

**Minutes of the Twenty-Seventh Annual Synod Assembly
of the
Southern Ohio Synod
of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

**Theme:
Being Church Together: Building Up the Body of Christ:
Telling the Good News
Biblical Text: Luke 2:8-17**

**HPER Center
Wittenberg University
Springfield, Ohio**

June 4, 2016

June 4, 2016 Morning Session

Opening of Assembly

Bishop Suzanne D. Dillahunt opened the Synod Assembly at 9:30 AM. She then extended welcoming words to the members and guests of the Assembly as well as some housekeeping matters.

Credentials Report

Bishop Dillahunt introduced Rev. Wendy Richter, Chairperson of the Elections Committee upon whom she called to provide the members of the Assembly with a Credentials Report. Rev. Richter reported that at 10:00 A.M. there were 109 voting clergy members present and 166 other voting members present, including lay male, lay female, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and synod council members, for a total of 275 voting members present. In addition, 28 non-voting members were present for a total of 303 Synod Assembly participants, both voting and non-voting. Bishop Dillahunt thereupon declared that a quorum was present to conduct the business of the Synod.

Voting Procedures

Bp. Dillahunt provided the voting members with the procedures for voting on matters coming before the Assembly today.

Approval of the 2016 Assembly Agenda

VOTED
SA.16.6.1

**To approve the pre-assembly printed agenda for the Assembly.
(Moved by Synod Council and Seconded) APPROVED
UNANIMOUSLY**

Adoption of Rules of Procedure for the 2016 Synod Assembly

VOTED
SA.16.6.2

**To adopt the Rules of the Procedure for the 2016 Synod
Assembly (Moved by Synod Council and Seconded)
ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY**

Greetings from Wittenberg University

Bishop Dillahunt introduced Rev. Anders Tune, Pastor to Wittenberg University, who, in turn, officially welcomed the Synod Assembly participants to the Wittenberg University campus. Rev. Tune expressed the University's gratitude to be in partnership with the Southern Ohio Synod.

Greetings from Bishop Gerhard Ulrich of the German North Church

Bishop Dillahunt then introduced Bishop Gerhard Ulrich, Bishop of the German North Church, with which the Southern Ohio Synod shares a companion relationship. Bishop Ulrich opened his remarks by saying that it was an honor and a gift to be here, and he expressed his thanks for the hospitality that has been extended to him. Bishop Ulrich proclaimed that we are all one in Christ although great waters separate us. He went on to extend greetings of love and peace from the people of the German North Church. He made reference to the merger of the east and west German churches during the last four years. Bishop Ulrich stated that education is the strongest weapon in making the world a better place to live. The Bishop went on to say that while here, he has discovered many similarities in blessings as well as in challenges. Bishop Ulrich stated that all of us are in the center of the Church when serving immigrants. He further stated that fences must be torn down and borders must be opened, clearly making reference to his own national experience. Bishop Ulrich closed his remarks by saying that the German North Church is looking forward to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and in sharing the anniversary experience with the Southern Ohio Synod.

Report of the Synod Council Secretary

Bishop Dillahunt then called upon Mr. Roy E. Hart, Synod Council Secretary, to present the Secretary's Report.

Mr. Hart reported that the 2015 Synod Assembly minutes were reviewed and approved by the Synod Council at its April 23, 2016 meeting. The minutes were made available to the voting members on the Synod website.

He also stated that since the adjournment of the 2015 Synod Assembly, the following rostered leaders have joined the Church Triumphant:

Rev. Ronald E. Grissom (August 9, 2015)

Rev. Raymond E. Menchhofer (September 28, 2015)

Rev. O. Franklin Johnson (October 1, 2015)

Rev. Garrard A. Haubrich (October 4, 2015)

Rev. Robert F. Gibson (October 18, 2015)

Rev. Eugene N. Langholz (October 30, 2015)

Rev. Max Culver (November 5, 2015)

Associate in Ministry Ms. Merrie Lawretta Rager (November 10, 2015)

Rev. John Mittermaier (January 10, 2016)

Rev. O. Henry Hoversten (January 12, 2016)

Rev. Norman Wegmeyer (April 1, 2016)

Associate in Ministry Lillian Smoot (May 28, 2016)

Mr. Hart then reported that since the adjournment of the 2015 Synod Assembly, the following rostered leaders have retired:

Rev. Robert Carter (July 1, 2015)

Rev. Gary Eichhorn (August 1, 2015)

Rev. Gordon (Tim) Huffman (July 1, 2015)

Rev. Isabelle Steele (June 14, 2015)

Rev. Stephen Kimpel (August 1, 2015)

Rev. Frederich Weber (September 1, 2015)

Rev. Ronald Willman (September 1, 2015)

Rev. Bruce Kramer (September 15, 2015)

