

Stream of Information

Upper Susquehanna Synod, ELCA

“Mission Globally. Mission Locally.” 2010 Synod Assembly Summary

The 23rd Annual Assembly of the Upper Susquehanna Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was held at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, PA, on June 18 and 19, 2010. Approximately 290 lay persons and clergy who are members of congregations of the synod attended plenary sessions, workshops, Bible studies and worship during the two-day event. The Bible study leader and ELCA Representative was the Rev. Gemechis D. Buba, director for African National Ministry. The theme this year was “Mission Globally. Mission Locally.” Global missions were emphasized on Friday, including the synod’s committees for World Hunger, Global Missions and Companion Synods. Local missions were highlighted on Saturday including Camp Mount Luther, the Synod Youth Council, our synodical Book of Faith Advocate, Campus Ministry, Mission Interpretation, Synodical Women’s Organization, the Ministry Partnership Team, and the Reconciliation Team. Mission Moment Videos were shared throughout the assembly highlighting “mission locally” including Diakon’s Ohesson Manor in Lewistown, Campus Ministry, the Sawdust Ministry from First, Watsonstown, and Lutheran World Federation.

Bishop Robert L. Driesen led the proceedings, which included reports of various synod organizations and committees. The assembly heard greetings from the Rev. Dr. Mark Wm. Radecke, chaplain of Susquehanna University. Many felt the highlight of the assembly was the presentations by Rev. Buba, who challenged the assembly to follow the earliest disciples to become an “open-minded and open-handed” church. Buba preached during the Friday Eucharist, led Bible studies, gave the report of the ELCA, and answered questions from the assembly.

In assembly business, a resolution regarding the teaching of evolution was defeated. Adopted were resolutions regarding rostered leader profiles and sacramental obedience in Holy Communion. A memorial regarding the termination of the Augsburg Fortress Pension Plan was ruled out of order.

Two in-gathering offerings were received. On Friday, the offering totaled \$1,456.08 for Lutheran World Relief. Saturday’s offering of \$1,222.50 went to Camp Mount Luther.

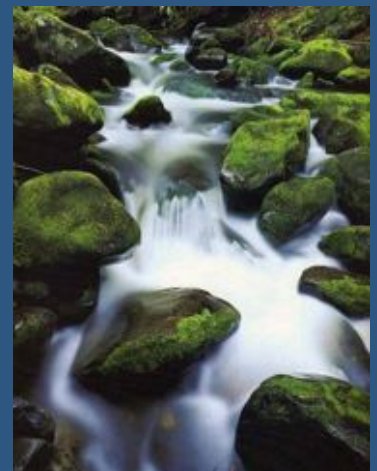
Due to renovations to Weber Chapel on the Susquehanna campus, this year’s assembly was held in the **Degenstein Campus Center Theater**. This provided a more intimate space for large gatherings and kept all assembly activities in one building.



Rev. Gemechis D. Buba, ELCA Director for African National Ministry, served as the churchwide representative to the assembly and Bible study leader. He brought greetings from Chicago and also answered questions from delegates.

Summary of Synod Assembly Actions:

- *Adopted 2011 Budget of just over \$1.2 million with an amendment directing the synod office to request 2011 pledges of mission support by September 2010, asking congregations to prayerfully consider ways to increase their support.*
- *Adopted constitutional changes*
- *Adopted 2011 Salary and Housing Guidelines for rostered leaders with a three percent increase in the first step for rostered leaders with no additional increase in the annual step or housing allowances.*
- *Rejected a memorial regarding teaching evolution*
- *Adopted memorials regarding rostered leader profiles and sacramental obedience in Holy Communion*





During a service of Holy Eucharist on Saturday morning, Cinda Jean Brucker was ordained. Brucker has been called to Trinity, Hughesville, with a purchase of services from Mt. Zion, Hughesville. The Rev. Charles Coates, who died on December 4, 2009, was also remembered during the service. Coates served St. Luke, Williamsport, immediately prior to his retirement.

2011 Compensation Guidelines Set for Rostered Leaders

The assembly voted to accept the recommendations from the Synod Council for 2011 Compensation and Housing Allowance Guidelines for Clergy and Associates in Ministry.

