

2010 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

SPRING SESSION: MAY 7-8
NATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTER
LANDSDOWNE, VIRGINIA

SPRING SESSION SUMMARY

Getting Started First song we sang, "Be Thou My Vision," accompanied by Tara Ward and Phil Woodward – a musician team brought to assembly by our keynote speaker, the Rev. Karen Ward.

Mission Spending Plan The Proposed 2011 Mission Spending Plan for the synod stewards just over \$2 million dollars. This proposal was presented and discussed during the Spring Session but will be voted upon by the Fall Session of the 2010 Synod Assembly. "The Synod Council wanted to share this budget proposal so you would know what we are working on and go back to your congregations to discuss where we are at this point," said Richard Ahlberg, chair of the synod's Finance Committee. A key change is moving from 55% mission support to the ELCA churchwide expression to 44%. "The funding model has changed over the years with funds provided by the ELCA churchwide expression," said Ahlberg, citing altered churchwide support for new mission starts, seminaries and campus ministry. The synod budget supports these areas. "We felt that these were priority items and wanted to make sure they had adequate funding," Ahlberg said. Dialogue about the situation has opened. "We will be working with the three expressions of the church to see if we can improve this," said Ahlberg. Other highlighted elements of the proposed Mission Spending Plan are increased support for outdoor ministry, a three percent increase for staff salaries and \$15,000 for moving expenses as the synod office anticipates moving when its lease runs out in November 2011. During discussion, many expressed hope that the synod could find a way by fall to maintain a 55% support level of the churchwide expression. A non-binding poll was taken of those present, and most supported the Finance Committee's direction at this point. Looking ahead to the vote on the 2011 proposal in the fall, Bishop Graham told members, "It is one thing to vote with your voting device. It is another to vote with your heart and voice and checkbook or credit card of choice."

Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Leaders Updated 2011 Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Leaders were adopted. It includes three percent salary and housing allowance increases and new guidelines for eight weeks of family leave, "which track to standard practices, for example of the U.S. government" according to Dr. John White, synod vice president. "This is an interim step, in a way," said White. "The task force to review and revise the overall structure of [the Compensation Guidelines]... is underway now."

Metro D.C. Synod, ELCA
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May 7-8 • September 25



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Treasurer's Update Audited financial statements will be available at the Fall Session, but in this session a general picture of the synod's financial state was shared. "Our benevolence receipts for 2009 were just under \$1.9 million, less than a one percent decrease from the previous year. Given economic factors... that is a pretty good performance," said John Handley, synod treasurer. "So far this year we are giving on pace," said Handley. He thanked congregations for staying current and congregational treasurers and finance committees who do "unseen work that makes the many ministries of this synod possible."

Year of the Young Adult Setting the tone for the Synod Assembly and year's theme, "Year of the Young Adult," the Rev. Amy Thompson Sevimli, Assistant to the Bishop, shared information about traits of "Millennials," persons born between 1980 and 2000, who are now age 10-30.

- There are more Millennials than Boomers;
- 43% of people under age 20 in the U.S. are people of color;
- 40% of 18-24 year olds are in a two or four year school, which is the highest percentage in our nation's history;
- 38% of Millennials are not in the labor force, indicating this generation has been hard hit by the recent recession;
- At least 25% of 18-29 year olds claim no religious affiliation

In local demographics, "it is very rare that any zip code in the synod is composed of less than 20% of young adults," noted Pr. Sevimli, making it "a wonderful opportunity to be focusing in the year 2010 on the young adult." A Young Adult Working Group is available to resource congregations in their efforts to connect young adults with their church communities and is planning a young adult conference later in the fall. A video to help us "better understand who young adults are and their perceptions of the church" was shown and can be seen on the synod's Web site under the "Look In" tab. Pr. Sevimli sees parallels between Millennials and the Biblical character, "Doubting Thomas." "We have to go outside of our walls and show them Christ's body," she suggested, referring to coffee shops, bars, libraries and other locations young adults are found. "All over this synod, the opportunity for us abounds," she said.

