**Minutes of the**

**Northeastern Ohio Synod Assembly**

**Twenty-Ninth Regular Assembly**

**May 15-16, 2015**

**John S. Knight Center, Akron**

***We Are Church Together***

**Friday, May 15, 2015**

1. Bishop Eaton led the gathering before the assembly in Thanksgiving for baptism accompanied by pianist Tim Elder. The liturgy concluded with the order for opening of a synod assembly led by Bishop Abraham Allende. The assembly was called to order at 9:05am.
2. The Bishop welcomed the assembly members and recognized the following:
   1. The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the ELCA.
   2. The Rev. Jean Hansen as the onsite Assembly Coordinator –
   3. The Rev. Darla Ann Kratzer, AIM Ed Kirst, and Chuck Mosberger, who comprise the Reference and Counsel Committee. It was noted that timely and germane resolutions are due to the Assembly office by 11:00am today.
   4. Tim Gilroy, the Synod Treasurer. It was noted that proposed budget revisions are due to the Assembly office by 11:00am today.
   5. John Sleasman, Interim Synod Vice President and Assembly Parliamentarian
   6. David Lenz, Synod Secretary
   7. First Call Candidates: Lucas Merritt, who was present as a Page, and Kristina Heise and Angela Storer, who were not in attendance due to graduation from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago this weekend. Other Pages include The Rev. Angela Freeman-Riley, Karen Kaufman, Ken Reinoehl, and Terry Vernon.
   8. Marjorie Ellis, ELCA Church Council representative from our region
   9. Tim Barrage and Joanne Caton-Frank operating the Powerpoint presentations
   10. A/V and camera are being operated by Owen Blakslee and Rex Rickely
   11. The Rev. Julianne Smith, Barb DeBord, and Mike Conklin comprise the Credentials Committee.
   12. The Rev. Ann Paynter and Thelma Williams comprise the Elections Committee
   13. Tom Cashman, The Rev. Bonnie Peltomaa, and David Lenz comprise the Minutes Committee.
3. Assembly Planning Committee Chair Dan Caruso made various introductory announcements to orient voting members to the John S. Knight Center.
4. Secretary David Lenz presented the list of excused rostered leaders, which appeared in the Assembly packets at the tables and included:

1. The Rev. Kenneth Anderson

2. The Rev. Béla Bernhardt

3. The Rev. E. Richard Bowen

4. The Rev. Loranell Breyley

5. The Rev. David Conrad

6. The Rev. Eric Edwards

7. The Rev. Rod Funk

8. The Rev. David Hammel

9. The Rev. Jeffrey Hancock

10. The Rev. Walter Heber

11. The Rev. Rob Henderson

12. The Rev. Thomas Henderson

13. The Rev. Steven Krebill

14. The Rev. Judy McGuire

15. The Rev. Mark Oster

16. The Rev. John Uhle

17. AIM Susan Wessner

18. The Rev. William Wessner

19. The Rev. Roger Willer

20. The Rev. Ann Marie Winters

21. The Rev. Timothy Zoruba

Mr. Lenz also noted the addition of The Rev. Thomas Schwartz, The Rev. Karin Himstedt, The Rev. George Gaiser, The Rev. David Nevergall, the Rev. Jaclyn Gaisor, and The Rev. Terry Parker, who were added after the list went to print.

1. The Rev. Doug Fidler, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, presented the slate of nominees printed on pages 17-30 of the pre-assembly materials. There were several additional nominations from the floor. The Rev. Paula Maeder Connor was nominated for Synod Council for Cleveland West, Clergy. The Rev. Bruce Roth and the Rev. Darla Ann Kratzer were nominated for Synod Council for Canton-Massillon Clergy. The Rev. Laura Barbins was nominated for 2016 Churchwide Assembly Voting Member restricted to Cleveland East and Eastern Clergy. Kim Meek-Obed was nominated for 2016 Churchwide Assembly Voting Member restricted to Canton-Massillon and Southern, Lay Female. Charles Benning was nominated for 2016 Churchwide Assembly Voting Member person of color or whose primary language is other than English, Lay Male.
2. Nominations were closed with no nominees for Synod Council for Southern Clergy (3 year term) and Eastern Lay (1 year term). A question was raised as to the procedure for filling the slots with no nominees. John Sleasman, as parliamentarian, explained that the procedures vary depending on the office involved but generally the authority to fill the vacancy is given to the Synod Council.
3. Pr. Julianne Smith presented the report of the Credentials Committee. As of 9:24am, there were 219 lay members, plus 8 official lay rostered members, for a total lay voting membership of 227, (97 male, 130 female). Rostered clergy registered were 143, for a total voting membership of 370 (61% lay, 39% clergy). There were 41 registered visitors, for a total attendance of 411.
4. Bishop Allende presented the agenda (pages 2-3 of the pre-assembly materials), as proposed and moved by the synod council, for adoption.

**SA15.05.01 To adopt the agenda as presented (carried)**

**Friday, May 15**

7:40 am Registration

Displays

8:10 am Orientation for first time voting members

8:40 am **GATHERING**

9:10 am Opening of synod assembly & call to order

Welcome by Planning Committee

Announcement of excused

Nominations

Report of Credentials Committee

Adoption of agenda

Adoption of Rules of Procedure

9:45 am Elections Committee report

First ballot

10:15 am Synod Council report

10:20 am Bishop’s report

10:55 am Break

11:10 am ELCA report

11:55 am Story Tellers

12:10 pm Lunch Exhibit Hall I

Displays/Social time

1:10 pm Treasurer’s report

Report of the Audit Committee

Presentation of budget (adoption at 3:15 pm)

Adoption of Compensation Guidelines

1:45 pm Report of Credentials Committee

Report of Elections Committee

Second ballot

2:00 pm Report of Reference and Counsel

2:05 pm Break

2:15 pm **WORD**

3:00 pm Break

3:15 pm Adoption of budget

Bylaw amendment

Resolutions

Other business

3:40 pm Ecumenical greetings

4:00 pm **MEAL**

4:45 PM Sending

**Saturday, May 16**

8:15 am Assembly reconvenes

Announcements

8:20 am **MORNING PRAYER** (anniversary recognitions)

8:50 am Report of Credentials Committee

Report of Minutes Committee

Election report

Third ballot (if needed)

9:00 am Women and Justice

9:15 am Q & A with Presiding Bishop Eaton and Bishop Allende

10:15 am Break

10:30 am **PRAYER AROUND THE CROSS**

11:30 am Break

11:45 am Report of Reference and Counsel

Election report

Other business

12:10 am Recognitions

Installation of newly elected

12:25 pm Adjournment

1. Secretary Lenz presented the rules of procedure (pages 14 and 15 of the pre-assembly materials) noting the deadlines for submitting changes to the budget and urgent resolutions.

**SA15.05.02 To adopt the rules of procedure as previously distributed and proposed (moved by council action; two-thirds vote required; carried)**

1. **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 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.

E. Motions shall be submitted to the secretary in writing on forms provided 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.

**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.

B. Nominees for offices except for bishop 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 printed summary of the results shall be published.

1. **Consideration of the Budget**

A. Changes to the proposed budget shall be submitted to the assembly office (behind registration tables) for the Finance & Budget Committee by 11:00 a.m., Friday, May 15, 2015. All proposals shall be in writing and shall include 1) the amount of increase for a committee total, 2) the committee total to be decreased, and 3) the rationale for such change.

B. Proposed changes shall be reviewed by the Finance & Budget Committee and presented to the synod assembly with its recommendations.

**IV. Consideration of Resolutions**

A. Resolutions to be considered by the assembly shall be received in writing in the synod office by Monday, April 6, 2015 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. Resolutions of an urgent nature which could not be submitted prior to the above deadline because of changing situations in the church or the world shall be submitted in writing to the assembly office (behind registration tables) by 11:00 a.m., Friday, May 15, 2015 for consideration by the Committee on Reference and Counsel. The Committee on Reference and Counsel, in consultation with the bishop and Executive Committee, may decline to report such resolutions or may report such resolutions to the assembly as in (A) above.

C. A resolution of a general nature shall be referred to the Committee on Reference and Counsel, which shall give an opportunity to each voting member of the assembly who proposes such a resolution to comment on it. The committee shall report back to the assembly on any suchresolutions submitted to it together with any recommendations it may have, as well as prepare courtesy resolutions for consideration by the assembly.

