



# Report of the Bishop

2022

Dear Gulf Coast Leaders,

*Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering,  
for the one who has promised is faithful.  
And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds,  
not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some,  
but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*  
**Hebrews 10:23-25**

The last two years have indeed been challenging, both as individuals and as church. Hurricanes, winter freeze, pandemic and racial strife. We are in the Easter season, a season of hope and resurrection. Spring is here. It is a time to replant the garden. Some of our beds lay bare. It is time to cultivate the soil, plant, water, weed and feed.

This is the theme for our assembly. It is time to reboot. It is time to replant. God gives the growth and invites us to fill the earth and till the earth. We cannot assume all the plants from the last season will reemerge. Some will, and for this we give thanks. Others will not, and so it is time for us to replant our congregations for a new season of ministry. We plant now for a harvest this fall. Pray the Lord will send workers into the harvest. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few!



## STATE OF THE SYNOD

The question I get asked most is, "So, how is the synod doing?" The answer is complicated. Everyone has had a rough go, some more than others. In-person worship attendance is lower than pre-pandemic levels but is coming back. Offerings have dipped, but not as much as one would have expected after a year of online worship.

Meanwhile congregations have fed their community, provided support to those who are struggling, built affordable housing, and done other amazing things. Pastor and deacons have been ordained, newcomers have been baptized and the gospel has been preached. Our congregations have proven to be quite adaptive and resilient. We have all had a lesson in the power of community. This Easter felt good, with full houses again. The work ahead will be rebooting, revitalizing, reconnecting, and renewing.



## ASSEMBLY OFFERING

This year's offering will help pay down the enormous seminary debt carried by some of our pastors and deacons. We all know it's not a level playing field. Some come from families that pay for their education outright. Others must borrow, incurring sometimes six figures of debt, a crushing load that affects the kinds of calls they can take. Our goal is to raise \$50K at this assembly, and \$100K this year. Will you help us reach our goal? When 100 families give a gift of any size, a generous donor will provide an additional \$10K gift. Gifts of all sizes matter. We are well on our way already. Can your congregation take a love offering to help us get there? Give here:

<https://gulfcoastsynod.org/synod-assembly-offering-2022>.

## FINANCES

**Thank you!** This year we operated at a deficit, but we also received our PPP (Payroll Protection Program) loan forgiveness, so our financials show a surplus. With all we've been through, this is a remarkable outcome. **Thank you.**

## SYNOD STAFF

Your [synod staff](#) are at your service. Our hope this year is to add another admin and possibly a disaster response coordinator.

- Aimee Elles, Administrative Services Coordinator
- Brother Chris Markert, Bishop's Associate for Mission
- Bishop Mike Rinehart
- Pastor Tracey Breashears Schultz, Bishop's Associate for Leadership
- Beth Vu, Bookkeeper

We are also grateful for Lizbeth Johnson (LFSW) and Peggy Hahn with LEAD.

Thank you for the privilege of serving as bishop these past 15 years. Thank you for the hard work you have been doing in this difficult time. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope, meeting together, encouraging one another, and provoking one another to love and good works.

Respectfully submitted,

**Bishop Michael Rinehart**

## BY THE NUMBERS

- **28,357** members
- **4,508** onsite in worship each Sunday
- **5,038** onsite in worship each Sunday
- **101** congregations and Missions
- **3** campus ministries: LSU, Houston, and Brazos Valley (Texas A&M and Blinn). New Orleans is still in development.
- **2** congregations served by ecumenical partners (Galilean La Place, Grace New Orleans)
- **93** active pastors and deacons
- **106** retired pastors and deacons
- **6** new pastors and deacons
- **\$1.368M** budget

