

Sask Synod Report on 2025 National Convention July 10 – 13, 2025; University of Manitoba, Winnipeg

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National Bishop Susan Johnson's Report

Rejoicing in Hope,” the theme of the 2025 ELCIC National Convention, served as the central focus for outgoing ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson's report to convention on Thursday afternoon. Gathered in Winnipeg at the University of Manitoba for the triennial assembly, over two hundred delegates, staff, visitors, special guests and volunteers took in Bishop Johnson's final report to convention. After 18 years of service, she will retire from the role she has held since 2007. As part of this year's convention business, delegates will elect a new national bishop.

“As we rejoice in hope, we lift up the goodness of God's grace. We lean into our tagline: *Living out God's grace and unconditional love*,” she said. “Rejoicing in hope, we gather these days to worship, for fellowship, to do business, to listen and learn, to discuss and to give thanks for service.”

Johnson spoke passionately about the work of the new steering committee: *Facing Today – Dreaming for the Future*, which is a church-wide consultation called into action by National Church Council this past year. She also hinted at upcoming video presentations from each of the four task forces that have been serving since the 2019 National Convention.

Prior to Johnson's address, those gathered for convention's opening worship took in a celebration of the 50th anniversary of women's ordination as pastors within the ELCIC.

All female pastors in attendance were vested for the service, which saw Rev. Johnson preach and British Columbia Synod Bishop Kathy Martin preside.

The first woman to be ordained in the church was the late Rev. Pamela McGee. The second woman, Rev. Vivian Roberts – also the longest-serving Lutheran female pastor in Canada – was in attendance to celebrate the anniversary and read a lesson at the service.

Johnson concluded her report with messages of thanks to her colleagues and partners over the past 18 years, all intertwined by an a cappella rendition of ‘Beautiful Saviour’ echoing throughout the plenary hall.

“It has been an honour to serve you as your national bishop,” Rev. Johnson said. “I love our church and I'm proud of what we do and what we stand for. We pray fervently, we work for justice passionately, we face challenges head on, and we embrace the future with hope. We give thanks to God for the grace we have received and strive to share that grace with the world in great need. Soli Deo Gloria – to God alone the glory!”

Posted on the ELCIC website.

National Church Council Report

National Church Council (NCC) presented its report via video to delegates at the 2022 ELCIC National Convention during the first business session.

NCC members shared that during the last triennium, they passed ninety-seven motions. Council work also including acting on motions from the 2019 National Convention.

“As per convention action we appointed task forces on addressing Ableism; addressing Racism, White Supremacy, and issues of Racial Injustice; and addressing Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia,” said Rev. Jane Gingrich, who highlighted the task force reports in the Bulletin of Reports, along with their many recommendations.

NCC members approved a new vision statement over the last triennium – “God’s grace and unconditional love calls us to be a diverse, inclusive community that celebrates all and upholds life-giving relationships.”

A new strategic plan has also been adopted, using *Compassionate Justice, Effective Partnerships, Relational Leadership* and *Healthier Church* as the new areas of focus in strategic planning. More information on the new strategic plan can be found in Appendix 11 of the Bulletin of Reports.

Changes and amendments to the Candidacy Manual, CECF Management Handbook, ELCIC Personnel Policy Handbook, NCC Policy and the Reimagining our Church document were highlighted.

Budgets and financial statements were approved, while gifts totaling \$150,000 were sent to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and The Lutheran World Federation in response to dire COVID situations.

“It has been a good three years...,” NCC member Rev. Dr. Kimberlynn McNabb concluded. “We look forward to the newly configured National Church Council bringing our unfinished work for you to discuss next year. Thank you for your prayers and your support.”

Posted on ELCIC Website

National Financial Report

Audited financial statements for the ELCIC were presented at Convention by NCC Treasurer, Stephen Holmes. To review the [full statements](#), please review them online. Drawn both from the statements, and from Stephen's presentation, here are a few key points:

- The auditor issued a qualified report for 2024, but it is a relatively minor tracking issue that will be sorted out this year.
- Investment gains have been very good recently. At the same time, revenue generated from investments is somewhat unpredictable.
- Benevolence continues to go down and its downward rate is accelerating.

Operations at the national church are currently running at a deficit and 2026 and 2027 will also have budget deficits. There are funds that can be used to offset these deficits but only for a short time.

Respectfully submitted by Jeff Barber

Facing Today – Dreaming of the Future Task Force

There has been a committee struck to answer some questions and provide guidance to the church. It is part of a three-year program led by a group of consultants who began the Thursday evening session with introductions of the team members and their roles. After that, they gave a general outline of their scope of work and the methodologies they would use to complete the project.

It was an interesting process they took to gather information during the convention from the attendees. They provided questions and then asked that the tables discuss each question. The questions asked were: “What are the signs of life in your local congregation?” and “What are the signs of life in your synod?” The answers of each table were recorded and provided to the facilitators. The results of which would be provided in a later session. Interesting discussions with many common themes emerging.

The second session provided more clarity on the methodology and raised one more question for discussion. That question was, “What signs of life do you see nationally in the church?” Again, an interesting topic at the table with many common themes revealing themselves. The results of this conversation were also submitted and will be presented at a later time.

The resulting reports of the conversations showed commonality across the country, with declining attendance, dwindling finances being the most common items. There were, though, many signs of life reported. Examples of this were: dedication of those attending grassroots initiatives to move into the communities, development of the laity for greater service in the church and community, and recognition of the genuine passion of those attending services to congregations, facilities, and the community.

Between table sessions, there were also discussions and commentaries from the floor, which provided some challenging points of view at times.

The outcomes of the project will set the tone for the future of the church in our ever-changing world.

Respectfully submitted by Kevin Prouten

NCC - Task Force Reports / Recommendations

The task force videos which include the Addressing Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia Task Force can be located at

elcic.app.box.com/s/vbwrgsf86dsa656osnm0w39tgv2tuq17

([2025 Task Force Videos | Powered by Box](#)). Excerpts from reports submitted follow ...