Rev. F. Allan Debelak (January 1, 2016)

Rev. Bethel Bateson (January 1, 2016)

Rev. F. Edward Williams (March 1, 2016)

Rev. Janice Winters (April 1, 2016)

Rev. David Jarvis-Schroeder (May 1, 2016)

The Secretary went on to state that since the adjournment of the 2015 Synod Assembly, the following congregations have disaffiliated from the ELCA:

St. Matthew, Logan (January 24, 2016)

Oromo Lutheran Church, Columbus (January 31, 2016)

Salem, West Alexandria (March 15, 2016)

Mr. Hart then stated that since the adjournment of the 2015 Synod Assembly, the following congregations have closed:

Zion, Adamsville (August, 2015)

Atonement, Cincinnati (December, 2015)

The Secretary then continued his report by informing the members of the Assembly of the action taken regarding two resolutions received and approved at the 2015 Synod Assembly.

First was the resolution on Synodical Funding of Seminary, Campus Ministry, and Outdoor Ministry, as amended on May 28, 2015. Mr. Hart reported that this resolution is being actively addressed by the Southern Ohio Synod Stewardship Team through the Planned Giving Partnership with the Indiana/Kentucky Synod, and in coordination with Mr. Chris Burnette of the ELCA because this is a Mission Support funding issue.

Second was the Resolution on Synodical and Congregational Conversations about Ministering to Same-Gender Couples and their Families, as amended May 28, 2015. Contained in the amended resolution was language to refer the resolution to the Southern Ohio Synod Vision Implementation Team for further consideration. The resolution was overwhelmingly approved. Since June of last year, Mr. Hart indicated that resources have been made available on the Southern Ohio Synod website and the ELCA website. He noted that one could find the 85-page report of the Working Group created by the ELCA Church Council. He further stated that the report contains nine specific recommendations which will be presented to the ELCA Church Council at its November, 2016 meeting.

Mr. Hart then thanked the Bishop and the members of the Assembly for their attention and concluded his report.

Extension of Terms for Certain Southern Ohio Synod Council Members for a Period of One Year

Bishop Dillahunt called upon Mr. Richard Freudenberger, member of the Synod Council, to present a resolution to the Assembly ratifying the action of Synod Council on April 23, 2016, extending the terms of certain members of Synod Council by one year. Mr. Freudenberger presented the resolution and explained that because no Synod Assembly will occur in 2017, the one-year extension is needed to insure that no vacancies on Council occur in June of 2017, when these members' terms would ordinarily end. Those members whose terms are effected are:

- Pastor Ralph Wolfe (Central Ohio Conference – Clergy)
- Mr. Bennett Whitaker (At-Large – Lay)
- Mr. James Renshaw (Central Ohio Conference – Lay)
- Ms. Jodi Keith (At-Large – Lay)
- Mr. Steve Schnittke (Muskingum Conference – Lay)
- Ms. Carol Swank (Scioto Conference – Lay)

VOTED **SA.16.6.3**

To ratify the action taken on April 23, 2016 by the Southern Ohio Synod Council extending the terms of Synod Council Members Wolfe, Whitaker, Renshaw, Keith, Schnittke, and Swank for one year, effective June 4, 2016, after which these Synod Council seats would carry a three-year term rather than a four-year term for the next election only. (Moved by Synod Council and Seconded) APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Report of the Synod Council Treasurer

Bishop Dillahunt introduced Mr. Kevin Pyle, Synod Council Treasurer, to the Assembly.

Mr. Pyle opened his remarks by informing the Assembly that Apple Growth Partners performed an independent audit of the Synod's finances, and it was the opinion of Apple Growth Partners that the financial statements of the Synod present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Synod as of January 31, 2016, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. The Treasurer noted some other financial matters and then thanked the members of the Assembly for their attention and concluded his report.

Mission and Ministry Plans for Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018

The Bishop then introduced Pr. Roger Quay and Ms. Melody Powderly, Synod Council members, to the Assembly.

Pr. Quay and Ms. Powderly noted that under the proposed Mission and Ministry Plan for 2017, both total general fund income and total general fund expenses are budgeted at \$ 1,820,000.00. Likewise, under the proposed Mission and Ministry Plan for 2018, both

total general fund income and total general fund expenses are budgeted at \$ 1,843,000.00; and therefore, the Synod expects to break even for these two fiscal years. Discussion followed.

VOTED

SA.16.6.4

**To approve the Fiscal 2017 and Fiscal 2018 Mission and Ministry Plans. (Moved by Synod Council and Seconded)
APPROVED WITH ONE VOTE AGAINST**

Report of the Compensation Guidelines Task Force

Bishop Dillahunt introduced the Task Force comprised of Pr. Peter Kruse, Mr. Bill Lyons, Associate in Ministry Diane Schwiger-Alexander, Pr. Katie Kerrigan, Pr. Barry Scott, and Pr. Jeff Wick.

