

ELCA News in Brief

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Lutherans Gather to Celebrate, Discuss Multicultural Ministries

ORLANDO, Fla. (ELCA) – More than 600 members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) celebrated their diversity “in praise, song and dance,” and held a series of conversations on the future of multicultural ministries in the church at the 2004 ELCA Multicultural Gathering July 9-11.

Under the theme “Lift Every Voice: A Multicultural Gathering in Praise, Song and Dance” Lutherans from across the church shared a variety of ways congregations worship within a multicultural context; received a retrospective on the 17-year work of the ELCA Commission for Multicultural Ministries (CMM); and discussed future directions for multicultural ministry in light of the ELCA’s current process to restructure its churchwide organization, budget and staff. CMM hosted the gathering.

ELCA STaR Ministry Alliance Forms at First Annual Meeting

NEWBERRY, S.C. (ELCA) -- The first annual meeting of the Small Town and Rural (STaR) Ministry Alliance of the ELCA brought together some 100 people from throughout the ELCA. A key component was the formation of several “affinity groups,” which will carry on the church’s rural ministry by devoting attention to a series of specific interests.

The STaR Ministry Alliance was conceived as an umbrella organization through which the affinity groups carry out ongoing rural ministry, LaBlanc said. They are composed of ELCA leaders and members that share the group’s specific interest.

The groups will address many topics, including consumer ethics, theological education, advocacy and public policy, multiple-parish concerns, stewardship, worship, Christian education, health care, community economic development, crisis intervention, cooperative ministry, lay ministry training, anti-racism programs, church revitalization, seminarian recruitment, domestic violence, rural poverty and public education.

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Hanson “Grateful” for LCMS Action

ST. LOUIS (ELCA) – The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop of the ELCA, said he is “profoundly grateful” for the decision of the 62nd Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod to continue discussions with the ELCA.

In a brief address here July 14 to delegates, Hanson referred to the convention’s adoption of Resolution 3-07. The resolution, adopted 672-479, calls for continued discussion between representatives of the two church bodies on a variety of scriptural, theological and church topics. In addition, the LCMS Praesidium – the Synod’s president and five vice presidents – recommended ELCA-LCMS cooperative arrangements for military chaplaincy be continued.

“We [ELCA] share with you the commitment to a continuing effort to bear witness to the truth of the Scriptures and the Confessions in the hope that agreement can be reached in areas where we disagree,” Hanson said.

The ELCA presiding bishop asked the delegates to continue “in well-doing,” together as church bodies, and he asked that members of both bodies “not fail” to pray for one another.

The 5 million member ELCA, like the LCMS, confesses “Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe,” he said. The two Lutheran churches share common beliefs in the Scriptures, the creeds, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the other confessional writings of the Book of Concord, Hanson said.

“We face challenges and opportunities of contemporary witness,” Hanson said. “I remain grateful for the strategic ways in which our two church bodies cooperate in the critically needed service of care and compassion.” He cited shared ministries such as Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Lutheran Services in America and Lutheran Disaster Response.

Cooperative efforts of the two church bodies in military chaplaincy are “a special area of cooperation,” with many chaplains serving today in Afghanistan and Iraq, Hanson said. Lutheran military chaplains represent “a superb and courageous group of pastors,” he added.

Hanson also congratulated the Rev. Gerald B. Kieschnick, LCMS president, on his re-election July 11 to a second three-year term.