TASK FORCE ON ABILITIES AND INCLUSION:

1. A workshop, entitled, “Embracing Inclusion: Cultivating a Welcoming and Accessible Church Community” has been developed. We recommend that it be a “pilot” presentation at the September 2025 NCC meeting. A resource list of articles and videos will be compiled to be presented to allow individuals and groups to continue this work. Any necessary changes will be made following this trial run and then the workshop will then be offered to all other expressions of this Church.
2. That the assigned staff member recruit a group of individuals and train them to facilitate the workshop so that the workshop can be presented to Congregational groups and other groups within this church.
3. We requested that the worship planners of the 2025 Convention find ways to incorporate those who are differently abled in the worship of the Convention.
4. To NCC, we ask that the tenure and terms of reference for this task force be clarified. We believe that the work should continue, and that the task force, with expanded membership could serve as a resource to the Diversity Equity and Inclusion staff member and to help forward this work within this church.
5. We are also unclear if there are/or will be similar initiatives taken at Synodical levels, and if so, how the national and synodical groups would integrate?
6. We recommend that the ELCIC establish a web-based chat line so that individuals and congregations might share their stories and ask questions about the work of Abilities and Inclusion. We acknowledge that there are budget implications of such a recommendation, both for the technology and for staff time to moderate the chat line.
7. We recommend that the ELCIC develop a set of study guides for Bible Study be developed using Disability Theology as their base.

TASK FORCE ON ADDRESSING RACISM, WHITE SUPREMACY AND RACIAL JUSTICE ISSUES

The Special Convention (2023) approved a policy article and eleven recommendations (a précis of the work completed on each of the eleven (11) recommendations below). The following are future recommendations for your approval as we continue to grow in the area addressing racism, white supremacy and racial justice.

1. That the ELCiC Task Force addressing Racism, White Supremacy, and Racial Justice Issues continue to exist with members appointed out of the National Church Convention, 2025. Members from each Synod will be representative of diversity, equity and inclusiveness.
2. That the National Task Force work together with an Assistant to the Bishop to effectively carry out and complete its mandate and objectives.
3. Training in racial justice issues and white supremacy be mandatory for all candidates and rostered individuals.

We propose the ELCiC continue to commit itself to the policy statement and to implementing, establishing and continuing the growth of the eleven recommendations approved at the national convention in 2023.

Report of Recommendations for National Church Council Task Force on Racism, White Supremacy and Racial Justice Issues February 25, 2025

1. That the ELCiC implement ongoing certified anti-racism training for national staff, National Church Council, and national committees. Curriculum should address privilege, power structures, and movement towards more equitable representation at ELCiC decision making and governance tables. Training should happen at least every three years.

The workshops address power structures... the National Church Council have taken all four workshops and the workshops are now open to ministers and lay people.

2. That Synods, seminaries, and schools ensure that all rostered leaders, councils, committees, board members, employees, candidates for ordination, and students participate in ongoing certified anti-racism training at least every three years.

The workshops are open to all ELCiC church attendants and staff but the ELCiC does not have control over the seminaries and schools or how they conduct their anti-racism work.

3. Anti-racism training for congregational councils, committees, leaders, and employees of the local congregations. Encourage critical conversation and intentional formation on how faith communities can better confront racism at the congregational level.

The workshop is completed and available.

4. That each Synod create a racial justice committee based on the Eastern Synod model.

This recommendation needs to be completed. The BC Synod has hired a DEI person (Pastor Aneeta Devi Saroop)

5. That the ELCIC develop a National Church Theological Study on Anti-Racism, White Supremacy, and Issues of Racial Injustice to encourage members in learning and ongoing reformation.

This recommendation is addressed in the current workshop.

6. That National and Synodical Bishops issue frequent public statements condemning Systemic Racism and calling for ongoing reformation in our church.

Review existing statements for the need to be updated.

7. That the ELCIC review, modify, design, promote, guide, monitor, and adhere to Nomination, Election and Hiring processes, to ensure that intentional efforts are being made to achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion, and that progress is shared widely; and to encourage all levels of the church to do the same.

They are no longer asking for medical records from candidates

8. That the ELCIC work with educational institutions (schools and colleges) to decolonize the curriculum and require educators and administrators to put the responsibility of equity, diversity, and inclusion at the center of their teaching and research. For example, create mandatory scholarship and innovative certificate programs in Black, Asian, and Indigenous Studies.

The Task Force in conjunction with the National Church needs to begin recommendations for this process.

9. That the ELCIC communicate and possibly collaborate with ELCIC Group Services Inc. and Canadian Lutheran World Relief regarding the ELCIC's new commitments to anti-racism.

This recommendation still needs to be completed.

10. That the national office provide for staffing with dedicated responsibility for diversity, equity and inclusion.

More staff for DEI are being hired at the national level. Staff has been working to get to know each other more intentionally.

11. That NCC appoint a task force to continue the work of addressing Racism, White Supremacy, and issues of Racial Injustice. The task force will report and be accountable to NCC and will report to the National Convention in 2025.

The Task force is appointed. We will recommend that the Task Force continue to exist and work together with an assistant to the bishop.

TASK FORCE ON CARBON NEUTRALITY

The ELCIC Task Force on Carbon Neutrality was established to help this church move forward with the recommendations in the 2023 Report of the Task Force on Carbon Neutrality that were adopted by the 2023 special convention. The mandate includes:

- Advising the National Bishop and National Church Council on ways to implement the recommendations.
- Collect and identify resources to support and encourage faith communities on the journey toward climate justice and carbon neutrality.
- Report regularly to NCC and prepare a formal report for the 2025 National Convention.
-

The task force has met regularly since being appointed in 2024. Special meetings include:

- A joint meeting with the Eastern Synod Climate Justice Task Force to hear from Mark Gibson of Zero Emission Churches.
- A meeting with Jeremy Langner to learn more about the ELCIC Green House Gas (GHG) Inventory Calculator for Congregations.
- A meeting with Susan Antler to learn more about the Compost Council of Canada.

In January 2025, the task force began providing monthly reflections on climate justice to encourage engagement, share resources, and call for prayer, reflection and learning.

