

MINUTES
Evangelical Covenant Church Ministerium Annual Meeting
June 28, 2023
Garden Grove, CA and Virtual Access

2023 MINISTERIUM OFFICERS

Rev. TJ Smith, Vice President, Moderator for this Annual Meeting
Rev. Laurie Cornell, Secretary
Rev. Ruby Varghese, Vice Secretary
Rev. Sandra Norris, Treasurer
Rev. Anne Jorgensen, Parliamentarian serving this Annual Meeting

Agenda 1. The meeting was called to order at 9:03 am (PST) by Vice President Smith. He welcomed everyone and noted that it is a good gift to gather as a community of the Covenant Ministerium. He also offered a land acknowledgement in honor of the Tongva Nation, who were God's first stewards of the space in which we gathered for this meeting.

Agenda 2. The Ministerium Officers chose to invite several colleagues/leaders/elders from our community to offer prayer and blessing over our gathering at various points throughout the day. These individuals represented the history and storyline of our Covenant family as it unfolded. For the opening prayer of our meeting, Fredrick, Melissa and Jonas Wall were invited to lead us. Frederick is the Director of Mission Finance in the Covenant; Melissa is a Covenant Pastor; and Jonas is their son! They prayed in both English and Swedish, which honored the beginnings of our Covenant denomination. At our founding, our elders spoke Swedish!

Agenda 3. Organization of the Meeting included the following:

Agenda 3dii3. Lumi Staff, as official Tellers for this meeting, offered training on the voting technology they provided. Test votes were conducted. Instructions were given for how discussion and debate would be conducted both in the room onsite, and virtually. *(A note that the wireless service the hotel provided had significant limitations, which affected all virtual participants to a great degree. This problem will be addressed very carefully prior to the next meeting.)*

Agenda 3b. Quorum call was handled next. The total number of those registered for the meeting was 531. The number of registrants active at the moment of the Quorum call was 386. Quorum was met!

Agenda 3a. Parliamentarian Jorgensen offered a motion for the Adoption of the Standing Rules, and then summarized the rules. She noted that all documents are online on the Ministerium Website. The Standing Rules summary included hybrid meetings and the complexity of that process. She observed that the WiFi service was not running smoothly, and encouraged patience!! She noted that those who were virtual participants need to be

responsible for their own devices and service, and any limitations of service or device failure, will not affect the flow of the Agenda, including any votes. She also reiterated that debates would be limited to 20 minutes, with one extension of 20 minutes by $\frac{2}{3}$ vote of approval. Those who wish to participate in a debate should choose the most appropriate position, when indicating a desire to speak. This would be required for both in the room and online, as there would be only one cue. She reminded everyone to address the Moderator; to speak positively and respectfully about your own perspective; and noted that it is never appropriate to presume the motives or character of those who may hold an alternative opinion on any issue. No discussion.

Vote: For: 330 (98.21%) Against: 6 (1.79%) Abstain: 12

VOTE: STANDING RULES ADOPTED

Agenda 3c. A motion was made by Vice President Smith for the Approval of the Agenda, including Consent Agenda. No discussion.

Vote: For: 339 (97.98%) Against 7 (2.02%) Abstain 14

VOTE: AGENDA APPROVED

Agenda 3d. The Consent Agenda was summarized by Secretary Cornell. She reported on the Approval of the 2022 Ministerium Annual Meeting Minutes by the Executive Committee of the Ministerium, at the November 2022 meeting. The members of this Executive Committee are: Chair or President of each regional Conference, Presidents of the Mosaic Commission (Covenant Asian Pastors Association, Indigenous Ministers Association, Asociacion Latina De La Iglesia Del Pacto Evangelico, African American Ministers Association), President of Advocates for Covenant Clergy Women, President of Covenant Chaplains Association, Executive Minister of Ordered Ministry and Develop Leaders, Chair of the Board of Ordered Ministry, Dean of NPTS, President of the ECC, and the Ministerium Officers.

She noted the list on the Agenda that included the Parliamentarian: Anne Jorgensen; the Sergeants-at-Arms: Alma Rosa Zamudio Maciel, Stephen Bjorlin, Daron Jagodzinske, Bronwyn Murphy, and Bob Do; and the Tellers for this meeting: LUMI staff. The Consent Agenda also included the Financial Report for 2022-2023, provided by Treasurer Norris.

Agenda 3e. The Good Standing review was offered by Vice Secretary Varghese. She gave special thanks to Danielle Ng, Bethany Saldana, and all Regional Conference Staff teams for the significant work involved in getting everyone in Good Standing in order to participate in this meeting! She noted that Good Standing matters a great deal, as we hold each other to common standards for maintaining professional, personal and communal health. Members who are in Good Standing enjoy the benefits of being able to vote at regional and denominational Annual Meetings; receive scholarships and grants as needed; have opportunity to receive gifts from the Crisis Care Fund and other forms of support available through our denomination. Finally, she listed the four components for Good Standing:

Paying Annual Dues through the Regional Conference in which each person serves;
Completing the Minister's Profile Form and keeping it updated every three years;
Completing the Vocational Growth Tool each year;

Maintaining regular healthy connections with ECC colleagues: This can be accomplished by attending Midwinter, Ministerium Annual Meetings, Conference Ministerial Association meetings and retreats, regional cohorts or mentoring groups, Continuing Education opportunities, or through other personal relational commitments, such as Spiritual Direction.

