

## Summary of 2023 Synod Assembly

The Central States Synod Assembly took place online, June 3, 2023. Following the structure of a worship service, the assembly flowed through **GATHERING, WORD, OFFERING, MEAL, and SENDING**.

### **GATHERING -**

As we gathered, the assembly began with a simple worship service led by D.E.M.s Rev. Aimee Appell and Rev. Donna Simon. Bishop Candea declared the assembly in session and introduced the Synod Council Executive Committee, Synod staff, and our Churchwide representative, Kristen Opalinski, Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations Manager.

The first business of the day was to approve several constitutional amendments. These amendments better align the synod's constitution with the churchwide model constitution and provide greater versatility for conducting future assemblies. The amendments were adopted. ([Amended Constitution](#))

The assembly then moved on to nominations and the election of several synod council positions. Ms. Pat Bjuland, chair of the nominating committee, presented the slate. The following individuals were elected to serve. . .

#### Synod Council:

Ms. Nancy Nagel – Vice President  
Mr. Scott Schulte – Treasurer  
Rev. Chad Langdon – Secretary  
Ms. Julie Barstow – Central Kansas Conference Representative  
Rev. Zac Sturm – Border Conference Representative

#### Consultation Committee:

Ms. Ros Thorpe  
Rev. Kristen Koch

#### Discipline Committee:

Ms. Pat Bjuland  
Ms. Cathy Hohl  
Mr. Dennis Kemper  
Rev. Steven Cauley

Throughout the day we also shared ministry highlights, demonstrating various examples of how together as a synod we are traveling the way of Jesus. The first video highlighted [Conference and Collaboration](#).

The assembly also functions as the stakeholders for Bethany Village, Lindsborg, Kansas. Board President, Rev. Amy Truhe addressed the assembly to give an update on the facilities and activities of Bethany Village and presented board nominations. The assembly voted to approve those nominated. We then heard a report from Nancy Nagel, Synod Vice President.

### **WORD –**

Kristen Opalinski, Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations Manager at Churchwide shared a video message from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and gave a presentation that expressed gratitude to the synod, to the synod's ministries, and to our congregations for the ongoing mission support. That mission support enables the ELCA to love and serve in ways that no individual congregation can. Ms. Opalinski recognized Ruth Ellen Howard, (St. Mark's Hope and Peace, Kansas City, MO) who will be serving on the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church beginning in their work in July. Additionally, she raised up federal chaplains, new start ministries (SAWCs), ELCA Missionaries and other ministries that are possible due to the synod's ongoing mission support.

Bishop Candea presented her report to the assembly. Together: Traveling the Way of Jesus – "traveling" implies that we go – not stay at home in our own church buildings – and where we go is out into the world, where we and our neighbors live, as complicated and challenging as the world can seem at times. Today this world we travel in and through includes

the realities of post-pandemic trauma and a challenging political climate. It has been a tough year for our congregations and there are times when it is exhausting. So how do we meet these challenges? How do we travel the way of Jesus? – We keep the gospel central, do this together, and with joy.

A ministry highlight was shared lifting up our [Ministers of Word and Service](#), also known as Deacons.

#### **OFFERING –**

Synod treasurer, Scott Schulte presented the proposed budget for 2024. Mission support from our congregations continues to decline. Estimating a \$100,000 decline in giving, the overall budget has been revised to decrease spending accordingly. Total budgeted expenditures are \$1,555,175. The synod continues to contribute 50% of congregational mission support to churchwide. ([Approved Budget](#))

A ministry highlight was shown that demonstrates the multiple [ministries supported by the synod budget](#).

#### **MEAL –**

After a break for lunch, the assembly resumed with recognition of those celebrating anniversaries of ordination, and congregations celebrating milestone anniversaries.

A ministry highlight was also shared that focused on the many [feeding ministries](#) that are happening across the synod.

#### **SENDING –**

Rev. Dave Whetter, Bishop's Associate, presented the proposed compensation guidelines for 2024. The approved guidelines recommend increasing family and medical leave to 8 weeks, increasing pulpit supply rates to \$170 plus \$55 for additional services, and an 8% increase to the baseline compensation figure. These proposed guidelines were approved by the assembly. ([Approved Guidelines](#) and [Worksheet](#))

Our final ministry highlight for the day put a spotlight on the [ecumenical partnerships](#) that are a crucial part of our work as a synod.

Rev. Whetter also brought forward five proposed resolutions. The assembly passed all five:

- [SA23.01](#) - Resolution to Encourage Development of Mission Partnership Support “One Body Together in Mission”
- [SA23.02](#) - A SEASON OF GLOBAL AWARENESS Remembering our Companion Synods and ELCA ministries around the world
- [SA23.03](#) - Creation of a Synod Campus Ministry Team
- [SA23.04](#) - Bethany Village Chaplaincy Endowment Support
- [SA23.05](#) - Thanksgiving for Ministry

The day concluded with a sending worship led by Rev. Whetter and ended with Bishop Candea declaring the assembly closed.