Pr. Jonathan Schriber and Mr. David Tipton, members of the Synod Council, then addressed the Assembly by explaining the Guidelines and all of the considerations that went into the formulation of the Guidelines. Discussion ensued.

VOTED

SA.16.6.5

**To approve the 2017 Compensation Guidelines.
(Recommended by Synod Council and Seconded).
APPROVED WITH FIVE VOTES AGAINST**

Report of Nominations Committee

Bishop Dillahunt introduced Rev. Mark Diemer to the participants of the Assembly. Rev. Diemer is currently serving the Synod as the Chair of the Nominations Committee. Rev. Diemer explained the work of the Committee to the Assembly and thanked all of the committee members for their dedicated work.

Rev. Diemer then made the following nominations on behalf of the Synod Council and stated the position for which each person has been nominated. After the nominees for each position were identified, Bishop Dillahunt called for additional nominations from the floor. Receiving no additional nominations for each position as each position was announced, Bishop Dillahunt declared the nominations for each position closed. A second was received from the floor for the nominees of each position. This process continued for each position, after which, Rev. Diemer concluded his report.

Synod Council, At Large - Clergy (Term 2016-2020)

Rev. Laura Leach-Shreffler

Rev. Justin Van Orman

Synod Council, Central Ohio – Lay Female (Term 2016-2020)

Ms. Marjorie Ellis

No other nominee

Upon closing the nominations for the Synod Council, Central Ohio – Lay Female position and as Ms. Marjorie Ellis was unopposed, Bishop Dillahunt declared Ms. Marjorie Ellis elected.

Report of the Elections Committee

Bishop Dillahunt then called upon Pr. Wendy Richter, the Chair of the Elections Committee, to address the Assembly.

Pr. Richter then explained the election process. She stated that for this election, voting cards would be used in place of an electronic voting system used in past Assembly elections.

Prior to the election, Rev. Alexander Sumo, Synod Assembly Chaplain, offered prayer.

Pr. Richter then supervised the election, and the voting members of the Assembly voted for the nominees for the open position. Once the voting cards were counted, Bishop Dillahunt declared the voting closed.

Report of the Synod Council Vice President

The report of Mrs. Barbara Klatt, Synod Council Vice President, was submitted in written form and is attached to these Minutes for review.

Bishop Dillahunt then turned the podium over to Mrs. Barbara Klatt, Synod Council Vice President, in order that the Bishop could present her report to the Assembly.

Report of the Bishop of the Southern Ohio Synod

Bishop Dillahunt's written report is attached to these Minutes for review; and the following notes are highlights and information supplementing the Bishop's written report.

The Bishop then introduced Pr. Barry Scott to the Assembly. Pr. Scott, along with Pr. Grant Eckhart, addressed the 2015 Synod Assembly in detail regarding the work of the Southern Ohio Synod Visioning Task Force. This year, Pr. Scott updated the Assembly

on the work of the Task Force since 2015 and reminded the participants of “The Five V’s” which stand for Vision, Values, Vehicles, Valuation, and Vocabulary.

Bishop Dillahunt then presented certificates to and congratulated those congregations celebrating anniversaries. Those congregations are:

Advent Evangelical Lutheran Church, Columbus, 50 years
Resurrection Lutheran Church, Lebanon, 50 years
St. Luke Lutheran Church, Gahanna, 50 years
The Lutheran Church of Our Savior, Dayton, 75 years
Fifth Lutheran Church, Springfield, 125 years
Zion Lutheran Church, Adamsville, 175 years
First Lutheran Church, Springfield, 175 years
First Lutheran Church, Xenia, 175 years
St. John Stovertown Lutheran Church, Philo, 200 years
St. Paul Lutheran Church, Dayton, 200 years

Bishop Dillahunt then presented certificates to and congratulated those rostered leaders celebrating anniversaries. Those rostered leaders are:

Associate in Ministry Zebulon M. Highben, 10 years
Associate in Ministry R. Dean Earl, 25 years
Associate in Ministry Shirley A. Smith, 30 years

Rev. Robert A. Abrams, 5 years
Rev. Robert D. Swanson II, 5 years
Rev. Robin Kay Wargowsky, 5 years

Rev. Christina L. Scheuller, 10 years
Rev. James M. S. Vannoy, 10 years
Rev. Jeffrey M. Glawe, 10 years
Rev. Lowell R. Michelson, 10 years
Rev. Seth C. Bridger, 10 years
Rev. Shelley Nelson-Bridger, 10 years
Rev. Thomas W. Batterman, 10 years
Rev. Dr. Emil H. Klatt III, 15 years
Rev. Orinda W. Hawkins-Brinkley, 15 years
Rev. Philip K. Van Dam, 15 years

