

Minutes of the Thirty-First Synod Assembly of the  
Southern Ohio Synod of the  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Theme:  
Hope in Believing

Biblical Text: Romans 15:13

June 3, 2023  
Peace Lutheran Church,  
3530 Dayton Xenia Road, Beavercreek Ohio 45432

**June 3, 2023, Session 1**

Opening Worship with Opening of Assembly

Bishop Suzanne D. Dillahunty led Worship. The worship service as well as the assembly meeting were streamed on YouTube for all Southern Ohio Synod congregation members.

At 9:32 AM, Bishop Suzanne D. Dillahunty convened the Synod Assembly with opening remarks. The Bishop acknowledged and thanked the Assembly Parliamentarian, Pr. Craig Richter, Synod Council members, and Synod Council Executive Committee members. The Bishop expressed appreciation for the service of, and farewell to Ms. Marjorie Ellis, Vice-President of Synod Council, who has served in that capacity for nine years; and Mr. Kevin Pyle, Treasurer of Synod Council, who has served in that capacity for over eight years. The Bishop acknowledged and thanked Assembly Committee members including Mr. Tim Skamfer, photographer Pr. Aaron Layne, Mr. Joshua Brodbeck, Chief Operations Officer, and the volunteers from Peace Lutheran Church who made the Assembly gathering possible.

The Bishop acknowledged with respect the indigenous peoples who occupied the land that is the site of the Assembly and the heritage of the land itself.

Voting Procedures; Report of the Credentials Committee

Bishop Dillahunty introduced Rev. Rebecca Grate, Chairperson of the Elections Committee, upon whom she called to provide the members of the Assembly with a tutorial in voting. Rev. Grate then provided a Credentials Report. Rev. Grate reported that at 9:30 A.M. there were 215 voting members registered and present and 16 guests present. *A quorum existed to conduct the business of the Synod.*

Bishop Dillahunty requested whether there was unanimous consent to adopt the Rules of Procedure for 2023 Assembly, as recommended by Synod Council, as submitted.

**VOTED**

**SA.23.06.01**

**To approve the Rules of Procedure for 2023 Assembly as recommended by the Southern Ohio Synod Council on April 29, 2023, as submitted. (Fischer)**

**APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT**

Bishop Dillahunty requested whether there was unanimous consent to approve the 2023 Assembly Agenda, as recommended by Synod Council, as submitted.

**SA.23.06.02**

**To approve the 2023 Assembly Agenda as recommended by the Southern Ohio Synod Council on April 29, 2023, as submitted. (Fischer)**

**APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT**

Bishop Dillahunty requested whether there was unanimous consent to adopt amendments to the Southern Ohio Synod Constitution that are required amendments, as adopted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America in the *Constitution for Synods*, August 2022. The Bishop noted that a copy of all the amendments are in the Assembly materials. Pr. Robert Abrams spoke to the proposed motion. He recognized the work of Mr. Roy Hart, Synod Council member, who chairs the Synod's Constitution Committee. Pr. Abrams noted that as the amendments are required by the ELCA, they are mandatory items. He noted that as to optional amendments adopted by the ELCA in August 2022, those may be considered by Synod Council with recommendations for the Synod Assembly in 2024.

**SA.23.06.03**

**To adopt the amendments to the Southern Ohio Synod Constitution that are required amendments adopted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, *Constitution for Synods*, in August 2022. (Fischer/Adams)**

**APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT**

The Bishop indicated that the updated Southern Ohio Synod Constitution will be codified and submitted by Secretary Fischer to the ELCA.

The Bishop provided an overview of the process for receiving nominations. Nominations from the floor must be submitted by 10:20 A.M. to Secretary Fischer, including the nominee biography.

## **Nominations Committee Report for the General Ballot**

The Bishop introduced Mrs. Michelle Riesbeck, Chair of the Nominations Committee. Mrs. Riesbeck read the names of all nominees for the General Ballot. After the slate of candidates for each position was read, Bishop Dillahunt asked if there were any nominations from the floor.

