

Rejoicing in Hope

“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer” – Romans 12:12

I had the privilege of attending the 2025 ELCIC National Convention at the University of Manitoba earlier in July as a delegate under 30 years old. With this being my first national convention, I sure was in for a treat.

We opened on Thursday afternoon with worship, where we celebrated the 50th anniversary of women’s ordination as pastors within the ELCIC. All female pastors vested for the service. The second ordained woman, Vivian Roberts, was in attendance to celebrate the anniversary.

We had two sessions with the newest task force for the ELCIC (*Facing Today – Dreaming for the Future*) where we had the opportunity to have meaningful discussions about what worship looks like in our home congregations today, and how it might look in the future. One topic was “where do we see signs of life in our congregation?”. My table members discussed community outreach, member involvement, and their pastor. I explained how we at Abundant Life have been without a pastor for two years and have been relying on lay leadership when pulpit supply isn’t available. Our congregational community has stepped up to plan and lead worship services, have community events, and comfort each other in times of struggle. To me, this was a huge sign of life in our congregation.

The ELCIC is in full communion with the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America), the ELCJHL (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land), the Moravian Church, and of course the Anglican Church in Canada. Delegates had the privilege to hear from representatives from each partner.

It took till the final ballot on Saturday morning to elect a new national bishop. The final three at the fifth ballot were Larry Kochendorfer (BC Synod), Carla Blakley (Eastern Synod), and Aneeta Saroop (BC Synod). Larry and Carla moved to the last ballot where Larry was elected as the fifth national bishop of the ELCIC.

On Saturday night, we honoured Bishop Susan Johnson who has been the ELCIC National Bishop since 2007. Gifts were presented and stories were told about Bishop Susan’s leadership, adventures, and outreach over the past 18 years. Her legacy as the first female National Bishop will live on for many years to come.

This national convention marked the closest the ELCIC has come to reaching their goal of having 20 percent of the delegates 30 years and under, where there were 28 out of the 150. We had time as a group to connect and share stories of our personal faith journeys – realizing that it is never a straightforward path. Bishop Susan addressed the under-30

delegates on Thursday: “I invite you to continue to be brave, be courageous, speak out, call for justice like you do, and I invite you to continue to pray for our church. It’s our church, it’s your church. We need you.”. We did, in fact, use our voices, bringing our opinions and perspectives to table discussions and debates during motions. We even submitted two motions to encourage the voice of young adults. Our first motion was to create a National Youth and Young Adult Council that would advise the National Church Council (NCC). Our second motion was to add two young adult members to the NCC. Both motions were carried.

The convention closed on Sunday with worship. The Gospel reading was the parable of the Good Samaritan. Bishop Eaton from the ELCA shared a message and reminded us of unexpected hope, and mercy, and that God used the unexpected person (the Samaritan) to come along and bring wholeness and peace.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbour as yourself” – Luke 10:25

—Caitlin Kostna

Detailed articles, resources, and pictures can be found here: <https://elcic.ca/national-convention/>