Keynote Speaker The Rev. Karen Ward, Episcopal priest and Abbess of the joint ELCA and Episcopal venture - Church of the Apostles in Seattle, built on Pr. Sevimli's points about Millennials, adding that, "We will be working with this entire generation for the next 20 to 30 years." Presently, the average American citizen is 33 years old, she said. Additional traits of Millennials she cited were:

- More racially tolerant and open than previous generations

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- Politically "progressive"
- The most highly educated generation
- Peer oriented and relational
- "Wired differently," i.e. brain chemistry is adapting to technology
- Civic minded and environmentally committed
- Trying to make it in the toughest economy since the Great Depression

Using several short videos, including a thought-provoking "Did you know" presentation on cultural trends, and questions posed by the Kubik community in Germany, Pr. Ward talked about what life looks like for the people she pastors with and what church looks like in her congregation. Drawing on comfort with and interest in spirituality among Millennials, the Church of the Apostles pulls in many monastic elements. "The church is a mystical body with a 2000 year history, so we will draw from the ancient and the modern," said Pr. Ward. Relating the community's worship style, Pr. Ward said, "Emerging worship is not so much a style as it is an approach, where the aim is the opening of space where an encounter with the Holy Trinity can occur." Creativity is welcomed and encouraged in the Church of the Apostles community, where Pr. Ward calls her role "Curator," one who helps create an environment. "Emerging worship is not so much led... as curated, realizing that the Holy Spirit is the one who leads us," she said.

Overview from Bishop Graham Bishop Graham addressed the Synod Assembly, and spoke of his work with the ELCA Living into the Future Together (LIFT) task force. "We have put together a small group in our synod to mirror the churchwide work of looking at funding, organization and vision in the synod," Bishop Graham told us. He also drew attention to exciting activities in the synod, including La Sagrada Familia, the newest "synodically authorized worshipping community" on synod territory.

Churchwide Representative Ms. Kristin Glass, ELCA Director for Youth and Young Adult Ministries, made a presentation as a representative of the churchwide expression of the ELCA. A video presentation called "Everyday Evangelists," featuring the Rev. Mark S. Hanson, ELCA presiding bishop, was shown. A second video updated Haitian relief efforts and use of the \$8 million raised in the ELCA. "The powerful images remind us that it is possible to achieve important work with our time, prayers, and gifts of money and service," said Glass. She emphasized that "80% of the work of the ELCA is supported by mission support – the portion of a member's financial offering that a congregation shares with its synod and churchwide organization." The Metro D.C. Synod "has a strong and dedicated history of churchwide support," she noted, and a 55% giving level "enables ministry to happen in and beyond the beltway." When speaking of young adults in the ELCA, Glass found meaning in Luther's concept of "vocation." "Young adults are in a swirling vortex of vocation,"

she said. "Get swept off your feet by the calling in the vortex," she said. "I am filled with hope and excitement for the past, present and future of our church."

Mission Directions in the Synod The Rev. Phil Hirsch, Director of Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop for the Metro D.C. Synod, gave an uplifting presentation. He cited statistics of concern in congregations (between 2003 and 2008, 44 of our congregations experienced decline, 23 stability and 14 growth) and also described new and renewing ministries in the synod. Though calling it "kind of scary that everything seems to be changing," he declared to applause, "It's going to be ok, because we have hope not in our own abilities but ultimately in Jesus Christ." A characteristic of growing congregations, he said, is that they tend to be trying lots of new things. "Eighty percent of the things you try will fail, 20 percent will succeed. Keep trying until we find the ones that get traction," said Pr. Hirsch. A "mission table" structure of the synod was presented, which will help the synod focus on the health and vitality of our congregations. Looking ahead to 2011, a theme to assist with our health and vitality is proposed – "To see ourselves as others do." Pr. Hirsch suggested a guide to help keep us on track: acting out "I" – reminding ourselves of whom we are; "LOVE" – learning to listen to God; and "YOU" – listening to neighbors, children and friends as we are missionaries in our own society.

A New Start The Assembly heard from the Rev. Dax Jordan, mission developer of the Belmont Ridge Church of the Resurrection in the vicinity of the National Conference Center. "We have waited a very long time to plant this church. Our people are die-hard committed. And there are families who need Jesus Christ in their lives." The community needs prayer and support, and Pr. Jordan prays, "Please Lord, send families."