Agenda 3f. The names of those colleagues sending greetings to the 2023 Annual Meeting were read by Secretary Cornell. She spoke of the long-standing relational commitment in the Ministerium of sending written greetings to the gathered Annual Meeting community, by any member who is not able to participate. This is not a rule, but a strongly encouraged optional courtesy. Those who sent greetings for this year:

Jeff Sweitzer
Carl Axel Franzon
Karen Palmatier
Dale and Jan Sandberg
Debbie Packnick
Dean Nelson
Greg Coates
Michael Zabel
James Danielson
Greg Applequist
Ryan Eikenbary-Barber
Jack Shields
David Wenell
Mark Swanson
Melissa Millis
Brad Kindall
Nathan Alley
Todd Kardell
Jerold Nugent
Jeffery Jones
Nancy Ebner
George R. Goodman
Tammy Hallam

Agenda 4. Superintendent Kara Stromberg introduced and read the Resolution of Sympathy, and a video was shown. The names of Pastors, Missionaries and Pastors' Spouses included this year:

PASTORS

Robert Liljegren

James W. Schwalm
Cislin Williams
Bruce Kallenberg
Daniel Edwards
William A. Goodwin
Arnold R. Bolin
D. Bruce Lake
Richard H. Petersen
Daniel R. Seagren
James C. Ressegieu
Robert E. Hirsch
Craig W. Nelson
Robert W. Anderson
Leslie Pearson
J. David Wood
Joel Jueckstock
Roger Nelson
Deborah Power
Lloyd F. Alex

MISSIONARIES

Joann LeVahn
Helen F. Bergquist
Glennis Heikes

PASTORS' SPOUSES

Genevieve A. Lovgren
Ruth E. Elia
Mary Louise Liljegren
Wayne W. Hansen
Delores E. Staurseth
Kathleen Osgood
Christie Peterson
Richard Steel
Velma Lagerstrom
Bernice Anderson
Lorraine Pratt
Harvetha Woodson
Connie R. McCain
Kay Johnson
Alan Roth
Kennis Bishop
Shirley Anderson
Bonnie Jean Nelson

Agenda 6. Brandi Sanders and Joseph Krishna led our community in worship through music and prayer. We were so grateful for their musical gifts and generous, gracious spirits.

Agenda 7. Dr. Hauna Ondrey & Dr. Mark Safstrom had been scheduled to lead us in Continuing Education focused on the History of our Covenant Ministerium, as part of a broader theme of *“Remembering where we have come from, in order to prepare for where we are going.”* A tragedy in Dr. Ondrey’s family prevented them from leading us.

In place of this teaching, first, Vice President Smith led us in prayer for Hauna’s family. Then, he led us in a time of Contemplative Reading of Scripture. Each of the Officers read Psalm 46:10 and Colossians 1:17 in a different version, followed by a time of silence for individual listening for God’s Spirit speaking and reflection in response. *“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”* (NIV)

This Lectio Divina opportunity offered the gift of space to listen deeply for God’s presence and communication to each of us, individually. Secretary Cornell read from the NIV; Treasurer Norris read from the Good News Translation; Vice Secretary Varghese read from the CEV; and Vice President Smith read from The Message.

Brandi Sanders and Joseph Krishna closed the Contemplative Prayer by singing “Amazing Grace.”

COACHING VIDEO - At this point in our agenda, because of extra time available, the Ordered Ministry and Develop Leaders team presented a video on the value of Coaching relationships and ministry.

Agenda 8. Reports from ECC Educational Institutions were given.

Agenda 8a. North Park University - Mary Surridge, President

President Surridge first invited us to watch a video promoting the University. Her verbal report followed. She gave thanks for Rev. Dr. Dennis Edwards as the Dean of the Seminary, noting that he would give his own report. She spoke of good progress in movement forward at North Park University in strategic direction, campus master planning, and elevating the level of excellence. In all endeavors, they are committed to dependence on God’s Spirit to lead and guide in decisions and community life. Last Fall, they welcomed a record number of first-year, first time students. She celebrated that North Park is being chosen by students because of the continued commitment to be unapologetically Christian, embracing the urban neighborhood around them, and honoring the beautiful diversity of the NPU neighborhood and community. Alumni giving was very generous in the past year. New programs have created opportunities for students to serve in the local community. Civic engagement has put Christian faith into action.

Diversity and racial healing have been addressed in different ways, including through

Anti-racism pathways. The NPU community engaged in a “book in common” experience, using Rev. Dominique Gilliard’s “Subversive Witness.” He led various gatherings on campus throughout the year. Members of NPU also participated in the Sankofa experience. Rev. Dr. Debbie Blue received the distinguished alumni award from NPU this past year. The Gospel Choir from NPU has toured this year, and is open to invitations from any local Covenant church throughout the denomination. President Surridge concluded that the Vision from its founding continues on at NPU today. She gave thanks for all of the support and prayers from the members of the Covenant Ministerium.

Agenda 8b. North Park Theological Seminary – Rev. Dr. Dennis Edwards, Dean

Dean Edwards noted that he has just completed his first year in this role. At the Seminary, they are committed to life-long learning. He referred to a colleague who used a clip from Fred Rogers (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary graduate) and his ministry to millions of children through his television program, as an example of how seminary graduates may serve in all types of spaces and communities, in addition to local churches. He noted that the Cohort Model for distance learning continues to include Ignite (PSWC) and Equip (MWC), and a new Cohort model for all degree-seeking students will launch this fall. The School of Restorative Arts continues at Stateville (men) and Logan (women) Correctional Centers, as well. He encouraged us to consider sponsoring tuition costs for one of the students at Stateville or Logan. The Illinois Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton gave the Commencement address at the Stateville graduation ceremony. Dean Edwards also reported that the Seminary was able to offer to Rev. Mark Novak an honorary Doctorate of Theology for his generous service over the years. He also gave thanks that Rev. Dr. Michelle Dodson has been chosen as the Milton B. Engebretson Chair of Evangelism and Justice. She is known as a preacher, an organizer, a researcher, a professor, and a dancer! Some of her important research and writing have been focused on multi-ethnic church congregations.

Rev. Dr. Dodson was introduced briefly, and she spoke of choosing to join the NPTS faculty because of The School of Restorative Arts. She expressed gratitude, joy and hopefulness in the season ahead. Dean Edwards concluded by speaking of the growth and changes underway at NPTS, and asked for prayer in this season.

