

**Minutes of the
Northeastern Ohio Synod Assembly
Thirty-Seventh Regular Assembly
May 12-13, 2023
John S. Knight Center, Akron**

Breathe (Some Assembly Required)

Friday, May 12, 2023

Breathe: Pre-Assembly

1. The Rev. Jonathan Stufft welcomed everyone and introduced the *Breathe* format. He also provided the invocation.
2. The Rev. Karen Liddy provided a Land Confession.
3. The Rev. Jim Kulma shared “The Creation Story” from Genesis 1:1-2:3.
4. The Rev. Marilyn Matevia provided a “Care of Creation” via video.
5. The Rev. Jim Kulma shared the story of “Moses and the Burning Bush” from Exodus 3:1-12.
6. Vicar Scott Wiley shared his call story via a recorded video.

Assembly Business Part I

7. The Assembly Business Part I began at 6:01 pm. The liturgy concluded with the order for opening of a synod assembly led by Bishop Laura Barbins. The assembly was called to order at 6:03pm.
8. Bishop Barbins provided an explanation of the voting process—and provided examples with the “old school” cards—yes, no, abstain.
9. Ms. Beverly Lund presented the report of the Credentials Committee: As of 6:04 pm, there were a total of 201 registered attendants. There were 103 rostered leaders and 98 lay members. Ms. Lund highlighted the various designations and requirements outlined by the ELCA.
10. Secretary Matthew Beery presented the Proposed Rules of Procedure for the 2023 Northeastern Ohio Synod Assembly, noting that they were located on pages 10-11 of the assembly materials. They were adopted.

SA23.05.01 2023 NEOS Assembly Proposed Rules of Procedure
(Moved by council action; two-thirds vote required; carried)
APPROVED To adopt the Rules of Procedure as distributed and as proposed.

2023 NEOS Assembly Proposed Rules of Procedure

PROPOSED RULES OF PROCEDURE for the 2023 Synod Assembly

I. General Rules

- A. Upon recognition by the chair, a speaker shall identify oneself by name, congregation (or agency or institution), and town (or city).
- B. Chairpersons of standing committees, committees of the assembly, or committees of the synod council who are not voting members of the synod assembly are accorded voice but not vote on all business relevant to the committees' work.
- C. Unless otherwise determined by a two-thirds vote, speeches during debate shall be limited to two (2) minutes.
- D. The chair may bring forward items as necessary or as helpful to the business of the assembly. The Chair may declare such items to be Special Orders for the Day if needed.
- E. Motions shall be submitted to the secretary electronically, according to instructions provided in the preassembly materials and at the assembly for that purpose.
- F. To afford voting members the option of expressing “no opinion” on a question, the chair will call for yeas, nays, and abstentions.
- G. In the event that the assembly must adjourn before completing its business, all remaining items shall be referred to the synod council for disposition.
- H. Because of the inability to add voting members after the authorized voting list has been finalized and transmitted to the voting application vendor prior to the assembly, the Credentials Committee will simply and singly report the final number of members authorized to receive voting credentials as the members in attendance at the assembly. The final assembly minutes will also show any information about the number of such individuals who did not at any time join the meeting or vote.

II. Nominations and Elections

- A. The consent of all nominees shall have been obtained prior to their nomination. Time constraints prevent distribution of biographical information for persons nominated from the floor. Nominations made from the floor of the assembly must be submitted electronically, according to instructions provided at the assembly for that purpose. Since such nominations may be submitted at any time after the opening of the assembly, if no nominations are received electronically prior to the time that the nominations committee has presented its official slate, the chair will declare nominations closed.

- B. Nominees for offices other than those conducted by ecclesiastical ballot shall be listed in alphabetical order on the first ballot, in two groups. Nominations made prior

to the assembly shall be alphabetically listed first, followed by nominations made from the floor. This grouping is necessary for efficient handling of vote counting. On subsequent ballots, listing will be in descending order according to votes received on the previous ballot.

C. Upon completion of all elections, a summary of the results shall be published.

III. Consideration of the Budget

Changes to the proposed budget shall be submitted electronically, according to instructions provided in the preassembly materials for that purpose, to the Finance Committee by 12:00 noon on Friday, May 5, 2023. The Budget Change Request form with instructions is available at <https://www.neosassembly.org/docs-deadlines--videos.html>. This will allow the Finance Committee to provide written responses and recommendation, which will be distributed as website materials for assembly action. All proposals shall be in writing and shall include the amount of increase for a specific line item and/or the amount of decrease for a specific line item and the rationale for such change.

IV. Consideration of Resolutions

A. Resolutions to be considered by the assembly shall be received in writing in the synod office by Saturday, April 1, 2023 for consideration by the Committee on Reference and Counsel. The Committee on Reference and Counsel shall report their action on such resolutions to the assembly, whether a recommendation for discussion and Assembly action, reference to an appropriate synod committee, no action, or postponement of further discussion to the next Assembly (with possible interim action, if appropriate). Actions of the Committee on Reference and Counsel shall be final unless the Assembly chooses to discuss such actions by a majority vote.

B. No resolutions may be submitted after the original deadline date, unless such a resolution is determined by the Reference and Counsel Committee to be of an urgent nature, in which case the committee may recommend to the assembly that debate at the assembly be considered. Such a recommendation for debate shall require a two-thirds vote for approval; if the assembly does not pass an enabling motion, the resolution shall be referred to the synod council. Resolutions of an urgent nature shall be submitted electronically, according to instructions provided at the assembly for that purpose.

