

The 2026 Northeastern MN Synod Assembly Highlights

“A New Creation is Everything! As for those who will follow this rule – peace be upon them, and mercy.” (Galatians 6:15b-16a)

39th Northeastern MN Synod Assembly at Breezy Point Resort - April 24-26th

Friday

Plenary #1

The 39th Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly began on Friday, April 24th at Breezy Point Resort. The plenary #1 session opened under the theme **“A New Creation is Everything!”** Bishop Amy Odgren opened with a welcome and Land Acknowledgement and the assembly sang their gathering hymn *Gather Us In* (ELW 532). During Bishop Amy’s opening address, guests were introduced: musician Jonathan Rundman, visiting region three bishops, and ELCA churchwide representatives Deacon MaryAnn Schwabe, Executive for Synod relations, and ELCA Secretary, Rev. CeCee Mills. **The adoption of the agenda and 2025 minutes** were introduced by Secretary Jon Moe and the **rules and procedures** by Parliamentarian Pastor Tanner Howard. Vpoll, a digital software, was used for electronic voting and was practiced by the assembly. After a little practice, it seemed to go well!

The **first quorum report** of the evening included 8 Ministers of Word and Service, 67 Ministers of Word and Sacrament, 7 Ministers of Word and Sacrament retired, 160 Lay voting members, 9 Synod Authorized Ministers, 7 Lay Synod council members for a total of 258 voting members (68.3% lay, 31.7% rostered). The assembly voted to approve the proposed agenda, rules and procedures, and the 2025 synod assembly minutes. Bishop Election Chair Deacon Brenda Tibbetts and Churchwide Representatives Deacon Schwabe and Secretary Rev Mills lead the assembly through the Bishop Election Process and Rules. Before the start of the first ballot, it was recognized that not all voting members were checked in. The Assembly voted to complete the check in process to allow several voting members to finish registration check in before the first ballot of the Bishop Election. An **amended quorum report** was reported with 8 Ministers of Word and Service, 74 Ministers of Word and Sacrament, 8 Ministers of Word and Sacrament retired, 170 Lay voting members, 9 Synod Authorized Ministers, 9 Lay Synod council members for a total of 277 eligible voting members (67.5% lay to 32.5% rostered).

The **first ballot for bishop** was a modified ecclesiastical ballot which included the four pre-identified candidates for bishop with an option for a write-in candidate. The assembly was invited to sing a song, followed by prayer, and then were invited to vote.

Bishop Amy Odgren gave her report encouraging us to envision the world and our lives as sacred gifts and to live fully and intentionally into the new creation God has called us to be. After her report, Secretary Jon Moe presented Bishop Amy with a “Blessing Basket” curated with musician Brandi Carlile wine, coffee, sauna oils, etc. as a prelude to her **retirement celebration at 1:30 pm on June 13th** at Zion Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids, MN.

LYO Youth Trevor Ranisate from Gethsemane Lutheran in Virginia gave the **Lutheran Youth Organization** Report sharing about his experiences and opportunities to grow in faith and help others grow as an LYO leader in our Synod. Julia Gwash from Gloria Dei Lutheran in Duluth shared about her experience as a Young Adult involved in **Gather Twin Ports** and how this organization is impacting young adults in our synod. She reminded the assembly “young adults are ready to lead right now. They just need to be invited.”

LYO members Josh Christensen and Trevor Ranisate came back on stage after reports and lead the congregation through an LYO practice of “**WHEATing**” (**Where, Hobbies, Experiences, Acquaintances, and Travel**), an exercise to help meet new people and create connection.

Pastor Sarah Stadler presented the **Report of the Hunger, Justice and Rural Life Committee**, sharing that our Synod raised \$309,720 this year for World Hunger! Pastor Stadler announced Grace Lutheran in Sandstone as the winner of the Holy Cow Award for giving a whopping \$79.94 per baptized member! Holy Cow!

