

2021 BC Synod Convention Lay Delegate Report

**Journey. Together:
Liminal Space**

**Connection...
Collaboration...
Communication...**

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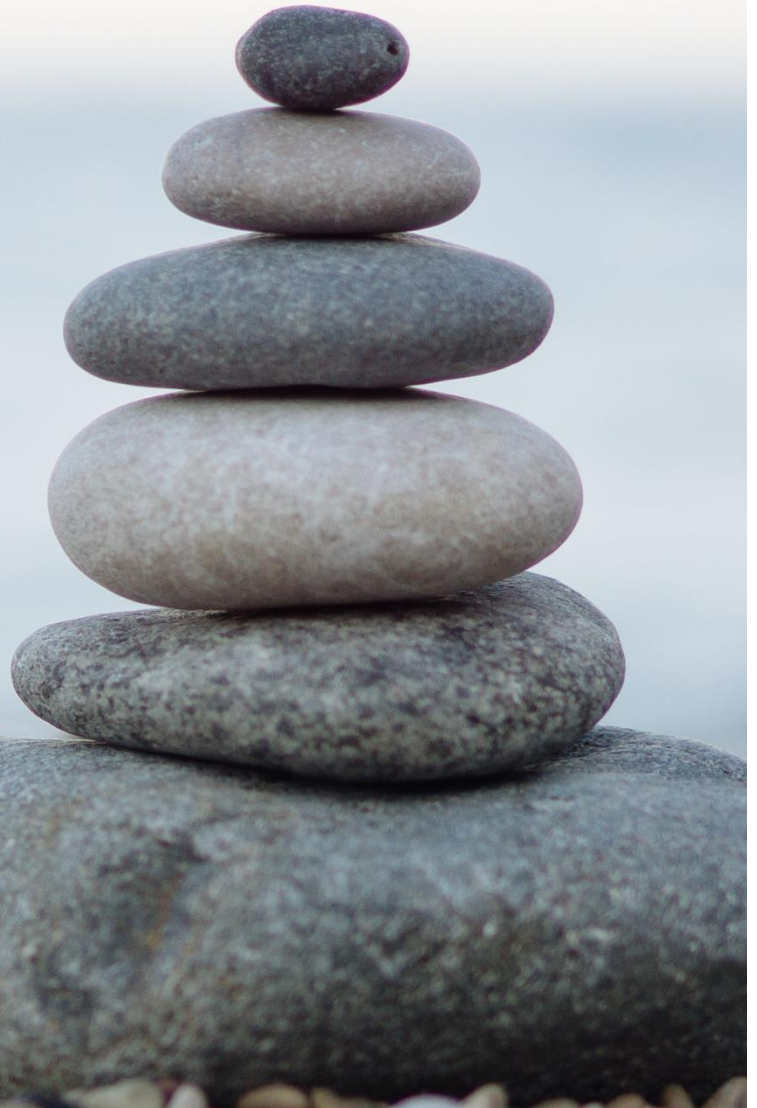


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2021 BC Synod Convention Information

Date: October 21 to October 24, 2021

Location:

Streaming Live via Zoom

Recordings are accessible via the BC Synod YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbYGUfeOSgd0seTEaOP-uLA>

Reports:

The Bulletin of Reports can be found on the BC Synod website at:

www.bcsynod.org

Attendance:

41 Rostered Delegates, 40 Lay Delegates, 12 Guests, and additional registrants for the Training Day. In total over one hundred people participated at the convention.

Sponsors:



2021 BC Synod Convention Introduction

I would like to begin my report by thanking Council for sponsoring my attendance at this year's convention. It is a privilege to represent the community of Christ Lutheran.

The theme of the convention this year was journeying together in a liminal space, the space between what used to be and what is yet to come. For most of us the last two years has been a challenge. It seems that the entire world is turned upside down and we can't seem to get our feet planted. The convention was one of hope and promise in these trying times. Yes, this COVID-19 world is full of difficulties and seems to be driving our families and our communities apart, yet as a people of God we are reminded of God's presence around and among us. The delegates came together in the spirit of togetherness with dignity, understanding and leadership.

