

African Descent Lutheran Association (ADLA) – Los Angeles Chapter
General Session Meeting – February 22, 2025
First Lutheran, Carson
Meeting Minutes

February 22, 2025

Subject to Approval

Present: Bonnie Archie, VP Andrea Barnes-Johnson, Renee Brandt, Constance (Connie) Chaney, Robert and Kathleen Elliott Chillison, President Carolyn and Randall Foster, Willa Glover, Rev. MaryAnn Harrison, TEEM Pastor Maurice Ingram, DN Gwen Jackson, Gilbert and Patricia Jernigan, Phoebus and Rita Lee, Treasurer Tom and Kenisa McKee, Mary Shipp, & TEEM Pastor/National ADLA VP Keith Youngblood

Guest: Fred Ascher, Manuel Cabacungan, Beverly Hamiter, and Beverly Mansker

Excused: Rev. Scott Hamilton Adams, Enid McGraw, Judith Tutt-Starr, Rev. Albert Starr, Jr., and Dale Washington

- I. **Call to Order** – The meeting began at 9:07A, with thanks to all for their presence, acknowledging that this was the first general session meeting for the New Year, 2025.
- II. **Devotions and Prayer** – Treasurer, Tom McKee provided commentary from his study book: *The Apostle's Code* which is a distillation of scriptural references coupled around a selected theme. This morning's theme was DRINK! 'He who believes in me... out of his heart shall be living water', John 7:38; '...You shall be like a watered garden...' Isaiah 58:11. 'Whoever drinks of the water I shall give him, shall never thirst...!' John 4: 13-14. We are God's living water to and for others. Mr. McKee offered a commensurate prayer.
- III. **Self-Introductions and Welcome**. Greetings were extended all, especially to those who were first-time participants.
- IV. **Approval of the Agenda (M/S/C)** – No suggested additions were presented.
- V. **Approval of the Meeting Minutes (M/S/C)** – The October 26, 2024, meeting minutes were approved as written. E-Copies in draft were distributed following the meeting in October and preceding this February meeting. Hardcopies were also made available at the meeting. (*Note: e-copies are submitted to ADLA National and placed on ADLA – LA's website after committee approval).
- VI. **Treasurer's Report** – The ADLA P/L Report carried a beginning balance of \$3,617.75 and an ending balance of \$14,724.49. Checks written during the period following the October meeting were directed to the January 2025 tribute to The Rev. Dr. MLK, Jr. worship service at Trinity Lutheran, Hawthorne. The ending balance includes the synod grant of \$7,500 for *The End of Summer Gathering*, as well as the MLK offering of \$2,812 (which was directed to Lutheran Disaster Response in support of the LA Fire victims). The report was M/R in its receipt.
- VII. **Region 2 Representative's Report** – Dn Gwen Jackson offered a summary of the recent meeting held by ADLA National in its preparation for the 2025 ADLA National Assembly. This biennial assembly will precede the ELCA Churchwide Assembly by a

week. Speakers, assembly topics/issues and related orchestration are in the works and shall be shared with the Chapters closer to the event. Bishop Yehiel Curry, Metro Chicago Synod is scheduled as the ADLA Ministerium Speaker. The Ministerium (gathering of Black ELCA Pastors meets separately in advance of the ADLA biennial assembly). In response to the White House's plan to deport undocumented residents, a February 12th letter was formulated and sent the by ADLA National President, Rev. Jesse Brown to Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton specifying the need for a concentrated and determined response by this Church body. The letter called into question the role of Churchwide, its policies and demonstrated advocacy in circumstances like these. As of this meeting, no formal response from Churchwide has been received. Discussion ensued as to whether the ADLA National President had the authority to construct and send a message like this without Chapter Presidents' concurrence or agreement. President Foster vowed to communicate this concern and its implications to National President Brown. Dn Gwen continued by sharing the proposed alignment of ALLIA (Association of Liberian Lutherans in America) with ADLA. National VP Youngblood mentioned that the alignment was seen as a strengthening of ADLA National's positioning among ELCA affiliates. This issue was previously discussed in October noting that ADLA – LA aided ALLIA with its constitutional review, language for possible chapter creation while making itself available for further assistance and consultation. More is likely to emerge on this subject in the months ahead.

