

Script for Synod Assembly Presentation

I bring you greetings on behalf of our Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Secretary Chris Boerger and Treasurer Lori Fedyk.

It is an honor and pleasure for me to be the Churchwide Representative at the Nebraska Synod.

Let me begin with prayer. The Lord be with you. And also with you.

Dear God, we are reminded that we are an Easter people. Walk with the Nebraska Synod as it serves its communities throughout the state. Bless the rostered ministers and lay leaders and give them boundless energy to do their work. Bless this assembly and give it wisdom in its decision making. I ask all these blessings in your holy name. Amen.

Last year I followed the script the Churchwide staff provided me and provided a 25-30minute PowerPoint slide update about what your church had been up to in 2017. This year we decided to modify our approach and use our videos more effectively and give the churchwide representatives more flexibility in what they presented. I decided to use two videos and a PowerPoint presentation that allows me to emphasize themes that I believe are important to us as ELCA members as we journey through 2018. There is some homework that I would like for you to do.

So here is the outline for today.

I will show you two videos. The first is the annual video that features our PB and a theme that she has been sharing with us in earnest. Please reflect on what she says and what you see in the video. I believe that you will see yourselves and symbolic examples of the work that you do throughout your Synod. The second video is the ELCA in Review 2017. This video is an attempt to provide you with an efficiently presented update of what the ELCA has accomplished in 2017. As I have said before, we are big church that does a lot of ministry to achieve God's mission in the world.

Then I will present a short PowerPoint presentation that will emphasize what your ELCA VP would like you to think and do something about more earnestly during 2018.

Slide 2 – The three expressions

- Your congregation
 - Your offering is stewarded by your congregation's council to support the work of your congregation. Your congregation designates a portion of your offering to be shared with your synod and the churchwide organization. These funds are called Mission Support.
- Your synod
 - Your congregation's Mission Support dollars are stewarded by your synod to support their work, including nurturing congregations and rostered ministers, support local partners and accompany the synod's global companion churches. A percentage also gets shared with the churchwide organization.
- Your churchwide organization
 - Mission Support dollars are used to support congregations, respond to local and worldwide ministry opportunities, engage in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and lead churchwide initiatives on behalf of the whole ELCA.

- Together, you all made it possible for your synod to share **\$1,546,676** with the churchwide expression to support ministries. That represented **46.8%** of all the Mission Support that your congregations shared with your synod. Thank you for your commitment to increase your mission support to a similar in 2018.
- The Mission Support dollars that remain in your synod support the vital work that your synod does to enhance and sustain our ministry together—such as providing pastoral care to your rostered ministers and walking alongside congregations going through the call process. Your Mission Support dollars breathe life into your communities and congregations through the work of your synod.

- On behalf of all the ministries stewarded by the churchwide organization and your synod, and all the people whose lives who are touched through these ministries, I say THANK YOU!
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Slide 2- Thank you for your support

Slide 3- Future Directions

- Propelled by a commitment to Lutheran traditions and to being a community of faith that is always forming and being renewed, the ELCA's presiding bishop, Church Council and Conference of Bishops initiated Called Forward Together in Christ Strategic Directions 2025 for this church. The process sought to engage all ELCA members and partners in conversation about future directions so that this church can journey faithfully and effectively together in the years ahead.
- Many of you participated – THANK YOU!

Slide 4 – Future Directions Goals

- 5 goals came out of the of Called Forward Together in Christ process
- These are the priorities that were shaped by the voices across this church
 1. A thriving church spreading the gospel and deepening faith for all people
 2. A church equipping people for their baptismal vocations in the world and this church
 3. An inviting and welcoming church that reflects and embraces the diversity of our communities and the gifts and opportunities that diversity brings
 4. A visible church deeply committed to working ecumenically and with other people of faith for justice, peace and reconciliation in communities and around the world
 5. A well-governed, connected and sustainable church

Slide 5-Congregational Vitality and Leadership

- Conference of Bishop, Presiding Bishop and Church Council have affirmed the highest church priorities for the next two years.

Slide 6 – ELCA Congregational Vitality

- The church is working with more than 35 synods on intentional strategies for improving congregational vitality. In addition, the unit has partnered with synods to start 124 new congregations and communities of Jesus over the past two years. The Directors for Evangelical Mission continue to engage synodical leaders, structures and strategies and coordinate and staff the education of all evangelical mission, mission support, and stewardship ministries in each synod.
- **New Starts in this synod:**

Iglesia	Omaha	Nebraska
Lakota Lutheran Center and Chapel	Scottsbluff	Nebraska
Nile Lutheran Chapel	Omaha	Nebraska
Spirit of Grace Lutheran Church	Holdrege	Nebraska
Sudanese Lutheran Fellowship	Omaha	Nebraska
Sudanese Messiah Worshiping Community	Omaha	Nebraska
United Asian Evangelical Lutheran Ministry	Omaha	Nebraska

Thanks for the work of your Synod DEMs
Rebecca and Richard Sheridan

Slide 7-Leadership

- There has been a lot discussion about the leadership needs of our church. When you listen carefully to what our leaders say at the congregational, synod and churchwide areas of our church, you hear a very clear message. Not only should we focus on the professional development needs of our rostered ministers, but we should equally focus on the needs of our lay leaders as well. In both areas, we should do more to prepare our leaders to serve the communities of Jesus in the context they are located.