Agenda 8c. Centro Hispano Estudios Teologicos (CHET) - Dr. Magdalena Sanchez, Interim President

President Sanchez spoke of 1989 as the year that CHET was born from the elders of First Covenant Church of Los Angeles allocating \$1,000,000 as an endowment for this new school. The new school’s purpose would be to educate homegrown, Spanish speaking leaders. At this point in 2023 in CHET’s history, approximately 10,000 leaders have been enrolled, with an average of 300 students per trimester. Among the students, 74% are first generation individuals. Students represent 17 different countries, and they are 50% women and 50% men. Over the 34 years of CHET’s existence in the ECC, the number of Latino churches has grown from 10 to 80 churches. She celebrated the fact that two women pastors from CHET would be Ordained at this 2023 Annual Meeting. President Sanchez also noted that 26% of the current students are

pastors and 60% are leaders of some type in their churches right now, as they study. CHET students are studying as they lead! So, the average age for CHET students is 40-60 years. CHET has no full time faculty. Instead, adjunct, part time faculty and four staff members have led and served this entire ministry. She closed by asking for an infusion of prayers, love and financial gifts! She also gave thanks for Rev. Dr. Edward Delgado as the previous President, who served so faithfully.

Agenda 8d. Report from the Board of Ordered Ministry - Rev. Sharon Anderson, Chair

Chairperson Anderson began by asking us to look around in the room or online, and remember that the Board of Ordered Ministry is made up of Covenant colleagues, and its purpose is to support and help this Ministerium community. There is no “us and them.” She named the 25 members of the Board: 14 elected members, which include 12 clergy and 2 lay persons. In addition there are 7 ex-officio members, including Executive Minister of Ordered Ministry/Develop Leaders, Dean of NPTS, President of CHET, Council of Superintendents representative, Covenant Executive Board representative, Ministerium President, ECC President, and 4 advisory members from the Ordered Ministry/Develop Leaders team. She gave special thanks for the outstanding group of individuals who make up that Ordered Ministry and Develop Leaders team.

Chairperson Anderson spoke of the fact that the Board serves the Ministerium and the ECC by supporting the spiritual, emotional and professional health of ministers and leaders. She reminded us that Christ holds us together in this work, and as a result, the Board is not an abstract entity. She acknowledged that they have experienced great challenges in their work, and they haven't always known the way forward. They do their work prayerfully and humbly, as they serve in community with the wider work of the ECC. She reminded us further that they are committed to complete confidentiality, as they support those receiving credentials and work alongside those who are in crisis. They provide mental health resources to colleagues. She reported that in the past year have continued to learn and grow in multi-cultural understanding and competency. Also, in the past year, the Board co-sponsored with the Ministerium, a resource called “Transforming Polarized Thinking.”

Chairperson Anderson described the fact that a core framework for their ministry to our denomination has been the reality that God chooses to inhabit and flow through us all, as clay jars. In their collective call to the Board, the team members have made a commitment to show up in their humanity; to bring each of their perspectives honestly; and to seek discernment together, guided by God's Spirit. She concluded by giving thanks for the privilege of leading this sacred work. She asked those who currently are serving on the Board to stand and be acknowledged.

Agenda 9. Ordered Ministry and Develop Leaders - Rev. Herb Frost, Executive Minister

Executive Minister Frost called us, as members of the Ministerium, to stand side by side, so that we can share and experience the companionship and support of one another. This posture allows us to stand strong. He gave thanks for a great year which had the foundation of a solid team, originally called together by Executive Minister Lance Davis. He invited us to embrace a life

and posture of imagination, playfulness and joyfulness in our servanthood and leadership. Executive Minister Frost named the essential commitments and resources which are central to the work of the Ordered Ministry/Develop Leaders team. They are: care for all credentialing requirements and process; development work leading to resourcing pastors and leaders, that has transformation and not just status quo as a goal; and pastoral care and support. He is committed to encouraging life-long learning for all credentialed clergy in the Covenant, and asked us all to embody a core posture that we are “for” one another.

Executive Minister Frost highlighted alternative pathways to formation and learning. An example of these pathways included the “*Lunchbox*” program from our ECC Children’s Ministry team, and named resources available for helping pastors and leaders thrive and grow. He reminded us that shepherds also need shepherding! He celebrated the one million dollars received from the recent LILY grant. He reflected on the third area of responsibility of the Ordered Ministry/Develop Leaders team - that of the care and support of pastors when they need intervention of some sort in their personal or professional lives. He shared his heart’s concern for the burden of our Ministerial community. The demands of pastoral/leadership roles often take their toll on families, marriages and on other relationships, including those with key lay leaders in congregations. Executive Minister Frost called us all to lean in and pay close attention to what is happening in our relationships and in those of others around us, and strongly encouraged us to seek help as needed.

Parliamentarian Jorgensen took a moment to apologize to our online participants for the continued audio difficulties. At this point, it seemed that they were resolved.

Agenda 10. Report of the Nominating Committee for Ministerium Officers - Rev. Mary Chung March, Chair.

She noted that 17 members make up the Nominating Committee. In their work, they were very intentional in seeking a balance of men and women, and in ethnic representation. They also gave attention to representation from various regions across the denomination, with special focus on candidates from regions not represented in the most recent Ministerium Officers leadership cycle. In the process of finding two candidates for each open position, they contacted a number of individuals. They were pleased to offer this ballot for the new year of service.

Agenda 10a. Nominees for President of the Ministerium were presented: Rev. Harvey Drake and Rev. Tom Ek. They have been nominated for one year, which fills the final year of Taylor Burgoyne’s original three-year term. At the end of this next year, the Nominating Committee has the option of presenting either of them on the ballot for a new, three-year term, or choosing different individuals for that new term. No nominations from the floor were presented. No discussion.

Vote: Drake: 272 (67.16%) Ek: 133 (32.84%)

ELECTED: Harvey Drake as President

Nominees for Secretary of the Ministerium for the three-year term were presented: Rev. Carmen Bensink Lewis and Rev. Nicole McClurg. No nominations from the floor were presented. No discussion.

