

Biographical Information for Nominees

Churchwide Assembly

Names are listed alphabetically within their respective categories.

Clergy

1. The Rev. Lauren Applegate

Vocation/Occupation: Pastor

Congregational Membership: Free to Be, Bethlehem

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Mission Developer Pastor for 9 years, Synod Reorganization Committee, Co-Convener for YoYoFa, Planning team for Synod Assembly for 4 years

Community Involvement: 10+ Years of Recovery and Participation in AA and SheRecovers, Mom of three kids, PTO member at Miller Heights Elementary, Little League Mom

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: None

2. The Rev. Robert Argot, Jr.

Vocation/Occupation: Pastor

Congregational Membership: Renewed Spirit, Reading

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Co-pastor of a four-church merger congregation. Previously secretary of West Berks Mission District Council for 12 years.

Community Involvement: Member of Lions Club, Shartlesville. Previously a merit badge instructor and chaplain for Boy Scouts.

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: None (Attended 2016 “Grace Gathering” in New Orleans)

3. **The Rev. Hans Becklin**

Vocation/Occupation: Senior Pastor

Congregational Membership: Trinity, Reading

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Trustee, Portico Benefits Services (2021-present). Member of Portico's Benefits Reimagined Working Group (2024). Member of ELCA Church Council (2013-2019).

Community Involvement: Active in working with many partners for vitality in downtown Reading. Passionate about justice for the poor and marginalized, no matter where they live.

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: 2011 and 2013 (As voting member); 2016 and 2019 (as ELCA Church Council member)

4. **The Rev. Jennifer Dee**

Vocation/Occupation: Lead Pastor

Congregational Membership: Trinity, Robesonia

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Lead Pastor, youth activity coordinator, teach youth Sunday School class, lay leadership training and guidance, pastoral care, preaching. Adult leader for youth heading to the NYG from the West Berks Mission District.

Community Involvement: Volunteer at Helping Harvest Food Bank, Girls on the Run Coach, coordinator of community Baccalaureate service, Volunteer at Jack Frost Parade in Robesonia, former member of local CROP Walk committee

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: No

5. **The Rev. Chris Druckenmiller**

Vocation/Occupation: Pastor

Congregational Membership: St. Peter's, Pen Argyl

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Pastor, Handbell Choir, Cantata Choir, Garden worker, Synod Council member, Pocono Mission District Council member

Community Involvement: Slate Belt Ministerium Vice-President

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: None

6. The Rev. Jamie Edelman

Vocation/Occupation: Pastor

Congregational Membership: United Fellowship, Easton

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Faith Formation Resource Ministry Team

Community Involvement: Board Member of Wilson Area Communities that Care Coalition, Preside at monthly worship service at local independent and personal care facility.

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: None

7. The Rev. Kenneth Melber, Jr.

Vocation/Occupation: Clergy

Congregational Membership: St. John's, Towamensing

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Various clergy functions, Synod Secretary, Synod Finance Committee, Synod Governance Committee, Synod Reference and Counsel Committee, Synod Assembly Planning Team (as Elections Team), Synod Assembly Parliamentarian (2023), Former Treasurer for the Hazleton-Lehigh Mission District

Community Involvement: Girl Scout Volunteer, Substitute Teacher, Poll Worker, Food Pantry Board

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: None

8. The Rev. Stephanie Roth

Vocation/Occupation: Pastor

Congregational Membership: Zion Lutheran, Perry Township (Shoemakersville)

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: As lay person prior to becoming a pastor this year I was focused on outreach and youth, my two passions. ELCA National Youth Gathering (Organized & chaperoned youth group, 2009 New Orleans; Community Life Staff, 2018 Houston). Lutheran Social Services Minnesota: Camp Noah (Staff Member, Toms River, NJ (2014) & Kokomo, IN (2017). Director, Rockport, TX (2018).)