The task force recognizes both the urgency of the climate crisis and the personal, economic, and systemic challenges of making transitions. Becoming carbon neutral is a huge challenge but it is attainable. The implications and difficulty of specific options for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions vary from context to context. Contextual solutions for how to move toward carbon neutrality will need to be as diverse as the people who are implementing actions.

Rev. Vincent Solomon, Indigenous Ministry Developer, Diocese of Rupert's Land, Anglican Church of Canada

Rev. Vincent Solomon, Indigenous Ministry Developer, from the Diocese of Rupert's Land (Anglican Church of Canada), delivered the first *Rejoicing in Hope* thematic presentation of the 2025 National Convention on Friday afternoon.

In his message, Solomon discussed the challenges of rejoicing in hope amid our struggles – individual and collective – and affirmed the enduring hope in the good news of Creator and Jesus.

He spoke about the resilience of Indigenous Christians, and the richness of the Indigenous church on Turtle Island. He offered insight from lived experience, and lesson from Indigenous perspective on what it means to hope and, and to rejoice in it.

“Indigenous Christians are still here. Because of people like my grandfather, because of my ancestors who believed from time immemorial that there is a benevolent being there, who loves us. Today, there are many, many churches dotted all across Turtle Island, all across Indian country, which inspire hope in a stormy land,” he said.

“One does not learn how to be and how to talk about God and how to talk about healing and how to come to a place where things are good. And where does one learn? It is only by living in a hard country where discomfort is the norm...We have hope that we can endure life's hard goals and afflictions, like my grandfather did, and that we can have a view that is not inclined to this world and traps us here, but rather moves us from and into a place where we can rejoice despite those dark times.”

Towards the end of the talk, Solomon stated that the Canadian church finds itself at a reckoning, and invited the delegation to ruminate: “What is your reckoning as the Lutheran church? To those who sit at your collective table, what is your reckoning as the body of Christ?”

Posted on ELCIC Website

Rev. Dr. Betsy Miller, Ecumenical Officer, Moravian Church, Northern Province

The Rev. Dr. Betsy Miller spoke two times at the convention. She has been the Ecumenical Officer of the Moravian Church in the Northern Province for 13 years.

The first time Rev. Dr. Miller spoke was on Friday evening when she brought greetings on behalf of the Moravian Church from the Northern Province. She said there were at least two Moravians present. This included herself and her colleague Matt. She addressed the group as brothers, sisters, and siblings in Christ. She asked for prayers and encouragement during their present administration in the United States which has been very difficult. She said Christ does not give fear but rather he gives courage.

The Northern Province which she represents extends from Los Angeles, California to Alberta, Canada to Toronto, Ontario. She said they have eighty-two congregations in this vast area and 15,000 members. Their belief is God is equipping all people to be messengers of His love. The Moravian pastors in Canada also benefit from GSI Services just as the pastors of the ELCIC do.

Her colleague, Matt, serves at a Moravian Church in Hannah, Alberta. She said ecumenism is achieved at the local level. In 2023, the Moravian Church entered full communion with the ELCIC. They also partner with the ELCA and others.

Their church has developed a daily devotion book entitled the Moravian Daily Text. It currently is translated into fifty languages around the world. She gave Bishop Susan Johnson a copy of the Moravian Daily Text. She had a second copy which she said she would be giving to the next new National Bishop of the ELCIC.

Rev. Dr. Betsy Miller had a great sense of humor. It was a pleasure and enjoyable to hear her offer greetings to the assembly.

The second time Rev. Dr. Betsy Miller spoke was on Saturday morning. This time she spoke on the theme of the convention – Rejoicing in Hope.

Rev. Dr. Miller said she and Bishop Susan Johnson met 10 years ago.

She began by explaining who the important figures have been in the creation of their church. She had three pictures up on the screen simultaneously. The pictures were of Jan Hus, John Amos Comenius, and Nicholas Ludwig Von Zinzendorf also in that order.

Jan Hus was martyred for his Christian faith in 1415. He was church reformer – a key predecessor to Protestantism. His teachings had a strong influence on many including Martin Luther one hundred years later. John Amos Comenius was considered the father of

modern education. He was also predecessor of the Moravian Church. The third picture was of Nicholas Ludwig Von Zinzendorf. He was from Germany. Zinzendorf became the bishop of the Moravian Church in the 1700's.

Some significant symbols of the Moravian Church are the Moravian Seal, the Moravian Star, and beeswax candles. First the Moravian seal has a lamb in the center representing Jesus the Lamb of God which holds a staff with a banner representing victory. The seal when spotted throughout the world brings comfort to Moravian followers who are travelling – they feel completely at home knowing they are among their brothers, sisters, and siblings in Christ. The Moravian Star has become an enduring symbol of the Moravian Church. The star is the reminder of God who caused the light to shine out of darkness and the light is the life of humanity. Lastly, beeswax candles are considered the purest of all animal or vegetable waxes – suggesting the purity of Christ. The candle, giving its life as it burns, suggests the sacrifice of the sinless Christ for sinful humanity.

Rev. Dr. Miller reported the church continues to grow in the global south. She also said several Moravian Church Settlements are in the UNESCO World Heritage site. These sites are in the U.S., Denmark, Northern Ireland, and in Germany. They are recognized for their unique historical and cultural value.

The Moravian Church is part of what is called Worldwide Unity. When taking a team to another part of the world, it is important to understand the context of that region to create "Unity." The whole Moravian church is broken into provinces. These provinces are found all around the world are among many races and of many tongues. These provinces offer a wide variety economic, social, and political development. There are many provinces although they are one without distinction in their membership in the Unity. They have Unity Provinces and Mission Provinces depending on their development toward self-governance and sustainability. Rev. Dr. Miller mentioned most of their members are people of color.

Great focus is put on two specific Bible readings in their church which are the Sermon on the Mount and Matthew 25. They build hospitals and schools before churches when spreading the gospel.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, Moravians were forced to underground and unfortunately ceased to exist. However, God helped them to rise again.

Their voting process is more of prayer and discernment rather than naming individuals beforehand for a specific position as we do in the ELCIC. Their trust is put solely into the Holy Spirit in that the right person will be appointed for the right position when the vote is called.

