

Hi friends! That is how Angela, the organizer extraordinaire, greeted us at the podium every day.

My name is Rosalind, and I attended the BC Synod convention on June 20-23, as the delegate from our church. It was held in Vancouver, on the beautiful grounds of UBC campus, situated in the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam).

I have to admit that I went into the convention not really knowing anything about the ELCIC, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. I have been wanting to get more involved in my faith and in my church, and I felt that this was a great way to start.

The convention started with a smudging ceremony. Indigenous peoples believe that the smoke from burning herbs; sage, sweet grass, and cedar, can purify the physical space; cleansing the body, mind, and spirit, promoting balance and harmony. It was a very peaceful and spiritual way to begin our proceedings.

Fifty-four delegates attended the convention, from various regions of BC. There were both rostered delegates and lay delegates.

One of our roles was to vote for rostered and lay delegates to represent BC at the upcoming national Synod convention in Winnipeg in 2025. I am happy to report that our own Marlis Enders will be attending on behalf of the Vancouver Island region.

We also nominated and voted in members for the new term of the BC synod council.

We heard our Bishop Kathy Martin speak on several occasions, and she also shared her “Report of the Bishop”.

We heard presentations from the three BC Synod youth participants of the 2023 Lutheran World Federation 13th Assembly, held in Krakow Poland. I was incredibly impressed by their presentations. I feel that if they are representative of our current youth, then the future of the Lutheran church is in very good hands.

The new logo and tagline of the ELCIC was presented. The new logo incorporates a dove, the Cross, and an open hand.

A Dove; love, peace, welcoming, and the Holy Spirit.

The Cross; forgiveness, Christ, Christian Faith, Love, and Humility.

An Open Hand; God’s Grace, Mercy, Warmth, and Guidance.

The new tagline of the ELCIC is “Living Out God’s Grace and Unconditional Love.” Or in its longer format, “God’s Grace and unconditional love calls us to be a diverse, inclusive community that celebrates all and upholds life-giving relationships.”

To me this vision statement steps away from uniformity, and celebrates unity. To me, uniformity does not allow for difference; different views, different beliefs, different standards. It enforces sameness, and to me, sameness is an illusion.

Unity on the other hand is harmony; it embraces diversity, it embraces respect, it honours who each of us are, and where each of us are at. I see this as such a positive step for the church and for our community.

There were discussions about Reconciling in Christ. As I am new to Hope, it made me question if we have this designation, or if we have started the work needed for this designation. Is this something our church would like to pursue?

Rev. Aneeta Saroop was announced as the Assistant to the Bishop for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. I believe it will be a 3 year term.

Time in the schedule was allocated for many meaningful and important discussions in small groups of four, which were then discussed in another small group of four, and then shared with the larger group. These sessions were called, "Committee of the Whole: Future Church: Brave Space in Action." We discussed concerns for our current and future church, and we discussed the need for inclusivity in the Lutheran church.

I found it interesting and informative to talk with other lay delegates and rostered delegates, in these small groups. Rostered delegates shared their concerns about personal burn out. Questions that arise from this: What are our expectations of our paid leaders? Are our expectations reasonable? Are they sustainable?

One Pastor shared that they have put gender inclusive flags on their church. These were not well received, and were taken down by people in their community.

Two Pastors shared their concerns about job stability with the declining number of people attending church.

Some lay delegates shared that they have not had a pastor for quite some time, and felt some pressure because of this.

There was some discussion on why churches don't reach out to/include each other more. There are many churches in the lower mainland, and one Pastor shared that there is limited to no involvement between them. We are operating independently, and yet we are part of a whole. Some questions arise from this: How can we become a better community? How can we support other churches that don't have a Pastor, or perhaps feel isolated? Are there some resources that we can share? I like that our Pastor and church have connected with Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Comox via zoom.

I heard some brief discussion about whether a physical church or space is needed. For me, I really like a space for worship, where I can connect and have community with others. Perhaps it is not as important to others, which further shows how we all have our own opinions and viewpoints.

There were differing views shared, one topic being inclusivity, and the LGBTQIA2S+community. It was good that the delegates, both lay and rostered, felt comfortable sharing their personal views and thoughts. Some of these shares were emotional, and some were conflicting. One person's viewpoint was not well received. I felt that this delegate showed bravery by apologizing to the group for how his words may have affected others. And I felt the group showed openness to this delegate by providing him the time and space to do this. How do we respect each other's viewpoints, when they don't reflect our own beliefs? How do we become more inclusive moving forward?

We reviewed, amended, and accepted various reports, one being the past, current, and forecasted budgets for 2025 and 2026. I feel that the largest change was made for the 2026 budget, allocating a significant increase of funds for campus ministries. Many people, including myself, spoke of the need to welcome youth, and encourage youth to feel more comfortable and more present with their faith.

I found the convention to be well run and organized. The pre-convention information was provided well in advance, and it was thorough in its content. Additional information was provided during the convention, like bios of nominations from the floor. These were provided as quickly as possible.

I spoke to two of the people working the electronic voting system. There was much behind the scenes work involved with it, but for the delegates, including myself, it was seamless.

The presenters were thorough and thoughtful, and opportunities were given to ask questions and get clarification, when desired or needed.

It was a busy four days. In addition to voting, we worshipped together, had communion together, enjoyed delicious meals and snacks, and even enjoyed fun activities like playing the kazoo while waiting for voting results or during other necessary delays. I would have to say that our table rocked our kazoo songs, even adding different harmonies to our song selections.

One of the delegates at my table wisely wrote, "We have family in Christ all over the province (not to mention globally) and I am so glad I got to meet and sing and dance and laugh and think and commune with them." I could not agree more.

I would like to thank you for inviting me to be a delegate for the BC Synod convention. I was honoured to attend on behalf of our church. When asked where I was from, I proudly told others that I am from Hope Lutheran in Nanaimo, sharing that I am blessed to have found such a wonderful church community, and amazing pastor.

Rosalind

The business sessions of the convention were taped via live stream, and if interested, they can be accessed here. The bulletin reports can also be found on this site, including Bishop Kathy Martin's report. [BC Synod Convention 2024 | British Columbia ...British Columbia Synodhttps://bcsynod.org > pages > bc-synod-convention-2024](https://bcsynod.org/pages/bc-synod-convention-2024)