



# LIVING OUR FAITH



# LET'S NOT BE AFRAID

**T**hese are the words National Bishop Susan Johnson spoke to delegates at Assembly 2023—a joint gathering of Lutheran and Anglicans this past summer. She encouraged those in attendance, “Let’s continue to grow, whether that’s in depth or in numbers. Let’s just strive to be as faithful as we can for our loving God.”

How are you and your congregation living into this? As you meet in your Annual General Meeting, you are encouraged to dwell on this question.

## Assembly 2023

**T**he ELCIC and ACC met in convention for the second time under the theme *Let There be Greening*, at the University of Calgary from June 27–July 2, 2023.

The ACC General Synod met at the same time as the ELCIC’s Special Convention, with several joint sessions involving both bodies for worship, fellowship, Bible study, presentations and other discussions—with other matters, such as voting and convention business, being conducted separately.

Assembly highlights include:

- ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson and Archbishop Linda Nicholls, Primate of the ACC, opened the Assembly 2023 plenary sessions with a state of the union address.
- The ELCIC Special Convention and ACC General Synod approved motions to bring the ACC, ELCIC and the Canadian churches of the Moravian Church in North America into full communion.
- Delegates approved an amended resolution calling on both churches to respond to opportunities for solidarity, advocacy and to pray for peace and justice in Palestine and Israel.
- On Canada Day, the assembly session began with an invitation to reflection from Anglican and Lutheran leaders, including National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop Chris Harper.
- Throughout the 2023 ELCIC Special Convention, delegates heard from four task forces, all of which were formed out of convention action at the 2019 ELCIC National Convention.
- The Task Force Addressing Ableism, Task Force Addressing Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, Task Force Addressing Racism, White Supremacy and Racial Justice, and the Task Force on Carbon Neutrality each spoke, with delegates voting to approve their reports.
- Pat Lovell was presented with the 2023 ELCIC Leadership Award for her dedication, work and love given through acts of service within the ELCIC. She is the third recipient of the award. •



Archbishop Linda Nicholls, Primate of the ACC, and ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson opened the Assembly 2023 plenary sessions with a state of the union address.



Sharing a campfire at Camp Lutherlyn.

## Giving back to the great outdoors

**T**he 2022 and 2023 summer seasons marked the return to camp for many families, church groups and individuals across the ELCIC. Following two years of COVID-related restrictions for the 2020 and 2021 camping seasons, faith-based Lutheran camps bounced back strongly in 2022 and 2023 with gratitude to their many financial supporters.

“Donations have certainly been up since COVID, which has really sustained us considering all we went through during the pandemic,” said Paul Kopjar, assistant director of Sylvan Lake, Alberta’s Camp Kuriakos. “That congregational support really has made a difference. Specifically, we receive donations from individual congregations, of both Lutheran and Anglican denomination.”

Camp Lutherlyn, located just west of Ottawa, Ont., took the time off to take on some serious renovations around camp. In order to do so, Lutherlyn relied on a number of grants while running fundraisers, including a “100 X \$100” to which 100 separate donors provided \$100 to the camp. Synod-owned, Camp Lutherlyn leases its property from the Eastern Synod.

Over in the Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod, Luther Village made some significant changes during COVID.

“When we took over, the summer shop was literally falling into the lake, our beloved dining hall building was falling apart and many cabins needed to be levelled, while others needed new roofs. And during COVID, you’re losing so much of your income from not running kids’ camps and school groups, so you’re just trying to maintain,” said co-executive director Lisa van Dijk.

“We just want to ensure we are best using the money we can raise. We thoroughly appreciate our remittance funding from the MNO Synod on a monthly basis.” •

## CLAY 2023: Ashes & Embers

For the first time since 2018, Lutheran and Anglican youth came together in-person for the Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth (CLAY) Gathering 2023: *Ashes & Embers*. A joint gathering between the ELCIC and ACC, youth of the two churches gathered from August 10–13. Typically held biennially, the 2020 event *En Route* was hosted online in 2021 due to the COVID pandemic.

For most in attendance, it was either their first CLAY event or their first in-person CLAY event. Between the large group gatherings, praise and worship sessions, reflective group experiences and personal prayer time, the trip out to Waterloo, Ont. was filled with experiences that will surely last a lifetime.

British Columbia Home Team Leader Darya Saëd submitted team reflections to *Canada Lutheran*—the official magazine of the ELCIC—from some of her youth following CLAY. Those responses are provided below:



"Something I really enjoyed about CLAY was the large group gatherings and the really inspiring workshops that we got to do on the second day."

"I enjoyed CLAY because I get to meet a lot of new people."

"...The concert, meeting new people, playing football, the workshops, all these things were a lot of fun for me."

"I really appreciated all the music...watching everyone dance along or clap along was my favorite part."

"I really enjoyed the concerts and staying up late!"

"I enjoyed hanging out with new friends."

"What I enjoyed about CLAY was just the chance to gather with hundreds of youths from across the country, excited to worship together, excited to learn together... and see the friendships that grow."