C. The Committee on Reference and Counsel shall also grant or deny permission to distribute material to assembly voting members.

2024-2025 Budget

Resolutions

Anti-Racism

Care of Creation

Others

Courtesy

Election Results Announced

11:45 am Close of the 2023 Synod Assembly

12. Bishop Barbins explained the process for Reports, Hearings, and Elections. Also, explained when the contested positions would be explained and voted.
13. Bishop Barbins recognized Mike Davis from the Budget and Finance Committee.
14. Mr. Mike Davis presented the 2024-2025 Budget in a video and highlighted the following:
 - a. The proposed budget for fiscal 2024-2025 is found on page 37-38 of the assembly materials.
 - b. Comments about the *current year* 2023-2024 amended budget:
 - i. Finance Committee did revisit the current budget.
 - ii. Finance Committee made recommendations for revisions that were approved by Synod Council and are reflected in current figures.
 - iii. The changes came in the Mission Support Income area, which was adjusted to reflect the current giving amount.
 - iv. ELCA Grant Income was initially anticipated that a Director of Evangelical Mission (DEM) would become a NEOS employee and there would be a grant for transfer of employment from the national church related to the salary and benefits related to this position. Approximately \$110,000. This change is now rescheduled to take effect in 2024-2025.
 - v. ELCA Grant Income; it is anticipated that three (3) grant proposals will be solicited to support congregational vitality initiatives. If we are not successful in getting these grants, these projects will not be undertaken.
 - vi. Ministry Partner Fund: with the continued downward trend in congregational mission support, it was recognized that our direct support for all mission partners could not be sustained at the level initially provided. A priority is to support our congregations.
 - c. Comments on the *proposed* 2024-2025 budget
 - i. Income area: Mission Support is targeting \$1,225,000
 - ii. The Mission Support to the national church is a fixed amount that has been reduced—just like last year—by approximately 1%.

- iii. ELCA Grant Income section: transfer of funds from national church and the cost related to the DEM, \$110,000. As noted, the three grants totaling approximately \$15,000.
- iv. Operational expenses: changes from historical treatment and implementation of new policies.
- v. Administrative costs reflect the current compliance of the NEOS Compensation Standard recommendations to salary, benefits, with a modest increase.
- vi. This is a deficit budget. We have the financial resources to continue to absorb these in the short term, but must continue to strive to reach a balanced budget.
- vii. Revenues totaling \$1,376,600
- viii. Operating expenditures \$1,454,158
- ix. Deficit \$78,558 before adding depreciation values of \$32,000 for a total estimate deficit of approximately \$109,558.
- x. The Finance Committee will continue to monitor these trends and adjust accordingly.

15. After the video with Mr. Mike Davis, Bishop Barbins highlighted the hearing process, again, for the “Resolution: Anti-Racism,” “Resolution: Care of Creation,” the 2024-2025 Budget, the Revised NEOS Governing Document proposal, and the 2023-2024 Compensation Standards. These hearings will give time to discuss with the authors of the documents before the assembly votes.

16. At 6:22 pm, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, The Rev Christina Krnac and Bishop Barbins, presented the slate of nominees and highlighted the biographical information printed in the assembly materials and asked for additional nominations from the floor.

- a. Synod Secretary: Gretchen Hallerberg, The Rev. Jeremy Hollingshead
- b. Synod Council Northeast-Rostered: The Rev. Steve Bond, The Rev. Jeffery Plummer
- c. Synod Council Northeast Lay: Gretchen Hallerberg
- d. Synod Council Northwest Lay: Susan Frantz
- e. Synod Council Southeast Lay: *vacant*
- f. Synod Council South Central Lay: Johanna Henderson
- g. Synod Council Southwest Rostered: The Rev. Stephanie Woods
- h. Synod Council At-Large Young Adult: *vacant*
- i. Synod Council At-Large Youth: *vacant*

- j. Synod Council At Large DEI Rostered: The Rev Marilyn Matevia
 - k. Synod Council At-Large DEI Lay: Bobby Barnes, Chuck Mosberger
 - l. Synod Council At-Large DEI Lay: Jenifer Ackermann
 - m. Consultation Committee Female Lay 5-year term: Donna Welker
 - n. Consultation Committee Male Lay 6-year term: Adam Pate
 - o. Consultation Committee Female Rostered 6-year term: The Rev Christy Krnac, The Rev Emilie Theobald-Rowlands
17. Nominations from the floor. *None received.*
18. The Rev. Charles Woodward, on behalf of the Elections Committee, presented the voting procedure. There were eight (8) positions for which candidates were unopposed. The following were deemed to be elected by consent.
- a. Synod Council Northeast Lay: Gretchen Hallerberg *elected*
 - b. Synod Council Northwest Lay: Susan Frantz *elected*
 - c. Synod Council South Central Lay: Johanna Henderson *elected*
 - d. Synod Council Southwest Rostered: The Rev. Stephanie Woods *elected*
 - e. Synod Council At Large DEI Rostered: The Rev Marilyn Matevia *elected*
 - f. Synod Council At-Large DEI Lay: Jenifer Ackermann *elected*
 - g. Consultation Committee Female Lay 5-year term: Donna Welker *elected*
 - h. Consultation Committee Male Lay 6-year term: Adam Pate *elected*
19. Bishop Barbins declared these offices elected. She also spoke about the vacant positions as well as the contested positions and when voting would take place.