A New Congregation One of the newest congregations in the ELCA is from our synod. Members of the Oromo Evangelical Church of Washington, DC sang before the afternoon session, bringing several Voting Members to their feet to join a circling formation of tuneful, clapping praise. The congregation's founding pastor, the Rev. Waaqtolaa T. Dinagdee, was recognized by applause for his vision and faithfulness.

Worship

- Guitar and calming harmonies by our guest musicians accompanied the Festive Eucharist co-planned by the Rev. Karen Ward and the Rev. Kate Murray, new chair of the synod's Worship Committee. Time for reflection was built into the experience, utilizing some "emergent worship" elements. Stations with icons, candles and submission of worship petitions were present.
- Bishop Graham's sermon, "Conversations on Faith," is published on the

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synod Web site.

- An offering of \$1,640 taken during the service will be used by Lutheran World Relief and synod congregation ministries supporting Haitian relief efforts.

Resolutions & Memorials

- The resolution "**Energy Stewardship**" was adopted. Our public witness as energy stewards and support available through the Synod Creation Care Team and congregational teams are highlighted in this resolution. Additionally, the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly is memorialized to encourage the ELCA in all expressions to reduce energy-related greenhouse gas emissions. This action adopted by our synod is likewise before several other synod assemblies in the ELCA. "Close to 20% of our congregations are already doing work around this issue. This is a way to formalize it," said the Rev. Sarah Scherschligt, member of the synod Creation Care Team.
- The resolution "**Memorial to Report on the Status of the Implementing Resolutions of the Social Statement 'Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust'**," was adopted. The social statement was adopted by the entire church body, said Phil Soucy, one of the drafters, but only a report to the Church Council in 2012 was delineated in implementing resolutions. A request for a report by the ELCA Office of the Presiding Bishop to the 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly on actions stemming from implementing resolutions included in the ELCA social statement on human sexuality is memorialized by this Synod Assembly action.
- Although changes to relevant ELCA documents have been made since the resolution was presented according to drafters, the resolution "**Memorial to Encourage the Full Implementation of Actions on Ministry Policies**" was adopted by our Synod Assembly. In it, actions of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly with respect to ministry policies were affirmed by this encouragement of full implementation of "structured flexibility" and integration of qualified candidates and pastors in the church's mission and ministry, and by memorializing the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to implement ministry policy actions "as soon as reasonably possible." From the floor, the Rev. Michael Wilker, one of the drafters, said, "This will put our Synod Assembly on record as saying we appreciate what [the Churchwide Assembly] did last year and want to continue to move forward."
- The resolution "**Kairos Palestine Document**" was adopted. In it, congregational discussion of a document written by concerned Palestinian Christians, referred to as the Kairos Palestine Document, is encouraged, as are seeking deeper understanding and ways for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "This document is hope filled, inspiring, and I encourage you to read it," said the Rev. Renata Eustis in a comment from the floor.

- Additional adopted resolutions were "**Greetings**," in which five synods with assemblies overlapping our own were extended "best wishes," and "**Expression of Thanks and Gratitude**," thanking several key participants for making the Spring Session of the Synod Assembly happen.

Elections

Voting Members to the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly

- Clergy – the Rev. Kim Conway, the Rev. Jeff Wilson
- Lay – Heidi Eickstadt, Judith Mangubat, Amanda Wahlig, Joseph Walker

Synod Council Members

- D.C. Conference (clergy) – the Rev. Mike Wilker
- Fairfax Conference (lay) – Jim Brookshire
- Maryland Conference (clergy) – the Rev. Thomas O'Brien
- Montgomery Conference (lay) – Ruth Manchester
- Potomac Conference (lay) - Wendell Anderson
- Virginia Conference (clergy) – The Rev. Dax Jordan
- At-large Representative (lay) – Robert Schilpp
- At-large Representative (lay rostered) – Deacon Katherine Miller-Holland
- Women's Organization Representative - Bonnie Priebe
- Youth Representative – Rachel Carle

A lay position on the Synod Council from the Maryland Conference remains vacant.

The newly elected leaders were installed at the closing of the Spring Session.

Future events

- Fall Session of 2010 Metro D.C. Synod Assembly: Saturday, September 25
- 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly: August 14-20 (2011) in Orlando, Florida

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Find photos, blog posts, and other information from the Spring Session at www.metrodcelca.org.



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God's work. Our hands.