"I really enjoyed all the time we got to spend together, worshipping and playing games and just hanging out." •

**BETWEEN THE LARGE GROUP GATHERINGS, PRAISE AND WORSHIP SESSIONS, REFLECTIVE GROUP EXPERIENCES AND PERSONAL PRAYER TIME, THE TRIP OUT TO WATERLOO, ONT. WAS FILLED WITH EXPERIENCES THAT WILL SURELY LAST A LIFETIME.**



The entire CLAY gathering poses for a group shot.



ELCIC members contributed in a variety of ways at the 13th Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation, in Krakow, Poland, September 2023.

## The importance of strong partnerships

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada values the life-giving relationships of its many partners within Canada and around the world.

The ecumenical work and interfaith witness of the ELCIC is felt in every corner of the globe. With roughly 95,000 members, the ELCIC is sometimes seen as a small church among the world's Christian churches. However, ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson sees it differently.

"Despite limited resources and being a medium-size church, we know our church is far more effective when we work with partners," Bishop Johnson shared in a column for *Canada Lutheran*. "Together we can accomplish much more, strengthen relationships and work towards becoming a healthier church."

Through partnerships with the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), the ELCIC remains actively involved in the mission and ministry of all three organizations, continuing its growth and outreach with churches of other denominations and faith backgrounds.

The ELCIC also maintains its strong relationship with Canadian advocacy and humanitarian organization KAIROS and Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR), while working closely with Global Mission and Companion Synod partners.

"We are a valued partner because we participate fully," Bishop Johnson said. We are valued because we take our turn in providing leadership. We are valued as we work to maintain our financial support. We are valued as we are seen being mediators. These partners are here for us as well, praying for us, supporting us, walking with us." •

# WORSHIP FOR A CONGREGATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING

## OPENING THE MEETING

### LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

You are encouraged to acknowledge Indigenous lands in a way appropriate to your context at the beginning of your annual meeting. The following words are provided as an example.

*We acknowledge that we are gathered on the traditional and unceded territory of the [Name of Indigenous Peoples for where your community is located]. We recognize and respect their enduring presence on this land and express our gratitude for the opportunity to live, work and learn on their territory.*

Let us take a moment to reflect on the history of this land and to consider our roles in working towards reconciliation and understanding.

### PRAYER

Gracious and loving God, we give you thanks for gathering us together into your church — whether it be in person, online or a combination of the two.

Our community is more than an organization; it is a family united by a shared purpose and mission, to discern the work you call us to do. In this time of reflection and planning, grant us clarity of mind and openness of heart. May our discussions be guided by wisdom, understanding, and a spirit of unity. Help us to see beyond the details and numbers, recognizing the greater purpose and impact of our collective efforts.

May we seek to be generous, compassionate, loving people of God. Keep us mindful of the many other needs in the world — conflicts, refugees, poverty, and all other concerns that we name before you now.

All this we pray in your name. *Amen.*

### READING 1 Timothy 6:17–19

*As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.*

**HYMN** *God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending*  
EvLW, #678

### LITANY

The prayers below are based on the ELCIC's four vision priorities.

**Leader:** We come before you today, humbled by the depth of your love that calls us to strive for a Healthier Church. Instill in us the

wisdom to foster collaboration among all expressions of the church. Grant us the grace to develop a strong sense of connection, rooted in trust, good communication, creativity and collaboration. May these qualities be the pillars that uphold the foundation of our faith community.

**All: Open wide our hands in sharing.**

**Leader:** As we seek to cultivate Effective Partnerships, open our hearts to the richness of engagement with others. As we navigate the path of collaboration, may our efforts be guided by your love and bring forth abundant fruit.

**All: Open wide our hands in sharing.**

**Leader:** In our pursuit of Relational Leadership, grant us the strength to deepen diversity and equity in our community. Inspire us to embrace inclusivity, creating spaces that reflect the boundless love you have for all your children. May our leadership reflect your grace, fostering an environment where every individual feels valued and heard.

**All: Open wide our hands in sharing.**

**Leader:** Let us lead with Compassionate Justice, guided in our reflections and actions. May we be a voice for justice on issues that matter, advocating for the well-being of all your creation. Grant us the courage to stand up for what is right, inspired by the compassion you have shown us through Christ.

**All: Open wide our hands in sharing.**

**Leader:** Gracious and loving God, bless us with creativity and perseverance as we navigate the challenges ahead. May our actions be a testament to your love, shining a light that draws others closer to you. All this we pray in your name.

**All: Amen.**

## CLOSING THE MEETING

**Leader:** Bless our community with a sense of purpose and direction for the coming year. We thank you for the diverse talents and gifts represented in our congregation and community. May we use these resources to show others the blessing of your unconditional love.

**Leader:** In your holy name we pray,

**All: Amen.**

**HYMN** *Lord of All Hopefulness*  
EvLW #765

**Leader:** Go in peace — in love, justice and a commitment to serve one another and our wider community.

**All: Thanks be to God.**