Rev. Alicia A. Nierman, 20 years
Rev. Christine M. Widrig, 20 years
Rev. Janet M. Hatch, 20 years
Rev. Robert E. Miller, 20 years
Rev. William A. McKee, 20 years

Rev. Bret D. Rizzo, 25 years
Rev. Dr. Charles W. Peterson, 25 years
Rev. Heidi J. Johns, 25 years
Rev. Lynn M. Miller, 25 years
Rev. Miriam Schreck, 25 years
Rev. Peter I. Ray, 25 years

Rev. Alemu Sernessa, 30 years
Rev. Brian P. Dillahunt, 30 years
Rev. Gilbert M. Santiago, 30 years
Rev. Karen E. Asmus-Alsnauer, 30 years
Rev. Larry A. Donner, 30 years
Rev. Martin P. Francis, 30 years
Rev. Rachel Sandum Tune, 30 years
Rev. Stephen K. Kimm, 30 years
Rev. Timothy F. Iseringhausen, 30 years

Rev. Andrew J. Mazak, 35 years
Rev. Bruce E. Quatman, 35 years
Rev. Carl A. Rayburn, 35 years
Rev. Douglas N. Jacobs, 35 years
Rev. F. Edward Williams, 35 years
Rev. Frederick A. Weber, 35 years
Rev. Janice L. Peterson, 35 years
Rev. Kurt S. Keljo, 35 years
Rev. Mark A. Wildermuth, 35 years
Rev. Timothy H. H. Thoresen, 35 years

Rev. Michael P. Althaus, 40 years
Rev. Robert H. Carter, 40 years
Rev. Ronald C. Willmann, 40 years
Rev. Terry L. Morgan, 40 years

Rev. Thomas J. Heil, 45 years

Rev. Hans Schwarz, 50 years
Rev. John D. Stroup, 50 years
Rev. Kenneth R. Soderlund, 50 years
Rev. Ray A. Rosenthal, 50 years
Rev. Thomas R. Stroch, 50 years

Rev. Ralph W. Doermann, 55 years
Rev. Robert A. Willauer, 55 years
Rev. Rudolf K. Schildbach, 55 years

Rev. J. W. Kerrick, 60 years

Rev. Reuben D. Mellum, 60 years

Rev. Edward L. Gard, 65 years

Rev. Fred K. Bernlohr, 65 years

Rev. Wilfred W. Ahrendt, 70 years

Consistent with this year's theme, "Being Church Together: Building Up the Body of Christ...Telling the Story", Bishop Dillahunt stated that we all can tell the story in many different ways. For example, we can tell the story by inviting others to be a part of a community of faith, by partnering and collaborating with other faith-based groups, and by living our vision. A video presentation followed wherein various congregations demonstrated and explained how they were sharing the Good News in their own unique way. Then Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, through another video presentation, explained to the Assembly how the ELCA shares the Good News at home and worldwide.

Bishop Dillahunt proceeded to thank her staff for all of their work on behalf of the Synod and the Church. Those recognized included Pr. Jeff Wick, Pr. Robert Abrams, Ms. Kim Uemura, Ms. Susan Barton-Nonno, Sister Sally Burk, Ms. Joy Hacker, Mr. Gary Pecuch, and Ms. Gabrielle Hudecek who was given special recognition and who was presented with a bouquet of flowers for her 30 years of service to the Synod.

Mr. Gary Pecuch was called to the podium by the Bishop in order to present information to the Assembly regarding The Bishop's Youth Ambassador Program. He explained that the Program seeks to address the problem in our Synod that most of our Youth have no knowledge of all the ministries offered by our congregations, our Synod, and Churchwide. The plan involves each congregation having the opportunity to send Council-approved Youth Ambassadors to Youth Summit Events to learn about the three expressions of our faith, and then return to their home congregation to spread the word to others within their home congregation.

Following the presentation by Mr. Pecuch, Bishop Dillahunt concluded her report to the Assembly, and Vice President Klatt returned the podium to the Bishop.

Reference and Counsel Report

Rev. Bonnie Gerber, Chairperson of the Committee, was called to the podium by the Bishop. She thanked committee members for their dedicated work on behalf of the Assembly. She stated that the Committee received one Memorial for the Assembly's consideration. The Memorial is titled, "God's Work. Our Hearts and Hands... Memorial for Military Personnel, Veterans, and their Families. (The final version of the Memorial as approved by the Assembly is attached to these Minutes.)

Rev. Gerber stated that the Reference and Counsel Committee brings the Memorial to the floor of the Assembly and recommends approval.

A great deal of time and discussion followed the Committee's recommendation. The phrase, "..., The Wounded Warrior Programs, ..." as appearing in bullet point number five of the recommended memorial was the focal point of the debate. Several people, including the original author of the memorial, stood to address the Assembly. Several motions were made, all of which were defeated or died for a lack of a second. During the discussion, one motion was made and seconded to amend the phrase, "..., The Wounded Warrior Programs, ..." by striking the word, "The" and by removing the capital letters in "Wounded Warrior Programs".