Mistakes were made by the Moravian church in the 18th century when spreading the gospel in Jamaica and the West Indies. Their intent to spread the gospel and improve the lives of the enslaved people sometimes was hindered when land was purchased along with the slaves. They regret ever having done this. In 2006, the Moravian Church issued a formal apology for slavery, acknowledging the church's past involvement and seeking to address any lingering racial divides. One specific case of this happening was in the Carmel mission station in Jamaica.

In 2022, some Moravian pastors from both the Northern and Southern Provinces took students on a racial justice pilgrimage to Montgomery, Alabama to deepen their understanding of the history of slavery and its lasting impact it has had on many.

Rev. Dr. Miller said, "The gospel is a gift given to us by God. It is a task for us to spread it. We can find joy by simply being together."

A Moravian Lovefeast is a worship service featuring a simple meal and communal singing. It is a time of fellowship, where a meal is shared, often consisting of coffee and sweet buns. During this time, the congregation sings hymns. This tradition symbolizes love, unity, and sharing of faith through a symbolic act of community.

Lastly, the Moravians believe the Spirit empowers believers to live out their faith in practical ways, not just through doctrinal understanding. According to Rev. Dr. Miller, "they do not get hung up on theological differences."

Respectfully submitted by Sharon Kane.

Rev. Dr. Imad Haddad

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

Rev. Dr. Imad Haddad, who was recently elected bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, delivered greetings on behalf of the ELCJHL and their outgoing bishop, Dr. Sani Ibrahim Azar. Although Bishop-elect Haddad was born in Palestine, his roots are in Jordan. He is an Arab, but not a convert to Christianity; as he explained, “my forefathers and mothers brought the gospel to you.”

To summarize his context, Bishop-elect Haddad taught us that he comes from *one* land, with *two* people, and *three* religions; despite its political divisions, the Holy Land is one geographic entity with a population of Christians, Muslims, and Jews, where both Palestinians and Israelis have the right to exist. Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip began following the Six Day War of 1967. Approximately three million Palestinians currently live there, under occupation, including 50,000 Christians.

Less than 1% of the population of the Holy Land identify as Christian. The majority are Greek Orthodox (40.7%), followed by Latin Catholic (35.7%), Melkite (9.3%), Protestant, including between 2,500 and 3000 Lutherans (8.8%), and Syriac, Coptic, or Armenian (5.5%).

Recently, the number of Christians in the Holy Land has been shrinking due to emigration. People have left for a variety of reasons, such as pursuing educational opportunities elsewhere or joining their spouse or other family members. Others leave due to their growing frustration with the separation wall, a lack of freedom, concerns for their safety, the increasingly difficult political and economic situation, or, in 0.8% of cases, religious discrimination.

Bishop-elect Haddad needs an identification card and a special permit to travel between his home and church due to the 708-kilometre barrier which separates the West Bank from east Jerusalem. He refers to it as “the apartheid wall” due to the restriction of movement and separation from loved ones which it causes. For example, the wife of one recently married ELCJHL pastor is not permitted to live with him. After Bishop Haddad’s family was questioned by Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint, his young daughters became fearful of visiting their grandparents. Colonial settlements and checkpoints, blockades, and barrier systems continue to increase, including the addition of new metal gates with the intention of confinement.

Palestinians also struggle to access sufficient water to meet their basic needs, living on only 4% of the recommended allotment per capita according to the World Health

Organization. They supplement their water supply with collected or purchased water stored in plastic or metal tanks. Bishop-elect Haddad's in-laws were recently without water for more than 50 days.

Bishop-elect Haddad also spoke to us about Israelis who live in settlements and outposts in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem being permitted to burn fields and homes, uproot trees, and attack the passing and parked cars of Palestinians without consequences, due to 'settlers' living under the protection of the Israeli Occupation Forces. In contrast, Palestinian prisoners, some of which are children, are often detained without trial for an indefinite amount of time.

Bishop-elect Haddad cautioned us to remember that the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas is being politically, rather than religiously, motivated. At the time of his remarks, it had resulted in 57,012 casualties and 134,592 injuries: numbers which have only continued to increase. Further consequences of this conflict are damage to both the natural environment and urban infrastructure and the resulting displacement of the population; people are grieving the loss of homes, schools and universities, houses of worship, and their heritage, as cultural and historic sites are destroyed. After nearly two years of warfare and genocide, anger and hatred have increased, and human dignity, human rights, and people's faith in humanity have all suffered. They often question why human rights organizations, churches, and even God appear to remain silent, rather than intervene to save them.

Despite both recent and ongoing challenges, Christians continue to strive to be a prophetic voice in the Holy Land. The ELCJHL consists of six congregations located in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Jordan. They also operate four of the 46 Christian schools. There, joint religious classes are offered to teach acceptance and appreciation of the other, regardless of race, gender, or political affiliation.

The mission of the ELCJHL also includes advocating for gender justice, promoting environmental stewardship, and helping to meet the financial, spiritual, and physical needs of the vulnerable. Ten years ago, they established the first ecclesiastical court in the Holy Land, granting equal rights and responsibilities to all parties in cases of divorce, inheritance, child custody, alimony, marriage age, and other family affairs.

In closing, Bishop-elect Haddad urged the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada to continue "rejoicing in hope", in keeping with our 2025 Convention theme, based on Romans 12:12. Speaking from the lived experience of the ELCJHL, he describes hope as something which "starts as reality today and continues to actively live and build for the future".

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This summer, the National Office and Eastern Synod launched a joint appeal to support the ministries of the ELCJHL with the goal of raising \$50,000.

Rev. Dr. Imad Haddad will be installed as bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land on January 11th, 2026.

Respectfully submitted by Karen Stepko

Rev. Sonia Skupch, Regional Secretary, Latin America and the Caribbean & North America, The Lutheran World Federation

Rev. Sonia Skupch, Regional Secretary, Latin America and the Caribbean & North America, The Lutheran World Federation, delivered the fourth Rejoicing in Hope thematic presentation on Saturday afternoon, as part of the 2025 ELCIC National Convention.

