

## Report to the Assembly

## Bishop Jim Arends



A second year student at Wartburg Seminary comments on what he saw in Tanzania this past January. Nathaniel Bothwell writes, "In Tanzania, the church is intimately involved in the doing of Christianity. The church seems acutely aware of the need not only to preach Jesus, but to be Jesus."

As the body of Christ we are called to be Jesus. To be Jesus is to bring new life. The gift of life is a treasure when all parts

of the body work together. Over the past six years I have had the joy of celebrating the life Jesus brings to many of us, our groups, our congregations, and our synod's ministry.

Being Jesus in a world that desperately needs the loving Spirit of God must be our central endeavor. We are part of a shrinking church in a rapidly changing world that is seeing the church as less and less relevant. We need each other's support and help and experience to be a church that makes a difference.

#### THANK YOU FOR BEING THE CHURCH TOGETHER

I want to commend the congregations of our synod that are intentionally working on mission plans and new initiatives. Pastor Libby Howe, our Director for Evangelical Mission is working with seven congregations in mission planning, and is coaching another twelve congregations in mission development and revitalization. Many other congregations are working on stewardship education and other mission development.

Also I give thanks for congregations that continually strive to be ministries that involve people of all ages. One result is apparent in the membership of this assembly! This year we have 16 young adult assembly members (age between confirmation and 24), the most ever at any of our assemblies.

#### MONEY and MINISTRY

##### Recovering from the Great Recession

I was first elected bishop in 2008, and took office at the start of the Great Recession. Finances have been difficult for households and congregations. After a drop of over \$50,000 in mission support from years 2009-2010, your congregations have restored \$6,600 each year since. To continue the ministries we are celebrating at this assembly, I ask you to take the need back to your congregations.

##### Mission Support on a schedule

Some congregations have made a commitment to send a percentage of their offerings weekly for use in our synod and churchwide. I challenge you to examine your percentage given to mission support. Consider working towards a ten percent tithe, setting an example for your members to consider tithing.

#### Resolution 1 Reallocating Ethiopia Funds

PASSED

RESOLVED that money given to our synod designated for clinics in Ethiopia be instead dedicated to the Malaria Campaign, and be it further

RESOLVED that money given to our synod designated for EECMY scholarships instead be designated to the ELCA initiatives to provide scholarships and educational opportunities for women leaders from our global companion churches, and be it further

RESOLVED that money given to our synod designated for books instead be designated to support this year's Young Adults in Global Mission from the La Crosse Area Synod, Elise Hynek and Jenna Putz.

Submitted by the Global Mission Committee of the La Crosse Area Synod

The account balances:

- Medical Clinics = \$470.42
- Scholarships = \$1445.62
- Books = \$3115.75

#### Resolution 2 Amending Synod Constitution

PASSED

BE IT RESOLVED to amend the synod constitution \$8.52 as follows:

\$8.52. The term of the bishop shall begin on the first day of the ~~fourth~~ **third** month following the election. The terms of the vice-president, secretary and treasurer and the Synod Council members shall begin at the conclusion of the Synod Assembly at which they are elected.

This recommendation comes from the Synod Council, requires a 2/3 vote of this assembly and the next regularly called Synod Assembly.

#### Resolution 3 Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA

PASSED

RESOLVED that the La Crosse Area Synod Assembly affirm and commit itself to participation in *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*, and be it further

RESOLVED that the La Crosse Area Synod Council establish a task force that will: set goals for this synod's participation in the Campaign, provide resources for congregations to participate in the Campaign, and enable connections to be made between the churchwide expression of this church and the congregations of the La Crosse Area Synod.

Submitted by  
the La Crosse Area Synod Council

## Malaria Campaign Goal Very Near

Two years ago our assembly committed to raising \$150,000 in three years to fight malaria. At this two-thirds point we have given over \$130,000 to the battle. My challenge? Let's reach our goal this summer. If each congregation plans one special event, we can raise the \$20,000 we need.