Jonathon Rundman led the assembly in **Holden Evening Prayer**. Bishop Regina Hassanally gave the message based on our Galatians text. The assembly closed Holden Evening Prayer by reading our NE MN Synod Welcome Statement.

The **Report of Ballot #1** of the Bishop Election was announced with 266 votes cast. Results were: Pr. Andrew Berry - 41, Pr. David Carlson - 74, Pr. Taryn Montgomery - 91, Pr. Kathryn Tiede – 57. Write-in candidates were Pr. Liz Davis – 2, Pr. Drew Bakken – 1.



Saturday

Plenary Session #2

Time together on Saturday, April 25 started with **worship** lead by Rev. Dr. Josh Blare and Synod Minister for Mental Health and Wellness, Joy Hensel. The Assembly was given play-doh to craft representation of what church means to each. With pressures congregations face today, this molds and changes the forms of our creating. Joy encouraged the assembly to see that Paul encourages us to understand that “a new creation is

everything...not preservation, not perfection. Pressure felt is not the end of church, but the hands of God molding, reshaping, and forming us.”

Plenary Session #2 started with **synod elections**. Pastor Kevin Olson and Chair Bishop Odgren lead the assembly in elections to synod council, committee of Reference, Council, and Memorial, Nominating Committee, Committee on discipline, and the Consultation Committee.

ELCA Secretary Rev. CeCee Mills provided the **ELCA Churchwide report** and reminded us that we are a Connected Church, sharing ministries and programs that our mission support dollars directly support. Rev. CeCee thanked the Northeastern MN Synod for our contributions to Churchwide ministry and shared a video from our presiding bishop Yehiel Curry.

Synod Treasurer Theresa Jacobson presented the proposed **2027 Synod Budget** on behalf of the synod council (p. 43 BOR).

Ballot #2 for Bishop Election contained all four pre-identified candidates. Both write-in candidates chose to withdraw their names. The assembly was led in a song written by Jonathan Rundman with the words *“We lift our hands, we lift our hearts, we lift our lives to you, o Lord.”* A prayer was shared before the vote.

The **2027 Compensation guidelines** were presented by Andy Larson. The Compensation Guidelines are a document that guides the compensation for church pastors, deacons, and lay professionals working in church ministry (p. 59-102 BOR). Pastor Rollie Bockbrader presented the **proposed Constitutional Amendments** (BOR 103-104). A statement was provided from the floor pointing out the lack of nonbinary language included in S10.06.

Rev. Tim Schroeder provided a report and video from **Portico Benefits**.

Pastor Christie Manisto introduced experiences with the **Global Refuge** (formerly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) **Border Emersion Trip** and presented a video of our NE MN synod members who spent a week down in El Paso, TX learning from people who are working with immigrant and refugee support and ICE detention support on the border.

Results of Ballot #2 of the Bishop Election was reported – 274 votes cast with results: Pr. Andrew Berry – 35, Pr. David Carlson – 76, Pr. Taryn Montgomery – 100, and Pr. Kathryn Tiede – 63. All four candidates move to Ballot #3. The Four candidates were given 5 minutes to address the assembly in the following order: 1) Pr. Dave Carlson, 2) Pr. Kathryn Tiede, 3) Pr. Andrew Berry, and 4) Pr. Taryn Montgomery. Between each address, the assembly sang verses from *“When you send forth your spirit.”*

Before the 5-minute addresses, Joy Hensel lead the assembly in a **mental health moment** centered around the acronym GIVE, a way to improve communication skills and relationships with others. Gentle, Interested, Validate, and Easy.

Bishop Amy Odgren gave the **anniversary recognition and in memoriams**, highlighting anniversaries of ordination and congregations, as well as a memorial for those rostered leaders who have passed away this year.

Ballot #3 of the Bishop Election took place after the addresses. The assembly was led in song and prayer prior to voting.

