

Southeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly Recap "Called into God's Marvelous Light"

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod met in assembly April 23-24 at the Mayo Civic Center in Rochester, Minn. Bishop Harold Usgaard led the gathering as it approached the work of the church in Southeastern Minnesota. The theme was "Called into God's Marvelous Light." Those gathered worked and worshipped, prayed and praised, studied and celebrated together as the body of Christ.

The highlight of the assembly was the unveiling of the new strategic plan for the synod, also themed "Called into God's Marvelous Light." Based on the input of over 5,000 members of the synod, the plan includes three visions: "To be joyful witnesses," "To be Christ-centered disciples," and "To be strong leaders." Within each vision are several specific goals, and these, as well as a timetable encapsulating the years of 2005-2007, were explained to the assembly, who unanimously supported the plan.

As keynote speaker, the Rev. Carmala Aderman, assistant to the bishop in the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, said churches are being challenged to grow in the new century, but that this makes the work exciting. "We get to find new means to open up ways for people to be grasped by this amazing faith that the Holy Spirit has blessed us with," she said. "If you like adventures, this is a fascinating time to be a part of the church of Jesus Christ."

The Rev. Dr. Kathryn Bradley-Love, in her Bible studies, led the voting members through Paul's journey to Damascus, when he experienced the marvelous light of Christ.

Participants also were able to participate in workshops. Eight workshops were offered covering many different facts of evangelism.

The assembly voted to:

- raise synod-wide contributions to the Missionary Fund of the ELCA to \$200,000 for the year 2005;
- encourage congregations to include financial support for the Morogoro District Support Fund in their mission planning efforts;
- invite Bishop Sijifredo Buitrago, IELCO to next year's synod assembly;
- make recommended amendments to the synod constitution that included renaming the Leadership Development Committee back to "Nominating Committee," and changes recommended by the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA for synod constitutions;
- accept the "2005 Minimum Compensation and Benefits Guidelines";
- refer to the synod council a resolution recommending each of the synod's five conferences start a new mission congregation within their conferences by 2007;
- ask the synod council to consider establishing a fund which would assist pastors in paying the cost for moving to a new location immediately following their retirement;
- encourage each congregation to consider bringing at least one person, age 30 or less, to the synod assembly as a voting member in future years.

During the week of the assembly, volunteers from across the synod gathered to work on a Habitat for Humanity house. The project, called "Building in God's Marvelous Light," was a means of taking the assembly theme beyond the walls of the assembly hall. Renovating a house downtown, the volunteers helped to provide an affordable house to a family in need. The house will be completed in June.

MUCH more information, as well as photos, is available at www.semnsynod.org.