Assembly Business recessed at 6:28 pm. until Saturday, May 13 at 9:45 am

Breathe Part II

20. The Rev Don King introduced ELCA representative and speaker, The Rev Kimberly Vaughn.
- a. The Rev. Kimberly Vaughn shared her call story.
 - b. The Rev. Kimberly Vaughn reminded the assembly of the prophetic call to justice—and asking the question “Who Am I?” God meets us on the way.
 - c. The Rev Kimberly Vaughn shared the powerful ways the NEOS is impacting the larger church.
 - i. God’s why is “Our Why.” Speaking about the ELCA Mission Support and \$500,000 from NEOS.

- ii. Faith formation and other important moments to support the newest disciples.
 - iii. Federal Chaplaincy
 - iv. There are 311 New Worship Communities that have started.
 - v. Lutheran Disaster Response
 - vi. ELCA World Hunger
 - vii. Empowering women
 - viii. YAGM (Young Adults in Global Mission)
 - ix. CRLC (Commission for Renewed Lutheran Church)
 - d. As Rev. Vaughn spoke about these ministries, she highlighted how much the NEOS contributed to each of these sites.
 - e. “All of these initiatives allow us to respond to God’s call in the world.”
21. The Rev. Kimberly Vaughn introduced a pre-recorded video with Presiding Bishop Eaton.
- a. Presiding Bishop Eaton discussed the shared ministries that the ELCA is spearheading.
 - b. Presiding Bishop Eaton highlighted how congregations are transitioning in a variety of ways—and how the Churchwide organization is assisting in these moments.
 - c. Presiding Bishop Eaton met with Pastor Hieraal in Minneapolis, Minnesota; discussed how, “We are part of something bigger.”
 - d. Presiding Bishop Eaton reminded us of our call to walk out the gospel of Jesus Christ and striving for peace, mercy, and justice. “Together, We are Called.”
22. The Rev. Brian Shields shared “The Dry Bones” story of Ezekiel 37:1-14.
23. The Rev. Marissa Harrison shared about Effective Ministry Partners in a pre-recorded video.
24. The Rev. Jonathan Stufft thanked the various and many people who made the first evening a success. Reminded everyone about the schedule for Saturday, May 13, 2023.

Assembly in Full Recess until Saturday, May 13, 2023

Saturday, May 13, 2023

Breathe Part III

25. The Rev. Jonathan Stufft welcomed the assembly for *Breathe* storytelling time at 9:00 am.
26. The Rev. Jim Kulma shared the “Baptism Story of Jesus” Luke 3:1-22.
27. Bishop Barbins led the assembly in the Affirmation of Baptism, ELW p. 234-237.
28. Bishop Barbins led the Remembrance of Faithful and Departed Colleagues. A slide show showed pictures of the following ministers who have died during the past year.

THE REV. SHERMAN BISHOP
DEACON EDWARD KIRST
THE REV. DANIEL ROSSBACH
THE REV. VICTOR MYERS
THE REV. FREDERICK GROSSE
DEACON TIMOTHY GUENTHER
THE REV. GEORGE HRBEK
DEACON MARILYN HANDSHUE
THE REV. HARRY C. FOX

Bishop Barbins reconvened the Assembly Business Part II at 9:36 am.

29. The Rev. Steve Bond presented the following Resolutions from the Reference and Counsel Committee found on pages 34 -35 in the assembly materials.

**SA23.05.03 “Resolution: Anti-Racism” (Moved by Reference and Counsel
Committee; seconded; carried)**
APPROVED To adopt the Anti-Racism Resolution as presented.

Resolution: Anti-Racism

Whereas, Jesus calls us to “love our neighbor as ourselves” in Mark 12:31;

Whereas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) adopted a social statement in 1993 entitled, [Freed in Christ, Ethnicity, Race and Culture](#), which encouraged the whole church to be committed to the work of anti-racism;

Whereas, on June 27, 2019, the Church Council of the ELCA adopted the following apology: [Declaration of The ELCA To People Of African Descent](#);

Whereas, the ELCA adopted a commitment to [Renewed Action Regarding Racism toward Lutherans of African Descent in 2016](#) ; and

Whereas, there is and will continue to be a need for anti-racism work; now, therefore be it

Resolved that the Northeastern Ohio Synod (NEOS):

1. identifies itself as an anti-racist synod; meaning it is in the “process of actively and consistently confronting racism wherever it occurs”.¹
2. reaffirms the commitment of this church to create, sustain and reinvest in local African descent communities, congregations and ministries; ([Renewed Action Regarding Racism Toward Lutherans of African Descent, August 2016](#))
3. urges congregations and individuals of the NEOS to consider partnering with the One Body, Many Members Anti-Racist Conversations Affinity Group through study, action, conversations and relationship building;
4. provides regular (every 3-5 years) racial justice² training for rostered ministers, using leaders and resources provided by the ELCA; and
5. urges individual members of the NEOS to read the [ELCA Anti-Racism Pledge](#) and consider signing and committing to one or more of its actions.

¹ Kivel, Paul. Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice. 1996. New Society Publishers: Gabriola Island, B.C. pg. 211.

²**Racial justice** is the approach or combined strategies that work to address the inequities of structural racism. It is “the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all. Equitable impacts and outcome across race is the key indicator of racial justice.” (Applied Research Center. Racial Justice Education and Action Manual. 2002 revised 7/01/04. Attachment 4.)