She presented an overview of the work of the LWF, engaging delegates with a pop quiz on LWF knowledge, before offering a deeper look into the LWF's mission and four strategic priorities: responsible theology, justice and peace, thriving churches, and service and dignity.

"Hope is the centre of the strategy... hope is the centre of the work we do," she emphasized.

She highlighted the areas in which the ELCIC is playing an important role within the work and priorities of the LWF. Skupch noted Bishop-elect Larry Kochendorfer's position as Chair on the Mutual Responsibility Framework task force, and Rev. Katherine Gohm's position as Vice-president for the North America region.

"We are facing a severe climate emergency, and I'm very pleased to see how engaged this church is with climate justice," she also commended the commitment to climate action that the ELCIC has demonstrated.

Skupch concluded the presentation with a gift to the ELCIC: a Holy Communion set, made with sand from refugee camps in Jordan and New Guinea.

Serving as a powerful reminder and symbol of Lutheran unity and communion, she noted the set is, "a symbol of hope and unity, a symbol of being in full communion, of being connected, of being united, and of having hope in Jesus Christ as the centre of us."

Posted on the ELCIC Website

Emily Savage, Vice-President, the Canadian Council of Churches

The final *Rejoicing in Hope* thematic presentation of the 2025 ELCIC National Convention concluded with a Bible study session, presented by Emily Savage, Vice-President, The Canadian Council of Churches and member at St. Philip's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Toronto.

Delegates were invited to draw their attention to 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable; it keeps no record of wrongs; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Savage encouraged delegates to reflect on love not just as an emotion, but as an action that can lead to new beginnings and transformative change.

"Love breaks down barriers, literal and metaphorical, offering new ways forward, new innovations, new connections, new relationships," she said. "It rewrites our expectations. It shifts how we think of ourselves, of our loved ones, of the people around us. Such a force that makes space for hope, even when it shouldn't be there."

Walking delegates through reflection on the story of the *Good Samaritan*, Savage illustrated the unexpected nature of love on making space for hope even in unexpected places.

During table discussions, delegates reflected on ideas surrounding the "unexpected neighbour" and where they see pockets and glimmers of hope today.

Savage concluded the session by inviting delegates into prayer, "Dear Lord, give us the courage to love beyond boundaries. Give us the eyes to see all of the hope you have hidden around our world. Give us the strength to redefine our neighbours and help us to keep our hearts open to all of the beautiful little surprises that make everything worth it."

Posted on the ELCIC website

Partner Reports

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada appreciates working with a variety of partners. Five partner reports were submitted to the Bulletin of Reports. Of the five, one partner was selected to address the convention. The Reverend Michael Pryse, who is currently serving as the Interim Executive Director of Canadian Lutheran World Relief, presented his report.

Canadian Lutheran World Relief

Reverend Michael Pryse shared his heartfelt appreciation to the remarkable CLWR staff for their skill and dedication, to Bishop Susan for her leadership, and to all the supporters for their extraordinary generosity. Last year, total revenue exceeded \$17 million which was a record. However, the needs are many. Rev. Pryse described a world groaning under the weight of war, disaster, and displacement. He described CLWR's efforts in Gaza, Ukraine, and East Africa. He highlighted the Nature-Based Solutions initiative in the Lake Chad Basin across Chad and the Cameroon where CLWR is working alongside thousands of small-scale farmers to promote climate-resilient agriculture. He closed his report with some reassuring words. "The world knows such pain, and our efforts may feel small in the face of it all. But love—steady, faithful love—moves mountains."

Lutheran-Anglican-Moravian Commission

The Lutheran-Anglican-Moravian Commission (LAMC) is the new group formed after the full communion initiative expanded to include the Moravian Church in North America. This working group of members from the Lutheran, Anglican and Moravian churches have placed their focus on networking opportunities, the role of deacons, Indigenous expressions of Church, and the potential for sharing resources.

Suomi Conference in Canada

The Suomi Conference functions as a special interest ministry for those congregations that have Finnish-speaking minorities. It consists of five congregations in Ontario, one in Quebec and one in British Columbia. It is financed almost entirely by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and its office of the Ministry for Finns Abroad. They reported on their resources of support for worship and lay ministry and their monthly publication.

German Evangelical Lutheran Conference in North America (DELKINA)

The Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Konferenz in Nord Amerika works to strengthen German-speaking Lutheran communities across North America. Several DELKINA member congregations are sending lay leaders to Germany for training as lay preachers through programs offered by the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD).

Chinese Special Interest Conference

The Chinese Ministry Conference (CMC) works to support Asian Canadian Lutheran ministry. One main focus is to welcome newcomers and provide settlement support. Their ministry encompasses congregations across the ELCIC. CMC has also established international partnerships and has had the privilege of attending several international events in the last three years. The CMC is also studying the issues of theological education for Asian ministries and addressing concerns faced by Asian Lutherans by promoting dialogue and networking.

Respectfully submitted by Charlotte Raine

ELCIC Group Services

Rev. Dr. Gordon Jensen, chair of the GSI Board, presented. Dr. Jensen emphasized that the purpose of GSI is the same as that named in an earlier presentation by Pr. Solomon: fostering experiencing gospel. Lynn Thiessen has retired as Executive Director. GSI welcomes Barb Fortier as the new E.D. GSI provides a national plan so that we can support people as they move to different ministries, remaining standard across the whole church and maintaining efficiency.

GSI supports local volunteers, especially in human resources:

1. Administers pension plan: accountable to financial services regulator.
2. GSI is the policy holder of various contracts in the benefits plan.

GSI faces a challenge: congregations suffer financial strain, and there are increasing costs in healthcare. Increasing healthcare costs appear because of aging population, mental health needs, specialty drugs and new therapies, chronic diseases, and dental needs. GSI's response is to focus on all members of the plan, sharing the costs.

The group has a retiree health plan, offered when participants are retiring, or their call is ending, and they are over the age of sixty. The plan must be continuously held; it cannot be interrupted. This plan is different from active health modules.

The pension plan functions on defined contributions in a retirement account (including employee and employer contributions, investment returns, and tax relief). GSI's investment strategy adjusts according to the age of the beneficiary.