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

1. The Rev. Ann Paynter presented the ballots and explained the election procedure. Bishop Allende called attention to nominations from the floor in addition to the pre-printed ballots. Additional nominees and their numbers for identification on the ballot were announced. Voting opened at 10:00am, and Bishop Allende declared the ballot closed at 10:16am.
2. Vice President Sleasman presented the Synod Council Report. He noted the parallels to how last year Interim Bishop Marcus Miller began his report by saying “A year ago I never imagined I would be standing here today.” Mr. Sleasman was contacted in February about serving as the interim vice president due to the resignation of Rod Sprang who had to move out of state due to a transfer by his employer. Mr. Sleasman called attention to the Synod Council Report on pages 32 and 33 of the pre-assembly materials. This has been a year of ongoing change. John lifted up for prayer the issues at the bottom of page 32 and top of page 33, which focus on the role, the size, and the structure of Synod Council and Synod committees.
3. John recognized the Synod Council and asked them to stand. He also asked anyone who has served as Synod Council, Churchwide Assembly voting member, etc. He emphasized that “they is we.” The church is the gathering of people, individuals who work together as best they can. We are one body with many members. The real report of the Synod Council is the interdependent relationships that act together and confess to the world that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.
4. Mr. Sleasman then assumed the chair of the assembly.
5. Bishop Allende presented his report. He started with a few introductions, including the Synod staff—perhaps the smallest since the early days of the Synod: (1) The Rev. Karl Biermann is a new addition to the staff coming from the Southwestern Texas Synod to accept the primary responsibility of overseeing the call process here in the Northeastern Ohio Synod; (2) Karen Kaufman – Resource Center Director, (3) The Rev. Terrance Jacob – Director of Evangelical Mission, who is on medical leave until he is hopefully able to return in August, (4) Helen Harms as Interim Director for Evangelical Mission from the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod (Helen was not present at the assembly due to a vacation), (5) Joy Hacker – Synod accountant (who also serves Northwestern Ohio and Southern Ohio Synods in that role), (6) Sony Gilroy – Executive Assistant to the Bishop, and (7) Kathy Lender – Administrative Secretary and Statistician. Bishop Allende also recognized The Rev. Laurie Miller and AIM Mary Ann Schwabe as stipendiary staff and Mary Ann Sima as LYO liaison (Mary was not present).
6. Bishop Allende recognized clergy who were new (or returning) to the roster of our Synod:
   1. The Rev. David Saylor (St. Paul, Massillon),
   2. The Rev. Chelsea Spencer (New Life, Youngstown),
   3. The Rev. Karl Biermann (Assistant to the Bishop),
   4. The Rev. David Connor (Trinity Presbytery, Ashtabula), and
   5. The Rev. Angela Freeman Riley from the Pacifica Synod.
7. Lastly, Bishop Allende also introduced his wife, Linda, acknowledging he committed the error of failing to thank and acknowledge her last year when he was elected bishop.
8. Bishop Allende announced that the assembly offering would be given to Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS). LIRS is a nationally recognized organization in working with vulnerable migrant communities. He also noted the dates for next year’s Synod Assembly as May 13-14, 2016.
9. What a difference a year makes. Last year Bishop Allende came to the assembly as a voting member, feeling led by the Holy Spirit to allow his name to go forward, and left feeling astonished that he had been chosen as bishop. The feelings of anxiety have subsided, but he still occasionally wonders what were you—what was the Holy Spirit—thinking? We read in Acts of Peter’s sermons to the religious authorities. Peter, who denied Jesus 3 times, now speaks truth to power. As a result of his Pentecost message, 3,000 followers were added that day. Bishop Allende reflects on the effect of his preaching and meetings with others and prays daily that the Spirit equips him to speak clearly to the people of Northeastern Ohio. He referred to Luther’s Sacristy prayer which hangs in his office.
10. Looking back at his first year as Bishop, Bishop Allende finds himself talking to a lot more people. As a pastor, his talking was limited to sermons and specific conversations and counseling. He now finds himself talking non-stop. He has been advised to keep comments short and general. Last Sunday he was in Leetonia. A month ago, he was in Plymouth. We have 20 counties in our Synod, and he has been to nearly all. If he hasn’t been to a particular congregation, it’s because he hasn’t been invited.
11. Looking forward, Bishop Allende’s vision is to strengthen the Synod for Mission and Ministry; strengthen connections between staff and congregations. He wants his staff in congregations 3 of 4 Sundays a month—not just to preach and preside but to be present and listen to the members of our Synod. Within two years, he and his staff want to visit every congregation in the Synod. Being among the people of the Synod gives us a true perspective of our shared ministry. Statistics don’t tell the story—they tend to create a false narrative. The recent Pew study says the Christian share of America is declining while the unaffiliated is growing. The perception is that the church is dying—but our faith tells us that death does not have the final word. While some congregations close, ministry is alive and well in many of our congregations. Statistics don’t tell the story of “Bondage Busters” (an after school tutoring and mentoring program at Martin Luther, Youngstown) or Sunday Night Live (a monthly youth group for the Canton-Massillon conference).
12. Many of the youth in our Synod are getting ready for the national youth gathering, and Bishop Allende recognized Darlene Waugh (Messiah, Fairview Park) and The Rev. Kathy Kluck (First, Strongsville) for coordinating much of the Synod’s efforts for that trip. What happens after youth gathering? One of our goals for the Synod is to develop a vibrant campus ministry. Bishop Allende recognized Pr. Doug Fidler of Trinity Kent for outreach at Kent State and described conversations with Barbara Essex of United Protestant Campus Ministries at Case Western Reserve Univeristy, Cleveland State University, and Cuyahoga Community College. We support an intern at the CSU campus. By supporting these efforts and making connections with new campuses, we want to avoid losing youth.
13. The Synod Staff are working on the revival of the Lay Academy to equip the saints for ministry. Lay Academy does not have a stated goal of developing more pastors, but it happens. Bishop Allende is a product of the Lay Academy. It may start again late this year or early next year.
14. The Communications Committee has been revived. They are working with a web developer to update the Synod website. The site will include a bulletin board to share events to the Synod and each congregation will have a coordinator who will contact with the Synod.
15. The Synod staff’s involvement in Journey Forward has been on hold with Pr. Jacob’s illness. It has taken on a life of its own in areas of the Synod. Pr. Julianne Smith (Prince of Peace, Poland) regularly meets with her cluster in the Eastern Conference, and The Rev. Doug Gunkelman of Divinity Parma also meets regularly with his cluster in the Cleveland West Conference.
16. Our theme for the assembly is that “We are Church Together.” It is not just a slogan. Together we can do more than we can do individually. Each of us has been blessed by God and our response is to be a blessing to others. We are encouraged to tell the story of what went on at assembly and spread the missional question of “To what is God calling me?” “To what is God calling us?”
17. Vice President Sleasman declared the assembly in recess at 10:58am. The assembly reconvened at 11:19am, with the chair returned to Bishop Allende.
18. Bishop Allende introduced Bishop Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the ELCA as the Churchwide representative.
19. Bishop Eaton recognized Bishop Allende’s service as part of an ELCA delegation working with undocumented migrant children coming through Mexico from Central America. She also recognized Jeff Tieman, President and CEO of Portico, as being present today to answer questions in exhibit hall. The Northeastern Ohio Synod has raised $290,500 for the Malaria campaign. Throughout the ELCA we have raised more than $14,000,000 for Malaria, also $500,000 for earthquake relief in Nepal. Bishop Eaton recognized two young adults in global mission from our Synod
20. More than 30,000 have registered for the youth gathering. There is a worship Jubilee in Atlanta July 21-23 with 63 of 65 Synods participating. We are seeing demographic shifts in our church--growing in Latin culture and African nationals as we develop. There are more Lutherans in each of Indonesia, Ethopia, and Tanzania than in the United States.
21. In 2017 we are “observing” not necessarily “celebrating” the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, which brought significant division to the church. The Churchwide center is focusing on the small catechism and will be inviting the Church to do that as well. The 2016 Churchwide Assembly will be the pivot point toward the 2017 observance. The voting members will be present at the assembly, but there will also be a “grace gathering” alongside the assembly to host visitors, service learning opportunities, and observation of legislative sessions.
22. Bishop Eaton recognized several resources concerning Lutheran-Catholic dialog including “Declaration on the Way to Unity” which is a compilation of the agreements reached in the international Lutheran-Catholic agreement. They are currently working on Eucharist, Ministry, and Ecclesiology. “From Conflict to Communion” is a new book and resource for Lutheran-Catholic dialog.
23. Bishop Eaton is often asked about her vision for the ELCA, and she provides her four-point vision: We are church. We are Lutheran. We are church together. We are church for the sake of the world. What does it mean to be church? We can talk about what we do, but we have difficulties finding the language to speak about Jesus Christ. Worship is not just a one item on a list of “what we do.” Everything needs to grow out of worship. We should be engaged intentionally in basic spiritual practices of prayer, silence, giving, study, etc. The “spiritual but not religious” idea may be a reaction against a church that is perceived as “religious but not spiritual.” We can be both.
24. We are Lutheran. Grace is key. Grace presupposes that we need it. It is counter-cultural to think that way. We live with paradox. We recognize that we can talk with others about difficult issues with different opinions and all cling to the cross and be church together. In baptism we have died the only death that matters. Resurrection is real. What are we to be afraid of? We are to spend our lives in service to each other.
25. We are church together. We have congregations, synods, churchwide, social ministries, Portico, and many other organizations. One in 50 Americans are touched by Lutheran Services. We are addressing the disaster of undocumented minors from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala—coming from horrific violence, kidnapping, rape, and other disasters. We are working with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, our ecumenical partners, and other organizations to assist the children who come here. We are working with advocacy organizations to change immigration laws. We could not do this alone as a congregation.
26. We are church for the sake of the world: Lutheran Federation was on the ground in Nepal the day of the earthquake. The day after, we were distributing blankets, shelter, and water. But, we are not just another disaster relief organization. We are church first.
27. The ELCA video was presented focused on “What is church?” Church is where we are found by Christ; where we share sorrows and joys; where we focus on prayer, among other things. Worship is the heart of what we do. The Eucharist is where we become one.
28. Bishop Allende thanked Bishop Eaton for her presentation then called on The Rev. Mark Rollenhagen of the Synod Communications Committee to describe a new initiative in the Synod to tell our story. Statistics do not tell the story. People tell the story. The committee is inviting short video stories with guidelines in the packets distributed at the tables. There is a video booth that is set up in the exhibit hall, where this process can begin, but it is only the beginning. The Rev. Karl Biermann also requested stories in written form. Stories can be individual, congregational, or through any other aspect of the church. The committee wants to emphasize simplicity and telling a story as you would to a best friend. Storytellers should focus on one example, use short sentences, illustrate who, what, where, when, why, and how. The Rev. Lisa Arledge shared an example of a story based on the redemption of broken lives at Oasis Ministry in Akron. The Rev. Dirk Van der Duim also directed the assembly’s attention to the page in the packets at the table entitled “Questions for 2-minute video stories.” They are story prompts, reflection questions, conversation starters about the story. He shared a video from New Life Lutheran Church describing transition from a craft-loving friends group into a prayer shawl ministry that serves multiple congregations. Dramatic turning points are great, but so is God’s day-to-day faithfulness. The packet also includes tips for making better videos. Bishop Allende also recognized the rest of the communications committee who were not present today.
29. Bishop Allende introduced The Rev. Jeff Tieman, President and CEO of Portico. The partnership among congregations, rostered persons, and Portico is a calling of being church together. Portico provides financial, physical, and emotional well-being. He challenged the assembly as church leaders to be able to name something each of us are doing to model well-being for others. Portico has a new online medical care service that allows video conference with doctors and ability to obtain prescriptions. Congregations recognize that having a healthy, resilient leader is important to having a healthy, resilient congregation.
30. There was a brief video presentation on behalf of Lutheran World Relief celebrating $4,300,000 in support from the ELCA in 2014 to fund 30 projects.
31. Bishop Allende declared the assembly in recess at 12:28pm. The assembly was called back to order at 1:34pm
32. Treasurer Tim Gilroy presented the Treasurer’s Report in powerpoint format, highlighting aspects of the material that appears on pages 73-80 in the pre-assembly materials. On page 73, total assets are $2,240,874, an increase of $235,860 over the prior year. Total liabilities are $182,467, an increase of $124,121, largely due to increase in funds held for others. On Page 76, Unrestricted Congregational Benevolence (Mission Support) was $1,489,014, which was approximately $77,000 less than last year and less than budgeted. There has been a decrease of $288,000 in Unrestricted Mission Support in the last five years. The Synod forwarded 49% of mission support to ELCA. Mr. Gilroy acknowledged Joy Hacker, Synod staff, and others for their efforts on behalf of the Synod’s financial records.
33. The Rev. Dan Cammarn presented the audit report on behalf of the Audit Committee. The audited statements are on pages 69-92 of the pre-assembly materials. At the bottom of Page 71 we were given an unqualified opinion, which means our financial statements fairly present the condition of the Synod and recommended no changes in financial procedures. By consensus, the assembly approved submission of the audit report to the ELCA for reporting in accordance with the provisions of constitution section +S14.31. Pr. Cammarn recognized the Audit Committee for their work.
34. Pr. Cammarn presented the budget, which is scheduled for approval later in the afternoon, and which appears on pages 42-44 of the pre-assembly materials. He noted that the third column is the 2015-2016 budget as amended by the Synod Council, not as approved at the 2014 synod assembly. In light of actual Mission Support received, the Synod Council reduced the estimated unrestricted mission support to $1,459,000 and made corresponding adjustments on the expense side of the budget, including campus ministry, LOMO, support to social ministry organizations, grants to congregations, the mission initiative fund, Synod office operations, and Synod staff. There was also a shift of $15,000 from Synod Staff to the Candidacy program and a similar shift for the Congregation Resource Team, both of which were in light of the new staff realities and the transition of Pr. Laurie Miller and AIM Mary Ann Schwabe to stipendiary positions.
35. The 2016-2017 budget is in the 4th column. Estimate of income for that year is $1,428,000—down $31,000 from this year’s amended budget. We will keep ELCA remittance at 50%, as approved for the 2015-2016 budget, which amounts to a $15,500 reduction to the ELCA. Lutheran Disaster Relief is a new budget line of $10,000 agreed among all three synods in Ohio. Congregational life reduced $300. Candidacy Committee increased $1,500 in anticipation of higher expenses. Lines 36-37 eliminated the Bishop’s Vision Fund, which had been intended as a one-time funding effort to help the new Bishop launch his or her initiatives in a difficult financial environment for staffing. Synod Office Operation (line 39) increased $300 to $27,000. Contracted expenses (line 40) are raised $1,000. Synod staff expenses increased by $11,000+ for increased costs of benefits. Pr. Cammarn noted that the amended 2015-2016 budget and the proposed 2016-2017 budget are based on projected income declines of approx. $30,000 in each of the next two years. This year alone, there was a drop of $77,000. In both budgets we kept percentage for ELCA at 50% to have the Synod demonstrate leadership in stretching to support the wider church. Pr. Cammarn also recognized the Finance and Budget Committee for their efforts.
36. Comments from the floor questioned when we will stop accepting yearly decreases and step up to support the work of the Synod and the ELCA and emphasized the importance of sharing the story of ministry to each of our congregations and each of our members to the greatest extent possible.
37. The Rev. Ed Kropa, from the Ministry Committee, presented the proposed 2016 compensation guidelines. They are presented on pages 45-62 of the pre-assembly materials. Highlighted changes include increase in base cash salary of 1.7% in line with the Social Security COLA. It was noted that base salary for clergy is lower than rostered lay with a master’s degree. This is because housing is also an expectation for the clergy. Under Pensions/Health Care it is noted that a medical expense reimbursement plan could be beneficial, but Joy Hacker, the Synod accountant, noted that for those using a medical reimbursement plan, new health care legislation prohibits reimbursement of medical insurance at the end of June of this year.
38. A question was raised as to whether the 2015 data has been reported for which health plans are provided to clergy in the Synod. Bishop Allende stated he would attempt to find that information and announce it later in the assembly.
39. Pr. Julianne Smith presented the report of the Credentials Committee. As of 9:24am, there were 220 lay members, plus 8 official lay rostered members, for a total lay voting membership of 228, (97 male, 131 female). Rostered clergy registered were 157, for a total voting membership of 385 (59% lay, 41% clergy). There were 46 registered visitors, for a total attendance of 431.
40. The Rev. Ann Paynter presented the report of the Elections Committee. As indicated, Bishop Allende declared candidates elected:
    1. Synod Council, Akron-Wooster Conference Lay: Cathy Byers (elected), 345.
    2. Synod Council, Canton-Massillon Conference Lay: Ken Reinoehl (elected), 337.
    3. Synod Council, Cleveland East Lay: Paul Lund (elected), 187; Nancy Krajec, 167.
    4. Synod Council, Eastern Conference Clergy – Eric Edwards (elected), 339 votes.
    5. Synod Council, Richland-Ashland Conference Lay – Susan Smith (elected), 333 votes.
    6. Synod Council, Cleveland East Conference Clergy – Laura Barbins (elected), 336 votes.
    7. Synod Council, Cleveland West Conference Clergy – Paula Maeder Connor (elected), 324 votes.
    8. Synod Council, Southern Conference Clergy – No nominees.
    9. Synod Council, Canton-Massillon Conference Clergy – Darla Ann Kratzer (elected), 193; Bruce Roth, 129.
    10. Synod Council, Eastern Lay – No nominees.
    11. Synod Vice President – Brian Penvose (elected), 341 votes.
    12. Consultation Committee Clergy – Ann Marie Winters (elected), 330 votes.
    13. Consultation 6-year Lay – Kate Venable (elected), 329 votes.
    14. Consultation 2-year Lay – Kathryn Lad (elected), 329 votes
    15. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Clergy (Canton-Massillon/Southern) – Chip Belanga (elected), 204; Stephen Patrick 156.
    16. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Clergy (Cleveland West) –Randy O’Donnell, 150; Sherman Bishop, 110; Steven Krebil 92. No election.
    17. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Lay Female (Eastern) – N. Marlene Fleming (elected), 330 votes.
    18. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Clergy (Richland-Ashland/Akron-Wooster) – Karen Liddy (elected), 184; Bonnie Peltomaa 166.
    19. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Lay Male (Canton-Massillon/Akron-Wooster/Richland-Ashland/Southern) – Nate Jackson (elected), 214, Don Palmquist 130.
    20. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Clergy (Cleveland East/Eastern) – Dirk van der Duim, 139; Gwendolyn Snell, 126; Laura Barbins, 92. No election.
    21. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Lay Female (Cleveland East/Cleveland West) – Cheryl Gerber, 167; Melanie Plummer, 63; Beverly Lund, 57; Kathryn Lad, 36; Elfriede Heaney 20. No election.
    22. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Lay Male (Cleveland East/Cleveland West/Eastern) – Chuck Mosberger (elected), 201; Frank Maenpa, 81; James Heaney, 56.
    23. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Lay Female, (Canton-Massillon/Southern) – Barbara White (elected), 245; Kim Meek-Obed, 83.
    24. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Lay Female (Richland-Ashland/Akron-Wooster) – Karolyn Miller (elected), 199; Cathy Byers, 136.
    25. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Lay Female (Person of Color/English as a Second Language) – Jackie Shakir (elected), 320 votes.
    26. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Lay Male (Person of Color/English as a Second Language) – Charles Benning (elected), 310 votes.
    27. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly (Young Adult) – Michael Moentmann (elected), 326 votes
    28. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly (Youth) – Tanazia Adams (elected), 235; Kayla Fisher, 112.