**SA23.05.04
APPROVED**

**“Resolution: Care of Creation” (Moved (Matevia); seconded; carried)
To approve that the “Resolution: Care of Creation” is referred to
Synod Council for more study, discussion, and discernment. An
original draft was presented by Reference and Counsel, but then
removed (and then revised and moved from the assembly floor) to
have Synod Council work with the Care of Creation affinity group for
appropriate language and economic study.**

- 30.** The Rev. Roger Willer spoke against the resolution as written (seconded), offering a friendly amendment to include current ELCA Social Statement language. Secretary Beery began adding appropriate language for this “friendly amendment.”
- 31.** The Rev. Marilyn Matevia moved (seconded) that this resolution be referred to Synod Council. In doing so, and in collaboration with the Care of Creation Affinity group, they should craft appropriate language and investigate the economic impacts of fulfilling this resolution.

Resolution: Care of creation

WHEREAS, “the earth is the Lord’s, and all that is in it” (Psalm 24:1); and

WHEREAS, God calls humans to tend and keep God’s creation (Genesis 2:15) for current and future generations;¹ and

WHEREAS, we are called to “love your neighbor as yourselves” (Luke 10:27) and to protect the most vulnerable (Matthew 25:40,45); and

WHEREAS, climate change is already destroying homes, crucial food sources, and livelihoods in the world’s most vulnerable communities, leading to record numbers of displaced persons around the world; and

WHEREAS, scientists and economists have determined that greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced globally by 43% by the year 2030 to avert a catastrophic acceleration of global warming;² and

WHEREAS, a just transition away from a fossil-fuel based economy that reduction in greenhouse gas emissions will protect air and water for vulnerable communities, improve public health and safety, and create more safe and sustainable employment opportunities; therefore, be it

¹ ELCA Social Statement, *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice* (1993);

<https://www.elca.org/faith/faithand-society/social-statements/caring-for-creation>

² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Sixth Assessment Report: Mitigation of Climate Change* (2022); <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/>

RESOLVED, that the Lutheran Center contribute to these efforts by committing to make the Lutheran Center facility net-zero greenhouse gas emissions-equivalents by the year 2028; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Ohio Synod Council establish an advisory committee or similar mechanism to assist with these efforts and report on progress at future synod assemblies); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Ohio Synod Council create a small pilot program to assist ten congregations in obtaining grants and expertise to modify their facilities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 50% by 2030, and 100% by 2045; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Ohio Synod leadership and Council will encourage congregants and rostered **leaders to read the 2023 ELCA social message on the Earth's Climate crisis** and educate themselves about our call as stewards of God's creation, and the urgency of the climate emergency climate change both locally and globally, as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregations be encouraged to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency climate change through prayer, worship, preaching, discipleship and/or education whenever possible and appropriate.

32. Bishop Barbins spoke, again, about the timeline for voting on the 2024-2025 budget, the 2023-2024 Compensation Standards, and the revisions to the Northeastern Ohio Synod Governing Document. She highlighted the Roberts Rules process that would be used in this context and the use of microphones in the debate process.

33. Bishop Barbins highlighted the following anniversaries:

Congregations:

25th

Rejoice!, Hudson

50th

Christ the Redeemer, Brecksville

75th

Christ, Avon Lake

150th

St. John, Petersburg

175th

St. Paul, Smithville

Rostered Ministers:

25th

The Rev. Frederick Grimm
The Rev. Loranelle Breyley

40th

The Rev. Deborah Wissner The Rev. Douglas Fidler
The Rev. George Murphy
The Rev. Laurie Miller, The Rev. Roger Willer, The Rev. Thomas Henderson

50th

The Rev. Keith Baker
The Rev. Terrance Parker
The Rev. Timothy Keeler

55th

The Rev. Richard Bowen
The Rev. John Wanamaker
The Rev. Patrick Persaud
The Rev. Philip Cummings
The Rev. William Wilkins

60th

The Rev. George Gaiser

34. Bishop Barbins welcomed the new ministers that joined the Northeastern Ohio Synod territory during the past year.

The Rev. Steven Mahaffey

The Rev. Eric Bodenstab

Deacon Erin Bodenstab

The Rev. Timothy Guenther

The Rev. Heidi Holst

35. The Rev. Charles Woodward spoke about the voting on the contested elections, which opened at 10:00 am and then closed at 11:00 am. Election Results for the first ballot would happen after 12:00 pm for the following positions.

- a. Synod Secretary: Gretchen Hallerberg, The Rev. Jeremy Hollingshead

- b. Synod Council Northeast-Rostered: The Rev. Steve Bond, The Rev. Jeffery Plummer
- c. Synod Council At-Large DEI Lay: Bobby Barnes, Chuck Mosberger
- d. Consultation Committee Female Rostered 6-year term: The Rev. Christy Krnac, The Rev. Emilie Theobald-Rowlands

Assembly Recess 10:00 am until 11:00 am

36. Bishop Barbins reconvened the assembly at 11:00 am. Voting closed.

37. Bishop Barbins introduced the Northeastern Ohio Synod Governing Document revisions found in the assembly materials. Mr. John Sleasman, Parliamentarian and Chair of Constitution Committee, spoke in more detail about the Governing Document changes that were up for adoption.

- a. Rev. Miller, Christ Lutheran, Avon—opposed revisions—citing ministry partner concerns (Mr. Sleasman provided a bylaw reason for this concern).
- b. The Rev. Stephanie Woods, St. Paul, New Pittsburg/Wooster—opposed revisions—citing marginalized retired rostered members (Mr. Sleasman spoke to the 60/40 split and how this revision will *not* marginalize retired rostered members).

**SA23.05.05 Northeastern Ohio Synod Governing Document Revisions
(Moved by council action; majority vote required; carried)**

APPROVED To adopt the proposed 2023 revisions of the Northeastern Ohio Synod Governing Documents as presented.