VOTED

SA.16.6.6

To amend the phrase, "..., The Wounded Warrior Programs, ..." as appearing in bullet point number five of the memorial recommended by the Reference and Counsel Committee by striking the word, "The" and by removing the capital letters in "Wounded Warrior Programs". (Motion and Second came from the Assembly floor). THE AMENDMENT PASSED.

Following the approved amendments to the Memorial, a motion and a second were received from the floor of the Assembly to end debate and to call the question by voting on the recommended Memorial as now amended.

VOTED

SA.16.6.7

To end debate and to proceed to vote on the recommended Memorial, as amended. (Motion and Second came from the Assembly floor). THE MOTION PASSED.

VOTED

SA.16.6.8

To approve the Memorial for Military Personnel, Veterans, and their Families, as amended. (Recommended by the Reference and Counsel Committee and Seconded). APPROVED.

Prior to recessing for lunch, Rev. Alexander Sumo, Synod Assembly Chaplain, offered prayer.

At 12:45 PM, Bishop Dillahunt then declared a recess in the proceedings for lunch and for a Workshop led by Rev. Dr. Cheryl Peterson. The focus of the workshop presentation was, "How do we tell the Good News?" Rev. Dr. Peterson opened her remarks by stating that the "Build the Church and They Will Come" model is broken. She then proceeded to explain how we, as Lutherans, can share the Good News with others independent of the old model.

Rev. Dr. Peterson suggested twelve ways by which the Good News could be shared, including a shift from telling others about our church to telling others about Jesus; from discomfort to talking about the Holy Spirit with ease; from belonging to an organization to belonging to Christ and to each other as members of his body; to name a few.

June 4, 2016 Afternoon Session

Following the lunch/workshop break, Bishop Dillahunt declared the Assembly once again in session at 3:17 PM, and the Assembly proceedings resumed in Weaver Chapel.

Rev. Alexander Sumo led the Assembly in song and offered prayer.

An appeal was made for \$30,850.66 to benefit Augusta Victoria Hospital in the Holyland.

Report of the Elections Committee

Bishop Dillahunt called Rev. Wendy Richter to the podium to announce the results of the election for the At-Large – Clergy Synod Council position.

The result of the election is as follows:

Synod Council, At Large - Clergy (Term 2016-2020)

Rev. Laura Leach-Shreffler	148 (elected)
Rev. Justin Van Orman	126
(Invalid vote)	1

Report of the ELCA Representative

Dr. Kathryn Jonson brought greetings from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and the ELCA. Dr. Jonson is the Director for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations for the ELCA. She stated that she is honored to be present at this Assembly and gave thanks to Bishop Dillahunt for the Bishop's work in Chicago. In addition, she extended her thanks to all who work for the Synod, its Mission Support, and for the theological education that takes place in the Southern Ohio Synod. She noted that the Southern Ohio Synod sends more people into service than it uses.

She explained that the church is made up of three expressions, i.e., congregations, synods, and the ELCA. She stated that the church is stronger and better together as each component of the church is not the church by itself.

Dr. Jonson went on to state that conversations are urgently needed with other Christian traditions. One example is the partnership with the Roman Catholic Church regarding the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation which is seen as a way to draw the Lutheran Church and the Roman Catholic Church together rather than as an observance that widens already-existing divisions.

She asked the following three thought-provoking questions concerning the future direction of the ELCA:

1. What kind of church do we believe God is calling us to become?
2. How do we become an inclusive, diverse church that is inspiring and relevant in different communities?
3. If we had to decide that some things were more important than others in the next 5-10 years, what are your top three things?

Dr. Jonson concluded her remarks by thanking the many people who made this Synod Assembly possible and by thanking the members of the Assembly for their attention.

Recognitions and Thanks

The Bishop took her time in order to individually thank all of those persons who made the Assembly possible and who did so in a professional manner.

Closing Worship and Eucharist

Bishop Dillahunt invited all of the Assembly participants and guests to join in the closing worship service and Eucharist and declared the 2016 Synod Assembly adjourned at the close of the worship service.

Respectfully submitted,

Roy E. Hart
Secretary of the Southern Ohio
Synod Council

2016 Synod Assembly – Report from the Vice President
Submitted by Barbara N Klatt, VP, Southern Ohio Synod

Greetings and blessings to all of you: rostered leaders, voting members and visitors – thank you for being here as the portion of the body of Christ known as the Southern Ohio Synod.

Over the last couple of years, you will have heard us refer to Southern Ohio Synod as the Southern Ohio Mission Territory. Think about how the wording change effects the way we approach ministry in our area. I would challenge you to take the word Mission with you in your conversations about our church today and forward.