- VIII. **President's Special Announcements** – President Foster addressed the annual responsibilities of all congregations by highlighting the following requirements, stating that it was incumbent on all present to ensure that their congregations remained compliant. The highlights she shared encompassed:
- a. **SI-100, State exemption** filing that validate the status of each congregation as a non-profit worshipping community that is exempt from taxation. This form is very simplistic and often overlooked. It can be obtained electronically from the State, if it is not readily available. The filing occurs every other year.
 - b. **Annual Parochial Report** (Congregational Status Report), due to both the Synod and ELCA. It is an e-filing that can be accessed via the ELCA website. The local congregation's ID code number is required for system access. All reports are to be on file by March 1st.
 - c. **Southwest California Synod (SWCA) Assembly** is slated for May 30-31, 2025, at the Marriott Hotel, Burbank. ADLA-LA is likely to serve as the Assembly Registration Team, as before. Volunteers from among our membership shall, no doubt, be recruited for this purpose. Since the assembly is less than 50 miles away in radius, no lodging will be provided by the Synod, however, it can be secured independently.

Old Business

IX. Status of Ongoing Measures of Intervention and Intercession

- a. *Rev. Dr. Nelson W. Trout Endowment* – current balance, \$10,228.45, endowment goal - \$25,000 (almost halfway there!). We can do this!

- b. *Lions Club partnership* – Old and seldom used glasses are (and have been) donated to the Lions Club, Inglewood. They are refurbished and given to those who – through current eye exams – are deemed in need. The Lions Club offers free eye exams as part of their community outreach.
- c. *Ronald McDonald House and the Miller’s Children’s Memorial Medical Center*, Long Beach, receives pull tabs secured by way of deposited/empty cans and recycles the aluminum which, in turn, produces medical products like injection needles. The revenues produced from this exchange are used in support of families whose kids are receiving prolonged care at Miller’s MC. ADLA – LA has collected and submitted 116 pounds of pull tabs at approximately 1,240 tabs per pound!
- d. *ADLA – LA membership drive* will be extended through the month of March 2025, in recognition of the multiplicity of issues impacting our congregations both locally and nationally. The added time should avail ADLA – LA more than enough sufficiency to meet its 2025 goal of 150 members. Last year, the membership total was 134, including two members from Philly, four from Chicago, and one residing in Spain!
- e. *Grant Funding* – ADLA – LA prepared and received grant funding in the amount of \$7,500 from the Synod. Special thanks to the Synod’s Endowment Committee for its assistance.
- f. *Synod Potential Relocation* - SWCA invited ADLA leadership to participate in a property relocation strategy meeting as the Synod intends to move its location to a less expensive setting. Presently, the Synod is only using some 20% of the building it occupies. The Chapel will need to be moved should the Synod advance its relocation plans. This strategy meeting has the Chapel relocation as its key topic for discussion. Future meetings have been postponed principally due to the LA Fires and the Synod’s redirection in addressing those local concerns.
- g. *2025 MLK, Jr. Worship Offering* - A check in the amount of \$2,812, received from the MLK worship service was submitted to Lutheran Disaster Response earmarked to assist those adversely impacted by the LA Fires. Confirmation from The ELCA regarding last year’s contribution to the ELCA Federal Chaplaincy was received with thanks!
- h. *The Black History Month celebrations at CLU’s Chapel* have been quite the RAVE. Last Thursday’s sermon by Rev. Scott Hamilton Adams was rousingly inspiring and cogent. Several members present asked to have the sermon emailed to them.
- i. *Grown Woman, Real Talk* remains as a 2025 objective, offering instruction and guidance – especially to young woman – who have questions about relationships, careers, femininity, equity and advancement. Bishop LaTresa Jester, who is a FEMA first-responder and Bishop of Full Gospel Baptist Church, in Arizona, hosts this seminar utilizing scriptural commentary and contextual framing in response to questions received. This seminar has been postponed based on her availability. She is presently deployed.
- j. *ADLA apparel* can now be obtained via Custom Ink. A link, including pricing, color palettes and other options will be distributed to each member. Orders must be secured in lots of 20 for matters of discount pricing.