Vote: Bensink Lewis: 208 (52%) McClurg: 192 (48%)

ELECTED: Carmen Bensink Lewis as Secretary

Agenda 11. ECC President's Report - Rev. Tammy Swanson-Draheim

President Swanson-Draheim gave thanks for her story of growing up in the Covenant Church family and for being given opportunities to serve in different capacities. She expressed deep love for all of us in this Covenant family. She also celebrated her own family and showed us a picture of her grandchildren, who are beloved and beautiful!

President Swanson-Draheim shared that her heart's desire is that we all lean in together and face our challenges as a united family of faith. She described how God brought to her mind and heart the story of the disciples who were caught in the storm as they were crossing the sea. She noted the core fact that Jesus was with them in the boat on the Sea of Galilee. She called us to hear and remember that Jesus is in the boat with us as we face any storm, including the "storm" in our denomination right now. In the story of the disciples, it was when they came to the end of their own strategies for responding to the danger of the storm, that they called out to Jesus. This story is a powerful reminder to us that so often, it is when we finally realize that we do not have control, that we become utterly dependent on Jesus. When we cannot design a solution, we turn our attention and our hope to Jesus, alone. President Swanson-Draheim invited us to trust that Jesus may know the way, precisely where we thought there was no way. Grow in our capacity and commitment to listen for the Spirit's guidance and to listen to one another much more faithfully, was President Swanson-Draheim's call to the Ministerium.

She told us the story of speaking with the President of the Evangelical Covenant Church in Congo, Rev. Theophile Duale Langba. (There are 60,000 Covenant churches in Congo!) He had come to the Paul Carlson Partnership meeting. In that setting, he gave her a beautiful carving of people in a boat, all traveling together, and told her that at this time, she is represented by the figure in the front of the boat, guiding the journey. This gracious leader and beautiful piece of art confirmed for President Swanson-Draheim that God was pointing her to this specific Scripture and its call for us to trust that Jesus will guide us while we are in that boat and facing that storm.

President Swanson-Draheim has spent time listening to our Ministerium and to people within our churches. Her travels and conversations have been a great joy and encouragement. She has been energized by the spaces for asking and answering questions; and has been grateful for broad engagement by many within the Covenant family. She noted once again her deep commitment to and investment in prayer, as she seeks to lead this denomination. She noted that the polarization in our country and culture has crept into the church, and into our Ministerium. This polarization has been expressed both in personal communications and through social media. Her call to us is to join our hearts to Jesus, which then guides us closer to one another. She named the sober truth that it is so much easier to lean back and evaluate, rather than lean in

and pray and encourage. She spoke of the motion which was passed at last year's ECC Annual Meeting, asking her to develop and bring back this year a proposal for how to heal the divide in our denomination on the matter of Human Sexuality. She noted that in response to this motion, there will be discussion on the proposal for changes in our Ministerium Constitution and the creation of related Bylaws, which are intended to address this motion and complex reality in our body. In summary, she also noted the work that has been done to recommend a re-organizational plan for Covenant Offices, aligning our mission with the resources we have been given.

Finally, she expressed gratitude for all who have been praying for her in her leadership role. For people who have asked about any new prayer requests, she requested prayer for her to discern and maintain the best rhythms of life, and for her to sense from God the wisdom that she needs as she seeks to glorify God and lead well. She invited us to pray this prayer for one another, as well. She noted a final encouragement that our Congo brothers and sisters are praying for us, here in the U.S. At the core, our hope is in Jesus who leads us all.

Agenda 12. African American Ministers Association Elder Prayer was offered by Eunice K. Johnson.

12:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Lunch Break

Agenda 13. Covenant Asian Pastors Association Elder Prayer was offered by Steve Wong.

Agenda 14. Brandi Sanders and Joseph Krishna led us once again in worship through music and prayer.

Parliamentarian Jorgensen noted the available Spanish translation headsets. She also acknowledged that the online technology difficulties still existed, and that they were being addressed with urgency. In addition, the Ministerium Officers' election percentages were announced in response to requests for that detail to be made public.

Agenda 15. The community was given the opportunity to meet in small groups for facilitated conversations. Vice President Smith offered gratitude for the individuals who served as facilitators for these "talking circles." Spiritual Directors, Chaplains, and Coaches facilitated these groups. This invitation gave us another way to get further connected with one another, and provided a space to "listen with our hearts." He noted that telling stories of our lives and listening to those of others, is an organic way for us to grow deeper relational connections, "heart to heart." Everyone was encouraged to introduce themselves; share one thing that each person "heard" during the contemplative prayer time earlier, or one thing held in their hearts at this moment; and then, one prayer request for their ministry or community. Finally, the groups were invited to pray for one another. We concluded this experience by sharing in the Lord's Prayer together.

Agenda 16. The 2022-2023 Financial Report summary and 2023-2024 Proposed Budget

Presentation were given by Treasurer Norris. She offered helpful teaching about the function of each of three traditional financial reports: Balance Sheet, Income and Expense Report, and Budget Report; providing wisdom and clarity about the value of and interaction between these written reports. She then offered a summary of our financial story from last year, and connected each item to the proposed budget for this new year, 2023-2024.

April 30, 2023 was the final day of our Ministerium fiscal year, and we had a balance of \$45,745 in our account. Our yearly, primary source of income is member dues. In this past year, we collected \$120,400 which equates to 1,417 members who paid dues. There were 1,876 dues eligible members in 2022, so our income means that 75% of the Ministerium members paid dues in the past year. Treasurer Norris described our spending report and noted that our expenses align with our mission which is to invest in our membership, our commitment to good leadership, and administrative costs which serve the mission. Our investment in our membership includes associations and affiliates within the Ministerium. Membership Development investments include opportunities such as the Anti-racism discipleship groups and events, Continuing Education, the Covenant Quarterly, Financial Leadership Training, Midwinter Scholarships, the Minister's Crisis Fund, Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, Women in Leadership Awards, and the Midwinter event as a whole. Our investment in future members happens through our support of CHET (Centro Hispano de Estudios Teologicos) and North Park Theological Seminary, with benevolence assistance for students in financial need.