2021 BC Synod Convention Summary

Bishop Gregory Mohr opened the convention with a land acknowledgment statement recognizing the Indigenous territories, ceded and unceded the Synod and its member congregations share. A welcome drumming ceremony was performed by Justin Young Thunder Sky and his drummers; people of the Nuxálk Nation in Bella Coola. **Our affirmation of baptism and the life-giving presence of God and His love for all was brought to us from the shores of Kalamalka Lake, the Fraser River, Kootenay Lake, the North Thompson River, and the Kiskatinaw River** (Dawson Creek).

Delegates at the convention got right to business after opening worship Thursday evening, with motions to approve the convention agenda and the minutes

from the 2018 BC Convention, as well as voting on the first ballot for the election of Bishop. No nominee was elected on the first ballot. The convention continued with greetings and reports from Karin Acheltstetter, Executive Director of the Canadian Lutheran World Relief organization and Dr. William Harrison, President of the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon.

Our business sessions resumed Friday morning after opening devotions, with the second ballot for the election of Bishop. No nominee was elected on the second ballot. A summary of the proposed amendments to the BC Synod Constitution and Bylaws were presented with rationale for the changes and in a subsequent vote, passed by the majority. The session continued with the report from our National Bishop, Susan Johnson. The Creative Connections group did a wonderful job of providing zoom breakout rooms and activities to get to know each other and recharge our batteries between business sessions. The Committee on Nominations called for nominations from the floor for the Synod Council Executive, the four regional at large council positions and the LTS Board of Governors and delegates for the 2022 ELCIC National Convention (Lay and Rostered). Nominations from the floor were added to the respective ballots. **The third ballot for the election of Bishop resulted in the election of Rev. Kathy Martin to the post.** During the evening business session Bishop Gregory Mohr presented a moving prayer and Celebration of Anniversary of Ordination for our Pastors and Deacons with 10 and 20 years of service. Voting continued with the election of the Synod Council Executive and regional positions as well as the LTS Board of Governors. For the Southern Interior Region Pastor David Hunter and I, were elected to the LTS Board of Governors. Pastor Brian Krushel and our council member Elke Pritchard were elected as our delegates to the 2022 ELCIC National Convention. Rev. Dr. Karoline Lewis presented a summary of the *Sexism in the Church Initiative*; begun in partnership with the BC Synod last year. A more detailed summary of Dr.

Lewis's presentation can be found in the Convention Highlights section of this report. The Committee of Reference and Counsel brought forward their report, outlining several motions with respect to the Social Justice Ministry Initiatives impacting our communities, congregations, and synod. These included: climate crisis initiatives, justice initiatives for gender equality, anti-racism, and support for our LGBTQ+ leaders and members, and TRC Reconciliation initiatives at the national, synodical, and congregational levels. **The delegates recognized the importance of the Church's need for a call to action on these matters.** Due to the lateness of the hour, the convention delegates were only able to get through the climate crisis initiatives. The balance of items from Reference and Counsel were carried forward to Saturday and Sunday business sessions.

The convention began Saturday morning with opening worship and a report from the Bishop, including the Assistant to the Bishop and Regional Deans. The delegation and training day registrants, then transitioned to our Learning Session Part 1: *Leading in a Liminal Space*, with Rev. Susan Beaumont. After the noon break, Rev. Beaumont continued with our Learning Session Part 2: *Moving from Decision Making to Discernment*. More detail on our learning sessions can be found in the Highlights section of this report. After a short break, the business sessions resumed with the Treasurer's report, the presentation of the Financial Reports including the 2021-22 and 2022-23 Synod Budgets. The delegation approved the Financial Reports and the Synod Budgets with minor amendments. The Committee on the Report of the Bishop presented their findings with suggestions for the Synod Council going forward. The delegation then continued with the previous days outstanding items from the Committee of Reference and Counsel with respect to asset disposal and Indigenous relationships.

The Chair again recognized the lateness of the hour, and the delegation moved to carry the items forward to Sunday's business session.