Three positions not yet elected appeared on the second ballot:

* Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Clergy (Cleveland West) –Randy O’Donnell and Sherman Bishop.
* Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Clergy (Cleveland East/Eastern) – Dirk van der Duim and Gwendolyn Snell
* Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Lay Female (Cleveland East/Cleveland West) – Cheryl Gerber and Melanie Plummer.

1. Bishop Allende explained the voting procedure for the second ballot as voting materials were distributed. Voting opened at 2:32pm and Bishop Allende declared the ballot closed at 2:39pm.
2. The Rev. Darla Ann Kratzer presented the report of the Reference and Counsel Committee that no resolutions were received.
3. The assembly proceeded into the Word portion of its assembly worship service in the Assembly Hall at 2:55pm. The readings for the day included Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; Psalm 1; 1 John 5:9-13; and John 17:6-19. Bishop Allende preached on the gospel reading emphasizing the importance of Christ’s prayer for us: Jesus prays for our protection. We are in need of prayer and must pray for each other. Jesus prays that we may be one.
4. The business of the assembly resumed at 3:36pm. Because we were over time on the approved agenda and as a courtesy to our ecumenical partners to keep them on schedule, Bishop Allende moved the ecumenical greetings up in the agenda to the approximate scheduled time.
5. Msgr. Robert Siffrin, Vicar General of the Catholic Diocese of Youngstown, brought greetings on behalf of the bishop and the diocese, praying for the efforts of our assembly and our work in the Synod.
6. The Rev. Dr. Gary George, East Ohio Conference, United Methodist Church, brought greetings giving thanks for the full communion relationship with our church and prayers for our Synod’s endeavors.
7. Fr. Joseph Hilinski, Ecumenical Officer for the Cleveland Catholic Diocese, brought greetings from Bishop Lennon. He made reference to the somewhat disheartening Pew Research Report mentioned in Bishop Allende’s Report earlier but finds encouragement that comes with seeing the efforts of this community.
8. Rev. Dr. Rita Root, Associations General Minister, United Church of Christ, brought greetings on behalf of the Western Reserve and Eastern Ohio associations of United Church of Christ and encouraged our church to continue to speak boldly about our faith.
9. Linda Badger Becker, Transitional General Presbyter of the Presbytery of the Western Reserve, brought greetings and prayer for our shared work together.

**SA15.05.03 To approve the budget as presented (moved by council action; carried).**

1. Secretary Lenz presented a bylaw amendment on behalf of the Synod Council, which appeared on page 31 of the pre-assembly materials. Mr. Lenz explained that the essence of the bylaw change is to change from a system of elected conference deans to conference deans appointed by the Bishop in light of the fact that reduced staff may call for more responsibility to fall on the conference deans to represent the Bishop and the Synod office in each of the conferences. A question from the floor asked what the term of appointment would be, which Bishop Allende stated would be co-terminus with the Bishop. Concerns were expressed as to whether this would reduce collegiality in the conferences, result in selection of conference deans who may not be the right people for their conferences, and whether it was appropriate for lay persons to vote on this amendment.
2. The Rev. Steven Woyen (St. Paul, Minerva) called the question, which was put to a vote and passed.