Treasurer Norris then described that we invest in leadership, primarily through the Executive Committee of the Ministerium. She noted that at last year's Ministerium Annual Meeting, there was significant discussion about Honoraria for Officers of the Ministerium, and then reported that the Executive Committee met in November of 2022. At that meeting, the committee agreed upon criteria for an opt-in/opt-out system for Officers receiving yearly Honoraria. Opting-in would be offered in an honor system. The criteria for this system:

- Serving in part-time or bi/co-vocational call or between calls
- Documented hours greater than 18 per month, averaged over a year
- Household income below 80% of local median income

Finally, Treasurer Norris noted our investment in the needed administrative expenses to serve the mission.

A motion was made to vote on our 2023-2024 Budget. No discussion.

Vote: For: 336 (97.39%) Against: 9 (2.61%) Abstain: 6

VOTE: BUDGET APPROVED

Agenda 17. The announcement of Vocational Service Awards 2022-2023, which acknowledges clergy who have reached the age of sixty-five, was led by Vice Secretary Varghese. She read these names; invited those who were present to stand; and then offered a prayer over their lives and ministries. Those honored:

Paul Anderson
Darlene Anderson

Keith Bergstrom
James Black
Judson Boies
Janice Bros
Michael Brown
Thomas Cowger
Stephen Cushing
David Dahms
Earl Dunbar
Robert Fairbanks
Gary Freimuth
Samuel Galdamez
William Gardner
R. Michael Gillett
Beth Haydon
Alice Johnson
Deena Jones
David Kelly
Cheryl Klem
Dale Kuehne
Matthew Marzluft
Keith Matthews
Gricel Medina
Todd Michero
Rick Miller
William Miller
Scott Nellis
Peter Nielsen
Galen Nordin
William Nylund
Mark Pearson
Mary Rowlands
Janet Russell
Kenneth Satterberg
Jeffrey Saville
Brian Schanil
Daniel Schuttler
James Sequeira
Mark Seversen
Timothy Smith
Phillip Sommerville
Anita Sorenson
Carolyn Stoker
Patricia Thompson
R. Brent Thompson
Douglas Thorpe

John Vogel
David Wallin

Agenda 18. Recognition of Out-Going Ministerium Officers and Executive Committee members.

Agenda 18a. Vice President Smith noted that Taylor Burgoyne's service as President of the Ministerium had ended early in 2023. Vice President Smith gave thanks for Taylor's service of the Ministerium, both in his role as President and prior to that time, as a Parliamentarian. He spoke of his great appreciation for Taylor's careful listening to his own life and seeking God's guidance, during which God released him from his role as Ministerium President. Vice President Smith honored Taylor's good leadership and then asked us to pray for both Taylor and Rachel Burgoyne, in their new life in Boston, MA, where Taylor has begun a new pastoral role.

Agenda 18b. Secretary Cornell used this space given to outgoing officers, for the purpose of offering her conviction that as a denomination, we have moved away from our core identity in an important way. She described conversations with and responses from individuals who were not familiar with the denomination, and noted the deep gratitude repeatedly expressed for the ECC's core affirmations of faith, including the affirmation of the reality of freedom in Christ. She spoke of the ways that "the reality of freedom in Christ" has shaped our history and our communal work of theological interpretation and decision-making, and expressed gratitude for this mature, rare and courageous space in God's Kingdom.

Secretary Cornell reminded the Ministerium of our historic posture of holding together the centrality of the Scriptures with a humble commitment to staying in relationship, even when differing interpretative frameworks have led to more than one conclusion on important and yet, secondary theological matters. She then referred to the 2004 Annual Meeting of the ECC, in which a motion was passed, that our Human Sexuality Position Statement become "binding in practice..." She invited the Ministerium to acknowledge that this vote shifted our polity, and concluded by asking the community to pray and wonder about any possible steps forward that may be needed in response to this serious situation in our history.

Agenda 18c. Treasurer Norris named the members of the Ministerium Executive Committee who completed their terms of service, and then offered prayer for them. Those members are: Dierdra Gray Clark; Jeannette Conner, Jeff Olson, Rick Millikin, Susan Cosio, and Sharon Anderson.

Agenda 19. Reports and Recommendations from Ordered Ministry and Develop Leaders.

Agenda 19a. Executive Minister of Serve Globally, Grace Shim, first, offered thanks to our Ministerium for our support of all the global personnel who represent the ECC in many parts of the world. She introduced new global personnel who are serving on behalf of the ECC. They are Seth and Samantha Jordan (MENA region), working in peace-making and reconciliation; and Rebecca Hodson (France), who will be joining others in building relationships with neighbors in the community, as well as sharing her musical gifts. Executive Minister Shim spoke of the challenges and glories of their calls and prayed for them.

Agenda 19b. Reports and Recommendations for Change in Standing and Approval of Candidates were led by the Ordered Ministry and Develop Leaders Team.

Vice President Smith noted that these motions come from a committee, so they do not need a second for the vote. However, anyone who wishes to offer a personal second for any individual receiving a credential may do so, by submitting that request in writing to Secretary Cornell. Those names will then be included in the Minutes for this meeting.