38. The revisions passed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2023 SYNOD ASSEMBLY GOVERNING DOCUMENTS ACTION

Preface

These recommendations come to the Assembly by action of the Synod Council at three meetings.

This document is divided into sections: An overview of the recommended changes; the text of those changes, with explanation of the reasons; and the final wording of the involved sections if the recommended changes are adopted. The current text of the NEOS Governing Documents can be found on the synod website.

Overview

The 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA made a number of both required and optional changes to the Synod Constitutions. In accordance with ELCA policy and constitutional provision †S18.11³, the required changes have been made to the document “Northeastern Ohio Synod Governing Documents as of August 2022,” which thus reflects the current status. Other proposals for constitutional amendments which follow are provisions which require majority votes, per †S18.12⁴.

The Synod Council considered possible reasons for Assembly action:

- A. The required provisions lead to some cascading effects, requiring additional synod action to change or complete at the next synod assembly.
- B. Changes made to optional provisions were reviewed for possible improvement and/or consistency with Churchwide recommendations.
- C. A periodic general review of the governing documents to identify provisions not affected by Churchwide actions, but to identify content which may need updating or no longer be relevant. This may suggest proposals to the synod assembly, or for action by the synod council.

Where citations from the governing documents appear with a **tan background**, those sections are to provide context or reference, and are not subject to direct discussion of change.

Technical Corrections

At the 2022 synod assembly, a number of changes were made to the structure of the synod conferences. In that process, which reduced from seven conferences to five, references to committees were inconsistently left unchanged. Also, when the change was made to have the synod treasurer appointed by the council, a residual reference to the former nomination process was not deleted. At its September 2022 meeting, the Synod Council took action to propose corrections to those provisions, reflecting the current arrangement. These two corrections are being proposed under the provisions of †S18.13.b³.

- S9.03. There shall be a Nominating Committee consisting of **five** ~~seven~~ members who shall be appointed by the Synod Council to serve for each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

³ †S18.11. Certain sections of this constitution incorporate and record therein required provisions of the constitution and bylaws of this church. If such provisions are amended by the Churchwide Assembly, corresponding amendments shall be introduced at once into this constitution by the secretary of this synod upon receipt of formal certification thereof from the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

⁴ †S18.12. Whenever the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officially informs this synod that the Churchwide Assembly has amended the *Constitution for Synods*, this constitution may be amended to reflect any such amendment by a majority vote at any subsequent

Additional nominations may be made from the floor for all elections for which nominations are made by the Nominating Committee.

~~S9.07. The Synod Council shall nominate at least one person for treasurer; additional nominations may be made from the floor.~~

Also proposed in September were other corrections to clean up various leftover provisions in the governing documents which are no longer applicable. These three proposals for deletion are also made under the provisions of †S18.13.b:

~~S9.11. —The Synod Council shall elect or appoint representatives to the steering committee of its region. [Rationale for change: A steering committee for our region no longer exists.]~~

~~S9.13. —The Synod Assembly shall elect its representatives to the Board of Directors of Trinity Lutheran Seminary, recognizing the inclusive composition of the board. The terms of office shall be set forth by the institution. [Rationale for change: There is no longer a Board of Directors of Trinity Lutheran Seminary since its merger into Capital University in 2018.]~~

~~S10.04 Any proposal to appropriate funds, whether by amendment to the budget or otherwise, which is presented to a meeting of the Synod Assembly without the approval of the Synod Council, shall require a two-thirds vote for adoption. Any proposal to increase the budget must be accompanied by a statement of the sources of the revenue. [Rationale for change: This requirement has not been adhered to for several years. (1) It is recommended that the Synod Assembly be free to amend the budget, without Synod Council approval, by a majority vote for adoption. (2) The requirement was important when budgets were required to be in balance. Since the adoption of provisions for an unbalanced budget and the creation of a Deficit Reduction Fund to cover “excess” expenses, the existence of that fund simply becomes the “automatic” source of funding. At the assembly, either presenters of amendments or any voting member of the assembly could cite other sources.]~~

OFFICER TERM ITEMS REQUIRING ASSEMBLY ACTION

NEOS had chosen to establish fixed terms for officers and council members, based on a September 1 date⁴. Additionally, there is a provision – consistent with ELCA recommendations – for the inception of a term for a bishop elected by a special assembly⁵.

The 2022 Churchwide Assembly altered the requirements of †S8.52, and made the following language required:

³ †S18.13.b. The Synod Council may propose an amendment, with notice to be sent to the congregations of this synod at least six months prior to the next regular meeting of the Synod Assembly. Such an

amendment shall require for adoption a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting at such a regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

⁴ S8.52. The terms of the officers shall begin as specified by the bylaws.
S9.01.01 The term of office of every person elected at a regular meeting of the Synod Assembly shall begin on the first day of September. Exceptions include terms of representatives to the Churchwide Assembly and boards of institutions, those terms being determined by each respective institution.

⁵ S8.54.01 A bishop elected by a special meeting of the Synod Assembly shall assume office as soon as possible, but no later than three months after the election.

†S8.52 The terms of the officers shall begin on the first day of the _____ month following election, or in special circumstances, at a time designated by the Synod Council.

Our past practice is therefore no longer in compliance with a required provision, and must be changed. For consistency, changes are also recommended to S9.01.01.

The Synod Council recommends that three months be used for insertion into the relevant blank. The means that terms begin August 1 if/when the assembly is in May, September 1 if/when in June, etc.

