



The Upstate New York Synod gathered for its thirty-third assembly June 5-6, 2022, in Rochester, New York at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center. Health and safety protocols, including vaccination checks and rapid tests, and a shortened assembly schedule helped make an in-person gathering as safe as possible for over two hundred voting members. This was the first Synod Assembly to gather with the Rev. Lee Miller II presiding as bishop and a number of new assistants to the bishop, ministry specialists, and synod staff.

Elections were held to fill a number of important positions. For the office of Synod Vice President, Thomas Madden (Incarnate Word, Rochester) was elected to a fourth term over Lindsay Stannard (St. John's, Albany). Wilhelmina LanFear, James Netzer, and the Rev. Gail Wolling were elected to the Consultation Committee while Kathleen Haldenwang, the Rev. David Preisinger, the Rev. Dana Smith, and Judith Warner were elected to the Discipline Committee. The Rev. Beth George was elected to the board of United Lutheran Seminary. Pamela Donovan (Central Crossroads) and the Rev. Kwame Pitts (Niagara Frontier) were elected to Synod Council from their respective conferences, while at-large positions for persons of color or primary language other than English, young adult, and youth members received no nominations and will be filled by appointment of the Synod Council.

The assembly also considered a number of **resolutions** from the conferences and from the floor. A resolution creating a path for Synodically Authorized Ministers to serve as additional lay voting members from their congregations and a resolution calling for action on the opioid addiction crisis were adopted easily. A proposed constitution amendment to allow Ministers of Word and Service to serve as conference deans also received the required two-thirds majority and will be on the agenda at the 2023 Synod Assembly for final adoption. A resolution regarding maternity, paternity and family policies and leave for rostered ministers was referred to the Synod Council, as well as a memorial asking the ELCA Church Council to create a way for multiple congregations to concurrently call the same rostered minister. A Zoom gathering was held the week before the assembly to answer budgetary questions, after which the 2023 Mission Proposal also passed easily.

Even with a shorter timeline, the assembly took time to **welcome special guests** and **celebrate** the work being done by disciples across the synod. The Rev. Kimberly A. Vaughn, Senior Director of Christian Community and Leadership Mission, served as representative from the ELCA and presided at the opening worship service of the assembly. The Synodical Discipleship Award was presented to Joanne Lembach and ordination and commissioning anniversaries were honored with a slide show, including eight rostered leaders celebrating service of fifty years or more. Spoken reports were also received from Bishop Miller and synod staff, the Racial Justice Task Force, the Synod Hunger Team, the Global Ministry Team, Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center, Women of the ELCA, the Gender Justice Task Force, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, Portico, and the ELCA Foundation.

The assembly theme, “Cultivating a G.R.A.C.E. Mindset: Generous Love,” was reflected in the readings and hymns chosen for **worship** on both days. A service of Holy Communion on Sunday evening officially opened the assembly, with Bishop Miller preaching and music from the new worship resource *All Creation Sings* in addition to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. A prayer of

lament mourned those lost in the recent Tops mass shooting in Buffalo and those lives lost in the COVID pandemic, in addition to naming the many ways our world desperately needs “generous love.” Special musical guest _____ served as cantor for “Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit,” and the Rev. Kimberly A. Vaughn led the assembly in claiming their baptismal inheritance and reaffirming their commitment to be agents of this love. Monday morning prayer was led by the Rev. Laurie Carson, the Rev. Roger Griffiths and Deacon Lee Lindeman using music from Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center. The Rev. Imani Olear, Director for Evangelical Mission, preached at the closing prayer service before those elected were installed in their positions, those serving as voting members to the Churchwide Assembly in August 2022 were blessed and commissioned, and the assembly goers were sent out to sow “generous love” in the world.