**SA15.05.04 To approve the proposed bylaw amendment re-writing S.12.01.12 as presented (moved by council action, two-thirds vote required; carried (213-80, 31 abstentions))**

To amend synod bylaw section S12.01.12 to read:

S12.01.12 The bishop shall appoint a member of the ordained clergy in each conference as conference dean. The dean shall organize the conference rostered persons, and act as the representative of the bishop in the conference. Specific duties of the deans shall be determined by the bishop and mutually agreed, with general guidance and approval by the synod council.

1. The assembly moved to the Meal portion of the assembly worship at 4:17pm with Bishop Eaton presiding. The worship ended at 4:59pm, and the assembly was recessed.

**Saturday, May 16, 2015**

1. The Rev. Lynn Williamson led Saturday Morning Word and Prayer as the assembly resumed on Saturday, May 16th. During Morning Word and Prayer, the Synod Recognized significant anniversaries:

**Rostered Leaders’ Ordination Anniversaries:**

The Rev. Walter Heber – 70 years

The Rev. Bela Bernhardt – 60 years

The Rev. Theodore Grotjohn – 55 years

The Rev. James Kennell – 55 years

The Rev. Donald Pentz – 55 years

The Rev. Thomas Baumgardner – 50 years

The Rev. David Hammel – 50 years

The Rev. Bruce Hathaway – 50 years

The Rev. Gerald Keller – 50 years

The Rev. Clyde McGee – 50 years

The Rev. Richard Schluep – 50 years

The Rev. Paul Williams – 50 years

The Rev. Elizabeth Hazelton – 25 years

The Rev. Randall O’Donnell – 25 years

The Rev. Gail Patton – 25 years

The Rev. Brian Rossow – 25 years

The Rev. Joyce Taipale – 25 years

**Congregation Anniversaries:**

Jerusalem, Columbiana – 200 years

St. Jacob, Massillon – 200 years

Clay Memorial, Mansfield – 175 years

First, Plymouth – 175 years

Zion, Wooster – 175 years

St. Paul, Alliance – 150 years

Peace, Ashland – 150 years

1. Bishop Allende called the assembly to order at 8:50am.
2. Pr. Julianne Smith presented the report of the Credentials Committee. As of 8:50am, there were 221 lay members, plus 8 official lay rostered members, for a total lay voting membership of 229, (97 male, 132 female). Rostered clergy registered were 157, for a total voting membership of 386 (59% lay, 41% clergy). There were 53 registered visitors, for a total attendance of 439.
3. The Rev. Bonnie Peltomaa, chair of the Minutes Committee, reported that the minutes of May 15 had been reviewed and were in order.
4. The Rev. Ann Paynter presented the report of the Elections Committee. As indicated, Bishop Allende declared candidates elected:
   1. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Clergy (Cleveland West) –Randy O’Donnell (elected), 212; Sherman Bishop, 134.
   2. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Clergy (Cleveland East/Eastern) – Dirk van der Duim (elected), 219; Gwendolyn Snell, 124.
   3. Voting Member 2016 Churchwide Assembly Lay Female (Cleveland East/Cleveland West) – Cheryl Gerber (elected), 233; Melanie Plummer, 104.

**SA15.05.05 To approve the proposed 2016 compensation guidelines as presented (moved by council action; carried)**

**NORTHEASTERN OHIO SYNOD 2016 COMPENSATION**

**GUIDELINES AND WORKSHEET**

**CLERGY**

**INTRODUCTION:**

A pastor assumes many responsibilities. We expect our pastors to be preachers, evangelists, administrators, teachers, counselors and leaders. We require eight years of study (including a bachelor’s and master of divinity degrees) as a part of preparation for ordained ministry. Compensation for pastors should be comparable to professional positions of equal responsibility, education, and time commitment.

Adequate compensation enables a pastor to fulfill responsibilities and obligations, encourages vocational satisfaction, and encourages a pastor’s best efforts and gifts. Congregations and our synod have an obligation to review compensation plans annually. We also expect pastors to take initiatives in seeking annual reviews of compensation.

Inadequate compensation may result in discouragement and dissatisfaction. This sometimes occurs as a pastor’s family cannot maintain financial stability, as negative attitudes toward the congregation and church begin, as an inability to participate in continuing education programs, or as “moonlighting” becomes a necessity. Inadequate compensation means low contributions to retirement plans, which leads to inadequate retirement income. All of these realities increase the occurrence of resignations from ordained ministry, make it more challenging to recruit able candidates for ordained ministry, and create a poor image of the church in the community.

Our synod recognizes there are pastors and congregations who, for a variety of reasons, choose to be content with salaries that are below the synod minimum. We caution these pastors and congregations, however, that they may be doing disservice to the congregation, other pastors, and pastoral successors by allowing the compensation package to remain below recommended guidelines. In such situations, the congregation, pastor, and bishop’s office should work together to implement other support strategies.

Congregations should develop procedures whereby they review their pastor’s salary and discuss their pastor’s personal financial concerns. This may be best accomplished by a small and understanding committee of three to six individuals appointed by the congregation council. The committee should bring to the council or appropriate committee its recommendations for annual compensation adjustments. The ELCA has published a guide to use in organizing a mutual Ministry/Staff Support Committee and for compensation planning: *Pastor and People: Making Mutual Ministry Work (ISBN 0-8066-4651-9)* which is available from Augsburg Fortress (1-800-328-4648). .

It should be noted that these are suggested base salaries. The total compensation package should also reflect any special concerns of the pastor and his/her family, and other factors as discussed in this document.

1. **SALARY**
   1. BASE CASH SALARY
      1. The minimum base salary recommendation for 2016 is $37,590. This represents an approximate 1.7% living adjustment to the 2015 minimum base cash salary recommendation, which was in turn based on the 2015 Social Security Administration cost-of-living adjustment. It is still strongly recommended that $310 for each year of ordained service be added to this minimum base; or,
      2. A congregation with experienced clergy may use a 1.7% living adjustment to the current base salary plus a $310 increase for the additional year of experience in ordained ministry.
   2. ADJUSTMENTS

Adjustments to the base cash salary may consist of, but are not limited to:

* + 1. Merit
    2. Local COLA (to reflect significant differences in local cost of living)
    3. Responsibilities
    4. Education (either advanced or specialized)
    5. Other concerns identified by the congregation/pastor.

1. **HOUSING**
   1. WITHOUT PARSONAGE
      1. This is for pastors who own their own house. A fair approach to determining the housing and utilities allowance is:
         1. One percent per month of the reasonable market value of a house within the general community in which the congregation resides, plus
         2. The cost of utilities for such a home, plus
         3. The difference in cost for the rental value of such a home furnished as compared to rental value of such a home unfurnished.

A realtor can help determine this figure. This allowance is to cover the mortgage payments, taxes, insurance, utilities, furnishings, and maintenance of the house.

* + 1. *Housing allowance must be officially designated in advance by the congregation. This can be done by a separate line in the budget or by official action of the congregation council.*
    2. A pastor may elect to use this allowance to rent a home, in which case the allowance should cover rent, utilities, furnishings, and insurance.
    3. The congregation council may also consider the establishment of a loan policy to assist the pastor in the down payment on a home if a parsonage is not provided.
  1. WITH PARSONAGE
     1. HOUSEHOLD FURNISHINGS/UTILITIES ALLOWANCE

If a parsonage is provided, it should be comparable to at least the average home in the congregation or community. For pastors who are in parsonages, it is appropriate for the congregation to provide a household furnishings/utilities allowance. This allowance will cover the expenses of the parsonage: utilities, maintenance, and furnishings needed to keep up the parsonage. This may be done in several ways:

* + - 1. The congregation may provide a fixed monthly parsonage allowance, based on the needs of the pastor and parsonage. This amount needs to be designated by the congregation council at its first meeting each year, or separately stated in the budget.
      2. The congregation may choose to pay the utilities (gas, electric, sewage, water, trash collection, telephone (except personal long-distance) directly.
      3. The congregation should generally pay for the costs of maintaining the parsonage. If not, an allowance would be provided to cover expenses to maintain the parsonage.
    1. HOUSING EQUITY ALLOWANCE

An equity allowance should be provided if the pastor lives in a congregation-owned home. The equity allowance provides the financial resources for a pastor to provide housing upon retirement, or to provide a down payment for the purchase of a house during active ministry. It is suggested that the equity allowance be:

* + - 1. An amount equal to 3% of the annual pension defined compensation.
      2. The congregation pays the total amount in monthly installments to a depository agreed to by the church and the pastor.
      3. Each congregation would stipulate at the beginning of each pastor’s ministry (or when the plan begins) that the funds become available to the pastor only:
         1. at the pastor’s retirement, or
         2. at the time the pastor is granted a housing allowance and purchases a home, or
         3. at the time of total and presumably permanent disability, or
         4. at the time the pastor leaves the clergy roster of the ELCA, or
         5. at the time of death, at which time the funds would be disbursed as stipulated by the agreement.

Our synod recommends that congregations and pastors consult with ***Portico Benefits Services*** (the ELCA Retirement Plan provider) and the IRS regulations and examine the pastor’s individual financial situation prior to implementation of this program.

* + 1. It is important that parsonages be sufficiently maintained. An annual walk-through of the parsonage by the council is advised. The purpose of the walk-through is to note the general condition of the home and plan regular maintenance.

1. **BENEFITS**
   1. PENSION/HEALTH CARE
      1. The congregation shall provide full pension, health, and death benefits for the pastor and family in accordance with ***Portico*** provisions. The “Gold+ level of health benefits has been recommended by the ELCA Church Council and the NEO Synod Council.
      2. A “Medical Expense Reimbursement Plan”, established in accordance with specific IRS requirements, could provide tax advantages for the pastor by reimbursing deductibles, co-payments, and other medical expenses not covered by insurance. For more information, please contact the synod accountant (jhacker@neos-elca.org)
      3. The pastor may elect to waive the health care benefit under the coordination of the benefits clause in the ***Portico*** Handbook. The congregation should consult with ***Portico*** (612-333-7651 or 800-352-2876) or the synod office for assistance in determining the effects of these guidelines.
   2. FICA ALLOWANCE (SOCIAL SECURITY)
      1. A congregation cannot pay the social security tax for a pastor. By law, the pastor must personally pay both the employer and the employee portions of social security taxes. However, a congregation can pay a pastor a special allowance which the pastor may then use to put toward whatever self-employment social security tax he or she owes. This allowance is taxable when computing income tax and social security taxes, and must also be considered income in computing pension plan contributions.
      2. The congregation should provide a minimum allowance that corresponds to the employer portion of social security taxes (7.65% for 2015). In order to assist the pastor, the congregation may further choose to provide for some or all of the remaining social security taxes (7.65% for 2015). Whatever is provided, the pastor reports it as salary.
      3. The allowance can be calculated as follows:
         1. Minimum social security allowance for pastor receiving a housing allowance (non-parsonage):

Salary

+ Housing Allowance

= Social Security Base

x 7.65 % (employer rate)

= Social Security Allowance

* + - 1. Minimum social security allowance for pastor living in parsonage:

Salary

x 1.3 (housing equivalency factor)

= Subtotal

+ Furnishings/Utilities Allowance

= Social Security Base

x 7.65% (employer rate)

= Social Security Allowance

* + 1. The synod recommends the pastor periodically check records to be certain accounts have been properly credited. A pastor may do this by obtaining Form SSA 7050 from the Social Security Administration office or online at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov/). from the local Social Security Administration office or post office. It is important that pastors do this periodically because one can only go back 39 ½ months to correct errors. This is critical in assuring the receipt of the maximum benefits available.

