran Outdoor Ministry partners.

“Strengthening lay people in their faith and leadership roles is absolutely essential,” Eaton said as she lifted up the work of Synod Authorized Ministers, the synod’s Lay Leader Network and Faith Formation of all ages.

Following her prepared remarks, Presiding Bishop Eaton opened it up for lively conversation, answering voting members’ questions typed out in the chat box.



Synod Staff Introductions and Installation

Bishop Amy Odgren introduced the Synod Staff as your Synod Ministers: Rev. Rollie Bockbrader-Synod Minister for Operations & Congregational Care; Deacon Brenda Tibbetts-Synod Minister for Leadership Support; Catherine Anderson-Synod Minister for Discipleship & Christian Community;

Rev. Liz Davis-Synod Minister for Candidacy Management (part-time); Deacon Colleen Bernu-Director of Evangelical Mission and Synod Minister for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Report of the Nominating Committee - All uncontested conference nominees were elected.

2022 Synod Budget - Synod Council Treasurer Sarah Gunderson presented “The Budget is a Missional Document” power point narrative budget on Friday evening which was then discussed and voted upon Saturday morning. The \$1,161,250 budget was passed. The 2022 Synod Budget is available on the website.

Synod Council Vice-President Rachel Berry closed the evening with prayer.

Saturday Morning Worship & Plenary

During Zoom check-ins, a rolling screen of video announcements and mission narratives presented by the Northeastern Minnesota Synod’s ministry partners provided an update from the past year as well as future opportunities for exploration and participation. Thank you to Portico Benefits, Mission Investment Fund, Youth Ministry & Mental Health Initiative, Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service; Peace Not Walls-Stand for Justice in the Holy Land; LSS & Bethany Crisis Shelter; Luther Seminary; ELCA Youth Gathering, Lay Leader Network and others for providing video reports this year.



Saturday morning worship continued to lift up the theme, *Love Ignites Us* with a candle-lighting liturgy and a reading from 2 Timothy 1:6-7, “For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.” The Sunday worship service along with Friday and Saturday’s services are available on the website and Facebook page.

Credentials Report for Saturday: Total of 282 Voting Members; 168 Lay; 7 Deacons; 79 Pastors under call; 5 Retired pastors; 14 Synod Authorized Ministers; and 9 Synod Council Members.

Churchwide Assembly 2022 Voting Member Youth or Young Adult had multiple nominees. Three ballots were required. Sanna Berdahl will be the Youth/Young Adult voting member with Micah Johnson, alternate.

Live On-Site Reports were provided by Rev. Andy Berry, Chairperson of the Synod Candidacy Committee; Jon Moe, RN - Synod Covid Smart Team; Synod DEM Colleen Bernu- Together Here/Anti-Racism Team along with a TH video. Joel Abenth, representing Lutheran Outdoor Camp Ministries zoomed in live to say thank you for congregation’s increased generosity along with the ELCA and Cargill Philanthropies who provided a generous grant for Total Inclusion. Abenth also thanked Joy Hensel, Catherine Anderson & Colleen Bernu for working to provide mental health outreach and resources. “Our camps are working diligently to navigate safely this summer and in need of summer staff.”

Reference, Counsel & Memorial: No memorials were brought forth from any of the conferences this year.

2022 Salary, Budget & Compensation Guidelines: Motion from the Synod Council, & passed that no increase in guidelines due to Covid uncertainties. However, recognizing the extra work/stress of doing ministry in a time of pandemic, many rostered ministers and lay staff were unable to take time off (vacation) or participate in continuing education. In lieu of an increase, councils are encouraged to work with rostered ministers/staff to acknowledge their efforts with extra time off.

Constitution Amendments & By-laws: Changes available on website. Most had to do with changing verbiage from “synodically” to synod and “clergy” to rostered ministers. Rostered ministers encompass pastors and deacons. Passed.

Servant of Christ Award: Presented by LSS went to three Duluth congregations for their efforts in sewing more than 4,000 face masks during this pandemic. Congratulations to First Lutheran, Kenwood Lutheran and Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd!

Holy Cow - Look What We Did for World Hunger Award was presented to Knife River Lutheran Church, Knife River who gave an average of \$100.41 per confirmed member! The traveling trophy was accepted by the synod's Parliamentarian Phil Berge on behalf of Knife River Lutheran Church where Rev. Phil's spouse, the Rev. Susan Williams Berge is the pastor.

Recognition of Special Anniversaries

(A power point of photographs is available on the synod website.)

