

2010 Synod Assembly - A Summary

"God's Work. Our Hands. Congregations Alive in Communities"

The 2010 Southeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly gathered on May 7-8 to join together in the work of the church.

As always, the assembly featured worship and Bible study.

The Opening Worship service was a service of healing. Bishop Harold Usgaard delivered a sermon on the importance of both Law and Gospel and on Christians' need for one another.

Saturday also opened in worship. Again, togetherness was emphasized. Through the music, the message, and the readings, the entire service was infused with this core message.

Bible study this year was led by Bishop Harold Usgaard. In three segments he led the assembly through an exploration of Paul's letter to the Philippians. The study looked at Paul's thankfulness for his partners in ministry, the humble example and self-giving love of Jesus Christ, and the our need for one another.

The assembly was also an opportunity to recognize the work of individuals, congregations, and organizations throughout the synod, our communities, and the larger church. Individuals retiring or celebrating anniversaries of their ordinations were recognized. Congregations received recognition for outstanding giving to ELCA World Hunger Appeal and Disaster Ministries. Seminarians and first call pastors received financial support for their theological education.

A number of stories were shared about the exciting ministries going on throughout the synod. Young people being integrated into congregational life, congregations

reaching out to unchurched neighbors, groups supporting ministry and education for the blind and deaf, individuals reaching



Carlos Peña, Vice President of the ELCA, traveled from his home in Galveston, Tx. to share the report of the Presiding Bishop and to preach at Saturday morning's prayer service.

across oceans to brothers and sisters in other lands, and many more.

The assembly ended with a consecration of individuals representing 37 congregations in their work to share the news of the ministry of the ELCA. These individuals have committed themselves to telling this story in their congregations and communities.

The work of congregations outside the synod was also lifted up in the showing of several of the videos submitted to the ELCA's "God's work. Our hands." video contest.

Friday afternoon assembly participants had the opportunity to explore techniques for being more missional. Workshops included, "What is the Missional Church?;" a discussion led by the synod's mission developer Rev. Peter Reuss and several Sudanese ministry leaders from the synod in "Ethnic Ministries in the 21st Century;" "Challenges to our Communities" about the challenges that occur when communities change and new people enter them; a "Workshop for Shy Lutherans" titled "One-on-One" that stressed the importance of listening when in a conversation and how that one-on-one conversation can be true evangelism; and a quiet time for prayer and reflection on God's work in communities in "We Pray for our Congregation."

After the workshops, assembly goers gathered for a buffet supper and panel discussion on the ELCA's LIFT (Living Into the Future Together) initiative which seeks to develop and recommend options for future ministry in the ELCA in light of its current mission and environment. Attendees were informed about the initiative and how to participate, were led in small group discussions about what they perceived as the strengths and weaknesses of



One of the many songs the assembly sang was 'This Little Light of Mine,' reminding those attending to shine as missionaries in their own communities.

Synod Assembly

the ELCA, and offered a time for questions. More on the initiative is online at www.liftelca.org, including survey forms for individuals and groups to let their voices be heard.

Of course business issues also were attended to at the Synod Assembly. Seven resolutions were presented to the assembly. Resolution 2010-02: Resolution to Rescind Social Statement – "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" and the Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies failed by a vote of 178 for and 294 against.

Resolution 2010-01: Resolution Regarding Augsburg Fortress Pension Plan Termination was passed with an amendment changing the resolution to read that the Synod Council would direct the resolution to the ELCA Church Council. This resolution asks the ELCA to investigate issues relating to the termination of the Augsburg Fortress pension plan.

The other resolutions all passed. Resolution 2010-03: Memorial to Change Social Statement Ratification Procedure is a memorial seeking to start the process that would change procedures to require synodical ratification of ELCA social statements and amendments to the churchwide governing documents.

Resolution 2010-04: Proper Use of God's Name in Public Discourse, also passed, encourages appropriate use of God's name and encourages congregations to engage in discussion on the subject.

Approval of Resolution 2010-05 changed the synod's constitution as passed by the 2009 Churchwide

Assembly. Changes address conflicts of interest with synodical bishops, the



A number of displays informed assembly participants about ministries connected with the ELCA and the Southeastern Minnesota Synod. One such display sold fair trade coffee, tea, and chocolate.

requirement of background checks for elected synod officers, the implementation of an audit committee, the opportunity for expanded roles for youth and young adults, and several other administrative changes.

Resolution 2010-06 approved the proposed Minimum Compensation and Benefits Guidelines for 2011.

Finally, Resolution 2010-07: Advocate to Stop Usury speaks out against predatory lending and encourages Lutheran Coalition for Public Policy in Minnesota to advocate against such practices.

The assembly also elected individuals to several boards and committees, including a slate of 2011 Churchwide Assembly voting members and a new synod secretary and treasurer. Jodie Archer, Our Savior's, Spring Valley, was elected to the role of synod secretary and John Petersburg, Trinity, Owatonna, to the role of synod treasurer.

Finally, the assembly passed a proposed budget for 2011. Despite concern over the significant cuts to Lutheran Campus Ministry of Minnesota, the proposed budget was passed.

Mark Your Calendar!

The 2011 Synod Assembly is scheduled for May 6-7 at the Mayo Civic Center, Rochester, Minn. We'll give you the details as they become available.



During the opening worship service, worshippers were invited to receive a laying on of hands as part of a healing blessing.

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