



Living in God's amazing grace:

Thanks be to God!

METROPOLITAN
WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD

Synod Assembly Wrap-Up 2007

Special points of interest:

- Elections yield new leadership (page 1)
- Full docket of Resolutions heard (page 2&3)
- Worship frames time together (page 4)

Metro D.C. Synod Assembly

Eisenhower Inn & Conference Center • Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

June 7-9, 2007

Engaged in Metro D.C. Ministry

Every synod congregation and worshiping site was represented among the record number participating in the 2007 Metro D.C. Synod Assembly, the highest legislative authority of the synod. On June 8, the registrar recorded 423 people in attendance: 351 voting members, and 72 visitors. Of voting members, 119 were clergy. Of lay voting members, 48% were male and 52% were female.

We met under the banner, *Living in God's Amazing Grace: Thanks be to God!* The first words in this theme are the ELCA tag line, a pithy and catchy phrase intended to help build the church's identity within and outside our congregations.

Proceedings were grace-filled as we held pivotal elections, decided synod direction, learned of exciting synod ministries, and praised our God



This group arrived ready for action. Special thanks go to our seminarians and other volunteers who helped things run smoothly!

who calls us together. We left with a clarified view of our life together.

Synod Leadership Selected

The inaugural use of electronic voting devices proved useful for the many elections held this year.

The Rev. Richard H. Graham, Hope Lutheran, College Park, Maryland, was elected June 8 to a six-year term as bishop. Three nominees addressed the Assembly in large and small group settings prior to the fourth ballot: Graham; the Rev. Phil C. Hirsch, Bethlehem Lutheran, Fairfax, Virginia; and the Rev. Ronald G. Qualley, Lord of Life Lutheran, Fairfax. Graham was elected on the

fifth ballot. Bishop Schneider did not seek reelection.

Graham will take office on September 1. He will be installed on October 14.

Several synod officers were elected by 2007 assembly voters. Dr. Tommie Robinson was reelected to the position of Vice President. The Rev. Maggie Rourk,

Christ Lutheran, Fairfax, Virginia, was elected Secretary. Graham had held this office. Mr. John Handley was elected synod Treasurer. Mr. Don Gibbs will retire from this service.

The Synod Council will also receive several new

members through 2007 assembly action. The following were voted to leadership: Mr. Philip Moeller (D.C. Conference Lay Member), the Rev. Justin Lathrop (Fairfax Conference, Clergy Member), Ms. Jane Bossler (Maryland Conference, Lay Member), the Rev. Marda Messick (Montgomery Conference, Clergy Member), the Rev. Jane Halpern (Potomac Conference, Clergy Member), Mr. John White (Virginia Conference, Lay Member), and the Rev. Kendall Summers and Ms. Barbara Topel (At-large Members).

Joining the synod Committee on Discipline will be the Rev. Arthur Cubbon and the Rev. Tiffany Towberman (Clergy Member), and Ms. Margaret Leinen and Mr. Howard Schue (Lay Member).



The Rev. Richard H. Graham, Bishop-elect

Metro D.C. Discerns Directions for Local and National Action

Several Resolutions were acted upon by the 2007 Synod Assembly, originated by synod congregations and leaders. The full text of each Resolution is available at www.metrodcelca.org.

Synod action is required by the following adopted Resolutions.

- *Kairos Statement*—Several pastors from the synod and others in the Lutheran Peace Fellowship are among signers of something called the Kairos Statement, encouraging "discussion and debate about the state of our world." With the synod's Resolution, individuals are encouraged to study and respond to the statement, and congregations and members are asked to enter "moral deliberation and discussion concerning our nation's foreign and military policies."
- *Organ Donation*—Synod rostered leaders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with organ donation issues in order "pastorally and knowledgeably" counsel family members considering donation, and synod Lutherans are encouraged to indicate donation on their Driver's License, carry a Universal Donor Card, or otherwise make known their donation wishes.
- *Prayers for Metropolitan Washington, D.C.*—Drafters noted it is God's command to pray, and this Resolution encourages us to pray for the leaders and citizens of the city of Washington, its suburbs, and surrounding counties regularly.
- *Rejection of Torture and Restoration of Rights*—Our prayers and the action of the synod Bishop, Secretary, and congregations are directed for the victims, perpetrators, instigators and bystanders involved in "the abuse of detainees and abrogation of their rights" and the "strong support for legislative and executive actions which will restore those rights and address the abuses."
- *Synod Mission Start in Loudoun County, Virginia*—The synod can expect to hear back at the 2008

