

**ABT Synod Convention 2024** June 22-24 Edmonton – delegate report by Beth Olver

At our daily worship services, delegates and guests of the Convention were introduced to a lovely new musical setting of our liturgy. *Liturgy of the Beloved* (by Ben Johnston-Urey) was commissioned by Bishop Larry and Cathy Kochendorfer as a farewell gift to the Synod. Perhaps we will try parts of it at All Saints.

Since Bishop Larry announced that he would not let his name stand for re-election as bishop, the main task of the convention was to choose a new Bishop. All congregations were invited earlier this year to participate in a discernment process – we did during coffee time after 3 services. There were three nominations received before the conference and many others in the first (nominating) ballot. At the fifth ballot **Rev. Patricia Schmermund** from Holy Spirit Edmonton was elected and installed at the closing worship on Monday afternoon.

All the reports from the convention can be found on the [albertasynod.ca](http://albertasynod.ca) website. Look under *our story - ABT synod information – ABT Synod Convention 2024 – Bulletin of Reports*. The one called 2024 ABT Bulletin of Reports includes the Agenda and Sections A, B, C, D, E. the financial reports are separate documents.

**Highlights from reports:** From Section C- The Bishop's Office and section D Officers and Council committees

Words of hope and encouragement **from Bishop Larry Kochendorfer:**

“We are a very different Synod than when I began as Assistant to the Bishop in 2010, and then was elected Synod Bishop in October 2012 and ordained in January 2013. Yes, we continue to be challenged with several realities not unique to our Synod nor to our denomination: a growing reality that there are too few candidates for congregational ministry, congregations struggling to provide financially for full or part-time ministries, shrinking worship participation, shrinking budgets, a need for faith formation and discipleship. I know that you share these realities, and others, with me. However, decline in participation or financial support does not mean God's purpose/mission for the church has changed.

My experience these past years is that the people and ministries across our Synod are rising to the challenge, seeking to join God in God's mission, which involves much intentional listening, shared discernment, experimentation, and risk-taking. Across our Synod we have intentionally focused on missional formation, not as a program, but as a way of living.

We do not know the future, but we have what we need. Jesus is feeding us. The Spirit is guiding us. We have the Scriptures. We have water. We have bread and wine. We have each other. Jesus is with us.

Beloved of God, as people of faith, continue to be humble and gentle with one another. Honour each other. Make space for lament that always accompanies change. Welcome moments of joy. Help each other to live into hope. Trust that God is with us in this time and look for the new things God is doing even now.”

The Bishop's Report is in four sections: Mission Priorities 1. Spirit-Led Leadership, 2. Hope-filled Discipleship 3. Innovative Tradition 4. Collaborative Partnerships. There are four ten-minute videos I

hope to share with you. You may also view them yourself from the ABT synod convention page of the website. Some highlights:

### 1. Spirit-Led Leadership

**Ponder Anew Vision Fund** established 2023 to support Mission Priorities like outdoor ministry, ecumenical and interfaith relationships, exploring models of pastoral ministry, and congregational redevelopment.

**Synod Support our Student's Fund** along with funds From Lutheran Theological Seminary continues to support candidates in the Diaconal and Pastoral tracks, removing financial barriers to those seeking to enter the ministry.

The Synod of Alberta and the Territories **Candidacy Committee** has been engaging with an average of 12 students per year over the past three years. Happy to share that we are working with 15 candidates for ministry this year, which includes 10 in active process.

**Campus Ministry** has been expanding among post-secondary schools in Alberta and supports students

The **Stephen D Wildfang Leadership Award** was given to Dr. Dianne Kieren (Edmonton Augustana) at the banquet on Sunday evening.

### 2. Hope-filled Discipleship

**Youth Gatherings CLAY** (Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth) national youth gatherings 2021 and 2023 Ashes and Embers, as well as Synod Youth Gatherings 2022 Reclaim, Rebuild, Recreate, 2024 Breathe, planning for next CLAY 2025 and next Synod Youth Gathering 2026.