GSI has a continuing education plan that is intended to encourage lifelong learning among rostered and non-rostered employees.

GSI board seeks to act responsibly, using consultants and other resources to make changes that benefit members in shifting landscapes.

Respectfully submitted by Bill Harrison

Elections

Election of a New Bishop

At this year's convention there were many highlights that I enjoyed being a part of, I would like to focus on two things. The first one was how proud I was of our young (under 30) people who insisted that as a group that they needed to be heard not only as the church of tomorrow but today. Personally, I think we have so much to learn from the younger generation.

Another highlight for me was the nomination, elections, discussion and selections of a new bishop for our national church and if we should limit the National bishop in the future to only serve 2 (6 year) term (no decision was made and this last item was referred to the National Church Council for discussion).

A new bishop was necessary because our current National Bishop, Susan Johnson has indicated her desire to retire. To assist in the process, the ELCIC's National Church Council approved a discernment process leading up to the election proceedings at convention. This process did not impact the ELCIC Bylaws process for elections of a bishop; rather, the discernment process was about an intentional process leading up to the election of consideration, prayer, and pre-identification of potential individuals for election. The Pre-Identification Committee received seven submissions for names for the National Bishop.

In addition to the names of potential individuals identified, the convention delegates were encouraged to nominate any rostered pastor of the ELCIC whom they thought would be able to lead our church at this time. After the first Ballot, there was no election. Thirty-two names move forward to the second ballot. In the second ballot, there is no election. All names from the results of the second ballot then move forward to the third ballot.

On the third ballot. There was no election. Five names then move forward to the fourth ballot. To assist the delegates before the next vote, the five individuals would each have five minutes to address the delegates. On the fourth Ballot – There was no election. Three names move forward. On the Fifth Ballot – There was no election. Two names move forward. (Bishop Rev Carla Blakley (Eastern Synod) and Dr. Rev Larry Kochendorfer (Former Bishop of Alberta)

On the sixth and final ballot was cast by 156 voting delegates. Delegates elected Dr. Rev Larry Kochendorfer to serve as our National Bishop. Kochendorfer becomes the fifth National Bishop in the ELCIC, following Donald Sjoberg (1986-1993), Telmor Sartison (1993-2001), Raymond Schultz (2001-2007), and Susan Johnson (2007-2025).

Kochendorfer was serving as interim pastor at Our Redeemer, Penticton, B.C., as well as assistant to the bishop in the British Columbia (BC) Synod. Before his retirement, Kochendorfer served as Bishop of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories (2012-24).

After the newly elected Bishop, Bishop Larry, addressed the delegates and visitors, encouraging us to pray for him and his wife, Kathy, and our church as we go forward

Yes, Bishop Larry, we will pray for you, your family, and your church as we go REJOYING IN HOPE.

Respectfully submitted by Murray Patzwald

Election Results from the 2025 ELCIC National Convention

Saturday, July 12th, 2025

On second ballot for National Church vice chair – Bruce Cook was elected.

For National Church secretary – Linda Grainger elected by acclamation.

For National Church Treasurer – Stephen Holmes elected by acclamation.

Results on election of National Church Council Members (three-year term)

BC Synod

Lay – Ben Lukenchuk elected.

Rostered – Rev. Aneeta Snoop elected.

Alberta/Territories Synod

Lay – Tammy Kirkwood elected.

Rostered – Rev. Kate Zaiser elected.

Sask Synod

Lay – Jeff Barber elected.

Rostered – Rev. Victoria Mwamasika elected.

MNO Synod

Lay – Sarah Harrington elected.

Rostered – Rev. Chris Bishopp elected.

Eastern Synod

Lay – Cath Wilke and Heidi Van Schaik elected.

Rostered – Rev. Dr. Kimber MacNabb elected (by acclamation)

Court of Appeal Election Results

Lay – Brent Latimer, Boston Laferte, Kristi Burns elected (three-year terms)

Rostered – Rev. Karen Stepko and Rev. Prema Samuel elected (three-year terms)

Respectfully submitted by Doug Schmirler

Committee on Reference and Counsel

Several different motions were brought to the Convention through the Committee on Reference and Counsel. This committee reviews motions that are essentially brought from the floor of Convention, to ensure they are clear and understandable by the assembly, and don't go against the procedures set out by our Bylaws. Reference and Counsel brings those motions to the assembly along with a recommendation of what should be done with each motion, based on how it would interact with our procedures and bylaws.

A majority of the motions brought forward at this Convention were recommended to be referred to NCC (National Church Council), as they required bylaw amendments or extensive review and consideration. When a motion is recommended that it be referred the first thing that the assembly votes on is to refer that motion or not. Many of these items were passionately defended that we needed to discuss them now, at this Convention. On two separate occasions the assembly made the choice to move into Committee of the Whole, which allows the group to suspend the motion at hand to refer the item, and simply discuss the content of what was brought forward without coming to any decision. This allowed the assembly to hear what the people had to say, both opinions for and against the idea that was brought forward. Ultimately one idea which was discussed came forward as an amended motion to direct the NCC to propose a bylaw change, and the rest which involved consideration of bylaws and resources were referred to NCC.

There were also some motions brought forward which Reference and Counsel recommended adopting. The assembly did vote to pass a motion formally designating the last Sunday in July as Emancipation Sunday, and a motion to show Solidarity with Palestine. Another motion that was recommended for adoption was brought forward by the youth delegates at convention, directing the NCC to create a National Youth and Young Adult Council as an advisory board to the NCC. The youth delegates spoke intensely about the need for younger members to be not only heard but also listened to, and how creating an advisory board to the NCC would help in achieving that goal. This motion was also passed by the assembly.

The last item that the Committee on Reference and Counsel typically handles is a motion to ensure any unfinished business gets referred to NCC, so it doesn't get lost if we are not able to address it at Convention. Once that motion was passed Reference and Counsel finished their work with a thank you to many groups and people who made the National Convention happen.