1. **PART-TIME CALLS**

Compensation for part-time calls should be made in consultation with the synod staff.

1. **PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES**

These items are considered congregational administrative expenses and are not items to be considered as compensation.

* 1. AUTOMOBILE EXPENSES: Congregations should adequately provide for the pastor’s business mileage expenses in one of the following ways. In determining the method, usage should be considered including factors such as geographical limits of the congregation, distance to commonly used hospitals, etc.
     1. Use an accountable reimbursement plan to reimburse the pastor for miles driven in service of the congregation. Such reimbursement must be based on documentation as required by the IRS, should be reimbursed at the maximum IRS rate for use of a personal car for business purposes (57.5 cents per mile in 2015) and is not taxable to the pastor; or
     2. Provide the pastor with a fixed automobile allowance of at least $4,000 per year in addition to salary. This allowance must be included as taxable income on the pastor’s Form W-2. The pastor is accountable to the IRS for use of this allowance and may be eligible to deduct a portion of the expenses based on accurate records of church mileage. Contact your accountant or the synod office for further guidance; or
     3. A congregation may, in accordance with IRS guidelines, buy or lease a car and assume the total cost of operating the vehicle.
  2. OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES

Other ministry related expenses incurred by the pastor should be paid by the congregation in one of the following ways:

* + 1. Paying these amounts directly as they occur; or
    2. Setting up a line item in the budget for reimbursement of these expenses, preferably combined with the automobile reimbursement into a single line item; or
    3. Paying a monthly professional expense allowance to the pastor.

*Note*: Congregations are strongly encouraged to set up an “Accountable Professional Expense Reimbursement” for all rostered leaders in the congregation. Reimbursable professional expenses include, but are not limited to: automobile (mileage, parking tolls), overnight travel (including lodging and meals), professional and liability insurance, vestments and vestment cleaning, long distance business phone calls, books, magazines/journals, professional dues, continuing education, media resources, supplies, meals associated with official meetings and appointments, business gifts (maximum of $25.00 per person per year), and equipment purchases. Such professional expenses, when reimbursed by the congregation with adequate accounting as specified in the Internal Revenue Code, are not taxable for either income tax or social security/self-employment tax and are excluded from Form W-2. When the congregation provides an expense allowance without accountable reimbursement, the allowance is taxable income included in Form W-2. Professional expenses not reimbursed under an accountable plan, including expenses in excess of the budget for reimbursement, are deductible for self-employment tax, but only a portion of the expenses is deductible for federal income tax (and only if the rostered leader is eligible to itemize deductions), and none are deductible for state, city or school district income tax. For more information, please contact the synod accountant.

* 1. COMPUTERS AND CELL PHONES

It is recommended that the congregation provide the pastor with a computer and cell phone to facilitate ministry. Note the following in this regard:

* + 1. Computer
       1. A computer owned by the church and provided for the pastor’s use is a business expense that is not taxable to the pastor.
       2. A computer purchased by the pastor is NOT a deductible business expense, even when used for business purposes.
    2. Cell Phone
       1. A cell phone provided to the pastor is a nontaxable business expense if the council minutes state it is primarily provided for noncompensatory business reasons (such as the need to be accessible at all time for work-related emergencies).
       2. The pastor may be provided with a nontaxable cell phone reimbursement if council minutes state that the pastor is required to maintain a personal cell phone for noncompensatory business reasons and the reimbursement amount does not exceed reasonable business needs (i.e. reimburse the basic monthly plan, not family plan for extra minutes).

1. **OTHER PROVISIONS**
   1. VACATION

The minimum vacation should be four weeks (including four Sundays). Attendance at official functions is not to be construed as vacation time.

*Note:* If financial constraints of a congregation make difficult monetary raises for clergy, a congregation might consider providing an extra week of vacation (including Sunday) as compensation.

* 1. SICK LEAVE

Sick leave should be provided for up to eight weeks per year (including Sundays) with full salary, housing, and benefits. An agreement may be made for partial disability beyond that time in coordination with ***Portico***.

* 1. MATERNITY LEAVE

Maternity leave should be provided for up to six weeks (including Sundays) with full salary, housing, and benefits. Because of special concerns or needs, actual time may be negotiated between the pastor and congregation.

* 1. PATERNITY LEAVE/ADOPTIVE PARENTAL LEAVE

Paternity leave and adoptive parental leave may be negotiated between the pastor and congregation. It is recommended that up to six consecutive weeks (including Sundays) with full salary, housing, and benefits be provided. Because of special concerns or needs actual time may be more or less than six weeks.

* 1. CONTINUING EDUCATION

The ELCA expects of its ordained clergy a minimum of 50 contact hours annually in organized continuing education.

* + 1. Congregations are encouraged to make available to their pastors at least two weeks (including Sundays) per year for continuing education.
    2. The scheduling of continuing education should be determined by the pastor in consultation with the council.
    3. $1,000 is recommended; a minimum of $700 per year should be provided for this education.
    4. A pastor should have the privilege of accumulating educational leave and funds over a two-year period.
  1. SABBATICAL LEAVE

Sabbatical leave offer an extended block of time for study, personal growth, and reflection apart from usual congregational responsibilities.

* + 1. Normally, an extended study and renewal period of one to three months after five years in the current call should be provided with full salary, housing, and benefits.
    2. The leave plan is to be developed in cooperation with the council. The parties shall seek the counsel of the bishop before finalizing an agreement.
    3. The congregation shall be responsible for arranging for pastoral coverage, including pulpit supply, during the leave.
    4. Within six weeks of the completion of the sabbatical leave the pastor shall present the congregation a written reflection on the experience and the implications for the ministry of the congregation and ministry in the parish. This written reflection shall be added to the pastor’s file in the bishop’s office.
  1. WORK WEEK

Because of the nature of ministry, it is recognized that pastors are expected to fulfill many evening and weekend responsibilities in addition to Sunday morning worship. Therefore, adequate time off (one day per week minimum) should be granted that would be free from ministry-related responsibilities.

* 1. SPECIAL CONCERNS

Where there are special needs within a pastor’s family, these should be considered separately.

1. **ASSOCIATE/ASSISTANT/SPOUSE TEAM COMPENSATION**
   1. The synod recommends that the above guidelines be applied to associate/assistant pastors taking into consideration their relationship with the senior pastor, e.g., duties, responsibilities, etc.
   2. For clergy spouse teams the synod staff should be consulted.
2. **INTERIM / TEMPORARY / SUPPLY MINISTRIES**
   1. INTERIM

At the time of a pastoral vacancy in a congregation, the bishop, working with the congregation council, recommends an interim pastor to provide basic leadership and pastoral care until another pastor is secured and, if needed, to address any special concerns of the congregation. No pastor is to be considered as a candidate for call to a congregation while serving it as an interim.

Depending on congregational need and pastoral availability, an interim pastor may serve on a part-time or full-time basis during a pastoral vacancy. An active pastor serving in an interim ministry, whether full or part-time, should be compensated according to the current guidelines based on the time negotiated with the church council. For example, if the pastor is serving half-time (50%), compensation should be 50% of a regular compensation package. A retired pastor who serves as an interim minister shall negotiate with a church council in consultation with the synod staff.

* 1. TEMPORARY PASTORAL SUPPORT

Temporary pastoral support will be compensated at $200 per month for a congregation council meeting and emergency pastoral care. Mileage will be paid at the current IRS mileage reimbursement rate (see V.A. above). Compensation beyond this is to be determined in negotiations between the congregation council and the temporary pastor with guidance provided by the synod staff.

* 1. SUPPLY PASTOR

During a pastoral absence, it may be necessary for a congregation to secure a supply pastor. A current list of clergy available for that purpose may be obtained from the synod office. Those asked to serve as pulpit supply should be contacted well in advance of the date needed and, upon acceptance, be provided with a copy of the worship bulletin and pertinent information about the service. A member familiar with congregational worship practices should be on hand to welcome the pastor prior to the service. The recommended honorarium for one worship service is $150 plus mileage at the current IRS mileage reimbursement rate (see V.A. above). For additional services, scheduled within three hours of the conclusion of the initial worship service, whether at the same congregation or at another, as in two-point parishes, an additional $50 per service should be paid plus any additional mileage. If additional services are scheduled during the week that are similar in nature e.g., Sunday evening, Wednesday, Saturday, etc., an additional honorarium of $85 for each additional service plus mileage at the current IRS mileage reimbursement rate (see V.A. above) should be paid. For additional responsibilities, appropriate compensation should be provided. Expenses for lodging and meals, if necessary, are to be paid by the congregation.

**COMPENSATION WORKSHEET**

**CLERGY**

* 1. **COMPENSATION**
     1. Cash Salary
        1. Annual base salary (before salary-reduction contributions) (I.A.,B.)\* $
        2. Clergy Social Security tax allowance (if paid directly to pastor) (III.B.) $
     2. Total of (1a.) plus (1b.) $
     3. Housing (only one housing option may be included) $

a. Cash housing allowance without parsonage (including any household

furnishings and utility allowances) (II.A.)

or

1. 30 percent of line 2 (if parsonage or other housing is provided)

4. Pastor’s household furnishings and utilities allowances (only if parsonage $

is provided and the allowance is paid directly to the pastor) (II.B.1.)

1. **TOTAL ANNUAL DEFINED COMPENSATION (Add lines 2, 3, 4).** $

**B. PENSION AND OTHER BENEFITS**

1. ELCA pension and benefits (***Portico***) (III.A.1.) $

2. Medical reimbursement (III.A.2.) $

3. Housing equity allowance (II.B.2.) $

**TOTAL PENSION AND BENEFITS** $

**C. PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES**

1. Automobile reimbursement or allowance (V.A.) $

2. Other professional expenses (V.B.) $

3. Cell Phone (V.C.) $

4. Continuing Education (VI.E.) $

**D. SPECIAL CONCERNS (VI.H.)**



\*Roman numerals, letters and numbers refer to sections within the guidelines.

