

## Assembly Focus on Bible Study

**Vision:** Called into God's Marvelous Light: To Be Christ-Centered Disciples

**Objective:** A Synod Joined in Bible Study

By Rev. Scott E. Olson, Assembly Reporter

At the 2004 Synod Assembly, voting members adopted the synod's strategic plan, "Called into God's Marvelous Light." This plan is to be carried out in 2005-2007. The plan includes three visions: "To Be Joyful Witnesses," "To Be Christ-Centered Disciples," and "To Be Strong Leaders." It also includes three yearly emphases. The first "A Synod Joined in Prayer," was the emphasis in 2005. This year the synod moved on to the second emphasis: "A Synod Joined in Bible Study," an initiative that surfaced in full force at the Synod Assembly.

Following the adoption of the strategic plan, the Congregational Renewal Team assumed responsibility for the Bible Study objective. Larry Iverson, synod minister and staff resource person to the team, summed this up in his report: "I hope congregations will let the 'Word' dwell richly in the hearts of the members and encourage engaging in self and group Bible study this whole year."

Indeed, the Bible, its importance for the life of faith, and its study permeated the whole of the Assembly. Arguably, it was at the core as Lutherans claim it should be. Rev. Dr. Craig Koester, Professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, presented three Bible study sessions on the book of Revelation. "If you can see yourself in any of this," he said, "then Revelation is the book for you."

Additionally, both clergy and lay people had the opportunity to "practice what they preach" by participating in a variety of small group Bible studies. Two separate sessions lasting 45 minutes each gave synod pastors an opportunity to lead a favorite Bible study with a wider group of people.

Of course, worship, the heart and soul of our lives together, both in congregation and assembly, was rooted firmly in Word and Sacrament. Bishop Usgaard, in proclaiming the Word during opening worship, declared how Christ as the Word is in the center of all we do as Lutheran Christians. The Service of Morning Prayer and occasional hymns not only supported the Word but proclaimed it as well. Rev. Michael Burke, ELCA Director for Worship, gave a presentation on how important the Bible is for worship, not only in the sermon, but the liturgy as well.



## Open the Book

By Rev. Cindy Fisher-Broin  
Congregational Renewal Team

There are many great Bible studies available today from Augsburg Fortress Publishing and other publishing companies. They come in all varieties: topical studies, studies of particular books of the Bible, studies for people who have little experience studying the Bible and studies for those who have been doing it for years.

The Synod Assembly in May focused on Bible study. In the midst of conducting business, the gathered assembly participated in Bible study led by Dr. Craig Koester from Luther Seminary and by pastors from our synod. These Bible study sessions were based on information and insight gained by the leaders in their own study of the Bible. They were not based on published Bible studies that had specific questions and a particular focus.

Bible studies that come from the study of a leader can be very effective. Not only do the people participating in the class learn something, but the leader also learns and grows as he or she delves into the passage or book of the Bible being studied. Several times in the gospels, Jesus interprets the scriptures or "opens" the scriptures for his followers. Jesus opens the scriptures for us also, so that we might come to know him more fully through our study, whether through a publishing company, through commentaries, through the original language, through prayer and meditation, or through insights given us by the Holy Spirit. We don't always have to have a published Bible study. Sometimes we can simply open the Book and trust the Spirit's guidance.



*Called into God's Marvelous Light*

*To Be Joyful Witnesses*

*To Be Christ-Centered Disciples*

*To Be Strong Leaders*