### **Synod Council Positions and Candidates (Terms as indicated):**

*One to be elected in each category*

#### **Vice President (4 Year Term)**

Mr. Chris Clothier

#### **Secretary (4 Year Term)**

Ms. Holly Fischer

#### **Cincinnati Lay Man (4 Year Term)**

Mr. Jonathan Keith

#### **Cincinnati Lay Woman (3 Year Term)**

Ms. Laura Moore

#### **Cincinnati Rostered Minister (4 Year Term)**

Rev. Matt Byrd

#### **Central Ohio Lay Woman (4 Year Term)**

Ms. Kathie Skamfer

#### **Dayton Lay Woman (3 Year Term)**

\*Kathleen O'Hearn

\*Laura Vannoy

\*Nominations made from the floor

#### **Dayton Rostered Minister (3 Year Term)**

Rev. Steve Kimm

#### **Muskingum Lay Woman (4 Year Term)**

No Candidate

#### **Muskingum Rostered Minister (4 Year Term)**

Rev. Mark Combs

#### **NW Lay Man (4 Year Term)**

Mr. Doug Ware

**NW Lay Woman (4 Year Term)**  
Ms. Laura Schmidt

**NW Rostered Minister (4 Year Term)**  
Rev. Cheryl Siegenthaler

**Scioto Lay Man (4 Year Term)**  
No Candidate

**Scioto Rostered Minister (4 Year Term)**  
Rev. Laura Cavendish  
Rev. Chad Huebner

**Young Adult, aged 21-30 (4 Year Term)**  
Mr. Ethan Roberts

Except as noted above, there were no nominations from the floor, and the Bishop closed the nominations. The Bishop noted that as to those positions for which there were no candidates, Synod Council would appoint a member.

Bishop Dillahunt thanked Ms. Riesbeck and the members of the Nominations Committee for their work.

Hope Reflection: Remarks were presented by Rev. Katie Kerrigan, Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop for Generosity. Pr. Kerrigan discussed Ephesians 4:11-12 as a guiding principle in her ministry journey. She emphasized the critical importance of the Priesthood of All Believers - all of us are called to ministry, whether rostered ministers or lay members. She expressed that the vitality of our congregations depends on equipping our lay people.

#### Reference and Counsel Committee Report

Bishop Dillahunt called Rev. Robert Abrams on behalf of the Reference and Counsel Committee to provide a report. Pr. Abrams reported that the Reference and Counsel Committee had received no proposed resolutions.

#### Treasurer Report

Bishop Dillahunt then called upon Mr. Kevin Pyle, Treasurer, Ms. Becky Witt, Chair of the Synod Council Finance Team, and Mr. Chris Clothier to provide information concerning the 2024-2025 Mission and Ministry Plan. Ms. Witt acknowledged Finance Team members (Rev. Jonathan Bull, Rev. Katie Kerrigan, Ms. Joy Hacker, Mr. Christopher Clothier, Mr. Joshua Brodbeck, Chief Operations Officer, along with Bishop Dillahunt and Treasurer Kevin Pyle). Ms. Witt shared a PowerPoint presentation with a high-level overview of the 2024-2025 Mission and Ministry Plan, which was included in

Assembly materials, and how the Plan translates into mission work. Ms. Witt highlighted changes in income and expenses. She noted the adoption of a new accounting standard for leases that is reflected in the financial statements, i.e., leases are treated as an obligation to pay (a liability), and the leasehold right is recorded as an asset. Ms. Witt noted that out of the total income of \$1,813,350.00, 40% is sent to the ELCA for mission support. Ms. Witt thanked all the Synod Assembly attendees for their support of the Synod, and thanked Mr. Kevin Pyle for his work as Treasurer over the past two terms of office.

