

# 2009 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

Spring Session: May 8-9  
Kellogg Conference Hotel • Washington, D.C.

**2009 SYNOD ASSEMBLY**  
May 8-9 and September 26  
Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod, ELCA



God's work. Our hands.

## DAILY UPDATE—SATURDAY

### A Brief Summary of Activity

- Attendance at the 2009 Synod Assembly's Spring Session topped just over **300 registered participants** on Saturday, 280 of those being Voting Members.
- In a report delivered by Dr. Tommie Robinson, synod vice president, on behalf of the Synod Council, **Robinson spoke of his tenure in the office which he is leaving this year**, saying "It has been my joy to do God's work." Bishop Graham spoke appreciatively of Robinson's service, calling him a "wonderful Christian man" with exemplary "balance of his vocation to the church and to the world."
- Jumping ahead of what was required of us, the Synod Assembly **adopted two proposed amendments** clarifying intent of **passages of the "Constitution for Synods"** although procedurally the language needed only to be read this year.
- The Rev. Phil Hirsch was introduced to the Assembly. He will be joining the synod staff in June in the newly created position of **Director for Evangelical Mission**. This position is funded by the ELCA program unit for Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission, but Pr. Hirsch will function on the synod staff as an Assistant to the Bishop. The creation of these new positions in most ELCA synods is "a massive realignment of resources and a refocus on congregations as primary centers of mission of our church," said Pr. Hirsch. "There has been an Olympic-size drop in worship attendance since 2002 across our churches," he stated. "We have people in our communities who are disconnected, who are longing for relationship with others and with God, and we need to be like Phillip reaching out to that Ethiopian eunuch to listen to what he was saying and to talk to him about Christ. I believe with God's help we can figure this out together."
- **Young adults and the church** were discussed by the Rev. Amy Thompson Sevimli, Assistant to the Bishop, as she encourages congregations to purposefully examine ministry with and to this "largely ignored" cohort, ages 18-35 who usually don't have children. While 25% of the general population falls into this age group, far fewer are active in congregations. In order to reach this population, Pr. Sevimli encouraged church leaders to meet with a different young adult "who does not go to church and who is not related to you" monthly and ask questions like: "What is your perception of the church?" and "What is your perception of Jesus?" By learning the language of young adults, including their perceptions of the church and institutions, Pr. Sevimli said we can better "speak the Gospel in the language they understand" — not to pack the pews, staff committees

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or fill the collection plates, but to reach out to the “community starved and spiritually hungry” with the “tasty food” the church has to offer.

- Although synod budget discussion will occur in the fall gathering of the 2009 Synod Assembly, our synod treasurer, John Handley, presented **general synod financial information** in this spring session. Synod receipts are “slightly down” and we are running on a “small deficit,” which Handley attributed to the synod being “caught in the trends of the early phase of the [nation’s] economic downturn.” As a result, “We have put the synod on a spending plan that has limited our ability to support some things we have traditionally been able to support,” he said. “We are holding the tithe [10% of giving] as a goal for all of our congregations,” said Handley of a figure useful for budget planning, noting that several congregations go beyond that support of synod ministry. The synod maintains giving 55% to the churchwide organization. “The financial model between synods and the national church needs to change, but we want to enter the conversation from a position of support.”
- Four **resolutions were adopted** on Saturday — find full text on the synod Web site.
  - **Expression of Gratitude to Spouses and Families of Synod’s Rostered Leaders** — This resolution expresses appreciation for the role of church ministry partner played by families and spouses of rostered leaders, economically and emotionally.
  - **Expression of Thanks and Gratitude** — The many persons who made the Synod Assembly experience enlivening and edifying are acknowledged.
  - **Israel and Palestine** — With education, prayer and accompaniment, our synod encourages with this resolution use of the “Peace not Walls” strategy adopted by the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly and ongoing recognition of issues of peace and security in the Holy Land.
  - **A Memorial Concerning Human Sexuality** — This synod “memorializes” the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to adopt the proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality and the proposed Recommendation on Ministry Policies, and looks ahead to the development of resources to hold those in same-gender relationships “publicly accountable in the exchange of promises of lifelong love and fidelity” and development of policy to reinstate to the roster or candidacy of those whose “rostering was precluded by previous policies on same-gender relationships.”
- Among **synod leaders elected** on Saturday was John White to vice president, the senior lay officer of the synod. Clergy members elected to the Committee on Discipline were the Rev. Kimberly Conway and the Rev. Sarah Lewis. Serving on the Synod Council in the At-Large position are the Rev. Kendall Summers and Barbara Topel.
- **Caroline Furnace** (Fort Valley, Virginia) and **Mar-Lu-Ridge** (Jefferson, Maryland) described developments and opportunities at their outdoor meeting and ministry settings.
- The offering received during the Festive Eucharist gathered nearly **\$2,000 for Latino Ministries** in the synod.

*Additional information and photos are posted to <http://www.metrodcelca.org>.*