New Business

- k. Following the wildfires, it was determined that the Synod could not collect and subsequently distribute contributions to individuals. ADLA – LA was contacted to become a fiscal intermediary for this purpose. A total of \$170 has been collected (2 donations). Gift cards shall be made available for members at Lutheran Church of the Master, Los Angeles and Christ the Shephard, Altadena. Persons from those congregations were asked to contact President Foster for gift card access. Five ADLA members and their families lost everything.
- l. A *Lenten Journey* summary marking congregational worship and study opportunities is being formulated. Thus far, information has been received from Ascension, Los Angeles, and Holy Trinity, Inglewood. The summary listing will be made available on or before Ash Wednesday, March 5th.
- m. Expenses for *The End of Summer Gathering* are hefty. Facility rental cost is \$1,500 and a million dollar liability insurance binder is also required (**Thanks to NCP for allowing ADLA to be part of its insurance coverage for the last two events!**). Secondary site options were discussed: First, Carson and St. Timothy, Lakewood. Both councils are to be asked if such an arrangement might be facilitated at their respective sites and when best might that happen. Follow-up is needed. Those interested in working on The End of Summer are Gwen, Renee, Kenisa, Connie, & Beverly H. ADLA plans on working with its partner, NCP, it securing insurance coverage for the day.
- n. The annual *ADLA – LA Fundraiser to Viejas Casino* will take place in September such that it doesn't conflict with similar trips hosted by First, Carson and/or Chapel of Peace. Event details to follow.
- o. The *National ADLA Biennial Assembly* is scheduled for July 24-25, 2025, Phoenix, Arizona (note previous discussion above).

Other Highlights

- p. Pr. Charlene Limenih and Dn Ora Wilson shall be honored at Chapel of Peace this evening, February 22nd at 5P. Please attend and wear African attire. Pr. Limenih was the first woman of color to be ordained in the SWCA Synod!
- q. Sunday, March 2nd, Pr. Albert Starr, Jr. will be narrating an Inglewood featured program documenting The Family Ladera, an expression of urban life. Tickets are \$25 General admission and \$50 VIP seating. Proceeds to benefit victims of the Altadena fires.
- r. In the August meeting, an extensive discussion ensued concerning university/college students facing food insecurity. ADLA-LA has teamed up with My Friends House, Inc. (MFH) in addressing this concern. Food, on a monthly basis, is transported to CLU, Cal State University Dominguez Hills and Bishop Conata HS. A master roster of distributed products and hygienic supplies is being maintained. A grant in the amount of \$12,500 was secured from the Synod in 2024 to aid in the distribution, transportation and service-orientation. For matters of FYI; MFH has received a

brand-new refrigerated van from The LA Regional Food Bank in support of its community outreach and service.

- s. Weighing heavily on everyone's mind is the aftermath of the LA Fires on families and friends, those we know and those we don't yet pray for their deliverance. Phoebus Lee urged that anyone who has lost their possessions/property should take full advantage of any/all counseling and instructional sessions made available. He cautioned the sale of property if one has elected not to rebuild. He further indicated that he may be serving FEMA as a property appraisal adjuster, noting that the vacant lots are probably worth more than the structures that once stood upon them. TEEM Pr. MaryAnn, whose congregation witnessed devastation at a member level of 50% losing homes, warned of the predatory interlopers in the community, attempting to take advantage of those mourning these losses. She indicated that the community had homes as old as 100 years, that served as multi-generational edifices, providing housing for one generation after another. The occupants average age is 65+ and many may not have the 'bandwidth' to rebuild. Over 300 families remain in shelters, residing on cots. Altadena was the geographic community options for Blacks wishes to live in the hills of Los Angeles.
- t. *Stand-up and Fight Back* is a program at St. Mark's that helps empower young people to 'fight back' against injustice, providing safe ways to intercede and make a difference. This workshop is taking place today, February 22nd at St. Mark's, from 11-3P.
- u. *Top Ladies of Distinction* (a program involving Kathleen Elliott Chillison) honors five clergy women each year. One of this year's recipients is The Rev. Tracy Williams, Community Lutheran, Los Angeles and Holy Redeemer Lutheran, Bellflower. This prayer breakfast shall commence on April 19th at the Proud Bird Restaurant in El Segundo. The cost is \$60/person.

Next ADLA General Session Meeting – Chapel of Peace, April 26th at 9A

Devotions to be provided by The Rev. Charlene Limenih, Pastor Emeritus, Chapel of Peace

Sincerely submitted,

Randall (Randy) Foster
ADLA Recording & Communications Secretary