Plenary #3

The Report of Ballot #3 for Bishop with 277 votes cast was: Pr. Andrew Berry – 37, Pr. Dave Carlson – 70, Pr. Taryn Montgomery – 111, and Pr. Kathryn Tiede – 59. The three candidates with the most votes participated in a Q&A period with the assembly. Bishop Election Chair, Deacon Brenda Tibbetts, lead the session. Ballot #4 for Synod Bishop commenced after the Q&A. The assembly sang and prayed before the vote.

The results of Ballot #4 for Bishop with 277 votes cast were: Pr. David Carlson – 63, Pr. Taryn Montgomery – 140, and Pr. Kathryn Tiede – 74. The two nominees with the most votes gave 3-minute statements to the assembly, with the Ballot #5 to follow.

The **Report of the Reference, Counsel and Memorial Committee** included 4 Resolutions:

- 26-1A – Funding for the Northeastern Minnesota Synod Hunger Grant Fund passed.
- 26-2B – Ecological Resilience in a Time of Climate Crisis passed.
- 26-3A – Youth and Young Adult Voting Members at Synod Assembly passed with amendment.
 - Amendment in the first RESOLVED to include “been confirmed and has”- passed as a majority on Vpoll 59.46% in favor and 40.54% in opposition.
 - Amended resolution was passed.
- 26-4A – Resolution on the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action passed.

The **Report of the 5th Ballot** for Bishop needed a simple majority for election. The Rev. Taryn Montgomery was declared Bishop-elect. In Pastor Taryn Montgomery’s remarks, she shared this question with the assembly: “What would it look like ‘if’ – as we lean into this season together?” as a question to discern in this new creation and transition our Synod will be living into.



Saturday Evening was the **2nd Annual Emmaus Fund Gala**. Assembly members celebrated the impact micro-grants have provided to congregations this year and raised funds to continue building the Emmaus Fund’s capacity to support leadership development, youth and young adult engagement, and congregational outreach! LYO President Abby Hartog and Pastor Josh Blare shared how these micro-grants impacted thier congregational ministries. Together through the generosity of individuals and congregations we raised \$43,283!

Sunday

Plenary #4



Plenary session #4 started Sunday, April 26th with morning worship and devotions.

MaryBeth Jacob presented the **People’s Choice Winner for the Quilts** the “Twilight Cabin” donated by Barb Murray, Messiah Lutheran Church and encouraged voting members to keep bidding! By the closing time at 10 am on Sunday, the assembly raised a total of \$9,556 dollars for World Hunger through the quilt auction and marketplace!

The assembly elected **Karen Gabriel to a 4-year term as the next Vice President** of the NE MN Synod. Bishop Amy Odgren shared a reflection and thank you for outgoing Vice President Rachel Berry, which was followed by Rachel’s thank you to the assembly for the honor of serving as their Synod Vice President for the past eight years.

Becca Thom and Doug Squibbs presented a report from **Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota** and presented the **Servants of Christ Award** to Our Saviors Lutheran in Hibbing! Pastor Kevin Olson received the award on Our Savior’s behalf.

Report of the Synod Council:

- The **2027 compensation guidelines** were presented by the synod council, seconded, and **passed**.
- The **2027 proposed budget** was presented by the synod council, seconded, and passed.
- The **proposed constitutional changes** were presented by the synod council, seconded. The assembly approved an amendment to the motion to modify the language to gender neutral and nonbinary persons.
- The Assembly voted on and approved a **bylaw** that will entitle each congregation to have one youth lay voting member at any meeting of the synod assembly in response to the passing of resolution 26-3A.

Closing Worship followed the assembly.

A special thank you to all who were part of the planning and running of the assembly. It takes many amazing people to create an assembly that runs smoothly! Mark your calendars for the **2027 NE MN Synod Assembly** at Zion Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids MN from April 30 – May 2nd.

Welcoming	Connecting	Reforming	Supporting
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