Slide 8- Bishop Eaton’s Leadership Initiative

- In November 2016, Bishop Eaton launched an initiative to inspire leaders within this church to seek out and encourage gifted people in their congregations, communities and networks to consider a call to the ministry

of the gospel, supported by growing levels of scholarships for seminary tuition.

- At the same time, Bishop Eaton announced an additional \$3 million for the ELCA Fund for Leaders, which will provide full-tuition seminary scholarships for 60 additional students over the next three years.
- **Fund for Leaders Scholarship Recipients. Halcyon Bjornstad/Wartburg Sem; Erin Branchaud/ LSTC at Chicago Sem; Courtney Geibert/ PLTS Sem ; Heather Goertz/Wartburg Sem; Erick Hill/Luther Sem; Caroline Keenan/Luther Sem; Shari Schwedheim/Luther Sem; Tim Stacy/Wartburg; Heidi Youngquist/Wartburg Sem.**

Slide 9– The Global Church

- *Thank you for your Companion Synod Relationships with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) and the ELC in Argentina and Uruguay.*
- This church receives the gifts of companions and we are re-formed in our U.S. context. This work is supported through approximately two dozen global events offered to synods and congregations each year. The events are a venue for training and experiential learning that increase participants' understanding and build new capacities in the use of accompaniment as a narrative, lens and method for global and local mission engagement.
- Thank you for sponsoring your long term missionaries and YAGMs.
- Krystie Moraska and Ignacio Madrussan/Argentina/Uruguay; Rev Deborah and Joseph Troester/Tanzania; Rev Jeni and Colin Grangaard/Jerusalem/West Bank; Rev Themba Mkhabela/West Africa; Meghan Brown Saveedra/Mexico; Rev Linda Johnson Seyenuklo/Liberia; Dr. Stephen and Jodi Swanson/Tanzania and Rev. Wal Reat/South Sudan
- YAGMs Kristin Bartlett/Rwanda and Jake Connealy/Southern Africa

Slide 10 – Women and Justice

- Women and Justice Study: You all should remember that the task force working on a social statement on women and justice requested your responses to “Faith, Sexism, Justice: Conversations Toward a Social

Statement” by August 31, 2017. I hope that you all participated in the study sessions in your church.

Slide 11-Women and Justice

- Women and Justice Draft Social Statement: The draft social statement on Women and Justice is available for study and response. Your comments are due before September 30, 2018.

Slide 12 – The Campaign

- After three years, *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* has received more than \$175.5 million (\$145million in gifts and commitments and \$30.5million planned gifts) to support and expand 10 ELCA ministries. ELCA World Hunger was the special campaign focus during 2016 and is grateful to report that through the Campaign, ELCA World Hunger has experienced sustained growth in giving, with the majority of the growth coming from congregational generosity! (Thank you!) ELCA World Hunger is now supporting projects in 60 countries, including the United States – working for a world in which all are fed. In 2017, the Campaign for the ELCA will focus on the Global Church Sponsorship priorities of the Campaign.
- *Thank you for gifts that totaled \$542,634 in 2017 and \$678,627 in 2016.*

Slide 13 – World Hunger

- THANK YOU!
- We are grateful to report that over \$21.3 million was given in support of our church’s ministry toward a just world where all are fed. **Thank you for your Synod contribution of \$434,500**
- **1 ELCA Domestic Hunger Grant (\$2,500) was funded in your Synod.** Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska is one of these programs. Lutheran Family Services’ International Center of the Heartland addresses food insecurity needs of Omaha’s refugee and immigrant population. New Americans remain integral and yet vulnerable As they seek out work and connections in a new community. With our support, LFS provides

culturally appropriate, familiar food for families learning to call a new place home.

Slide 14-Lutheran Disaster Response

- Lutheran Disaster Response. As it was stated in the video, over \$22.8million was given in support of Lutheran Disaster Response. **We want to thank your synod for over \$397,000 in contributions.**

Slide 15-ELCA Inter-Religious Draft Policy Statement

- Draft Inter-Religious Policy Statement. The ELCA Inter-Religious Task Force, appointed by Presiding Bishop Eaton in 2016 has prepared a draft inter-religious policy statement to be considered by the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. This draft of “A Declaration of Our Inter-Religious Commitment” is an invitation to everyone in the ELCA to comment. The comment period closes June 30, 2018.

- Thank you for the 817 Synod youth that have registered for the Youth Gathering in Houston in June.