Mr. Pyle shared that this will be his last Assembly as Synod Treasurer. He shared reflections on his tenure as Treasurer, and noted the progress the Synod has made in managing its financial position. He also thanked Assembly members for their support, especially through the challenging times presented by Covid-19. He thanked Rebecca Witt, Chris Clothier, and members of the Finance Team for their hard work.

**SA.23.06.04**                      **To adopt the April 29, 2023 recommendation of Synod Council to adopt the 2024-2025 Mission and Ministry Plan. (Fischer)**

**APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Bishop asked that Chris Clothier, Chair of the Audit Committee, present information related to the Auditor's Report (January 31, 2022 and 2021) which is in the Assembly materials. Mr. Clothier noted that the Report is "unqualified," meaning all financial statements are accurate. The auditors also provided an opinion that the Synod's controls are compliant with best practices. Bishop Dillahunt requested whether there was unanimous consent to accept the Auditor's Report (January 31, 2022 and 2021), as accepted by the Synod Council on April 29, 2023.

**SA.23.06.05**                      **To adopt the April 29, 2023 recommendation of Synod Council to accept the Auditor's Report (January 31, 2022 and 2021). (Fischer/Hovland)**

**APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT**

At 10:58 AM, the Bishop called a recess.

At 11:25 A.M., the Bishop reconvened the meeting.

The Bishop shared a video presentation. She noted that the Southern Illinois Synod has elected a new Bishop, Greg Busboom.

The Assembly was presented with a *Ministry Moment* video featuring the Paraclete Post. Mr. Matthew Hazzard, Synod Council member, provided information regarding this

ministry, which is intended to accept donations and fund activities including providing faith-based books to families with children.

Rev. Grate then provided a Credentials Report. Rev. Grate reported that at 11:25 A.M. there were 220 voting members registered and present and 16 guests present.

A prayer was offered by Pr. Kristie Beckmann.

### **Synod Council Four-Year Term (2023 – 2027) Elections**

Bishop Dillahunt called Rev. Rebecca Grate, Chair of the Elections Committee, to conduct Synod Council Elections for terms from 2023 – 2027.

The following positions had only one candidate. Rev. Grate asked for approval of the candidates by unanimous consent. After each candidate's name was read, Rev. Grate asked if there were any objections. There were none.

#### **Vice President (4 Year Term)**

Mr. Chris Clothier

#### **Secretary (4 Year Term)**

Ms. Holly Fischer

#### **Cincinnati Lay Man (4 Year Term)**

Mr. Jonathan Keith

#### **Cincinnati Lay Woman (3 Year Term)**

Ms. Laura Moore

#### **Cincinnati Rostered Minister (4 Year Term)**

Rev. Matt Byrd

#### **Central Ohio Lay Woman (4 Year Term)**

Ms. Kathie Skamfer

#### **Dayton Rostered Minister (3 Year Term)**

Rev. Steve Kimm

#### **Muskingum Rostered Minister (4 Year Term)**

Rev. Mark Combs

#### **NW Lay Man (4 Year Term)**

Mr. Doug Ware

#### **NW Lay Woman (4 Year Term)**

Ms. Laura Schmidt

**NW Rostered Minister (4 Year Term)**

Rev. Cheryl Siegenthaler

**Young Adult, aged 21-30 (4 Year Term)**

Mr. Ethan Roberts

**APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT**

The above candidates were declared elected by Bishop Dillahun.

Pr. Rebecca Grate then explained the process for voting by paper ballot, and oversaw the distribution of paper ballots and collection of ballots for the following positions with more than one candidate:

**Dayton Lay Woman (4 Year Term)**

Kathleen O'Hearn

Laura Vannoy

**Scioto Rostered Minister (4 Year Term)**

Rev. Laura Cavendish

Rev. Chad Huebner

After each voting session for the above positions, Pr. Grate declared the voting process closed.