## ELCA Hunger Appeal

Thank you for fighting hunger in our world. Last year our synod contributed \$2.77 per baptized member to the appeal, yet our per-member giving ranks 57th out of 65 synods in our church. My challenge to you is to adopt the resolution and start today – to raise our average to \$4.00 per baptized member.

## GLOBAL PARTNER: PERU LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS

There is a serious disfunction in the national leadership of la Iglesia Luterana Evangelica Peruana (ILEP-Peru Lutheran Church). It stands in the way of our work with the dynamic and compassionate local churches we have visited. While the ELCA has stopped financial support through the ILEP, the ELCA Director of Ministry in Latin America, Pastor Raquel Rodriguez has recommended our synod send a delegation to Peru as soon as possible to visit congregations and celebrate ministries there. Consider joining this delegation!

## Pastor Libby Howe

Director of Evangelical Mission /Assistant to the Bishop

Much of the work I do among the congregations of our synod addresses the struggles we are facing, like the decline of membership, involvement, and giving...I walk with congregations who are asking, "will we live or die?" And we tackle that tough question together. The even tougher question though is "whether we live or whether we die, how will we do so faithfully?"

Only twice in five years have I heard anything about a desire to share the life-giving good news of Jesus with people who have not heard and do not know. This tells me something that alarms me: We have not experienced the life-giving good news of Jesus in such a way that we are compelled to share it with others. We treat Jesus as an historical event far removed from us or a good idea to help us make good decisions, but we are not experiencing his presence with us today, right now.

I chose the scripture passage for this assembly in light of this reality. Isaiah 43 "I am about to do a new thing, do you not perceive it?" The expected answer is "of course". But the truth is...I do not perceive ...the new thing that God is doing, especially in this rapidly changing era where the church as we have known it is largely obsolete. So I think we need to spend a LOT of time and energy on "perceiving it"; on listening to God.

There are many ways to listen; three are critical: 1) studying scripture and praying together 2) engaging one another in real, truthful conversations about our lives, and 3) opening our hearts, ears and eyes to the communities we are in...In and through this listening, which is prayer after all, God promises to be known to us. The Holy Spirit will show up!

My prayer: **Draw us closer to you, Jesus, that we may perceive your grace and guidance. AMEN.**

## Resolution 4 World Hunger

**PASSED**

RESOLVED that the congregations of the La Crosse Area Synod participate in a Synod-Wide World Hunger Sunday in the fall of 2014 using resources provided by the World Hunger Subcommittee, and be it further

RESOLVED that the La Crosse Area Synod gathered in Assembly recommend congregations commit to giving \$4.00 per member to the World Hunger Appeal through their budgets, Special Offerings, Memorial Gifts, Endowment Funds, and matching funds to reach this goal, and be it further

RESOLVED that the World Hunger Subcommittee report regularly to the congregations throughout the year on efforts to reach this goal and that the subcommittee provide educational and motivational materials to the congregations.

Submitted by the synod  
World Hunger Subcommittee  
Endorsed by La Crosse Area Synod Council

## BUDGET

The details on the budget will be posted. (name a local bulletin board in your place!)

Year	Budget	Expenditures
2013	\$ 856,890	\$ 811,085
2014	<b>\$ 856,404</b>	

## REGISTRAR

170 voting members, 62 pastors, 232 total  
32 guests, volunteers, and visitors

## ELECTION

Bishop Jim Ahrends received 220 of 220 votes on the first ballot, and was duly re-elected our synod bishop.

## LUTHERAN CAMPUS MINISTRY IN LA CROSSE

Our synod has been helping support ministry to students on the three college campuses here. There is a need to call a new campus pastor and put the ministry on a good financial footing. We have called for six congregations to step up and make a three year commitment of \$5,000 a year. Two have agreed to it, a third is considering it. Take this challenge home to your congregations.



**ELCA  
CHURCHWIDE  
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN**

Celebrating the 25th anniversary with a giving campaign to expand and add to our ministries. The Goal: Raise \$198 million in the next five years, reaching our goal in 2018