Synod Assembly about progress on a mission start in Loudoun County, an exploration begun in 2005 and advanced in following years. This resolution affirms prioritization of the project and interest in supporting it, as did an impromptu progress report made by the ELCA Region 8 Mission Developer before the resolution's adoption.



This group was ready for action in the Assembly hall.

- *Synodical Youth Ministry*—The "need to improve and expand the reach and scope of youth and family ministry" was asserted by this Resolution, and formation of a task force and presentation of a strategy to the 2008 Synod Assembly were directed.
- *Thanksgiving and Appreciation for the Ministry of Bishop Theodore F. Schneider*—Our Bishop, who will be known as "Bishop Emeritus of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod" effective September 1, 2007, was recognized by a standing ovation and will be named, along with Mrs. Doris Schneider, in special prayers of thanksgiving across the synod on Sunday, July 29.
- *Thanksgiving and Appreciation for the Ministry of the Rev. Judith E. Simonson*—In addition to thanks for her service as Assistant to the Bishop, a Scholarship Fund will be established at Caroline Furnace Lutheran Camp and Retreat Center where Pr. Simonson has ties to honor her ministry in the synod. Prayer of thanksgiving for Pr. Simonson's ministry are encouraged on Sunday, July 22 among our congregations.

The following Resolutions were not adopted, but rather referred for additional

synod action.

- *Decade for a Culture of Non-Violence (to the Office of Ecumenical Affairs)*—The years 2001-2010 were declared the "Decade for a Culture of Nonviolence" by the 1999 Churchwide Assembly (CWA). The synod's Office of Ecumenical Affairs is to engage in faith-based peacemaking dialogue with interfaith and international faith communities in our area, affirming the '99 CWA decision.
- *Memorial Regarding Iraqi Refugees (to the Synod Council)*—Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS) is encouraged to be prepared for the needs of Iraqi refugees and displaced persons, and educate synod congregations on the issues.

Several adopted Resolutions become "Memorials." This means action by the Churchwide Assembly (CWA) is instigated by our synod.

- *Memorial for a Call to End the War in Iraq*—The Presiding Bishop of the ELCA is encouraged in his peace-seeking efforts and directed to further press for stabilization of Iraq and a subsequent peace by this Resolution. Prayers and actions from synod members to honor men and women in military service are also directed.
- *Memorial Regarding the Youth Ministry Network*—The value of the mission of the ELCA's Youth Ministry Network ("Network") is highlighted with this Resolution, as well as synod youth leader membership in the Network and participation across the ELCA in the Network's annual event.
- *Memorial to the CWA to Encourage Bishops to Refrain from Discipline*—Refraining from disciplining rostered leaders in "mutual, chaste, and faithful committed same-gender relationship" and from disciplining those who call, approve, ordain, commission, or consecrate those in such relationships "who are not qualified solely because" of that relationship is memorialized by this synod in this Resolution. Memorialized means the 2007 Churchwide

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Faith Support Crucial on Campus

Lutheran campus ministry, institutions of higher education, and outdoor ministries are "breeding grounds of discernment of God's call" with a firm "history of producing church leaders," noted Bishop Schneider.

Interspersed in Assembly activities was celebration of the presence and impact of 100 years of campus ministry in the ELCA. What began in 1907 with the calling of a pastor to a cluster of Lutheran students in Madison, Wisconsin, now involves many thousands of students across the country in a wide range of social, spiritual, and service-oriented activities.

Five Lutheran campus ministries serve the Metro D.C. area, at: American University, Georgetown University, Howard University, the University of Maryland-College Park, and George Mason University. Congregations were given a DVD highlighting the ministry at these sites. Said the Rev. Tom Omholt, St. Paul's Lutheran, D.C., "Some of our

neighbors happen to be the students and faculty of American University. For young people to leave home and to spend part of their lives in a strange place and a strange city with so many challenges—we feel it is extremely important for the church to reach out and bring to those students the Good News of the Gospel."