Hope Reflection: Remarks were presented by Mr. Gary Pecuch, Synod Youth Ministry Church Coach and Community Sandbox Manager. Mr. Pecuch commented on the story of Gideon. Mr. Pecuch shared, through a video presentation, the great and mighty deeds of young people and adults with whom Mr. Pecuch has worked as a ministry leader throughout the years, noting the accomplishments of each (including several youths who now serve in rostered ministry)

**Report of Secretary**

The Bishop called on Secretary Holly Fischer to provide a report. Ms. Fischer indicated the minutes of the June 2021 Assembly are in the meeting materials and were approved by the Synod Council at its September 2021 meeting. She shared that at the April 29, 2023 Synod Council meeting, the Council appointed Ms. Rebecca Witt to serve as the Southern Ohio Synod Treasurer for a four-year term, beginning June 3, 2023 to 2027. Ms. Fischer indicated that the ELCA Region 6 Archivist position remains vacant, however, a second search for a candidate has resulted in a number of qualified people who are in the

interview process. Ms. Fischer provided the following report on Southern Ohio Synod statistics since the June 2021 Synod Assembly:

**The following have joined the Synod Roster since the June 2021 Synod Assembly:**

Biermann, Karl  
Cook, Sally  
Leland, Eilert  
Fergus, Deborah  
Forbes, Adam  
Lehman, Jim  
Miller, Marcy  
Winters Perkins, Ann Marie  
Wrenn, Timothy  
Huebner, Chad  
Lynch, TJ  
Kehn, Kevin  
Rider, Alan

**Closures since the 2021 Synod Assembly:**

St Paul, St Louisville (effective July 24, 2021)  
Grace, Centerburg (effective November 17, 2021)

**Deaths since the 2021 Synod Assembly:**

Arnold, Wally  
Bernheisel, Lisa  
Burgie, Richard  
Carter, Robert  
Fritz, Earl  
Hare, Donald  
Huffman, Gordon Seth ("Tim")  
Johansen, John  
Klopfer, Paul  
Matevia, David  
Mintel, Richard  
Risch, David  
Sauer, Ken  
Schalnat, Roger  
Timmons, Ron

The Bishop called for a luncheon recess at 12:18 P.M.  
A prayer was offered by Pr. Beckmann.  
The Bishop reconvened the meeting at 1:45 P.M



## **June 3, 2023, Session 2**

Secretary Fischer noted an addition to the report on those who have joined the Synod Roster since the June 2021 Synod Assembly:

Reuning-Scherer, Julie

### **Elections Report**

The following positions with more than one candidate were voted upon individually via paper ballot. Rev. Rebecca Grate, Chair of the Elections Committee, supervised the election process and announced the results of the First Ballot of the General Election for the Synod Council positions following the vote for each individual position. Rev. Grate explained that a simple majority vote was required for each position to be elected. The results were:

#### **Scioto Rostered Minister (4 Year Term)\***

Rev. Laura Cavendish - 104

Rev. Chad Huebner - 107 Elected

*\*215 ballots cast with 4 invalid ballots leaving a total of 211 ballots cast.*

The Bishop declared the above candidate elected.

#### **Dayton Lay Woman (3 Year Term)\***

Kathleen O'Hearn – 134 Elected

Laura Vannoy – 77

*\*212 ballots cast with 1 invalid ballot leaving a total of 211 ballots cast.*

The Bishop declared the above candidate elected.

Rev. Grate then provided a Credentials Report. Rev. Grate reported that at 1:45 P.M. there were 209 voting members registered and present and 16 guests present.

Bishop Dillahunty shared a *Ministry Moment* video. The video featured Pr. Richard Freudenberger, a member of the Synod's Cultivate team. Cultivate encourages congregations to engage in Holy Experiments to develop new ways to form new worshipping communities.

### **Reference and Counsel Committee Report**

Bishop Dillahunty called Rev. Robert Abrams to provide a report for the Reference and Counsel Committee. Rev. Abrams reported that the Reference and Counsel Committee had received no proposed resolutions.