Agenda 19bi. Active to Inactive:

Nicholas Bruckner (OWSa)
Robert Foster (OWSa)
Brian Haight (OWSa)
Matthew Mattoon (OWSa)
Heather Monkmeyer (OWSe)
Bob Shim (CM)

Vote: For: 332 (99.40%) Against: 2 (0.60%) Abstain: 14
VOTE: REPORT APPROVED

Agenda 19bii. Recommendation for Inactive to Active:

Eric Bain (OWSa)
Ronald Ferguson (OWSa)
Douglas Humphreys (OWSa/R)

Vote: For: 355 (98.61%) Against: 5 (1.39%) Abstain: 9
VOTE: REPORT APPROVED

Agenda 19biii. Recommendation for Transfer of Credential:

Myron Erickson (OWSa) to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.
T.C. Moore (OWSa) to The Moravian Church.
Nathan Salinas (OWSa) to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Vote: For: 362 (98.37%) Against: 6 (1.63%) Abstain: 6
VOTE: REPORT APPROVED

Agenda 19biv. Recommendation for Resignation of Credential:

David Capozzi (OWSa)
Michelle Clifton (OWSa)

Tina Herrin (OWSa/I)
Anders Johnson (OWSa/I)
Jonathan MacDonald (OWSa)
Erin McDermott (OWSa/I)
Mark Nilson (OWSa)
Rebekah Strobel (OWSa)
William Walles (OWSa)

Vote: For: 338 (93.89%) Against: 22 (6.11%) Abstain: 26

VOTE: REPORT APPROVED

PRAYER: Executive Minister Frost prayed for these individuals, giving thanks for their lives and asking God to give them hope and to guide them in this next season.

Agenda 19c. Recommendations for Approval of Candidates was led by Executive Minister Frost and Danielle Ng.

Agenda 19ci. There were 389 Licenses granted or renewed for 2023-2024. The entire list was presented as one motion.

License for Amber Eaton - Second by James Eaton

Vote: For: 371 (100%) Abstain: 2

VOTE: RECOMMENDATION APPROVED

Agenda 19cii. Transfer of Ordination

Ira A. Carty - Second by Sally Carlson
John C. Lassen

Vote: For: 356 (99.44%) Against: 2 (0.56%) Abstain: 2

VOTE: RECOMMENDATION APPROVED

Agenda 19ciii. Ordination to Word and Service

Rebecca L. Homan - Second by James Eaton
Kristi M. Ivanoff - Second by Sally Carlson
Christopher J. Kelly - Second by Stephen Weihsman; James Eaton
Bronwyn Murphy - Second by Stephen Weihsman
Kristi S. Smith - Second by Eric Landin; Sally Carlson; James Eaton
Mika M. Strait
Melanie Kay Viana
Theodore J. Wilson - Second by Sally Carlson; James Eaton
Sarah Winter - Second by Pete Anderson; Eric Landin; Karen Hinz

Vote: For: 375 (100%) Abstain: 3
VOTE: RECOMMENDATION APPROVED

Agenda 19civ. Ordination to Word and Sacrament

Aaron W. Anderson - Second by Pete Anderson; Eric Landin; Sally Carlson
Robert J. Balian
Kara A. Berg
Paul H. Betancourt
Kelly Ladd Bishop
Scott A. Burnett - Second by Richard G. Mylander
Christina Burrows
Jacqui L. Crumrine
John N. DePalma
Anthony C. Emerson
Melissa L. Emerson - Second by Eric Landin
Annie Espinoza
Jeremiah J. Fair
Peter A. Frost - Second by Eric Landin
Rachel Gough - Second by Eric Landin; Sally Carlson
Shaun Higgins
Joshua W. Hinken
Erin M. Johnson
Dani Kilgore - Second by James Eaton
Lawrence K. Kim
Seung Evelyn La - Second by Pete Anderson; Karen Hinz
William E. Lopez - Second by James Eaton
Andrew J. Mark
Leslie D. McAuley - Second by Karen Hinz; Sally Carlson
Criss W. Mitchell
Nicholas S. Munn - Second by Cathy Stanley-Erickson
Matthew S. Ness
Michael R. Nunan - Second by Sally Carlson; James Eaton
Erico Ortega Romero
Taylor Sexton - Second by Eric Landin
Jean H. Shim
Garrett R. Smith
Alexander Song - Second by Sally Carlson
Phillip K. Tolbert - Second by Stephen Weihsmann
Dianira P. Ulin
Elizabeth A. Whitney
Emily B. Wickstrom - Second by Linnea Ek; Eric Landin
Sharad Yadav - Second by Sally Carlson
Daniel J. Yoon

Vote: For: 380 (100%) Abstain: 2

VOTE: RECOMMENDATION APPROVED

A prayer of gratitude was offered over these colleagues.

BREAK

Agenda 20. Vice Secretary Varghese led the presentation of the Women in Leadership Awards 2022-2023. **Rev. Phyllis Myung received the “She Advocates” Award; Rev. Dr. Sara Heacox Sosa received the “She Leads” Award; and Rev. Nicole Bullock received the “She Preaches” Award.** Phyllis Myung is a pastor, communicator, and writer. She is a champion for mental health, children and youth, and justice issues. Sara Heacox Sosa serves as a Family Ministries pastor, as well as the Director of Children and Family Ministry for the Northwest Conference. She also is a professor at North Park and Bethel Seminaries. Nicole Bullock serves as a pastor and as the founder of two ministries: “She Preaches” and “Make Room”. Vice President Varghese offered words of affirmation for each of these women. Pastor Phyllis and Pastor Sara expressed words of thanks. Pastor Nicole was unable to be present to receive her award. Vice Secretary Varghese then prayed for them and for all girls and women who may be called by God to pastoral leadership in God’s Kingdom.

Agenda 21. Ministerium Constitutional Amendment and Bylaws Change Proposal

Agenda 21a and 21b. President Tammy Swanson-Draheim and the Governance Working Group led a conversation about the Proposal for the Ministerium Constitutional Amendment and future Bylaws changes. Members of the Governance Working Group include: Dierdra Gray Clark, Susan Cosio, TJ Smith and Anne Jorgenson as Parliamentarian/Governance consultant. The specific purpose of this conversation at the Annual Meeting was for the community to offer feedback about additional questions that hadn’t yet been named or addressed related to this proposal. This conversational event was not a debate format and its purpose was not for individuals to express opinions about the merits of the proposal. Instead, this opportunity was offered for further clarification of the elements of the proposal and for the Ministerium to be able to add to the work of refining and strengthening the proposal.