*Helpful calculators for defined compensation and ELCA benefits contributions are located on the Portico website at* [*www.porticobenefits.org*](http://www.porticobenefits.org)*. Please note, however, that you should insert your own calculations for the social security allowance with guidelines III.B. For more information, a workbook entitled, “Nuts and Bolts of Clergy Tax” is available from the synod accountant.*

**NORTHEASTERN OHIO SYNOD 2016 COMPENSATION**

**GUIDELINES AND WORKSHEET**

**NON-ROSTERED**

Due to the wide range of non-rostered duties that may be performed at a congregation, this guideline will only reflect general guidance and not specific recommendations.

**INTRODUCTION:**

A congregation employs many non-rostered people in various positions such as musicians, custodians and administrative assistants. Compensation for these positions should be comparable to professional positions of equal responsibility and training. Adequate livable compensation for the non-rostered employee, as for anyone else, is necessary to fulfill responsibilities, obligations and maintain satisfaction in ministry. The congregation and the synod have an obligation to review compensation plans annually using the guidelines as adopted by the synod assembly. Non-rostered personnel are also urged to take initiatives in seeking an annual review of compensation.

The congregation should develop procedures whereby it may review the employees’ salary and discuss those personal financial concerns that may apply. This may be best accomplished by a small and understanding committee consisting of the pastor(s), one or more representatives of the congregation council, and other persons as deemed necessary. The committee should bring to the congregation council its recommendations for annual compensation adjustments.

Written job descriptions should be developed for each position. The job description should include, but is not limited to:

1. duties
2. days of work
3. hours
4. whether salaried or hourly
5. benefits
6. rate of pay and overtime policy
7. other

A special effort should be extended in determining actual hours worked, (e.g., for musicians, detailed listing of time requirements is available from Association of Lutheran Church Musicians). Local considerations could include:

1. regular services (number per week)
2. choir practice(s)
3. additional services, e.g. Lenten
4. practice time
5. educational level
6. **SALARY**
   1. BASE CASH SALARY: An effort should be made to determine adequate local compensation levels. There are several ways to accomplish this including but not limited to:
      1. Consult with local school districts, especially for custodians, secretaries, and Christian educators.
      2. U.S. Department of Labor
      3. other local congregations
      4. classified ads
      5. local Chamber of Commerce
      6. negotiation with the employee (e.g., an employee who is also a member of the congregation may volunteer a portion of their compensation to the congregation)
      7. professional organizations, (e.g., Association for Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM), International Association for Office Professionals).
   2. ADJUSTMENTS: Adjustments to the base cash salary may consist of, but are not limited to:
      1. merit
      2. local COLA (to reflect significant differences in local cost of living)
      3. responsibilities
      4. education (either advanced or specialized)
      5. other concerns identified by the congregation/employee
7. **HOUSING**

Not applicable

1. **BENEFITS**
   1. PENSION / HEALTH CARE
      1. The congregation shall provide full pension, health, and death benefits for the employee and family in accordance with ***Portico Benefit Services*** (ELCA Benefits provider) provisions. Health care issues may be addressed through other agencies (e.g. a local Chamber of Commerce).
      2. A “Medical Expense Reimbursement Plan”, established in accordance with specific IRS requirements, could provide tax advantages for employees by reimbursing deductibles, co-payments, and other medical expenses not covered by insurance. For more information, please contact the synod accountant (jhacker@neos-elca.org)
      3. The employee may elect to waive the spouse and dependent health care benefit under the coordination of benefits clause in the ***Portico Benefit Services*** Handbook. The congregation should consult with ***Portico*** (612-333-7651 or 800-352-2876) or the synod office for assistance in determining the effects of these guidelines.
      4. For part-time employees refer to Section IV.
   2. FICA ALLOWANCE (SOCIAL SECURITY)
      1. A congregation shall provide FICA payments in accordance with current Federal regulations.
      2. The synod recommends the employee periodically check records to be certain accounts have been properly credited. An employee may do this by obtaining Form SSA 7050 from the local Social Security Administration office or online at www.ssa.gov. It is important that employees do this periodically because one can only go back 39 ½ months to correct errors. This is critical in assuring the receipt of the maximum benefits available.
2. **PART-TIME EMPLOYEES**
   1. For part-time employees (less than 40 hours), salary and benefits should be calculated then reduced to reflect the percent of employment, e.g., an employee at half-time (20 hours) would receive 50%.
   2. When employed less than 20 hours, ***Portico Benefit Services*** is not available.
3. **PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES:** These items are considered congregational administrative expenses and are not items to be considered compensation.
   1. AUTOMOBILE EXPENSES: If congregations require the employee to use his/her own vehicle, congregations should provide an adequate automobile allowance. Such reimbursement should be consistent with the maximum IRS deduction for use of a personal car for business purposes (57.5 cents per mile in 2015).
   2. OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES: These expenses include, but are not limited to books, subscriptions to magazines or journals, media resources, and official meetings. They may be covered by:
      1. paying these amounts directly as they occur; or
      2. setting up as a line item in the budget; or
      3. setting up as a monthly allowance.
4. **OTHER PROVISIONS**
   1. VACATION: A graduated schedule for vacations should be used. The minimum vacation should be two weeks. The maximum is four weeks. Attendance at official functions is not construed as vacation time.
   2. SICK LEAVE: Sick leave should be provided for up to eight weeks per year with full salary and benefits. An agreement may be made for partial disability beyond that time in coordination with the ELCA Board of Pensions.
   3. MATERNITY LEAVE: Maternity leave should be provided for up to six weeks with full salary and benefits. Because of special concerns or needs, additional time may be negotiated between the employee and congregation.
   4. PATERNITY LEAVE / ADOPTIVE PARENTAL LEAVE: Paternity leave and adoptive parental leave may be negotiated between the employee and congregation. It is recommended that up to six consecutive weeks (including Sundays) with full salary, housing, and benefits be provided. Because of special concerns or needs actual time may be more or less than six weeks.
   5. CONTINUING EDUCATION:
      1. If applicable, provision should be made for assisting with continuing education with paid time off and tuition reimbursement. The scheduling of continuing education should be determined by the employee in consultation with the council.
      2. SABBATICAL LEAVE: Sabbatical leave offers an extended block of time for study, personal growth, and reflection apart from usual congregational responsibilities. If a sabbatical is appropriate, refer to the sabbatical guidelines in the rostered person’s guidelines.
   6. WORK WEEK: Because of the nature of church employment, it is recognized that employees may be expected to fulfill evening and weekend responsibilities. Therefore, adequate time off (one day per week minimum) should be granted that would be free from church-related responsibilities.
   7. SPECIAL CONCERNS: Where there are special needs within an employee’s family, these should be considered separately.

**COMPENSATION WORKSHEET**

**NON-ROSTERED EMPLOYEE**

**(POSITION)**

**JOB DESCRIPTION:** Duties and expectations should be provided for each position. These duties will normally be performed on (days of the week) from (list regular hours). This position is classified as hourly/salaried.

1. **COMPENSATION**
   1. Base Salary (I.A., B.)

TOTAL COMPENSATION

1. **PENSION AND OTHER BENEFITS**
   1. ***Portico*** or other Pension and health (III.A.1.)
   2. Medical Reimbursement (III.A.2., 3.)
   3. Other Benefits

TOTAL PENSION AND BENEFITS

1. **PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES**
   1. Automobile Reimbursement or allowance (V.A.)
   2. Other Professional expenses (V.B.)
   3. Continuing Education (VI.E.)
2. **OTHER PROVISIONS (VI)**
   1. Vacation
   2. Sick leave
   3. Maternity leave
   4. Paternity/adoptive parental leave
3. **SPECIAL CONCERNS (VI.G.)**

\*Roman numerals, letters, and numbers refer to sections within the guidelines.

**NORTHEASTERN OHIO SYNOD 2016 COMPENSATION**

**GUIDELINES AND WORKSHEET**

**ASSOCIATES IN MINISTRY,**

**DIACONAL MINISTERS & DEACONESSES**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses assume many different responsibilities. Job descriptions vary and are developed by the congregation. We require specialized training for certification as an associate in ministry, diaconal minister or deaconess (hereafter referred to as rostered lay leader). Compensation for these rostered lay leaders should be comparable to professional positions of equal responsibility and training. Adequate compensation enables these rostered lay leaders to fulfill responsibilities and obligations, encourages vocational satisfaction, and encourages a rostered lay leader’s best efforts and gifts. Congregations and our synod have an obligation to review compensation plans annually. We also expect rostered lay leaders to take initiatives in seeking an annual review of compensation.

Inadequate compensation may result in discouragement and dissatisfaction. This sometimes occurs as a rostered lay leader’s family cannot maintain financial stability, as negative attitudes toward the congregation and church begin, as an inability to participate in continuing education programs, or as “moonlighting” becomes a necessity. Inadequate compensation means low contributions to retirement plans, which leads to inadequate retirement income. All of these realities increase the occurrence of resignations from rostered lay ministry, make it more challenging to recruit able candidates for rostered lay ministry, and create a poor image of the church in the community.

Our synod recognizes there are rostered lay leaders and congregations who, for a variety of reasons, choose to be content with salaries that are below the synod minimum. We caution these rostered lay leaders and congregations, however, that they may be doing disservice to the congregation, other rostered lay leaders, and rostered lay successors by allowing the compensation package to remain below recommended guidelines. In such situations, the congregation, rostered lay leader, and bishop’s office should work together to implement other support strategies.

Congregations should develop procedures to review their rostered lay leader’s salary and discuss those personal financial concerns that may apply. This may be best accomplished by a small and understanding committee of three to six individuals appointed by the congregation council. The committee should bring to the congregation council or appropriate committee its recommendations for annual compensation adjustments.

It should be noted that these are suggested base salaries.The total compensation package should also reflect any special concerns of the rostered lay leader and his/her family, and other factors as discussed in this document.

