

Be Open to Change in Christ's Church



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Synod Vice President

Greetings!

One of the joys of attending the ELCA Churchwide Assembly is getting a sense of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in

America, which is different in looks and feel from the ELCA in Minnesota. The easiest way to explain this is to share one simple statistic: In the Metropolitan New York Synod of the ELCA, Sunday worship services are conducted in twenty-eight languages. WOW!

In the October *Lutheran Woman Today* magazine, Twila Schock writes from Wittenberg, Germany, "I am reminded of our shared conviction that it is Jesus Christ crucified who binds us together as brothers and sisters in Christ, and that we, like our forebear Martin Luther, are called to continually renew and reform this faith in our own daily lives." To her thoughts I

would add that we must continually renew and reform this faith weekly in our congregations.

We have so much resistance to change. We have congregations that are being ripped apart by issues of change. Cries of "We've never done it that way before" and "I want my old church back" ring through some of our sanctuaries. Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson writes in *Faithful Yet Changing*, "If we don't become a changing church, we will be simply a museum piece in the religious history of the American people."

Bishop Hanson goes on, "As a missionary church in a missionary context, we have to be willing to be changed by the new people who come into our churches...we will need to let go of what we have been in order to become a more diverse community that reflects the hues and cultural richness that now exist in our land."

I have a friend who likes to say, "There is more than one way to skin a cat." There's more than one way to do most things – including having a

Lutheran worship service. If we are truly Lutheran, we are by our very nature in favor of renewal and reform. Bishop Hanson says, "The change that is needed is the change that grows out of our call to be a witnessing, worshiping, engaging, equipping, inviting church in the world. It is not change for the sake of change, but change for the sake of the gospel."

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I'm not talking about my church, or even about our church. This is Christ's church for all people, all languages, all cultures – most of them very different from mine. As difficult as it may be, we need to open our arms and our hearts and

welcome renewal and reform, welcome change as a way to enhance our worship services and our lives – and in the process we will enhance and encourage our survival as the ELCA.

Blessings in Christ,

Shirley

Register Online for Synod Theological Conference!

You can now register online for the Nov. 6-8 Theological Conference! For details, visit www.semnsynod.org/events.html. You can pay by check or by credit card.

If paying by check:

1. Please send the check within 3 business days of registering.
2. Please include a note with the check so we know whose registration the check is for.

Remember, the early bird registration deadline is Oct. 6. Registrations postmarked on or before the early

bird deadline are \$85 for the whole conference, or \$22 for Sunday night only; registrations postmarked after Oct. 6 are \$100 for the whole conference, or \$25 for Sunday night only.

NOTE: THERE WILL BE NO ON-SITE REGISTRATION AVAILABLE THIS YEAR. All registrations must be received by Oct. 26, whether you are attending the whole conference or just Sunday evening.

For more information on the Theological Conference, or to download a registration brochure, visit www.semnsynod.org/events.html