Susan Cosio spoke of needing God and needing one another. She reminded us that we need to “phone a friend” when we need support and guidance; to stay grounded; to have a lifeline. She noted that as a Ministerium, we have experienced damage to our relationships and our witness through the past responsibility to hold a hearing for a pastor who is contesting the recommendation of the removal of his/her credential. President Swanson-Draheim and others believe we need a better way, and she has offered this significant proposal for that better way. She is inviting the Ministerium to discuss and process this proposal.

Dierdra Gray Clark spoke of moving the process of Contested Credential Hearings out of the Ministerium Annual Meeting setting and into the Executive Committee of the Ministerium, as an equitable and representative space. She reported that this proposal was unanimously voted upon

by the Council of Superintendents, the Board of Ordered Ministry, Executive Committee of the Ministerium, the Executive Board of the ECC, and the Leadership Team of the Covenant. She stated that “official” discussion of this proposal begins today in this Ministerium gathering. The proposal is anchored in the Ministerium - it is our proposal.

Anne Jorgensen discussed the Constitutional Amendment that is being suggested this year. It will be debated and voted upon next year. **Section 6.2a is the new language added.**

From the Constitution of the Covenant Ministerium:

Article VI. Relationship to the Board of the Ordered Ministry:

Section 6.2. As provided in the Constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Covenant Church, all decisions of the Board of the Ordered Ministry requiring action by the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church shall be submitted to the Covenant Ministerium at its Annual Meeting for approval before being submitted to the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church, ***except in the instance of 6.2a.*** Matters not approved by the Covenant Ministerium shall be recommitted to the Board of the Ordered Ministry for further consideration.

6.2a. Contested Credential Hearings: All removal of credentials recommendations sent to the Covenant Ministerium for consideration by the Board of Ordered ministry, in which the minister desires to contest their removal, will be referred to the Executive Committee of the Covenant Ministerium for a contested credentials hearing. The process of the contested credentials hearing will take place as defined in the bylaws.

President Swanson-Draheim described her process of taking her initial idea to the Executive Committee of the Ministerium to talk about it, conceptually. She then created an initial proposal to bring to the Officers of the Board of Ordered Ministry. They encouraged her to share this proposal with the entire Board. Next, in January, the Executive Committee of the Ministerium, Council of Superintendents, Board of Ordered Ministry and Covenant Leadership Team all demonstrated great consensus. President Swanson-Draheim also noted that part of the proposal included the agreement that there would be a pause on Contested Credential Hearings until 2025, when the vote on this matter would have taken place in 2024. She spoke of the fact that the proposal was introduced to the Officers of the Covenant Executive Board, because any Ministerium Constitutional Amendment and changes in the Bylaws, would require some Bylaws changes in the governing documents for the Executive Board of the Covenant. Finally, she noted that in terms of process, the proposal technically has now moved out of her hands, and is a proposal of the Executive Committee of the Ministerium. We have a year to talk about this going forward before the vote in 2024.

President Swanson-Draheim also spoke of the plan for appointing a Presidential Task Force, which will design alternative pathways of accountability for use by the Board of Ordered Ministry for pastors who are choosing actions which are not in alignment with our Ethical Guidelines related to Human Sexuality. She noted in conclusion, that any recommendations from

this group would be shared with all relevant groups of leaders, and as in each step of her process so far, members of the Ministerium will have voice and vote.

TJ Smith spoke of a return to the purpose of the Ministerium, originally, which had the goal of building relationships. He stated that in recent years, we haven't had the chance to focus on this core purpose. We expressed his hope that we will be able to discuss important matters and then go forward together in respectful relationship.

Dierdra Gray Clark spoke of how she appreciates the yearly Ministerium Annual Meeting as an opportunity to connect with colleagues and friends she may not otherwise see. However, she is very aware of the fact that her experience is not true for all credentialed clergy in the Covenant. Many cannot afford to attend these meetings, for financial or scheduling reasons. Those who can afford to come are the ones who make the decisions. She expressed her opinion that the Executive Committee of the Ministerium is representative of the whole body of credentialed clergy, so that this proposal helps us move further toward the goal of all members being represented well in these crucial decisions. Finally, she noted that this Governance Working Group will schedule time for conversation in each of our Conferences during the next year.

Agenda 21c. Time was given for questions and reflections from the Ministerium

Vice President Smith offered introduction to the following discussion, inviting clarifying questions. They are hoping to receive questions and observations that have not yet been named or addressed. At this point, the invitation is not to express an opinion about the proposal, but to offer additional questions for consideration in the process.

Steve Wong: He asked if this potential change in process for Contested Credentials Hearings would be applied to all issues, or only Human Sexuality related actions. *Response:* It would be broader than just that matter.

Brad Frost: Changes in Bylaws have not yet been written, but would need to be. As the Presidential Task Force is formed, would there be a possibility of each Conference voting on one person from their region to sit on that Task Force? *Response:* That idea will be included in the further conversation about the Task Force when the time comes. Many components would need to be considered, and this idea will be included in those discussions.

Parliamentarian Jorgensen noted a clarification that at next year's Ministerium Annual Meeting of 2024, there would be a vote on the Amendment to the Constitution, and also a vote on any related Bylaws which may have been written.

A question was asked by a member who is a therapist, on the matter of confidentiality, openness and clarity. How would this new proposal and process address these concerns in a way that is legal, respectful and appropriately open and clear, for the purpose of making decisions on each case? *Response:* The question was noted for the work ahead in this next year.

Phyllis Myung: She asked the question of how we'll address the issue of mistrust, when a

proposal describes a process which will go from being handled in the whole Ministerium, to a smaller, representative group of colleagues? How can we rebuild trust? *Response:* There will be a continuation of what already has been happening related to this proposal process. There will be ongoing opportunities for genuine detailed discussion and conversation about all components of this proposal.