The delegation resumed deliberations Sunday morning after a moving presentation called *Sacred Fire*. Rev. Jane Gingrich reported on the work of the National Church Council. The Committee of Reference and Counsel's unfinished business was brought forward for consideration. The delegation experienced some procedural back and forth with respect to one of the motions. With heartfelt consideration and discernment, the delegation recognized the time constraint, and the remaining Reference and Counsel items were referred to the BC Synod Council for study. The convention closed with a Synod-Wide worship service and a moving Sermon by Bishop Gregory Mohr.

2021 BC Synod Convention Highlights

There were several highlights for me during the convention.

Creating Connections

These were conversations interspersed throughout the convention. The conversations were with people across our synod and represented all levels of society, genders, and races building stronger communities and helping where it is needed most. We Lutherans have something special, and Pastor Aneeta Stroop put it succinctly:

*“We need to hear the expression of the Lutheran theology, **know that we are loved unconditionally**. The lens is quite beautiful, and I do hope that expression gets communicated.”*

Missional Renewal Projects

There were several missional projects presented by the congregations of our synod, reflecting the diverse backgrounds and needs of our synod communities. I was especially moved by the submission of Our Saviour's Lutheran in Prince George, "*Rainbow Heart.*" The church community began by asking what it means to be an inclusive church. It means everyone is included, so they reached out, built bridges, and developed relationships with the Prince George LGBTQ+ community and have experienced firsthand God's unconditional love. I encourage you to check out their website at <https://www.oursaviourslutheran.ca/>

Difficult Conversations

Sexism in the Church Initiative: Rev. Dr. Karoline Lewis presented a history and summary of the initiative that arose from conversations at the 2019 Study Conference. The BC Synod council began the process of gathering information at listening sessions and reviewing previous studies done by the ELCIC. One thing became clear early, this is a systemic issue. Questions began to be asked – what kind of work needs to be done with respect to policies, practices, and ethos to change this mindset. Findings are still being analyzed. The work of the synod in this area is unprecedented. No other synodical body is doing this work, we are leading by action in this area and the work done by our synod can become a model and resource for others.

Sacred Fire: "...we want to be acknowledged as human beings as Creator created me, and you."

The opening video on the last day of the convention presented us with the harsh reality of the church's involvement in the deaths of children at Kamloops' residential school. While we may console ourselves that our Lutheran church did

not participate in the Residential School system, we are complicit in the travesties by virtue of our silence. This brings to light the ugly reality we face when we do not see each other as equals, with the shared rights and privileges of our human family.

The Bishop's Report

While the times do indeed seem dark, Bishop Greg reminded us that curiosity, exploration and journeying together are all ways of being in this world. It is a missional mindset, a path we need to walk with our eyes wide open so we can see God out there in that big, glorious world and try to catch up with Him.

The Learning Day:

How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going

“What do you do when you are stuck between something that has ended and a new thing not yet born? You don't fully understand where you are or where you are headed.” This is the introduction of Rev. Susan Beaumont's course for our learning day. This is the environment we find ourselves in, liminal space, betwixt and between. We are caught between established practices that no longer work, and new processes that are not yet clear to us. The workshop explored the unique challenges of connecting our spirituality, both individually and as a church, to our actions and our values. The learning day offered insights into how we can let go of our fears of 'not knowing' and deepening our capacity for group discernment and collective wisdom. What programs still work? What can we let go of? What can we change?

Our Next Steps Together Connection, Collaboration & Communication

The BC Synod is a resource for our congregation, and it is important that we stay connected and get involved. I respectfully urge Church Council to create a Synod Liaison mandate for one of our at large council positions. This individual would report to council and our congregation on Synod events, and initiatives and ways our congregation can contribute and more importantly, get involved in the broader issues our synod and our world faces. Thank you again for sponsoring my attendance at the convention.

“Give us eyes to see each other, ears to hear each other, and hearts to know You are with us.”¹Amen.

Respectfully,
Sue Palmer

¹ A Prayer from Pastor Terry Richardson