

2025 Synod Assembly Minutes DRAFT

Minutes of the 2025 Assembly

Of the

Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod of the ELCA

Date: May 15-17, 2025

Venue: Hilton New Orleans Riverside, New Orleans, LA

Minutes

The 47th Assembly of the TX-LA Gulf Coast Synod was called to order by Bishop Michael Rinehart and Vice President Robert Rivera. The Assembly materials were distributed via the synod website, and voting was done via the VPOLL website.

Day 1 of the Assembly in Session at 9:23 am. Assembly recessed at 5:27 pm.

Day 2 of the Assembly in Session at 9:12 am. Assembly adjourned at 2:25 pm.

Actions Taken

1. Adopted the First Credentials Report as presented. Quorum established.
 - a. Total Voting Members - 220, Total Rostered Minister Voting Members - 79, Total Lay Voting Members - 141. % Lay Voting Members 64.09%, % Rostered Voting Members 35.91%.
2. Approved the Consent Agenda, comprising the Standing Rules, Minutes, and Agenda for the Assembly.
3. Amended the proposed 2026 Compensation Guidelines with an additional 2% for both Urban and Rural Congregations.
4. Approved the 2026 Compensation Guidelines as Amended.
5. Held the first ballot for Synod Vice President.
 - a. Kathy Patrick was elected as Synod Vice-President with 128 Votes. (110 needed for simple majority)
6. Held the first ballot of the Bishop's Election.
 - a. 214 total ballots cast, 208 legal ballots.
 - b. No candidate received 75% of the votes; the election moves to a second ballot.
7. Motion to elect unopposed Synod Council candidates en bloc, by acclamation.
8. Elected unopposed Synod Council Candidates by acclamation.
9. Adopted the Second Credentials Report as presented. Quorum established.
 - a. Total Voting Members - 223, Total Rostered Minister Voting Members - 81, Total Lay Voting Members - 142. % Lay Voting Members - 63.69%, % Rostered Voting Members - 36.32%.

10. Held the second ballot of the Bishop's Election.
 - a. Legal votes cast - 221. 166 votes are required for an election.
 - b. No candidate received 166 votes; the election moves to a third ballot.
11. Adopted both of the audit reports for 2023 and 2024.
12. Adopted the third Credentials Report as presented. Quorum established.
 - a. Total Voting Members - 224, Total Rostered Minister Voting Members - 82, Total Lay Voting Members - 142. % Lay Voting Members - 63.39%, % Rostered Voting Members - 36.61%.
13. Held the third ballot of the Bishop's Election.
 - a. Legal votes cast - 219. 146 votes are required for an election.
 - b. Tracey Breashears Schultz is elected Bishop with 153 votes.
14. Adjourned the Synod Assembly and Convened the Lutherhill Corporation Meeting at 11:18 am.
15. Elected 5 members to the Lutherhill Board of Directors
16. Adjourned the Lutherhill Corporation Meeting and Reconvened the Synod Assembly at 11:42 am.
17. Approved the 2025-26 Budget.

Discussion

Day 1

- Began with a welcome and words of thanks from Bishop Mike, and an Overview of the day's schedule. The assembly also received reports from Pastor Tim Schrader on Portico Benefit Services, the Jensen Ford Insurance Agency, and Synod Disaster Coordinator Maritza Spraug.
 - ELCA Treasurer, and our Churchwide Representative, Lori Fedyk, described the role of a Bishop to the Assembly and introduced the Bishop's Election Process.
 - Presentation of Candidates for Synod Council.
 - Acknowledgment and Celebration of Retirements.
 - Report from Bishop's Associate for Mission, Jose Luis Escalera.
 - Report from Bishop's Associate for Leadership, Tracey Breashears-Schultz.
 - Ecumenical Greetings delivered to the Assembly.
 - Video and Discussion on Hosanna Hot Meals by Pastor Candy O'Meara.
 - Presentation by Pastor Arthur Murphy of the LiveOn Board.
 - Presentation by John Roalson on the Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest.
 - Bishop's Report by Bishop Michael Rinehart.
 - Video and Discussion on Disaster Response by Pastor Katie Jacob.
 - Vice President's Report from Robert Rivera.
 - Treasurer's Report given by Robert Rivera, on behalf of Paul Antolik.
 - Veronique Eberhart provided an update on our companion synod from the Central African Republic.

- Pastors Alan Kethan and Cassandra Nagle provided an update on our companion synod, the Lutheran Church in Peru.

Day 2

- Video and Discussion on Youth Ministry by Pastor Katie Jacob.
- Anders Nilsen presented on Campus Ministry at Tulane University and Loyola University.
- Lutherhill Corporation Meeting by the Lutherhill Board and Staff.
- Churchwide Representative and ELCA Treasurer, Lori Fedyk, provided a report to the Assembly on the work of the Churchwide organization, including social statements, resources available for congregations, and a video from Presiding Bishop Eaton.