### 3. Innovative Tradition

**Wednesday's Word:** a weekly newsletter from the synod office tells what's happening around the province and the territories. You can subscribe on the ABTSynod.ca website by clicking on the E-Newsletter envelope in the green banner at the top or the bottom of the page

<https://albertasynod.ca/our-ministries/fulfilling-our-mission/publications/wednesdays-word/>

### 4. Collaborative Partnerships

**Calgary Alliance for the Common Good (CACG):** The objectives of CACG and GEA include the creation of a network of diverse religious, nonprofit, labour, ethnic and service groups that seek meaningful relationships with each other while also reaching out to the community. – working with Indigenous Elders for the purpose of reflecting and resourcing efforts toward decolonization and reconciliation. Pastor Wallace was part of CACG.

**Collaborative Partnerships** among Lutheran congregations and others

**Global Partnership** of ABT synod with Evangelical Lutheran Church of Columbia

**Full Communion Partners – Lutheran, Anglican, and Moravian** At a lunch and learn Moravian Pastor Rev Matt Gillard (Redeemer Lutheran Hanna) told us about the Moravian church. In Prague,

Jan Hus (1369-1415) a hundred years before Martin Luther, spoke against indulgences and the infallibility of the Pope, and lobbied for worship in the language of the people and the morality of priests. Although Hus was burned at the stake, followers continued to meet in hiding. Moravian Motto: In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty/diversity. In all things, love.

**Affirming Diversity Ministry Team:** “This Ministry Team was established with the purpose to support and encourage members, congregations, and specialized ministries within the Synod of Alberta and the Territories in welcoming and affirming all people, with the uniqueness of their gifts as Children of God, and as valued partners in ministry. The Ministry Team’s mandate (includes): support and hold safe space for the experiences of those marginalized by our church and world; support ... specialized ministries to engage in breaking down systemic barriers within their contexts as they work towards equity and inclusion; ....”

“We seek to express God’s grace and love as we seek to abide in right relations, uplifting the diversity of those who have often found themselves at the margins of our congregations: such as those living with Disabilities, the 2SLGBTQ2SIA+ community, Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, and other marginalized identities.”

**CARe (Congregational Action and Response for Mental Health) Ministry Team.** Barb Stolee (past chair)

**Care of Creation Ministry Team** “1. To raise awareness for the care of creation within leadership, congregations, and communities. 2. To share resources for the formation of disciples and leaders to understand their Christian calling to care for creation. 3. To gather people, including organizations, who are living out their calling to care for creation to learn and grow together as stewards.”

**Missional Formation Ministry Team:** “The ELCIC has been in a multi-year discernment process to determine how to best fund what used to be termed “Canadian” mission. It is no longer feasible to buy land, build new church buildings and provide mortgages to congregations. As part of that discernment, the National church’s Church Extension and Capital Fund (CECF) has been renamed **ELCIC Mission Fund**, recognizing this wider scope of mission today.”

“The Missional Formation Ministry Team approves projects and the spending of funds based on one or more of these criteria: 1. Exploratory and experimental in nature. 2. Seeking to address a challenge that is being faced related to the church’s mission for which a way forward is not easily discernible. 3. Seeking to develop a relationship with others in local communities and neighbourhoods. 4. Encouraging participation in God’s mission in local communities and neighbourhoods.” Pastor Dave Saude’s Caring for Creation workshop exploring air quality and extreme heat received funding for the air filters that were made.

Reports from other ministries: **National Bishop** of ELCIC, Susan Johnson

**Canadian Lutheran World Relief**, Karin Achtelstetter

**Lutheran Theological Seminary**, Rev. Dr. William Harrison

**Greater Edmonton Alliance**, Gary Savard & **Calgary Alliance for the Common Good**, Rev. Ryan Andersen