Each year, I start my report talking about the challenges and growth that change brings to the church and to the Southern Ohio Synod. Many find it difficult to put Change and Church in the same sentence! However, change is often the opportunity to evaluate ourselves and to grow.

We see articles posted daily on FB and in blogs challenging us to look at “doing” church differently in order to reach various categorized groups “millennials” “the unchurched” “families with children under the age of...” etc. And while we study these articles and reports...we ask each other, how do we keep our Lutheran presence and reach out and be valid in an ever-changing world.

Presiding Bishop Eaton challenged us this year to answer six questions in regard to the Future Direction of our church. We have discussed these at length at Synod Council, sharing ideas and concerns in regards to each question. Bishop Dillahunt took copious notes during our discussions and will share our thoughts at future meetings with her fellow Bishops. This challenge, along with the information shared in Ken Inskeep’s paper on *Priorities in Context: Sustainability and Membership Growth* will hopefully help us gain some insight to these concerns.

Consider taking these questions home with you for discussion:

1. What is distinctive about our identity as a Lutheran Church?
2. What kind of church do we believe God is calling us to become?
3. What are the most important ministries we should be engaging in?
4. What institutional structure do we need for the future?
5. How do we recruit and invest in leaders to become the church God is calling us to be?
6. What does this mean for you as a member and leader in this church?

The work of the Compensation Guidelines Task Force continues – Synod Council would like to recognize their hard work and their commitment as they continue to refine and define all aspects of our guidelines. We encourage continued conversation and education so call committees, councils, rostered leaders seeking calls and all congregation members can have open conversations to determine what is best for all involved.

Change also occurs annually within Synod Council as terms conclude for some members and new members are elected to begin terms. I want to take this opportunity to thank your Synod Council for their service. Your Synod Council is made up of a diverse group of people (lay and rostered)...I encourage you to meet them...to know who they are... and to understand their work on your behalf. [AND a special thanks to those who are extending their terms by one year to meet the new Assembly schedule.]

Council's job is to clarify and sustain, model and champion the synod's mission and vision...And I would add... to take to heart the theme of this year's Assembly, encouraging the synod Be Church Together...to Build up the Body of Christ...to Tell the Good News!

As a synod, we have continued to meet our goals to be consistent in our Mission Support to the greater church. Just as many of you are challenged at the congregational level, we, as a Synod Council, are challenged to apply good stewardship practices to the monies given to supporting our Mission and Ministry Plan. These numbers are available on our website. Your Synod Council reviews these at every meeting.

Our Stewardship Task Force has worked hard to communicate and educate so everyone can have a better understanding of how your mission support brings our synodical mission and ministry plan into fruition. And we continue to work towards greater education at the congregational level of what ministries are supported by that giving.

I encourage everyone to make themselves more familiar with our website. It is a great resource to stay informed on what's happening in our synod and in the ELCA.

Please continue to keep your Synod Council in your daily prayers as we move into the next year being Church Together.

2016 Report of the Southern Ohio Synod Bishop
Being Church Together: Building up the Body of Christ...Telling the Story

Grace and peace be with you in the name of Jesus Christ our resurrected Savior and Lord.

How have you lived out your baptismal calling to tell the story of Jesus Christ and share the Gospel message outside of your church walls?

Brothers and sisters, the world so desperately needs a word of hope and each and every one of you can make a difference by sharing the hope that we have in the risen Lord! Your presence in what you are doing in your congregations and communities makes us Stronger and Better Together as we Join Jesus in the Restoration of the World. This just so happens to be the vision statement. Let's live it out!

When you invite others to be a part of a community of faith, when you share your story of what Jesus means to you, and when you live your faith every day, you are Jesus' presence in this world. Together we are a strong group, which makes a difference--so don't give up! God's story in Jesus is our story to share and it is the best story... It is the Good News!

At Synod Assembly this year--June 4 only--we will hear stories of who Jesus Christ is and what he means in our lives. Telling the story and sharing it is what we are called to be about. We will have a very special guest at assembly, the Presiding Bishop of the German North Church, Bishop Ulrich. His visit is important because we partner with the German North Church in telling the story of God's love in Christ, a love that doesn't stop at the end of our parking lots or even our Country's borders.

Partnerships such as the one we share with the German North Church, is one way we live out our vision for the Southern Ohio Synod mission territory. As the vision states, we CLARIFY, COLLABORATE, AND CULTIVATE. Putting it plainly, we clarify to ourselves and to the world who we are and whose we are as Lutheran Christians. We collaborate with one another, companion synods, agencies, like Graceworks, LSS and Oesterlen, affiliates, like Capital University, Trinity Lutheran Seminary and Wittenberg University, campus ministries, the ELCA Churchwide organization and many others to reach everyone with the Gospel. We cultivate these relationships by heading boldly into the mission field to plant and harvest the crops the Lord has given us.