2025 National Convention Report to Sask Synod, July 10 – 13, 2025; Winnipeg, MB

Make sure to read the motions, recommendations from Reference and Counsel, and whether they were carried at the ELCIC National Convention website
<https://elcic.ca/motions-2025/>

Respectfully submitted by Deb Roberts

Greetings

Anglican Church of Canada

The Most Rev's Gregory Kerr-Wilson, Bishop of Calgary, Archbishop of the Ecclesiastical Province of Northern Lights.

He brought greetings on behalf of the new Primate, Shane Parker. Rev. Gregory Kerr-Wilson shared some of the details of their recent general synod. The new Primate was elected for a period of three years. This will be a period of transition as there was a primate's task force that generated six creative pathways dealing with a number of topics. Details about this initiative can be found here <https://anglicanjournal.com/general-synod-overwhelmingly-votes-for-change/>. Rev. Kerr-Wilson closed his greetings by reading two moving tributes to Bishop Susan on her retirement as sent by former Primate Linda Nicholls and acting primate Anne Germond.

Respectfully submitted by Lynda Erlandson

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Bishop Elizabeth Eaton brought greetings from the ELCA and informed us that they will meet in Phoenix in late July and early August. They will be electing a new bishop, secretary, and many council members. Issues facing their country like White Christian Nationalism will also affect us. They continue to work on the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery and look to us for example there. They are also looking at a “year of jubilee” to reconcile for the slavery. They are working on concept of “separation of church of state” and pointing out that Luther said it was the duty of the church to call out the prince. Care of Creation is something they are working on and look to us as an example. Bishop Susan was commissioned to help in the process of Lutheran Renewal, and this was an important assistance. They have formed a coalition of not the usual suspects to work through the cuts to USAID to support refugees.

Respectfully submitted by Lynda Erlandson

Citizens for Public Justice

Rev. Dr. Willard Metzger expressed gratitude for allowing time to address us and the long-standing relationship with ELCIC. He gave us an overview of CPJ. They define themselves as the political arm of public justice, and a faith-based advocacy and lobbying group. Poverty Eradication, Climate Justice, and Refugee and Migrant Rights are the three focus areas. The focus of his presentation was mostly on the state of Refugee and Migrant Rights. Policies at the time shaped the experience of our families that came. Current Policies will shape the experience of generations to come. We currently fall short ... we treat refugees differently depending on country of origin. He discussed misinformation and the scapegoating of immigrants. The Safe Third Country Agreement between USA and Canada

is problematic because we send most asylum seekers at Canadian land borders are sent back to USA to claim asylum there. It is questionable whether they are safe there in current times. The new government throne speech signals a concerning shift in our government's approach to refugee and migrant rights. C-2 “The Strong Borders Act” introduces rollbacks to those rights some of which violate international law. He outlined some history of the work of the organization in Refugee Welcome and Private Sponsorship. What more can we do? Address harmful rhetoric to restore hope. We need to apply public pressure to reshape the narrative.

Respectfully submitted by Lynda Erlandson

LCBI

Dr. Wayne Hove, president of LCBI, brings greeting on behalf of the high school. Video is posted on the ELCIC website.

<https://youtu.be/4hp5CCx-VLo?t=11207>

Luther College

Dr. Tom Phenix, president, Luther College, U of R, Regina brings greetings in the video posted on the ELCIC website.

<https://youtu.be/0vly-seGy4I?t=9223>

Moravian Church

Rev. Dr. Besty Miller – Ecumenical Officer Northern church. She was joined by Matt Gillard. Sister or Brother is the honorific used by Moravians, so she expressed a thank you to Sister Susan and our siblings in Christ. Dr. Miller said they covet our prayers for their country. “We need your prayers and encouragement.” She then greeted us formally on behalf of David Bennett head of the Northern 'Province'. Which includes northern half of US and Alberta, and Toronto. GSI looks after their Canadian pastors. Ecumenism is best achieved at the local level ... Matt serves at Redeemer Lutheran in Hanna, AB. The Lutheran, Anglican, Moravian Commission is an example of theological hospitality. Moravian daily text is one of the gifts from Moravians to the world. Dr. Miller presented a copy to Bishop Susan and had one for the new bishop when we finished the election process.

Respectfully submitted by Lynda Erlandson

The Episcopal Church

The Rev. Margaret Rose, Deputy for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Relations brought greetings and thanks from Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe as well as former presiding bishops who have worked with our church. They are grateful for our prayers and for our leadership in inclusion. Margaret Rose mentioned that she had been very impressed with the Museum of Human Rights in a previous visit to Winnipeg. We are churches working with the spirit moving in and through borders. Within a year, all the original four churches will be electing a new leader, so we are all realigning. We are reckoning with our past to repair, heal and make reparations. We have so much “good trouble” to make together. She ended by reading a letter from Bishop Rowe to Bishop Susan expressing gratitude for her work.

Respectfully submitted by Lynda Erlandson

Leadership Award Presentation

At the Thursday evening business session, Trina Gallop Blank presented the ELCIC Leadership Award. It is presented to a rostered or lay member to recognize outstanding contributions in service to others. The award this year was presented to Ben Johnston-Urey who is Director of Worship and Outreach at Trinity Lutheran Church in Whitehorse. Ben is a leader who has helped to create a welcoming and caring community and revitalized the congregation by drawing in new members and deepening the faith of those already present. They have fostered ecumenical relationships and community programs that bring people together in joy and hope. Ben's thank you speech was moving and inspirational. He expressed gratitude to his wife and family who work together with him in ministry. He also expressed pride and joy in his congregation and gratitude to the ABT synod as well as the larger church. He spoke of our call to be who our ancestors dreamed we would be in this time.

(Or just link to: <https://elcic.ca/2025/07/10/ben-johnston-urey-presented-with-2025-elcic-leadership-award/> for the ELCIC news report on this)

Respectfully submitted by Lynda Erlandson

Worship

Worshipping together was a vital part of our church gathering in convention this summer. The Worship Planning Committee prepared a number of services where we had the opportunity to hear the Word of God, be fed at the Lord's table, and be moved by the Spirit through excellent music. Throughout our time together, the Convention Chaplain, Rev. Peter Wall, helped us focus in prayer as we began our meetings, before meals, and as we discerned the votes we cast for our new National Bishop and other new members of our National Church Council.