Bishop Dillahunt asked Mr. Josh Brodbeck, Chief Operations Officer and a member of the Compensation Standards Taskforce, to review the proposed Compensation Standards for Rostered Ministers for 2024-2025. The proposed Standards are included in Assembly materials. Mr. Brodbeck indicated that the proposed Standards reflect an increase of 6.5%, in 2024, consistent with the consumer price index.

Bishop Dillahunt thanked the Compensation Standards Committee, chaired by Rev. Peter Kruse, for its work in preparing the 2024-2025 Guidelines.

**SA.23.06.06**                      **To adopt the 2024-2025 Compensation Standards for Rostered Ministers and Pulpit Supply Rates, as approved by the Synod Council on April 29, 2023. (Fischer)**

**APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY**

Report of the Bishop of the Southern Ohio Synod, Part 1

Bishop Dillahunt referred to her written report that is included in the pre-assembly materials and then addressed the Assembly. The Bishop reflected on the recent history of Southern Ohio Synod which has been punctuated by change: Beginning with the launch of the Thrive! campaign in 2019 and the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. In 2020 there was no Synod Assembly due to the pandemic. In 2021, the Synod conducted a wholly virtually Assembly and learned that this was not only possible but successful. In 2022, the Southern Ohio Synod hosted the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Columbus, Ohio. Today, in June 2023 the Synod has gathered for its first one-day Assembly event in a congregation setting. Amidst all of the recent change, the Bishop noted that one thing has not changed: Jesus Christ, God's Hope, and God's Love. As we move into 2024, the Synod will rejoice in what God is up to. We will be looking at a mission appeal and will continue to think "outside the box" so the Holy Spirit may work in and through the ministries of the Southern Ohio Synod.

Bishop Dillahunt shared a *Ministry Moment* video themed "Let Your Light Shine", reflecting on Matthew 5:16. The video featured Pr. Michelle Terry, who serves as the Chair of the Synod Stewardship Team.

The Bishop expressed appreciation for the Bishop's Mission Team: Pr. Robert Abrams, Pr. Katie Kerrigan, Mr. Gary Pecuch, Ms. Kim Uemura, Mr. Josh Brodbeck, Pr. Steve Kimm, Pr. Larry Donner, and Ms. Joy Hacker.

The Bishop shared a video featuring Rev. Karl Biermann, who was unable to attend the Assembly in person. Rev. Biermann is the ELCA & Ohio Synod Regional Gift Planner and provides planning services at no cost to congregations and members.

The Bishop announced the hiring of two individuals who will join the Bishop's staff effective July 1, 2023: Pr. Timothy Mentzer and Pr. Connie Mentzer. The Mentzers will serve as Assistant to the Bishop for Discipleship, Leadership and Engagement, with Pr. Tim focusing on Discipleship Engagement in a fulltime capacity, and Pr. Connie focusing on Leadership Engagement, Candidacy, and Leadership Recruitment on a parttime basis. The Bishop noted that both positions are funded in the 2024-2024 Mission and Ministry Plan.

The Bishop asked Mr. Chris Clothier, who leads the Synod's Outside the Box team, to share information. Mr. Clothier noted the demographic changes in our church community, for example, worshipping community members that speak in different languages and are from different cultural backgrounds. He noted that many rostered ministers are moving toward retirement and there is a less steady pipeline of seminary students. Churches are shrinking in size, both locally and globally. Mr. Clothier asked how do we take the message of Jesus Christ into new communities in new ways? He emphasized the importance of developing strong lay leaders, connecting churches for sharing of talent and resources, and thinking of ways to re-think "church."

The Bishop asked Pr. Katie Kerrigan to speak. Pastor Kerrigan provided an update on the work of Cultivate: Emerging Lutheran Communities, an initiative to establish new Lutheran communities in the Southern Ohio Synod. She shared that three aspects of the initiative are new communities which are outbranches of existing congregations, regional projects representing joint efforts of multiple congregations, and stand-alone projects. Examples of developed communities include Tikkun Farm, an urban farm near Cincinnati and La Palabra, an outreach ministry to Latinx families in the Dayton area.