This vision, which is being rolled out by a talented and dedicated team of volunteers from our mission territory, will be discussed further during my oral report at assembly. Please keep these brothers and sisters in your prayers as they put flesh on the bones of our vision and make it a reality that is honoring to God.

As a synod, you adopted two resolutions last year with the goal of sharing the Gospel with our neighbors. The first was a resolution about ministry to same gender

families. The Vision Team has identified ELCA resources that will assist congregations with the first resolution. These resources are available for download and viewing on the synod assembly website under the Handouts tab.

The second resolution asked that the Southern Ohio Synod find a way to increase funding for Lutheran Outdoor Ministries in Ohio, Southern Ohio Campus Ministries and Trinity Lutheran Seminary. Since mission support to the synod remains flat, other avenues for funding have been explored and continue to be explored, as the need for funding continues to increase for these vital ministries. We have begun looking for ways to increase funding through the Southern Ohio Synod Foundation, our new Regional Gift Planner, Christopher S. Burnette, and our SOS Stewardship Team. We are hopeful that these resources will help meet the needs of our partners now and in the future. I challenge you, if you have a passion for any or all of these ministries in our synod, to prayerfully and generously give either directly to these partners or through your synod mission support. Each is a valuable ministry worthy of your investment.

The SOS Stewardship Team has also been working over the past year to raise awareness of how your mission support is put to work in our synod through quarterly messages that share the stories of our synod ministries, along with your congregation's quarterly mission support. I hope your pastor and council have shared these stories with you. It's important for each of you to know the eternal impact your donations are having in and beyond our territory.

For more detail about where your mission support goes, please look at the 2015-2016 Mission and Ministry Plan summary in your pre-assembly materials. You will see that even though mission support did not increase, we were still able to meet all of our commitments to our agencies, institutions and ministries and were able to meet our goal of sharing 40% of our unrestricted income with ELCA Churchwide in support of the wider church ministries.

Mission and Ministry Plans for 2017-2019 are also provided. Please look these over before coming to assembly on June 4. When you vote to approve these plans, you are saying that your congregation will do its share to fund all of the ministries in the plan, just as you commit to funding the many ministries in your congregation when your mission and ministry plans are voted on each year. Together we can meet and exceed the plans. Please encourage your congregation to be generous givers locally and at the synodical and Churchwide level. Giving is one way we share the story of what God is doing in our lives and set an example for others to do the same.

How else do we collaborate and cultivate in our synod? Through grass-roots efforts like those of the Columbus Urban Pastors Group and Zanesville Cooperative. These grass-roots ministries are popping up deliberately because we are doing mission differently in Southern Ohio. These men and women of God know that to reach deep into our communities, we have to do mission differently than we have before. They are sharing ideas and resources and coming up with methods to share and tell the

story in new and different ways. God puts opportunities in front of us daily and these two new cooperatives are just a sample of how we will be church together in the future.

Another opportunity God put forth for us this year was spearheaded by Mr. Nick Bates, Diaconal Minister, and chair of the SOS Public Policy Task Force and member of the SOS Hunger Task Force. Nick organized our synod's first Advocacy Day at the Ohio State House. The day's focus was on hunger and its devastating impact on our communities. We held a press conference and met with congressional leaders. It was a great first event and definitely won't be the last.

In December, a group of committed rostered and lay leaders from the state, including representatives from the Northeastern and Northwestern Ohio Synods, gathered to discuss race in Ohio. Out of that gathering, a Southern Ohio Synod Race Relations Team was born. Our work has only begun. Telling the story of God's love is a key part of what this group will do.

Sharing the Gospel and our hope with veterans has also begun to take shape as a vital and growing ministry in our territory. Military veterans are often forgotten, but Pr. Joe Schrock is working to see that no longer happens. Southern Ohio Synod was chosen by the ELCA to be a pilot synod for a new ministry with veterans and their families. Pr. Schrock is working throughout the territory to provide education and training to leaders and congregations who wish to give back to our veterans. Pr. Schrock and representatives from the Ohio National Guard recently met with me to see how we can work better together to address this growing mission field. Please look for invitations in our weekly e-bulletins and on Facebook to attend trainings in your area. This is a great opportunity for laity to share the Good News and welcome potential members into your congregations. You do not have to be a pastor to welcome the stranger or tell the story!

Lay members of congregations have more opportunities than ever before to deepen their understanding of the Lutheran faith and God's word through the Lay School of Theology's two campuses. The Chillicothe Campus works with students who have had some theological education and are looking to go deeper into scripture and Lutheran theology. The Dayton Campus works with students who are just beginning their theological journey. The need for this type of education continues to grow. I want to thank Pastors Merlyn Seitz and Steve Kimpel for their ongoing work in this area. Look for new offerings from the Lay School soon!