Community Involvement:

Local: Girl Scout Troop Volunteer 2023-24 - 2 troops; Hamburg School District Baccalaureate (2024); Created "Jesus, Jammies & Joy" annual Christmas drive to collect kids pajamas for several agencies in 2 counties – 390 pair total first 2 years

(currently 3 churches involved for 2024); In Ian's Boots – Set-up & coordinate ongoing shoe drive at 3 churches.

International: Living Water International (Well drilling & hygiene education in El Salvador and Guatemala); Tree 4 Hope (Mission Trip to Guatemala, Organized Speaker & Support Projects (3 churches); Food support for kids at orphanage & Education at Hope Academy Girls School)

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: None

9. The Rev. Rashion "Woody" Santiago

Vocation/Occupation: Pastor

Congregational Membership: St. Paul Lutheran, Tannersville

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Synod Council, Bear Creek Council

Community Involvement: Path, Pocono Interfaith Committee

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: No

10. The Rev. Deborah Staniszewski

Vocation/Occupation: Pastor

Congregational Membership: St Paul's Lutheran Smithfield

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Yes

Community Involvement: Yes

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: Yes

11. Deacon Travis Woodfield

Vocation/Occupation: Director of Congregational Legacy and Purpose, NEPA Synod

Congregational Membership: Grace, Macungie

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: At Grace, Macungie, I've led an adult forum series, and I also supply preach across the Synod. NEPA First Call Planning Team. Presenter at the 2023 Rostered Ministers Gathering. Currently in formation with the Lutheran Diaconal Association (LDA).

Community Involvement: This summer, I'm volunteering with the PA Shakespeare Festival. I also enjoy DM'ing Dungeons and Dragons games for churches/community groups. Amateur Magician.

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: None

Lay Female

1. **Erla Biasi** Vocation/Occupation: Retired Second Grade Teacher (Weisenberg Elementary)

Congregational Membership: St. John's, Tamaqua

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Singing & Bell Choir. Attended numerous NEPA Synod Assemblies. Communion Assistant & Lector. Taught Sunday School. Serve on the Shepherd's fundraising committee/assist with outreach events.

Community Involvement: Community Hunger Walk. Involved with the Annual Spirit of Christmas weekend. Assist with the American Cancer Society Telethon—fundraising and performing with Bell Choir. Helped with community events at the Tamaqua Train Station. Ring handbells with Zion Stone Church, New Ringgold, PA. Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: None

2. **Barbara Hikes**

Vocation/Occupation: Retired Educator (Math Teacher)

Congregational Membership: St. Peter's, Pine Grove

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: 50+ year member at St. Peter's, Choir Member, Substitute organist, Sunday School teacher and musician, Church archives organizer, Worship committee, Four time attendee of NEPA Synod Assembly

Community Involvement: Conductor of Pine Grove Community Band for 40+ years, Substitute organist for local churches, Pine Grove Historical Society Member, LBL Mountain LLC manager, 50th reunion planning committee for PGA class of '73

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: None

3. **Amanda Melber**

Vocation/Occupation: Educator

Congregational Membership: St. John's, Towamensing

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Choir, Bell Choir, Fundraising Committee, Fellowship Committee, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School

Community Involvement: Girl Scout Troop Leader, PTA

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: None

4. **April Mulvey**

Vocation/Occupation: Seminarian/2nd year

Congregational Membership: Common Ground Recovery Community, Wyomissing

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Seminarian, Steering Committee Board Member, Small Group Coordinator, Altar Guild, Assistant to Pastor

Community Involvement: 12-Step Recovery Community, Veteran Community

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: No

5. Jean Sandberg

Vocation/Occupation: Education/ELCA Camp and Conference Center staff

Congregational Membership: Holy Trinity, Dingmans Ferry

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Support various activities in congregation, Mission District council, Synod Disability Ministry Team, Appointed Synod Council member, ELCA Churchwide grant reviewer, ELCA Disability support teams

Community Involvement: Bethel Woods (Site of Woodstock '69 Historical Event) volunteer, Trinity Centennial band member, ESU Community Band member, Stroudsburg Area Orchestra member, Habitat for Humanity volunteer, Local Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary member, Community garden support