Rostered Ministers - The following were recognized for their years of service/anniversary of ordination.

5 Years: Rev. Elizabeth Pottratz, Rev. Eric Thiele, Rev. Sierra Westerman
10 Years: Rev. Amanda Kossow, Rev. Bethany Nelson, Rev. Sarah Marshall, Rev. Thomas Murray
15 Years: Rev. Stacey Jutila
20 Years: Bishop Amy Odgren, Rev. Christine Sabol, Rev. Kathryn Ulrich
Deacon Ann Terhark, Deacon Brenda Tibbetts
25 Years: Rev. Anna Madsen, Rev. Kari Pancoast, Rev. Michael Pancoast
30 Years: Rev. Joyce Piper
35 Years: Rev. Mark Ditmanson, Rev. Paul Brown, Rev. Randy Wendt, Rev. Sandy Berg-Holte, Rev. Susan Berge
40 Years: Rev. Gregory Larsen, Rev. Joan Gunderman, Rev. Kristin Foster, Rev. Mark Osthus, Rev. Paul Leslie
45 Years: Rev. Owen Christienson, Rev. Martin Halvorson, Rev. James Raisanen, Rev. Steven McCaughan
50 Years: Rev. Brian Wermager, Rev. Cletus Alley, Rev. David Putz, Rev. John Lee, Rev. Terry Frovik
55 Years: Rev. Gary Fehring
60 Years! Rev. Robert Munneke, Rev. Roger Munson, Rev. Victor Nelson

Congregational Anniversaries

(Power point photos also available on the website.)

125 Years: Holy Trinity Lutheran, Hibbing; Emmanuel Lutheran-Dell Grove, Sandstone; Trinity Lutheran, Duluth
100 Years: Bethany Lutheran, Deer River; Bethesda Lutheran, Aitkin; Zion Lutheran (Cloverdale) Hinckley
75 Years: Our Redeemer Lutheran, Pine City

Thank You and Farewell to Kathy Wimer for her 24 years of service to the Northeastern Minnesota Synod. A video of "Thank-You's" included photos and video clips from former bishops Peter Strommen and Thomas Aitken, Synod Council VP Rachel Berry, Bishop Amy Odgren plus a thank you by Mary Jo Mettler on behalf of the PV for Phoebe and Current for Curran fund drives. Video is available to watch on the synod website as well as the synod Facebook page.

Synod Assembly Offerings: designated for Seminary Scholarships and First Call Debt Reduction \$1,167.00 to date.

World Hunger: Quilt Auction and Marketplace. Thank you to all who gave of their time & talents and thank you to those who bid to raise funds for World Hunger. Total so far for the digital auction/marketplace is \$5,092.00.

Worship Services

Friday evening, Saturday morning and Sunday's Synod-wide worship service videos and bulletins are available for your congregational use and can be accessed via the synod website and Facebook page. Bishop Odgren's sermon can be accessed as a separate video or the written sermon may be utilized. Sunday's worship service includes a corporate Reaffirmation of Baptism. Twenty-eight congregations, four Lutheran Outdoor Ministry Sites, along with many musicians, lectors and liturgists, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and NEMN Synod Bishop Amy Odgren contributed to the three worship videos. Thank you! Special thanks to Rev. Sierra Westerman for editing all of the videos.

Thank you to Salem Lutheran Church in Hermantown for their gracious hospitality in hosting the synod assembly! A full list of all persons who made this digital assembly happen is listed on the website.

Closing of the Assembly: Bishop Amy Odgren led the Litany for the Closing of the Assembly and encouraged everyone to bring back the good news to their congregations and communities that **God's Love Ignites Us** to do God's work in the world. The assembly concluded business ahead of schedule.

The 2022 Synod Assembly: April 29 - May 1, 2022 Cragun's Resort, Brainerd



The Northeastern Minnesota Synod Staff was installed by Bp. Amy Odgren
 Back L-R: Catherine Anderson, Pr. Rollie Bockbrader, Deacon Brenda Tibbetts
 Front L-R: Colleen Bernu, DEM & DEI, Bp. Amy Odgren, Pr. Liz Davis, Candidacy

Paula Jackson,
 Synod Council Secretary



Sarah Gunderson, SC Treasurer
 Budget available website



Pr. Phil Berge, Parliamentarian
 Anne Laechel, Registrar



Rachel Berry, Vice-President
 Mark Hollabaugh, SA Co-chair