Featured Speaker Highlights a Reformed Augsburg Fortress

In her overview of Martin Luther's use of the "power of the press" and its implications for Lutherans today, Ms. Beth A. Lewis, President and CEO of Augsburg Fortress, told us, "Through connecting with printers, Martin Luther became an opinion leader... The technology made the man, but the man also made the technology."

Lewis cited statistics that con-

cern many. ELCA membership is down by 300,000 members in 14 years. The average ELCA member is 53 years old, whereas the average age of the U.S. population is 38. ELCA Sunday school attendance is down by 250,000 in the past 14 years. Reflecting upon these realities, Lewis said,

"Reformation must not be something that happened once upon a time..."

While the familiar "scent of

paper and ink" are still available, Lewis said Augsburg Fortress now has over 600 downloadable resources at their Web site, including hymns, the small catechism, some "print on demand" materials, and more. Lewis named several innovative resources which take into account Internet culture as well, such as Akaloo and proclamation.com.

Bishop Schneider commended Lewis' leadership of the ELCA publisher. "She listens," he said. "If you haven't looked at them in a while, you need to look at them now."



The Assembly heard reports of exciting ministry among us.

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Assembly is asked to consider the stance.

- *Memorial to the CWA Regarding the Blessing of Same-Gender Relationships*—Development of liturgy for the blessing of same-gender unions is requested in this memorial as is encouragement of pastors and congregations to ask "God's blessing on permanent, faithful, committed, same-gender relationships" when their "understanding of scripture, tradition, and the guiding of the Spirit" directs them to do so.
- *Memorial to the CWA Regarding Restraint in Applying ELCA Policies with Regards to Rostering—Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*

and *Vision and Expectations* are two ELCA documents relating to the rostering of persons. In the spirit of "finding ways to live together faithfully in the midst of disagreements," as worded by the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, the synod in this Memorial calls for "restraint in the application of provisions" from these documents to persons referred to as "practicing homosexuals" or as "homosexual in their self-understanding."

- *Memorial to the CWA to Reject Reparative Therapy*—This synod has memorialized (see above) the 2007 Churchwide Assembly to "declare its rejection of any therapy that seeks to change one's sexual

orientation," expresses care and concern for those wrestling with "issues of sexual self-understanding," and encourages "those in authority" to be mindful of rejection of this type of therapy by "major health and mental health professionals" in advisory relationships, focusing on God's unconditional love.

Rounding out our actions are two traditional Resolutions: *An Expression of Thanks*, which shows appreciation for the many who contribute to the makings of an Assembly; and *Greetings*, an offering of prayer and support for synods holding Assemblies overlapping our own.

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**Evangelical Lutheran
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**"We are not alone the
[Metro D.C.] Synod. . .
Ours is the 'Galilee of
the Nations,' the 'place
where all nations
live' . . . We have the
opportunity to bring
Christ to the world."**

- Bishop Schneider

Using a setting from Evangelical Lutheran Worship, the new primary book of worship in the ELCA, the Metro D.C. Synod Assembly packed the Chapel at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg for our Opening Eucharist Thursday evening to boldly proclaim the reason for our gathering. Bolstered by ringing bells and resonant voices from St. Luke Lutheran in Silver Spring, Maryland, from the prelude through the closing hymn, worship was stirring.

The pulpit of Gettysburg Seminary is a familiar one to Bishop Schneider, who told us he'd preached there as a seminarian, as a new bishop, and on this occasion near the conclusion of his tenure in the office.

In Schneider's sermon, he urged the synod to focus on not gath-

ering members but on making disciples. Citing a congregational model he'd heard of, Schneider said some congregations ask: "Does this activity help people know Christ, and if so, specifically how?" Such congregations are so focused upon discipleship that all activities that fail in these things are discontinued." Five suggestions for making disciples were offered: We

must • actively talk about and celebrate what it means to live in the midst of God's amazing grace; • strive to be Christ with and for others; • expect faithfulness from one another; • be converted, disciplined and gener-



ous people; and • be an ecumenical church.