

The 13th Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America was held Aug. 12-17, 2013, at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh. The assembly included 952 voting members. The theme was “Always being made new.”

Summary of Actions

Elected the Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton as ELCA presiding bishop

Voting members elected the Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, bishop of the ELCA Northeastern Ohio Synod, as ELCA presiding bishop. Eaton will be installed Oct. 5 at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel in Chicago and will begin her six-year term as ELCA presiding bishop Nov. 1.

Elected Wm Chris Boerger as ELCA secretary

Voting members elected the Rev. Wm Chris Boerger as ELCA secretary. Boerger, who recently completed two terms as bishop of the ELCA Northwest Washington Synod, was installed during the assembly’s closing worship Aug. 16. He will begin his six-year term as ELCA secretary Nov. 1.

Adopted “The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries”

The assembly adopted “The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries,” a social statement on criminal justice. The statement affirms the fundamental principles of the U.S. criminal justice system, such as due process of law and the presumption of legal innocence, and it also recognizes serious deficiencies -- overly harsh sentencing and persistent inequalities based on race and class. It calls ELCA members to hear the cries of those affected, recommit to visiting the prisoner, correct the flawed criminal justice system and participate in God's work with hands and hearts.

Approved ELCA’s first major fundraising campaign

The five-year campaign, to begin in 2014, is designed to increase this church’s capacity to renew and start new congregations, educate and develop its leaders, bolster its global mission efforts and expand the impact of its relief and development work. Voting members approved two additional campaign initiatives -- encouraging and forming lay youth and young adult leaders and support for disability ministry. The total campaign goal is \$198 million.

Moved to extend the Book of Faith initiative

Voting members affirmed the Book of Faith Initiative “as a continuing emphasis and priority in this church.” The initiative invites the 4-million-member ELCA to become fluent in the first language of our faith -- the language of Scripture -- and to be renewed for lives of witness and service.

Adopted ELCA budget proposals for 2014-2016

The budget for the ELCA churchwide organization includes current fund spending of \$70,541,740 for 2014, \$68,552,280 for 2015 and \$67,920,675 for 2016. It also approved ELCA World Hunger income proposals of \$19,000,000 for each year 2014-2016, and authorized the ELCA Church Council to establish a spending authorization after periodic review of revised income estimates.

Considered proposals from the Memorials Committee

Voting members approved a variety of synodical memorials on topics that include community violence, Israel and Palestine, Holy Communion, immigration reform, pastoral ministry among same-gender couples and their families, the Uniting American Families Act, gender identity discrimination, immigration detention, hydraulic fracturing, fossil fuels and more.

Considered resolutions from the Reference and Counsel committee

The assembly approved resolutions on topics ranging from the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation to a social policy resolution concerning the guarantee of voting rights to all citizens. It also considered amendments to the ELCA Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions on term limit provisions and referred some amendments to the appropriate units of the churchwide organization, Church Council and Conference of Bishops.

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly, the highest legislative authority of this church, will transition from a biennial to triennial schedule with the next assembly meeting August 2016 in New Orleans.