†S8.52. The terms of the officers shall begin on the first day of the third month following election or, in special circumstances, at a time designated by the Synod Council.

and

S9.01.01 The term of office of every person elected at a regular meeting of the Synod Assembly shall begin on the first day of the third month following election. Exceptions include terms of representatives to the Churchwide Assembly and boards of institutions, those terms being determined by each respective institution.

ITEMS FROM CHURCHWIDE RECOMMENDEND FOR COUNCIL PROPOSAL FOR ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT

Generally, the Synod Council is recommending that adoption of almost all of the optional proposals made by Churchwide Assemblies, so as to keep consistency with those recommendations and with most other synods.

The synod council recommends the adoption/amendment/deletion (as noted) of:

S7.21.01. Voting members shall begin serving with the opening of a regular Synod Assembly and shall continue serving until ~~voting members are seated at~~ the opening of the next regular Synod Assembly.

S7.22. This synod may establish processes that permit retired rostered ministers, or those granted disability status, or on leave from call, on the roster of this synod to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, provided that such processes not result in fewer than 60% of the voting members of the Synod Assembly being laypersons in contravention of ~~consistent with~~ †S7.21. If the synod does not establish processes to permit the rostered leaders specified above to serve as voting members, they shall have voice but not vote in the meeting of the Synod Assembly.

S7.24. Ministers under call on the roster of this synod shall remain as members of the Synod Assembly so long as they remain under call and so long as their names appear on the rosters of this synod. Lay members of the Synod Assembly representing congregations shall continue as such until the opening of the next regular synod assembly, or unless replaced by the election of new members for a special synod assembly, or until they have been disqualified by termination of congregational membership. ~~Normally, congregations will hold elections prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.~~

S7.26. This synod may establish processes through the synod council that permit lay representatives of mission settings formed with the intent of becoming chartered congregations and authorized worshipping communities of the synod, which have been authorized under ELCA bylaw 10.01.04., to serve as voting members of the synod assembly, consistent with †S7.21.

S7.27 This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council to grant a minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Churchwide assembly ~~of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America~~ the privilege of both voice and vote in the Synod Assembly during the period of that ordained minister's services in a congregation of this church.

S8.42. The treasurer shall provide and be accountable for:

...

c. Receipt and acknowledgment of offerings, contributions, and bequests made to this synod, collecting interest and income from its invested funds and paying regular appropriations and orders on the several accounts as approved and directed by the Synod Council. The treasurer shall transmit each month to the treasurer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America the funds received by this synod for the general work of this church as well as any funds to support restricted programs of this church.

f. Obtaining a fidelity bond in the amount determined by the Synod Council for persons handling synod funds, which bond shall be in the custody of the secretary. The premium for the bond shall be paid by this synod. Fidelity coverage provided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be deemed a fulfillment of this requirement.

**ADDITIONAL ITEM RECOMMENDEND FROM COUNCIL FOR ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT
(Requiring a two-thirds vote of the Synod Assembly, per †S18.21.)**

S6.03.05 currently reads:

S6.03.05 This synod shall maintain relationships with Trinity Seminary, Capital University, Wittenberg University, Thiel College, Lutheran Outdoor Ministries in Ohio, Lutheran-Episcopal Campus Community (Cleveland), and appropriate social ministry organizations.

At one time, this bylaw listed every organization which was supported as a mission partner by the synod in the operating budget. In recent years, this is no longer the case – the text has not been regularly, continuously updated. One of these listed entities, the Lutheran-Episcopal Campus Community, no longer exists, and the remainder does not reflect current supported ministries.

The following proposal generalizes the bylaw provision and makes reference to a continuing resolution. This will allow regular and ongoing council action to amend the continuing resolution as arrangements change. The proposed wording, which would replace the entire current bylaw, would read:

S6.03.05 This synod shall maintain relationships with other Lutheran entities and other faith-based organizations as specified in a continuing resolution.

S7.21.04 is a proposed new item:

S7.21.04 Members of the Synod Assembly committees appointed by Synod Council who are not otherwise voting members of the assembly will be additional voting members of the Synod Assembly, provided that they are voting members of congregations of this synod consistent with †S7.25.

This bylaw is being proposed to allow better advance appointment to assembly committees. In many cases, assembly committees are required to be composed of voting members, and in others, best practice is that non-voting members rarely be on these committees. Since congregations often do not finalize their lay voting members until shortly before the assembly, this sometimes results in “easy” appointment of lay synod council members (who already get voting rights) to committees; delays in appointing lay persons to committees; guesses as to who might be a voting member; appointment of

persons to committees who then may be “imposed” on congregations to be voting members; or, as necessary, last minute replacement of people who do not become congregational voting members; etc. This continuing resolution would resolve these issues, and allow earlier, more timely, appointment of lay people to committees without complication. This should not significantly increase the total number of voting members actually registered, and helps to insure the required 60% lay, 40% rostered balance.

39. Bishop Barbins presented the Compensation Guidelines found in assembly materials as well as in the hyperlink below.

SA21.06.07 2023-2024 Compensation Guidelines (Moved by council action; carried)

APPROVED To adopt the 2023-2024 Compensation Guidelines as proposed.

40. The standards passed unanimously.

41. The full 2023-2024 Compensation Standards document can be found at the following:

- a. [neos compensation standards 2023-2024 proposed.pdf \(neosassembly.org\)](https://www.neosassembly.org/2023-2024-compensation-standards-proposed.pdf)

42. Mr. Mike Davis and Mr. Bob Emmerich presented the 2024-2025 Budget. The figures for this budget were found on pages 35-37 in the assembly materials.