Report of the Election Committee

Elections also were held for several synodical positions. Elected to Synod Council for three-year terms were the following: Terry L. Gardner, Zion, Turbotville; Samuel Leister, Messiah, Mifflintown; the Rev. Andrew Weaver, St. John, Mount Pleasant Mills and Richfield; the Rev. Jeffrey Bohan, St. Luke, Bloomsburg; Maryann Reier, Zion, Sunbury; Carol Waltz, Messiah, South Williamsport. Elected to a two-year term on Synod Council was James Neitz of the Tulpehocken Conference. Elected to a one-year term on Synod Council was Donna Treaster, St. John, Lewistown. Christopher Sands, Sharon, Selinsgrove, was elected for a three-year term as the Young Adult Representative on Synod Council. Katie Zeigler, St. Luke, Sunbury, was elected for a two-year term as the Youth Representative on Synod Council.

The assembly elected the Rev. Carla Volland, Clarkstown/Lairdsville Parish to a three-year term on the Consultation Committee. Michael Hartman, St. John, Lewistown, was elected to a four-year term on the Board of Directors of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg.

Elected as voting members to the ELCA Assembly in 2011 were the following: the Rev. Cheryl Berner, Betty Longfield, the Rev. Patrick Sipes, Dana Creasy, the Rev. Brian Beissel, Peggy Bohart, Thomas Booth, and Christy Zeigler. Alternates are the Rev. Barbara J. Collins, Donna Treaster, the Rev. Andrew Weaver, James Stanley, Rev. Constantine Havir, and Jodi Ellis.

Sights from the Assembly



Musical instruments from the percussion and brass families accompanied the piano during assembly worship services

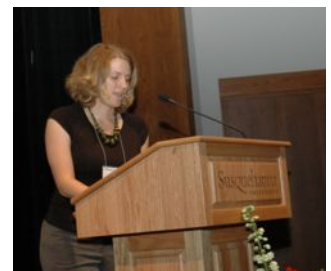


Voting members listen during Plenary Sessions in Degenstein Theatre



Over 20 workshops were offered during the two days including this popular one on Small Church issues

Bethany Campbell, from ELCMA, addresses the assembly and announces their conference in 2012 will be in Lewisburg



Milestones Celebrated at Friday Banquet

As usual, Friday evening at the Synod Assembly was a special time of celebration, relaxation, and fun. The evening began with a buffet dinner, followed by a program of celebration of anniversaries for pastors and congregations. Pastors who have retired were also honored. A new milestone for the synod this year was recognizing the Rev. Paul L. Reaser, who celebrated his 75th anniversary of ordination. Reaser, 102, was one of five across the ELCA who celebrated that milestone. Pastor Reaser died on June 27.



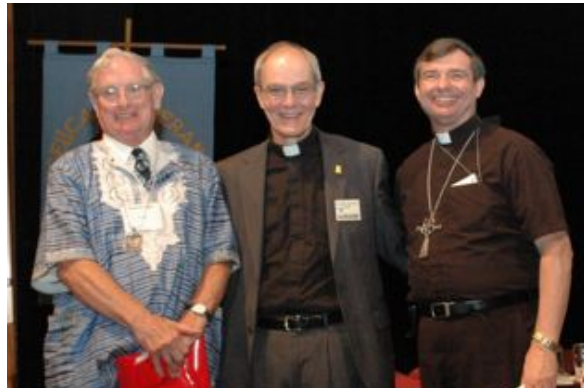
A concert followed the dinner and celebrations with two dulcimer ensembles performing.

Liberian Church Birthday Recognized

During Friday's session, the 150th Anniversary of the Lutheran Church in Liberia was celebrated. The Rev. Viking E. Dietrich, ELCA/Global Mission Regional Director for West Africa, was present. On stage, those involved with our companion synod partnership gathered to be recognized including the most recent work team, which went to Liberia earlier this year.



Photos provided by Harry Deitz



Bradford Honored with Paulsen Award

In a surprise announcement, Gettysburg Seminary President Michael Cooper-White announced the awarding of the Bertha Paulssen Award for Distinguished Christian Service to Dr. Robert L. Bradford. The Gettysburg Seminary Board voted in April to confer this award upon Bradford for his churchmanship over the years, especially his work with Liberia. Bishop Driesen nominated Bradford for this award.

In his nomination letter, Driesen wrote, "While his service to the church has been varied and extensive, it is his work as coordinator of this synod's mission with the Lutheran Church in Liberia that is especially noteworthy. As a volunteer for many years, Bob has routinely spent an entire day in the synod office on a weekly basis working for the sake of the people of Liberia." He added that it was largely through Bradford's efforts that 25 cargo containers have been sent to the people of Liberia and work teams have traveled to that African country to help the people rebuild important facilities such as Phebe and Curran Hospitals.