1. **SALARY**
   1. BASE CASH SALARY
      1. The minimum base salary recommendation for 2016 is based on their level of education within the area of expertise as follows:

NO DEGREE BACHELORS MASTERS

$33,945 $39,315 $40,730

This represents an increase to the 2015 minimum base cash salary recommendation, as the Social Security Administration has set the cost of living allowance at 1.7%. It is recommended that $310 for each year of rostered service be added to this minimum base, or

* + 1. A congregation with an experienced rostered lay leader should offer a $310 increase for the additional year of experience in rostered ministry.
    2. It should also be noted that these are suggested base salaries which include money for housing.
  1. ADJUSTMENTS: Adjustments to the base cash salary may consist of, but are not limited to:
     1. merit
     2. local COLA (to reflect significant differences in local cost of living)
     3. responsibilities
     4. education (either advanced or specialized)
     5. other concerns identified by the congregation / pastor.

1. **HOUSING**

In compliance with federal tax law, the congregation council may consider providing housing or a housing allowance for the rostered lay leader similar to that for clergy (see clergy guidelines). The council may also consider the establishment of a loan policy to assist the rostered lay leader in the down payment on a home. Synod staff is available for counsel.

1. **BENEFITS**
   1. PENSION / HEALTH CARE
      1. The congregation shall provide full pension, health, and death benefits for the rostered lay leader and family in accordance with ***Portico Benefit Service*** (the ELCA Retirement Plan provider). The “Gold+ level of health benefits has been recommended by the ELCA Church Council and the NEO Synod Council.
      2. A “Medical Expense Reimbursement Plan”, established in accordance with specific IRS requirements, could provide tax advantages for rostered lay leaders by reimbursing deductibles, co-payments, and other medical expenses not covered by insurance. For more information, please contact the synod accountant (jhacker@neos-elca.org)
      3. The rostered lay leader may elect to waive the care benefit under the coordination of the benefits clause in the ***Portico*** Handbook. The congregation should consult with the ***Portico*** (612-333-7651 or 800-352-2876) or the synod office for assistance in determining the effects of these guidelines.
   2. FICA ALLOWANCE (SOCIAL SECURITY)
      1. Normally a congregation will pay Social Security tax for rostered lay leaders. Social Security law regulates the amount to be paid.
      2. Rostered lay leaders who are considered self-employed as defined in current Social Security guidelines, by virtue of a “teaching call,” please refer to Section III.B. of the clergy guidelines.
      3. The synod recommends the rostered lay leader periodically check records to be certain accounts have been properly credited. A rostered lay leader may do this by obtaining Form SSA 7050 from the Social Security Administration office or online at www.ssa.gov. It is important that rostered leaders do this periodically because one can only go back 39 ½ months to correct errors. This is critical in assuring the receipt of the maximum benefits available.
2. **PART-TIME CALLS**

For part-time calls, salary, housing, and benefits should be calculated then reduced to reflect the percent of call, e.g., a call at half-time would receive 50%. All part-time calls should be made in consultation with the synod staff.

**V. PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES**

These items are considered congregational administrative expenses and are not items to be considered as compensation.

* 1. AUTOMOBILE EXPENSES: Congregations should adequately provide for business mileage expenses in one of the following ways. In determining the method, usage should be considered including factors such as geographical limits of the congregation, distance to commonly used hospitals, etc.
     1. Use an accountable reimbursement plan to reimburse for miles driven in service of the congregation. Such reimbursement must be based on documentation as required by the IRS, should be reimbursed at the maximum IRS rate for use of a personal car for business purposes (57.5 cents per mile in 2015) and is not taxable; or
     2. Provide the rostered leader a fixed automobile allowance of at least $4,000 per year in addition to salary. This allowance must be included as taxable income on Form

W-2. The rostered leader is accountable to the IRS for use of this allowance and may

be eligible to deduct a portion of the expenses based on accurate records of church

mileage. Contact your accountant or the synod office for further guidance; or

* + 1. A congregation may, in accordance with IRS guidelines, buy or lease a car and assume the total cost of operating the vehicle.
  1. OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES

Other ministry related expenses incurred by the rostered leader should be paid by the congregation in one of the following ways:

* + 1. Paying these amounts directly as they occur; or
    2. Setting up a line item in the budget for reimbursement of these expenses, preferably combined with the automobile reimbursement into a single line item; or
    3. Paying a monthly professional expense allowance.

*Note*: Congregations are strongly encouraged to set up an “Accountable Professional Expense Reimbursement” for all rostered leaders in the congregation. Reimbursable professional expenses include, but are not limited to: automobile (mileage, parking tolls), overnight travel (including lodging and meals), professional and liability insurance, vestments and vestment cleaning, long distance business phone calls, books, magazines/journals, professional dues, continuing education, media resources, supplies, meals associated with official meetings and appointments, business gifts (maximum of $25.00 per person per year), and equipment purchases. Such professional expenses, when reimbursed by the congregation with adequate accounting as specified in the Internal Revenue Code, are not taxable for either income tax or social security/self-employment tax and are excluded from Form W-2. When the congregation provides an expense allowance without accountable reimbursement, the allowance is taxable income included in Form W-2. Professional expenses not reimbursed under an accountable plan, including expenses in excess of the budget for reimbursement, are deductible for self-employment tax, but only a portion of the expenses is deductible for federal income tax (and only if the rostered leader is eligible to itemize deductions), and none are deductible for state, city or school district income tax. For more information, please contact the synod accountant (jhacker@neos-elca.org).

* 1. COMPUTERS AND CELL PHONES

It is recommended that the congregation provide rostered leaders with a computer and cell phone to facilitate ministry. Note the following in this regard:

* + 1. Computer
       1. A computer owned by the church and provided for the rostered leader’s use is a business expense that is not taxable.
       2. A computer purchased by the rostered leader is NOT a deductible business expense, even when used for business purposes.
    2. Cell Phone
       1. A cell phone provided to the rostered leader is a nontaxable business expense if the council minutes state it is primarily provided for noncompensatory business reasons (such as the need to be accessible at all time for work-related emergencies).
       2. The rostered leader may be provided with a nontaxable cell phone reimbursement if council minutes state that the leader is required to maintain a personal cell phone for noncompensatory business reasons and the reimbursement amount does not exceed reasonable business needs (i.e. reimburse the basic monthly plan, not family plan for extra minutes).

**VI. OTHER PROVISIONS**

* 1. VACATION

The minimum vacation should be four weeks (including four Sundays). Attendance at official functions is not to be construed as vacation time.

Note: If financial constraints of a congregation make difficult monetary raises for a rostered person, a congregation might consider providing an extra week of vacation (including Sunday) as compensation.

* 1. SICK LEAVE

Sick Leave should be provided for up to eight weeks per year (including Sundays) with full salary, housing, and benefits. An agreement may be made for partial disability beyond that time in coordination with ***Portico.***

* 1. MATERNITY LEAVE

Maternity Leave should be provided for up to six weeks (including Sundays) with full salary, housing, and benefits. Because of special concerns or needs, additional time may be negotiated between the rostered lay leader and congregation.

* 1. PATERNITY LEAVE / ADOPTIVE PARENTAL LEAVE

Paternity leave and adoptive parental leave may be negotiated between the rostered lay leader and congregation. It is recommended that up to six consecutive weeks (including Sundays) with full salary, housing, and benefits be provided. Because of special concerns or needs actual time may be more or less than six weeks.

* 1. CONTINUNG EDUCATION: The ELCA expects of its rostered personnel a minimum of 50 contact hours annually in organized continuing education.
     1. Congregations are encouraged to make available to their rostered lay leader at least two weeks (including Sundays) per year for continuing education.
     2. The scheduling of continuing education should be determined by the rostered lay leader in consultation with the council.
     3. $1,000 is recommended; a minimum of $700 per year should be provided for this education.
     4. A rostered lay leader should have the privilege of accumulating educational leave and funds over a two year period.
  2. SABBATICAL LEAVE

Sabbatical Leave offers an extended block of time for study, personal growth, and reflection apart from usual congregational responsibilities.

* + 1. Normally, an extended study and renewal period of one to three months after five years in the current call should be provided with full salary, housing, and benefits.
    2. The leave plan is to be developed in cooperation with the council. The parties shall seek the counsel of the bishop before finalizing an agreement.
    3. The congregation shall be responsible for arranging for required coverage during the leave.
    4. Within six weeks of the completion of the sabbatical leave the rostered lay leader shall present the congregation a written reflection on the experience and the implications for the ministry of the congregation and ministry in the parish. This written reflection shall be added to the rostered lay leader’s file.
  1. WORK WEEK

Because of the nature of ministry, it is recognized that rostered lay leaders are expected to fulfill many evening and weekend responsibilities in addition to Sunday morning worship. Therefore, adequate time off (one day per week minimum) should be granted that would be free from ministry-related responsibilities.

* 1. SPECIAL CONCERNS

Where there are special needs within a rostered lay leader’s family, these should be considered separately.

**COMPENSATION WORKSHEET**

**ROSTERED LAY LEADER**

* 1. **COMPENSATION**
     1. Base Salary (I.A.)
     2. Housing (II.) (if applicable)
     3. Other (I.B.)

TOTAL DEFINED COMPENSATION

* 1. **PENSION AND OTHER BENEFITS**
     1. ELCA pension and benefits (***Portico***) (III.A.1.)
     2. Medical Reimbursement (III.A.2)

TOTAL PENSION AND BENEFITS

* 1. **PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES**
     1. Automobile reimbursement or allowance (V.A.)
     2. Other Professional expenses (V.B.)
     3. Cell phone (V.C.)
     4. Continuing Education (VI.E.)
  2. **SPECIAL CONCERNS (VI.H.)**

\*Roman numerals, letters, and numbers refer to sections within the guidelines.