Sharad Yadav: He noted that it sounds as if the two reasons for this proposal are first, working to provide representation of our diversity, and second, creating a path that reduces harm to our Ministerium and our collegiality. He asked what this proposal might do to our collegiality, and how might this actually create more harm to our whole body, by not allowing these voices to be heard? His training as a trauma therapist causes him to ask if the group has considered the importance of diversity of convictions and perspectives on the topic of Human Sexuality, as well as diversity of racial and cultural backgrounds, as being essential to the best discernment in a contested credential case? He also asked if the group had considered the fact that removing the opportunity to process any contested credential cases from the full Ministerium may actually damage even further, the collegiality of our Ministerium? *Response:* The vote on the proposal next year will be the way that the whole Ministerium will speak into which path seems to have the most potential harm or benefit. And, in terms of diversity, it truly does already seem as if there is diversity of conviction represented in each smaller/representative group of leaders.

An online colleague asked if the Governance Working Group had thought about the reality that no matter how this Contested Credential Hearing process is designed, it likely will cause pain because of the nature of the situation. *Response:* Yes, this team had acknowledged this as a reality.

John Fanous: He offered a suggestion about making clear and available to all Ministerium members, the detailed list of who serves on the Executive Committee of the Ministerium. *Response:* This is a very good suggestion which will be enacted.

Stephen Weihsmann: What might be some of the alternative pathways for staying in relationship? *Response:* In talking about the alternative pathways available for staying in relationship, when a pastor has made decisions which are not consistent with the Ethical Guidelines on Human Sexuality, a first step would need to be finding a way to bring down the anxiety present in this situation and conversation. Secondly, the Board of Ordered Ministry would be involved in praying about and designing alternative ways to handle such discipline cases.

Stephanie Ahn Mathis: She asked for confirmation about which group would be given the responsibility for the Contested Credential process, in this proposal. (Executive Committee of the Ministerium was described for her.) *Response:* Stephanie's words were refrained from "taking away the vote from the entire Ministerium," to a statement that "the vote remains that of the Ministerium, yet, is moved to a representative body of the Ministerium." A reminder was given that in the ECC and in our local churches, we regularly practice forms of representative leadership.

Stephanie's follow-up question was related to her uncertainty about the criteria for Conference Ministerial Associations choosing candidates for their election of a Chair/President. Would the

commitment to bringing theological diversity to these future Contested Credential Hearing decisions be a key component considered when each Chair/President is nominated for the Conference leadership role? *Response:* No thoughts on her concerns were developed at this point.

Chad Glazener: He spoke of his confusion about the timeline of this process. He shared his understanding that next year, we would vote on the Amendment to the Constitution and the Bylaws changes at the same time? *Response:* Yes! His second question related to whether or not the Presidential Task Force's work would need a vote in 2025. *Response:* The need for a vote would depend on the nature of any recommendations from them. His third question related to the nature of the process and timeline of caring for a pastor who is under discipline related to our Ethical Guidelines on Human Sexuality. *Response:* The process is clear and will not change regardless of whether or not this new proposal is approved next year. Which group would guide and hold the process is what is being considered for in the proposal.

An online participant asked how we might incorporate a perspective broader than those who fit the mold of elected leaders in our ECC community? She believes that a person who ends up in a conference or denominational leadership role, tends to have a particular life and circumstance story that led to being well-connected, relationally - to her that seems to be the default pattern for a person being known to various Nominating Committees and therefore, organically considered more readily for leadership roles, than someone who is not in such a situation.. *Response:* The reality of her observation was appreciated and noted. And, the team will seek to be aware of this dynamic and contribute to improvements in this reality.

Criss Mitchell: In the proposal to move the Contested Credential Hearings to the Executive Committee of the Ministerium, would the 2/3 threshold remain the same? *Response:* Yes!

Vice President Smith noted that we were out of time at this point, and invited any additional questions or thoughts to be directed to our Ministerium email: eccministerium@gmail.com.

Point of Order - At this time, there was a request that we receive the final two people seeking to speak in the room and two people seeking to speak online.

Wayne Smith: His concern about delegating these decisions to denominational leadership is that "institutional hierarchy" in general, tends to make decisions which promote "institutional tranquility and continuity." His suggestion was that we keep this whole matter in the broad Ministerium and work on better communication and relationships rather than move forward with a representative group being responsible.

An online participant asked about the steps that initiate a discipline case of this nature? *Response:* The situation would be that the Board of Ordered Ministry has recommended the removal of a pastor's credential and that pastor has chosen to contest that recommendation.

Lars Stromberg: He noted that many merits of the proposal were described. He then asked what the chief liability of this proposal would be? *Response:* No liability was named at that moment.

Dominique Gilliard: He spoke of being committed to equitable and just representation in important decisions, and offered the suggestion that we consider adding a couple of spaces on the Executive Committee of the Ministerium for Bi-vocational people, as a way to honor our commitment to equitable representation throughout our Ministerium.

Agenda 22. As an alternative to the planned Season of Prayer in the agenda, Vice President Smith made a request that all members of the Ministerium seek to spend a few minutes in prayer with colleagues or alone, later in the evening.

Agenda 23. The Lakota Blessing was led by Vice President Smith. He noted that a tradition in Indigenous cultures is that a gift is given in response to receiving a gift. He offered thanks to the Ministerium as a whole and to the Officers, for the grace extended to him in his role as Moderator at this Annual Meeting. He spoke the blessing in Lakota and in English, from his heart to ours.

Agenda 24. The Closing Prayer was led by ALIPE Elder Rev. Fil Nesta, who asked us to stand, to reach out to our neighbors, and he prayed in Spanish and English.

Vice President Smith read Romans 15:13 from the First Nations Version and then led us in the Benediction.

Agenda 25. Motion to adjourn was presented as a voice vote by Vice President Smith.

VOTE: 2023 MINISTERIUM ANNUAL MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 5:30 pm (PST).

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Laurie A. D. Cornell
Secretary, Evangelical Covenant Church Ministerium