- a. Rev. Jacobson—Zion, Wooster—presented an amendment (re: ministry partners) to restore funding to LOMO/Hopewood to \$40,000 (seconded).
- b. The Rev. Jean Hansen—Faith, Fairlawn—clarifying question (balancing concern).
- c. The Rev. Don Frantz—First, Lorain—in support of amendment restoring \$40,000.
- d. The Rev. Charles Woodward, Prince of Peace, Westlake—in support of amendment.
- e. The Rev. Don King—Hope Peace, Cleveland Hts.—in support of amendment.
- f. The Rev. Jean Hansen—Faith, Fairlawn—amend the amendment to restore \$40,000 *plus* refer to finance committee to find \$40,000 to be removed to pay this.
- g. Rev. Weaver—called the question.
- h. Voting to the amendment to the amendment. Had to go to App for voting result
 - i. For:57
 - ii. Against: 90
 - iii. Abstained 7

43. Amendment to *find \$40,000 failed*

44. The amendment to restore \$40,000 for LOMO/Hopewood passed.

45. The Rev. Robert Eller—to further amend budget—highlighted Trinity Seminary (seconded) to restore \$15,000 to Trinity Seminary.

- a. The Rev. Jean Hansen—spoke against the amendment.
 - i. A vote ensued and the Trinity amendment failed.

46. \$40,000 LOMO/Hopewood restoration in the amended budget passed.

SA23.05.04

2024-2025 Amended Budget (Moved by council action; seconded; carried)

APPROVED

To approve the 2024-2025 Budget presented, plus restoring \$40,000 to the LOMO/Hopewood line item.

Proposed 2024-2025 Budget

Accounts	2021-2022 Unaudited	2022-2023 Unaudited	2022-2023 Budget	Original 2023- 2024 Budget	Revised 2023- 2024 Budget	Requested 2024-2025 Budget
INCOME						
Mission Support Income	\$1,224,891.08	\$1,200,062.22	\$1,237,000.00	\$1,300,000.00	\$1,225,000.00	\$1,225,000.00
Undesignated Congr. & Indiv. Gifts	\$2,030.00	\$24,932.87	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$12,000.00
ELCA Grants	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$120,000.00	\$46,000.00	\$135,400.00
Other Income	\$20,711.71	\$6,772.05	\$7,500.00	\$23,500.00	\$4,200.00	\$4,200.00
Total INCOME	\$1,257,632.79	\$1,241,767.14	\$1,256,500.00	\$1,445,500.00	\$1,285,200.00	\$1,376,600.00
EXPENSES						
CHURCH IN SOCIETY						
ELCA Churchwide Support	\$581,823.26	\$550,055.83	\$550,000.00	\$550,000.00	\$550,000.00	\$525,000.00
Social Ministry Organizations	\$5,462.00	\$12,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total CHURCH IN SOCIETY	\$589,823.26	\$562,233.83	\$562,000.00	\$562,000.00	\$550,000.00	\$525,000.00
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE						
Congregational Vitality	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$28,000.00	\$15,000.00
Resource Center	-\$82.97	\$276.14	\$2,550.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00
Congregation Events & Program	\$1,100.42	\$1,625.03	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$6,500.00	\$2,000.00
General Conference Support	\$7,700.00	\$12,800.00	\$13,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$12,500.00	\$12,500.00
Region 6 Archive Total					\$7,500.00	\$7,500.00
Total CONGREGATIONAL LIFE	\$10,717.45	\$14,701.17	\$31,050.00	\$33,000.00	\$57,000.00	\$39,500.00
LEADERSHIP						
Seminary						
Trinity Seminary	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$7,500.00	\$0.00
Seminary Student Support	\$4,500.00	\$5,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00
Total Seminary Student Support	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$21,000.00	\$21,000.00	\$13,500.00	\$6,000.00
Candidacy Programs	\$3,667.70	\$3,291.05	\$7,500.00	\$9,000.00	\$4,700.00	\$4,700.00
Care of Rostered Persons	\$2,523.24	\$169.95	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00
Total LEADERSHIP	\$26,190.94	\$23,461.00	\$31,500.00	\$33,000.00	\$21,700.00	\$14,200.00
FAITH AND LIFE						
Young Adults						
UPCaM (Cleveland)	\$0.00	\$10,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
United Campus Kent			\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Capital University	\$750.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Wittenberg University	\$750.00	\$875.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Young Adults	\$2,000.00	\$11,875.00	\$12,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
Youth						
Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO)	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
Hopewood/LOMO	\$45,000.00	\$48,750.00	\$45,000.00	\$40,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$0.00
Total Youth	\$47,000.00	\$50,750.00	\$47,000.00	\$42,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$2,000.00
Total FAITH AND LIFE	\$49,000.00	\$62,625.00	\$59,000.00	\$54,000.00	\$9,000.00	\$7,000.00
ADMINISTRATIVE						
General Administrative						
Synod HR	\$7,961.04	\$7,625.04	\$8,500.00	\$10,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
Staff Compensation	\$265,410.00	\$363,929.15	\$364,000.00	\$471,650.00	\$395,954.61	\$479,308.25
Contract Staff	\$27,000.00	\$27,000.00	\$23,000.00	\$21,500.00	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00
Total Staff Compensation	\$292,410.00	\$390,929.15	\$387,000.00	\$493,150.00	\$425,954.61	\$509,308.25
Staff Benefits	\$170,146.68	\$192,175.97	\$186,191.50	\$215,313.93	\$201,006.36	\$248,400.00