1. In response to Friday’s question concerning the health plans offered to clergy in the Synod for 2015, Bishop Allende reported that the data from Portico show: 89% of congregations use the Gold Plus plan, 7% use the Silver Plus plan, 3% use the Platinum Plus plan, and 1% use the Bronze Plus plan. Bishop Allende also announced that yesterday’s offering for Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service totaled $2,535.08.
2. Bishop Allende called upon The Rev. Angel Jackson (St. John, McZena), who is serving as a Process Builder for the proposed ELCA Social Statement “Women and Justice: One in Christ.” Social Statements come from ELCA’s belief that the gospel calls us to address social issues in the world. She provided definition and examples of Social Statements from the ELCA. Generally a topic comes to the church council from Synod Assemblies, the Church Council selects a 19-member task force to study the issue, and the task force gathers information from experts and hosts listening events to hear from ELCA members. A draft statement will be sent out for comment (October 2017). Church Council may vote to recommend the document (Feb. 2018). The Churchwide Assembly then votes on the document (2019). The Women and Justice statement is currently in listening events stage. As a process builder, Pr. Jackson facilitates listening events. Everything that is submitted at a listening event is read by at least two members of the task force. Women’s groups are the natural thought about who to have in a listening group, but congregations are encouraged to look further. A question was raised as to whether the ELCA is interested in feedback from the community, not just ELCA members. The task force is primarily interested in feedback from ELCA members, but it will accept comments from anyone at a listening event. If you are interested in hosting a listening group in your congregation, contact Pr. Jackson or go to [www.elca.org/womenandjustice](http://www.elca.org/womenandjustice). This is another way that we can be church together.
3. Bishop Allende introduced The Rev. Rick Barger, president of Trinity Lutheran Seminary. Pr. Barger noted that the number one crisis our church faces is a crisis of leadership. We need healthy, vibrant, self-differentiated, transformative, resilient, evangelical leaders whose lives bear the marks of a deep devotion to Christ as Lord. Trinity strives for excellence in a variety of ways, and their students believe this is the most exhilarating time to be the church in North America.
4. The assembly had been asked during Friday’s session to submit written questions to Bishop Allende and Bishop Eaton, which would be addressed in a Question-and-Answer session moderated by The Rev. Don King. The questions and portions of the Bishops responses appear below.
5. What is the one thing you would really like to do in moving the ELCA or Synod forward?
6. Eaton: Have our church just really live as if we believe the resurrection was real.
7. Allende: Let us love one another, because love is from God. If we exercise the love that cares not about oneself but the other, the church would move forward more quickly.
8. I fear my grandchildren will not feel the need for connection to the local congregation they way I did or my children did. How do we make congregational life more important?
   1. Allende: It is hard to tell you what to do. It’s a matter of developing habits and developing them in the home. We think of the three legs of the stool of nurturing in baptism: parents, godparents, and congregation. How many of us in each of these roles take the promises of baptism seriously? We must search our own commitment to nurturing children in the faith.
   2. Eaton: As we examine our own lives and what we demonstrate to our children, we must ask: How many times do they see you praying or reading scripture? How often do you talk to them about the love of Christ? How often do you talk about church with joy?
9. What are we doing to strengthen the bonds with other denominations with whom we have full communion partnerships?
   1. Eaton: We have 6 full communion partners, and we do much work in concert with them. Our military chaplaincy is closely tied with the Episcopal Church. Latino mission starts are closely tied with Episcopal and soon Methodist churches. We work together in a variety of ways in advocacy.
10. Please discuss the proposed changes to lay roster and timetable for voting on this?
    1. Eaton: We are looking at the practices of our full communion partners and considering combining into one word and service roster with deaconesses, diaconal ministers, and Associates in Ministry. The Churchwide Assembly in 2016 will look at whether to combine the rosters, and the 2019 Assembly may look at entrance rite and ordination issues.
11. Is there a plan for the ELCA to make a response to a Supreme Court decision in favor of marriage equality?
    1. Eaton: Congregations that choose to do so can hold same gender couples publically accountable. We do not have any plans as yet for a separate rite for same gender marriage. We have not said as a church we are engaging in same-gender marriage. We have a task force looking into issues of ministry to and for same-gender families.
12. Do you believe in holding congregations accountable for withholding mission support, such as fee for services?
    1. Allende: He does not believe in a fee-for-service model as a punishment to congregations, but we are doing a fee-for-service model for Mary Ann Schwabe and the Congregational Resource team. Mary Ann Schwabe now works for Churchwide expression because we could not afford to keep her on staff. Now congregations are charged $900 for the services of the Congregational Resource Team. We must be church together in all ways, spiritually, socially, economically. We ask churches in October-November to make a statement of intent, but we have many blank spaces in that report in the pre-assembly materials.
    2. Eaton: Giving is a spiritual discipline. How do we move from being an atomized church to seeing a larger church together? Maybe congregations can hold each other accountable in clusters? We need to step out of the restrictive way we think about money in America to a fuller understanding of stewardship.
13. ELCA Disaster Relief is a great blessing to our world. My congregation is a disaster. What help is available to us as a grassroots congregation?
    1. Allende: The Congregation Resource Team is whom you want to engage. Bishop Allende himself goes out to congregations as well. He now usually takes a member of the Congregation Resource Team with him. Usually it is a small but very vocal minority that creates dissention. The greatest sin the majority commits is keeping silent—giving power to the dissenters.
14. What has been your high and low since you became bishop?
    1. Eaton: The high is being out with the people. There are great opportunities such as meeting the Pope, but those are not the moments where she most feels the Spirit. She has been asked what she is afraid of. She is afraid of it becoming an overly political job and afraid of “believing the hype” and the unnatural deference give to the office of Presiding Bishop.
    2. Allende: He echoes much of what Bishop Eaton said. The highs are Sunday morning when he is out in the congregations meeting people. The lows are dealing with the conflict in certain congregations. Closing of Bethlehem, Youngstown was also a low. It was very difficult to actually pronounce the words “I declare this congregation closed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”
15. What advice would you give to someone considering entering seminary?
    1. Eaton: Before answering this question, she wanted to address the issue of congregational closings. If a congregation discerns it will close, why not give funds to the Synod to start new missions? If we see that we are closing, let’s see if new life can occur somewhere else. Run, don’t walk to seminary if you are feeling a call and working with spiritual leaders. The privileged position we had is fading. We in the church historically depended on ourselves, but now we must depend on God.
    2. Allende: He would point those considering seminary toward the coming revival of the Lay Academy in our Synod, which is how Bishop Allende discerned his call.
16. It feels like a small church cannot compete financially with larger congregations. Can something be done to help small congregations keep their pastors, like requiring a minimum commitment?
    1. Eaton: Pastors are not in it for the money, but student debt is an issue. Pastors might need to be bi-vocational in some cases. We need to empower the laity to be ministers in the community. Baptism is the most important ordination that we experience. Can we have more collaboration between large and small congregations without the small congregation feeling threatened? We tend to view the congregation as “my” church, not Christ’s church.
    2. Bishop Allende and Pr. Biermann regularly review the needs of small congregations and look for ways to encourage collaboration. Our competition is sin and the devil, not other congregations.
17. What spiritual discipline are you involved in when you have been emptied by the demands and challenges of your ministry?
    1. Allende: The Bible. He has learned more and more to rely on scripture and daily devotions to find a sense of comfort and calm. In sleepless nights, he turns to the word of God. He uses a devotional entitled “For all the Saints.”
    2. Eaton: She engages in 20 minutes of silence per day, centering on Psalm 46—Be still and know that I am God.
18. What is one question that you are never asked, that you think you should be asked? Neither Bishop was able to identify an important unasked question.
19. The assembly recessed as of 10:15am and re-convened at 10:37am for Prayer Around the Cross led by Donna Fagerhaug and The Rev. Sean Meyers, with readings from members of Lord of Life Canfield, and Brian Wentzel as pianist.
20. Prayer Around the Cross ended at 11:28am, and the assembly recessed until Bishop Allende called it back to order at 11:47am.
21. The Rev. Darla Ann Kratzer of Reference and Counsel Committee presenting the Courtesy Resolution.

**SA14.05.06 To adopt the Courtesy Resolution. CARRIED by consensus.**

**2015 Courtesy Resolution**

**WHEREAS** the Northeastern Ohio Synod, gathered in assembly, celebrates and is committed to the proclamation of the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, serving all people, following the example of Jesus, and striving for justice and peace in all the world; and

**WHEREAS** the 2015 Northeastern Ohio Synod Assembly has sought discernment for its work through Word, Sacrament, and prayer; and

**WHEREAS** we have been buried with Christ in Holy Baptism; and

**WHEREAS** we are church together; and

**WHEREAS** in Christ we have been reconciled and given the ministry of reconciliation:

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Northeastern Ohio Synod in assembly extend its appreciation and thanks for the dedicated work and commitment of time to onsite assembly coordinator Jean Hansen, assembly coordinator Sony Gilroy, assembly committee chair Dan Caruso, the assembly planning committee members and all others who helped to organize this assembly; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that we extend appreciation to John Sleasman for his continued faithful service as parliamentarian; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that we give thanks to God for the gifts and talents of the worship leaders and musicians at this assembly; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that we recognize and give thanks for the tireless and grace-filled leadership of Bishop Abraham Allende as he challenges us to be more energetic, imaginative, and resourceful in making Christ known; and for the diligent and faithful leadership or our synod officers and council; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that we give thanks for our Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton for graciously taking the time to be with us; to bring us into the developing vision of how God is calling the church today to work for our community/*(ies)* and the life of the world; and emphasizing the places where we as the ELCA are already nurturing, working with, and serving people in sites that span the globe. We thank her for her humor and candor as she encourages us to share the lavish love of God in Jesus Christ that we have experienced in our lives; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that we will, as congregations of the Northeastern Ohio Synod, pray for the Spirit-filled leadership and guidance in the many and various ministries of our Bishops, Synod officers, council, and staff; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that we recognize the significant anniversaries and appreciate the loyal and faithful ministries of those congregations and rostered leaders who have used their God-given gifts to share the Good News of God, in Jesus Christ; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that we are church together, trusting in God’s Baptismal promise, striving to serve the world as church together by which our gracious God extends his grace and mercy to ALL!

1. Karen Kaufman distributed prizes for various drawings of Augsburg Fortress materials on behalf of the Synod Resource Center. Penny Christensen (on behalf of Kevin Eichhorn) presented LOMO “Camp for Free!” drawing. Barb White from NEOSWO presented two drawings.
2. Donna Fagerhaug, Synod Worship Committee announced Augsburg Fortress “Holden Prayer Around the Cross” and “Singing Our Prayer” as the worship resources for the prayer service.
3. The Rev. Jimmy Madsen of First, Lorain gave thanks for the support of the Synod for First Lutheran Church, Lorain after the fire in their building. They are now worshiping in a school cafeteria. About 75% of their regular attendees are involved in a committee. They are planning to rebuild. Bishop Allende noted the importance of Church together.
4. Bishop Allende installed the newly elected Synod Council, Consultation Committee, and 2016 Churchwide Assembly Voting Members.
5. Bishop Allende adjourned the Assembly at 12:22pm after the order for the closing of a synod assembly.

Additional content of the pre-assembly mailing and distributed material is explicitly incorporated into these minutes by reference, including those items relating to the roster report and statistics, and budget and finance material (including audited financial statements). These items are part of the *acta* of the assembly. Other ancillary material available through official channels does not constitute *acta*, but may provide expansive context for the assembly record.