Bradford has announced his upcoming "retirement" as chair of the Liberia sub-committee of the synod Global Missions Committee. Cooper-White said that an official presentation of the Bertha Paulssen Award will take place in the future at the seminary but that he wanted to take this opportunity at assembly to announce the award and congratulate Bradford.

Assembly Updates on Facebook

Throughout Synod Assembly, status updates on the proceedings were posted on the synod's Facebook page. The synod launched a Facebook fan page this spring and uses it to post information about the synod for those who are part of this popular social networking site. The synod's Facebook page can be found at www.facebook.com/usselca.

Stream of Information and USS ARK are publications of the Upper Susquehanna Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, for congregations in the Pennsylvania counties of Mifflin, Juniata, Snyder, Union, Northumberland, Columbia, Montour, Lycoming, Clinton, & Tioga. Permission is granted to reproduce for congregational communications. Send your mission stories and ministry ideas to Chad Hershberger, Director of Communications, at news@uss-elca.org, or to the Upper Susquehanna Synod, PO Box 36, Lewisburg, PA 17837

Seven Marks of an Open-Minded Church

Open-Minded Churches:

1. Identify with the cross of Christ as embodied by the poor, refugee, sick, etc. It "lives" a theology of the cross as opposed to a theology of glory.
2. Rejoices over the Risen Christ. We are the community of the resurrection! Through Christ and His cross, that which is dead can rise up. Our God specializes in resurrection.
3. Preach repentance and forgiveness together. Repentance without forgiveness is legalistic. Forgiveness alone without repentance is cheap grace. We need to have Law and Gospel in balance.
4. Commit to mission locally and globally - it is proactive and inviting.
5. Have open eyes to see and tell what God is doing. They always point to how God is active in the world. Witnesses see and experience the acts of God and tell people what they see.
6. Are open to the promise of the Holy Spirit. They welcome, ask for guidance from and follow the Holy Spirit. Most rely on books, theology and liturgy – but can we learn to rely on the Holy Spirit?
7. An open-minded church is a community of faith that is on its knees, praying for and welcoming the Holy Spirit, centered in scripture and the theology of the cross. Our problem is not money, education or manpower; our problem is that we are not on our knees in prayer.

Seven Marks of an Open-Handed Church

1. John and Peter, two of Jesus' closest disciples, went out at 3:00 p.m. They modeled what it means to be a visible, public church practicing "the priesthood of all believers." It's not just about Sunday morning but also about what is done and who does it Monday afternoon. What does it look like to engage the priesthood of all believers? The ELCA has 14,000+ pastors for 10,000+ congregations, or almost 1½ pastors for each church. In Ethiopia, with a fast growing Lutheran community, there are 9000 congregations and less than 2000 pastors! As the "priesthood of all believers," Christ calls us to be an open-handed, "Monday afternoon church."
2. An open-handed church calls attention to itself and puts forth a unique, relevant message. It is countercultural - it doesn't distribute money - but its unique, relevant voice is the message of Jesus Christ. We do social ministry, but it's the message that's important. Our community proclaims God's grace and truth. We are not of the world but are in the world. The future flows from God's Word and Sacrament, and belongs not to those who blend in, but to those who stand strong in the world and are not ashamed of the Gospel!
3. An open-handed church gives people what it has – the Gospel. Don't focus on what you don't have; instead fix your eyes on Jesus. Talk about what you do have - Jesus Christ, God's word, God's grace, and the sacraments. Serving a declining church in Atlanta, Dr. Buba helped members focus on what they did have and it sprang back to life. The most precious resources we have are the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and God the Creator!
4. All the open-handed church does – feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick – is in the name of Jesus Christ! Leaders pass, but the name of Jesus is eternal. We are a people claimed in His name. We are not liberal or conservative, left or right...we act in Jesus' name without apology!
5. An open-handed church does not put people down but lifts them up – the sick, the immigrant, the outsider, the anxious, the suffering. Congregations are in the business of encouraging and lifting people up! The future belongs to those who boldly confess Jesus and lift each other up. After Jesus resurrection, his disciples were told, "not to seek the living among the dead." We are called to keep the light of the Gospel shining – offering people life, not death – by lifting them up.
6. When lifting people up, an open-handed church gives them a firm Christian foundation, as we ourselves stand firm on that foundation.
7. Open-handed churches are not only called to help people stand, but to help them walk and leap! Our work should speak for itself as we accompany people to become strong in their faith.