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: 2007, 2016, 2019

6. **Alicia Wood**

Vocation/Occupation: Special Education Teacher

Congregational Membership: Trinity, Kutztown

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Council President, Sunday School Teacher, Youth Group Volunteer, 2024 Youth Gathering Pre-Gathering Event Planning Team, 2024 Young Adult Gathering Participant

Community Involvement: Helped establish and am treasurer of The Veering Cane, a non-profit organization that helps create social and networking events for students with visual impairments. I have been involved with helping Kutztown Community Partnership with events. I also assist with the KU campus ministry.

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: None

Lay Male

1. **Dr. Donald Boyer**

Vocation/Occupation: Retired School District Superintendent, State Budget Director for Education

Congregational Membership: Jerusalem, Schuylkill Haven

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Mission District and church council Chair, Synod Council Finance Committee, Synod Treasurer, Voting member at 34 Synod Assemblies

Community Involvement: Rotary Club, Fire Company, Scouting Leader and Council Camping Committee, Lifetime member of the Pennsylvania Society

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: 2019

2. **Stephen Hikes**

Vocation/Occupation: Retired (former butcher)

Congregational Membership: St. Peter's, Pine Grove

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: St. Peter's Mutual Ministry Committee, Worship and Music Committee, Senior Choir, Synod Council, Former Call Committee Member and Congregational Council Member, Adult Sunday School teacher for 25 years

Community Involvement: Planning Group for Pine Grove Area Lutheran Co-Op, Little League Coach, served on UCC Consistory, Firefighter for many years, was on Rescue Squad; Pine Grove Area Marching Band Booster (and equipment manager)

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: None

Person of Color/Language Other Than English (1 to be elected)

1. **Barbara Maria Marcano**

Vocation/Occupation: Medical Secretary

Congregational Membership: Renewed Spirit 9th St Reading PA

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Mission Council

Community Involvement: none

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: No

2. **The Rev. Nelson Quinones**

Vocation/Occupation: Pastor/Chaplain/Dean

Congregational Membership: St. John's, Fogelsville

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: St. John's Pastor, Lutheran Home at Tipton Chaplain (PT). Lehigh Mission District Dean, East Berks Mission District Council Member

Community Involvement: Roberto Clemente Charter School Board Trustee

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: 2011, 2022

Youth/Young Adult (1 to be elected)

1. **Madison DeLuca**

Vocation/Occupation: Seminarian

Congregational Membership: Dinkey Memorial Lutheran Church- Ashfield

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Lay minister, choir member, previous council secretary

Community Involvement: Supporting congregations through my seminary experience

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: Yes, 2022

2. **Ashley Gheer**

Vocation/Occupation: high school student

Congregational Membership: St John's ELC Boyertown

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Youth member of our Church Council, has attended two mission trips to Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico, and is co-leading a water reclamation project in connecting Boyertown Rotary, St. John's Boyertown, and Wellspring Karitas. Worship team as sound technician, as an altar assistant, and as an usher.

Community Involvement: Participating in a YMCA youth leadership group and has traveled to Harrisburg to present information supporting a bill requiring school bus drivers to be certified in CPR and other health-related certifications.

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: No

3. **Elizabeth Leibenguth**

Vocation/Occupation: Public Safety, Emergency Dispatcher

Congregational Membership: St Johns, Allentown

Congregational/Wider Church Involvement: Previous Order of St. John's member, former member and district representative of Lutheran Youth Fellowship, former chairwoman and current member of Lehigh Mission District, member of NEPA Synod Council, and am a member of the LGBTQIA+ Taskforce. Community

Involvement: I am actively involved in the community by teaching technology skills and providing guidance on how to effectively use various applications. I host and participate in regular get-togethers with a group of peers where we engage in thought-provoking discussions on a diverse range of topics. I have participated in numerous community clean-up events, volunteered at food banks, and have promoted and attended numerous fundraising events.

Previous Churchwide Assemblies Attended: 2019, 2022