National Convention opened on Thursday afternoon, July 10, 2025, with worship commemorating and celebrating the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and its predecessor church bodies. Worship began with a procession of forty-four women clergy from across our church, both actively serving and retired, vested in albs and stoles and singing as they walked around and through the gathered assembly. National Bishop, Susan Johnson, preached at this service, and Bishop Kathy Martin of the BC Synod presided at Holy Communion.

We closed our meeting days on Thursday and Friday with quiet services of Evening Prayer. Thursday, July 10, our Worship Leader was Rev. Aneeta Saroop from the BC Synod, and on Friday, July 11, worship was led by Rev. Jennifer Marlor from the MNO Synod.

Sunday morning, July 13, Closing Worship prepared us to return to our homes, synods, and congregations with hope for the next chapter of life in our church. During the service, National Church Council was installed, and our new National Bishop-Elect Larry Kochendorfer was blessed by the worshippers and offered a blessing. National Bishop Susan Johnson presided at Communion, and Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Elizabeth Eaton, preached.

Our regular gathering in prayer, praise, and song was a powerful and essential reminder at this central business meeting of our church of who and whose we are, and why we do what we do. At our core, we are in the business of being church.

Respectfully submitted by Sarah Dymund

Music

Jeanne Martinson to submit

Motions

From the Bulletin of Reports

Proposed Motion	Page Number	Action by Convention
Motion 1: 1995 ELCIC Statement to the Jewish Communities in Canada	F 15	CARRIED
Motion 2: Report of the Task Force on Abilities and Inclusion	F 15	CARRIED
Motion 3: Recommendations from the Task Force on Abilities and Inclusion	F 15	CARRIED
Motion 4: Report of the Task Force Addressing Racism, White Supremacy and Racial Justice Issues	F 15	CARRIED
Motion 5: 1991 Stewards of Creation: Respect for Human Life	F 16	CARRIED
Motion 6: 2024 Audited ELCIC Financial Statements	E 87	CARRIED
Motion 7: 2026 and 2027 Budgets	E 91, 93-94	CARRIED

Reference and Counsel

Proposed Motion	Action by Convention
RC 1: Eucharistic Practices and Presiding <i>Recommended that the resolution be referred to NCC.</i>	CARRIED
RC 2: Emancipation Sunday <i>Recommend Adoption.</i>	CARRIED

RC 3: Term Limit for National Bishop <i>Recommend that the resolution be referred to NCC.</i> Amended Motion: That the 2025 National Convention directs the National Church Council to propose a bylaw change for a limit of up to two (2) terms to the Office of the National Bishop of the ELCIC effective from 2028.	CARRIED
RC 4: Bylaw Amendment <i>Recommend that the resolution be referred to NCC.</i>	CARRIED
RC 5: Creation of a National Youth and Young Adult Council. <i>Recommend adoption.</i>	CARRIED
RC 6: Adding 2 young adult members to NCC <i>Recommend that the resolution be referred to NCC.</i>	CARRIED
RC 7: Solidarity with Palestine <i>Recommend adoption.</i>	CARRIED
RC 8: Solar Power National Unity Project <i>Recommend that the resolution be referred to NCC.</i>	CARRIED
RC 9: Unfinished Business <i>Recommend adoption.</i>	CARRIED
RC 10: Expressing Gratitude for <i>Rejoicing in Hope</i> <i>Recommend adoption</i>	CARRIED

Posted on the ELCIC website – go to [Motions - Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada](#)

Conclusion – July 13, 2025

On Sunday morning, the 2025 ELCIC National Convention concluded with a closing worship service. Delegates, visitors, and special guests gathered to rejoice, pray and sing all together, one final time before departing home.

Outgoing National Bishop Susan Johnson served as the presiding minister for the service, and Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and longtime friend of Bishop Johnson, preached the sermon. Readings from Deuteronomy 30:9-14 and Colossians 1:1-14 were read, along with the Gospel, Luke 10:25-37, delivered by Deacon Sherry Coman.

The Gospel reading, the parable of the Good Samaritan and Bishop Eaton's message, uplifted Jesus' important and wonderful question, "Who is my neighbour?" A familiar question, a frequent question. "Who is my neighbour? How far must I extend my totality, my care, my compassion, my resources?" Bishop Eaton asked.

Offering delegates a parting reminder of unexpected hope, and mercy, she proclaimed that "who we were expecting was not the one who actually showed up," and that God used this unexpected person (the Samaritan) to come along and bring wholeness and peace. "Every one of us is a member one of another, so the suffering that people are enduring in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land is our suffering as well, and we dare not distance ourselves from that, or from missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, or anything that is happening out of climate change," she preached, encouraging the gathering to journey with Jesus down difficult roads and continue to embrace the call to action, to propel ourselves to be healed, with the reminder that Jesus might also use us to bring others from death to life.

Closing worship included a blessing of the Bishop-elect Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer, in which the gathering extended hands as the conference of bishops offered words of blessing. The installation of Officers and the National Church Council also followed.

Throughout the service, joyful music was heard through various musician and instrument accompaniment for hymns, including the violin, piano, shakers, and a djembe, along with choir performances. The instrumentals for worship were led by musicians Sarah Harrington and Melissa Gingrich.

The offering hymn, "*God, Who This World Created*," was commissioned by Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) as a resource for the Friends of Creation initiative, in memory of Daniel O. Schickedanz, a faithful companion of the mission of CLWR. Sunday's offering was designated for CLWR.

After Holy Communion, the service concluded with a parting blessing from Bishop-elect Kochendorfer, rooted in the words of Romans 15:13. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may have hope for the power of the Holy Spirit,” he spoke, concluding the gathering with a resounding reminder of hope, and why we rejoice.

“In this new moment we can hear God calling; in this new time, all shall work together. In this new moment we learn to change what is wrong, though no one is able to do this alone,” the first verse of “*Momento Nuevo*” (English: *In this New Moment*) rang out, as those gathered joined in song one last time as they prepared for the journey back to their home communities, invigorated, inspired, and hopeful for the future ahead of us, and ready to continue in the work and mission of the ELCIC.