Pastor Kerrigan also shared information regarding the Paraclete Post project led by Mr. Matthew Hazzard, and thanked Mr. David Drumm his work in designing the logo for this project.

## Report of the Bishop of the Southern Ohio Synod, Part 2

The Bishop introduced Pr. Robert Abrams, Assistant to the Bishop and asked Pr. Abrams to speak to his work. Pastor Abrams provided information on how pastor searches are conducted within the Southern Ohio Synod. He indicated that 85% of the calls since 2018 have been to ministers outside of the Synod territory. He shared that Synod has been successful in recruitment, but we are anticipating that rostered minister shortages are on the horizon, and we need strategies to get ahead of the curve. He encouraged prayer for those congregations with vacancies. Pastor Abrams encouraged members who have considered a role in ministry or as a deacon to give this thought.

The Bishop introduced Pr. Steve Kimm and asked him to speak regarding the Leadership Academy. Pastor Kimm shared a story about the "leaky pot" that was flawed (cracked) but was utilized to provide water for the growth of flowers along its path. Pastor Kimm shared that we are all "cracked pots", and our purpose is to let the grace of God flow through our faults toward fulfilling a holy purpose. Pastor Kimm provided information

regarding the Leadership Academy and its purpose in equipping laity for worship leadership in the church. He explained the roles of the Lutheran Worship Leaders (LWLs) and Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs).

The Bishop asked Pr. Kerrigan and Pr. Rebecca Grate to share information about Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities (SAWs). Pr. Grate shared a video featuring “MomenToUs”, a community in the Delaware, Ohio area that the Assembly will vote whether to seat as a SAM at this meeting. Pastor Grate thanked Pastor Aaron Layne for creating the video. She shared that this SAW is exclusively digital at this time since its launch on Easter Sunday. It now has approximately 825 podcast downloads and more than 450 individuals involved in the online community. MomenToUs is a way of connecting to church and growing in faith, whether one is already involved in a congregation or not.

The Bishop called upon Vice-President Marjorie Ellis to speak, indicating that Ms. Ellis has been a great advocate for the Southern Ohio Synod for many years. Ms. Ellis thanked the Bishop for the opportunity to serve in this capacity over the years, thanked all the members of the Assembly and congregants for their financial support and contributions to the ministry of the Synod. She encouraged everyone to spread the Word and become more involved in Synod work. She thanked the Synod Council and staff for their support. Ms. Ellis concluded by sharing her hopes for the future.

Bishop Dillahunt requested whether there was unanimous consent to seat MomenToUs as a Synod Authorized Worshipping Community.

**SA.23.06.07**

**To seat MomenToUs as a Synod Authorized Worshipping Community. (Fischer/Clothier, Beth)**

**APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT**

The Bishop indicated that the Synod has come a long way together and will continue to focus on ministries that bring life-giving hope. Congregations embrace challenges as opportunities for hope. Our neighbors need to find hope and we have it. She encouraged all to be the people of God and share the story of faith. She expressed appreciation for our time together.

The Bishop engaged Assembly members to consider and discuss “Where do you See Hope?”. Individual discussions ensued.

The Bishop shared some 2022 statistics. Southern Ohio Synod congregations gave over \$257,000 to ELCA World Hunger, and over \$457,000 to Lutheran Disaster Response. Thanks to the ELCA, 24 new missionaries served in 54 countries. There were 18 new mission starts and 15 explorations, and the Southern Ohio Synod was represented in both categories.

The Bishop shared information regarding a Rostered Ministers Gathering planned for 2024. The Bishop then shared three ELCA Video Reports.

