



La Crosse Area Synod, ELCA

Coulee

2013 Assembly Edition!

Courier

Assembly edition

Generous Love, Generous Lives

April 26-28, 2013

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SATURDAY'S WORK

STARTING SATURDAY AT 8:15 SHARP!

The 2013 Assembly met in the Lunda Center on the downtown campus of the Western Wisconsin Technical College. The business session was on Saturday, April 27. Bishop Jim Arends began with the somber news from two synods near us:

The Mekane Jesus Ethiopian Lutheran Church severed ties with the ELCA, which immediately affected our 22 years of companion synod relationship with their Central Synod. Our friends in the Central Synod argued strenuously for continuation of our relationship as a needed example of how church may still cooperate and support one another while separated by various issues of doctrine or practice. The vote was not in our favor, so for the time being there will be no visits, exchanges, or financial involvement.

Closer geographically is the Wisconsin South Central Synod of the ELCA, where Bishop Bruce Burnside is in custody and charged with three felonies after a vehicular homicide. The Vice President of the SC Synod was with us and we pledged our prayers for them and the victims of this tragedy.

We recognized and commissioned our synod's members who will represent us at the August Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA in Pittsburgh.

We recognized the eight high school assembly members sent by their congregations as voting members with us.

BISHOP'S REPORT

Bishop Arends expressed great confidence in the faith and work of the people of the synod. He reminded us that we do not all need to be involved in great deeds to serve, but that God uses what we do day to day in our Christian lives ... it is all essential in the ministry of helping people. He described for us his vision:

... "I was recently asked if I have a vision for the Synod. I do. It is a vision of us being the church our world needs in these disturbing times. It is a vision that can come to fulfillment because it builds on what already is. It is a vision of Christ alive in us!

In my vision the La Crosse Area Synod is: 38,000+ Lutherans in 74 growing congregations and specialized ministries

- seeing each congregation as the center for Christ's mission in their community,

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS

Resolution One

WHEREAS, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) in General Assembly on February 2, 2013, voted to sever its official ties with the ELCA...

RESOLVED, that the "Companion Synod Fund Ethiopia - General" be closed and the existing funds be transferred to the "Companion Synod Fund Peru - General"; and be it further

RESOLVED, that any additional funds received for the "Companion Synod Fund Ethiopia - General" be received into the "Companion Synod Fund Peru-General"; and be it further

RESOLVED, that these funds may be used toward eliminating the shortfall of the 2012 La Crosse Area Synod Delegation to Peru; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Synod Council be empowered to distribute the Ethiopia Funds for scholarships, books, and clinics to appropriate companion synod needs if and when it is determined that these funds may not be used for their original purposes in the Central Synod of the EECMY.

Use this space for other notes as you present your report to your home congregation:



WELCOME VISITORS!

Don Shunkwiler,

new director of Sugar Creek Bible Camp, who reasserted the strong connection between camping ministries and church leader development.

Eric Peterson,

Vice President of the South Central Synod of Wisconsin, ELCA who is leading the ministry and congregations there in place of former Bishop Burnside.

Elisio Mandamiento Grados,

President of the ILEP our companion synod in Peru. President Grados inspired us with a thinly disguised Norwegian joke about a man in the sea waiting for God to rescue him.

Rochelle Christiansen,

Service Center Director, PORTICO Benefit Services of the ELCA, who reassured us that benefit services will continue through PORTICO and accomodate the coming changes in federal health care law.

The LIFT (Living in Faith Together) Study adopted by the 2011 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America includes these words about congregations and synods:

The priority for this church is to work together to nurture congregations that are Evangelical: proclaiming God's reconciling forgiveness, mercy and love, and missional, engaged in witness and service in God's world, through which God makes disciples of Jesus Christ who are sent into God's mission in the world.

For the sake of congregations, synods should be centers of encouragement and facilitators of planning and partnership.

For the sake of the larger Church, synods should be the constant reminders that our common life is larger than the local congregation.

- calling on our synod's leaders to help them do ministry in their unique settings, and
- expecting our synod's leaders to challenge us so that our ministry will reach beyond ourselves to regional, national & global service"

...

"I have complete confidence in you! We are making a difference!"

MALARIA TASK FORCE

At the 2012 Assembly we challenged ourselves to raise \$150,000 over three years for the ELCA End Malaria Campaign. Our congregations have responded and have raised \$70,000 in less than a year!

Aleta and Marjorie of Freeman Lutheran church, "The Rapping Grannies" raised \$4.00 from every member and then moved their fund raising for ending Malaria to the Village of Freeman. They performed their hip hop appeal to a standing ovation.

BUDGET

Synod Treasurer Derek Jackson presented the 2014 Mission Budget slightly larger than the 2013. The new budget includes some efficiencies and cost saving measures, and the stabilization of the benevolence support in the last year has encouraged the return of budgeted support for our seminaries. Derek was earnestly appreciated with applause and acclamation for his hard work that leaves so little for us to do! It was approved overwhelmingly by voice vote.

REGISTRAR

There are in attendance today 71 pastors, 202 lay persons for a total of 273 voting members. We also welcomed the presence of 32 visitors.

ELECTIONS

All the nominated for synod committees and boards were elected by unanimous ballot. This is the first time the unanimous ballot

PORTICO AND THE HEALTH PLAN

Rochelle Christiansen happily reported that the 2% discount in our congregational insurance cost given to our synod was due to enough leaders taking the health assessments. We were also reassured that Portico is on top of the changes occurring in federal health law.

The only reason for the ELCA to have a health plan is for the sake of ministry. PORTICO and church leaders have sharpened the benefits philosophy. You can check out the evolving policy online at the Portico website. ELCA Health plan options will go from one option to four options. The Federal Exchange that will begin operating October 1, 2013 and will have four plan levels.

Portico has always served its members well, does not deny coverage to anyone because of pre-existing conditions. And as in the past, PORTICO expects it's rates will be 14% lower than comparable plans.