This has been a busy and rewarding year. I have only touched on all of the wonderful work you all have accomplished since we last met in assembly. This work at the synodical level would not have been possible without the Bishop's Office team. This group of faithful servants continues to equip and coach leaders, members and congregations to share the Good News and tell the story. Over the past year, we crisscrossed the territory and visited with leaders and congregations. We drove 103,501 miles, which is equivalent to 26 times around the world! We are a smaller

team, but still do our best to assist and equip you and your congregation for ministry. Please continue to pray for your team...Pr. Jeff Wick, full-time Assistant to the Bishop for Candidacy and Call Process and Leadership Development; Pr. Bob Abrams, part-time Assistant to the Bishop for Congregational and Rostered Leader Care/Health and Governance; Mr. Gary Pecuch, Youth and Family Ministry Coach; Mrs. Susan Barton-Nonno, Director of Communications and Administration; Ms. Gabrielle Hudecek, Executive Administrative Assistant for Roster and Candidacy; Ms. Kim Uemura, Administrative Assistant to the Bishop; Mrs. Joy Hacker, Accountant; and Sister Sally Burk, Pulpit Supply Coordinator. Thank you!

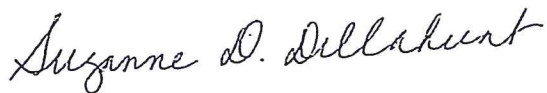
Before I close my report, I want to thank the 28 rostered leaders in our synod that submitted by mid-April their annual Reports to the Synod Bishop. These reports are helpful to me, and my staff, as we plan our synodical mission and our ministries to our leaders. These leaders reported the following:

- 23 Active
- 4 Retired
- 0 On leave from call
- 1 Associate in Ministry
- 1 Under call by Synod Council/Churchwide

- 2 are above compensation guidelines
- 5 are below compensation guidelines
- 11 are at compensation guidelines

How will you tell the story? How will you Be Church Together? How will you be Stronger and Better Together: Joining Jesus in the Restoration of the World in your congregation and community? I look forward to what God has called us to be together!

In Christ,



The Rev. Suzanne Darcy Dillahunt, Bishop

God's Work. Our Hearts and Hands...
Memorial for Military Personnel, Veterans, and their Families

Whereas 1.2 million Americans are currently serving in the various branches of the US Armed forces, and about 21.2 million American men and women are veterans of military service, and

Whereas hundreds of thousands of military personnel have been injured over the years and returned home with wounded bodies, minds, and hearts, and

Whereas the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is highly committed to ministry among those in military uniform and those who have faithfully and often sacrificially served this nation, therefore

Be it resolved that the Southern Ohio Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage congregations of the ELCA to offer their gratitude and support for all military personnel, veterans, and their family and friends with tangible expressions of care and encouragement in one or more of the following ways:

- Express our gratitude often and remain especially attentive to those serving in the Armed Forces, as well as veterans, including the military and federal chaplains.
- Present copies of the *Prayer Book for the Armed Services*, (Augsburg Fortress), a companion to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* designed for those serving in uniform, veterans, and their families, to military personnel and their families and donate additional copies of the prayer book to military chaplains.
- Regularly lift up in prayer those who are serving and those who have served, and pray especially with and for members of the military and the families of those who have been wounded or killed in the line of duty.
- Give ongoing support and hold in constant prayer the military chaplains who bring the Means of Grace in the name of Christ Jesus on our behalf, to the 1.2 million women and men in the Armed Forces, as well as to those in Veterans Hospitals, and wherever else they are called to serve.
- Explore and facilitate congregational, conference, and/or synodical events that equip individuals and congregations to offer needed care and support for returning veterans such as the ELCA "Care for Returning Veterans", wounded warrior programs, Rural Clergy Training Program, Point Man Ministries, Partners in Care, and other efforts to receive those returning home with open hearts and arms.
- Lift up the vocational call of those who serve in the Armed Forces and raise up the need in our congregations for those who may hear the call of the Spirit of God and the church to serve as ordained military and federal chaplains of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- Designate one Sunday each year to especially remember those in military uniform, the veterans who have served, the wounded and their families in their recovery and in their coping, and the families of those who have lost their lives in service who live with pain and loss.
- Remembering that injuries of the mind, spirit, and relationships do not show as clearly as physical injuries, offer rituals of healing and reconciliation for active duty members,

reservists, and members of the National Guard upon their return from deployment or special duty, and periodically thereafter.

- Realizing that not all honorably discharged veterans transition well and some find themselves incarcerated, congregations which already have prison ministry are encouraged to make a special effort to seek out incarcerated veterans and thank them for their service and help them access their veterans benefits that they might have a more successful transition upon their release.