The Bishop congratulated the following significant anniversaries for congregations and rostered ministers in 2022 and 2023, and Bishop Dillahunt awarded certificates to those rostered ministers and representatives of congregations in attendance:

### **The following are 2022 Anniversaries**

#### **Word and Sacrament 25 years**

Williams, Betsy  
Gerber, Bonnie  
Eidson, David  
Zorn, Henry  
Eilert, Jonathan  
Gehring, Martin

#### **Word and Sacrament 50 years**

Adler, Carl  
Swanson, Timothy

#### **Word and Sacrament 60 years**

Wilch, Andrew  
Matevia, Brian  
Markowich, David  
Moeser, Donald  
Gronlund, Glen  
Match, Richard

#### **Word and Sacrament 65 years**

Hartman, George  
Kelley, Robert  
Kolberg, Rudolph

#### **Word and Service 25 years**

Cole, Linda

## **Congregation Anniversaries**

### **100 years**

Clinton Heights

### **125 years**

Trinity, Bridgeport  
St. Paul, Lynchburg

### **175 years**

St. Matthew, Arcanum

## **The following are 2023 Anniversaries**

### **Word and Sacrament**

#### **25 years**

Swartz, Alan  
Scott, Barry  
Wallace, Bethany  
Combs, Mark  
Weaver, Mike

#### **50 years**

Moreland, David  
Sayre, Michael  
Trover, Larry  
Welin, Larry  
Ulring, Paul  
Becker, Stephen  
Bernlohr, Thomas

#### **65 years**

Jacobson, Gerald  
Kuhlmann, Herm

### **Word and Service**

#### **25 years**

Mitchell, Jeffrey

40 years

Isbel, Elizabeth

### **Congregation Anniversaries**

75 years

Gethsemane, Columbus

150 years

Grace (Refugee Road), Columbus

Trinity, Versailles

175 years

First Lutheran, Columbus

Trinity, Columbus

Hope Reflection: The Bishop called upon Pr. Larry Donner to make remarks regarding Thrive! Equipping a Vibrant Church Together. Pr. Donner shared that the campaign base goal was \$1.2 million based on surveys/input from congregations with a challenge goal of \$2 million. Thrive! was launched on January 1, 2020 with a two year hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Amazingly, despite this, we have received over \$1,053,000 in gifts and commitments through the generous support of Southern Ohio Synod congregations. Pastor Donner shared the hope experienced in his personal life with the recent illness of his wife. Pastor Donner spoke to “Hope Realized” and shared video clips from congregation members. Pastor Donner shared that some congregations still plan to do campaigns in the remainder of 2023 and Thrive! campaign training is still available. Thrive! is the hope of God in action.

The Bishop acknowledged departing members of the Synod Council: Ms. Marjorie Ellis, Ms. Jennie Gray, Mr. Roy Hart, Mr. Kevin Pyle, Ms. Michelle Riesbeck, and Ms. Cindy Schrader, and thanked all of them for their work and contributions.

Hope Reflection: The Bishop called upon Pr. Robert Abrams to make remarks. Pr. Abrams shared information regarding the work of the Congregation Resource Team. He noted that at all times in this work, confidentiality is maintained. He expressed appreciation for the nine members of the Team, who serve to support congregations experiencing stress.

Pastor Abrams shared that hope is reflected in congregations that realize they are not alone and in members who care for each other and step up in times of crisis. He sees hope in the Synod, which is stepping forward in a difficult and uncertain time and is not afraid to take chances.

The Bishop made concluding remarks. The Bishop indicated that we want everyone in the Synod to engage in leadership and discipleship, and the Synod will equip members with the tools and resources to do this. She emphasized that Jesus Christ is our center and our hope, and that we live in the Good News.

**SA.23.06.08**

**To adjourn the Assembly. (Richter, Joel/Dillahunt, Brian)**

**APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY**

The 2023 Synod Assembly was adjourned at 4:20 pm., to be followed by a worship service led by Bishop Suzanne D. Dillahunt and open to members of Peace Lutheran Church.

Respectfully submitted,



Holly R. Fischer  
Southern Ohio Synod Council Secretary