Proposed 2024025 Budget

Travel and Profession Expenses	\$32,741.73	\$23,510.27	\$16,000.00	\$16,000.00	\$22,500.00	\$12,500.00
Total Synod Staff	\$495,298.41	\$606,615.39	\$589,191.50	\$724,463.93	\$649,460.98	\$770,208.25
Contract Services	\$51,192.93	\$33,205.00	\$32,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$35,000.00
Synod Office Operations	\$44,183.44	\$41,633.97	\$37,250.00	\$33,750.00	\$29,850.00	\$29,850.00
Synod Building Expense	\$44,472.20	\$52,839.52	\$41,450.00	\$56,700.00	\$30,400.00	\$30,400.00
Total ADMINISTRATIVE	\$695,808.63	\$741,918.92	\$708,391.50	\$860,413.93	\$747,710.98	\$868,458.25
Total EXPENSES	\$1,371,048.37	\$1,404,939.92	\$1,391,941.50	\$1,542,413.93	\$1,385,410.98	\$1,454,158.25
Net Operating Income/ Loss Before Transfers	-\$113,415.58	-\$163,172.78	-\$135,441.50	-\$96,913.93	-\$100,210.98	-\$77,558.25
Transfers from Designated Accounts						
Resource Acquisitions					\$2,000.00	---
Synod Assembly Transfer					\$4,500.00	
Congregational Vitality						
Christian Education					\$9,500.00	
Total Transfers from Designated Accounts	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$16,000.00	\$0.00
Total Net Operating Income/Loss	-\$113,415.58	-\$163,172.78	-\$135,441.50	-\$96,913.93	-\$84,210.98	-\$77,558.25
Depreciation Expense	\$24,264.34	\$26,686.97	\$27,622.00	\$27,622.00	\$32,000.00	\$32,000.00
Total Income/Loss	-\$137,679.92	-\$189,859.75	-\$163,063.50	-\$124,535.93	-\$116,210.98	-\$109,558.25

47. The Rev. Charles Woodward announced the Election Results for the first ballot. The numbers of votes received are in parentheses and if elected, the name is in bold:
- Synod Secretary: **Gretchen Hallerberg (85)**, The Rev. Jeremy Hollingshead (80)
 - Synod Council Northeast-Rostered: **The Rev. Steve Bond (85)**, The Rev. Jeffery Plummer (75)
 - Synod Council At-Large DEI Lay: **Bobby Barnes (88)**, Chuck Mosberger (71)
 - Consultation Committee Female Rostered 6-year term first ballot: The Rev Christy Krnac (79), The Rev Emilie Theobald-Rowlands (79) NO ELECTION

*Assembly recessed at 12:00. Voting for second ballot for contested position 12:00-1:00 pm.
Results during final Business section at 1:00 pm.*

Courtesy Resolution:

48. Bishop Barbins reconvened the assembly at 1:00 pm and yielded to The Rev. Steve Bond.
Pastor Bond read the following resolution:

Whereas our Northeastern Ohio Synod of the ELCA in America gathered in assembly under the theme “Breathe: Some Assembly Required” and;

Whereas the way in which we gathered was intentionally designed to create room both for the Spirit to Breathe new life and creativity into our Synod and for us to respond to the moving of that Spirit and;

Whereas through worship, stories, empower time enrichments, fellowship, meals, displays and presentations; we have been inspired to deepen our connection to the Holy Spirit and to reignite the fire of our faith;

Therefore be it resolved that the Northeastern Ohio Synod give thanks to those have worked to create space for the Holy Spirit to move among us specifically:

That thanks be given especially to Bishop Barbins and the entire staff of the NEOS

To the Rev. Jonathan Stufft for his leadership in our gatherings

To the Rev. Karen Liddy for her reminder of who stewarded this land long before our presence here and who led us to confess and mourn our history which displaced these people and resulted in the loss of life.

To the Rev. Jim Kulma for his passionate retelling of God’s story

The Rev. Kimberly A. Vaughn Senior Director of Christian Community and Leadership Mission for her reminder of our role in the greater Church both nationally and abroad

To Vicar Scott Wylie for sharing his call story with the greater Church

Rev. Marilyn Matavia and her calling us to an awareness of an affinity group for the Care of Creation

For our Finance team in their tireless work on our Synod’s budget

For our Synod Committees

For our Synod Council

For our worship leaders, musicians, vocalists and assistants

For our technical support volunteers

For the Staff of the John S. Knight Center

And, be it further resolved that grace be given if anyone individual who contributed to this Assembly was omitted from this resolution

And, finally, be it further resolved that we give God thanks for bringing us to this place and promising to be with us all as we continue to work in our various communities to share the love

and mercy of Christ while working for a world where justice is done and where basic needs are met.

The Rev. Steve Bond yielded back to Bishop Barbins who called upon The Rev. Charles Woodward to announce the election results.

Contested Position: Second Vote

49. The Rev. Charles Woodward announced the *second ballot* for the Consultation Committee Female Rostered 6-year term. The results were as follows:

Consultation Committee Female Rostered 6-year term second ballot: The Rev Christy Krnac (67), The Rev Emilie Theobald-Rowlands (66)

50. The 2023 Northeastern Ohio Synod Assembly was adjourned at 1:36 pm.

51. The Rev. Jonathan Stufft thanked the vendors and the John S. Knight staff for their hospitality and generosity in the space.

52. Bishop Barbins gave the benediction—and wished the 2023 *Breathe* (Some Assembly Required) participant’s safe travels. And the time together closed while singing “We are Marching in the Light of God.”