

Stream of Information

Upper Susquehanna Synod, ELCA

“God’s Work. Our Hands.” 2009 Synod Assembly Summary

The 22nd Annual Assembly of the Upper Susquehanna Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) was held at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, PA, on June 19 and 20, 2009. Approximately 450 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 was the Rev. Dr. Thomas W. Martin, associate professor of religion and philosophy at Susquehanna University. The theme this year was “God’s work. Our hands.” with an emphasis on mission in action.

Bishop Robert L. Driesen led the proceedings. The assembly heard greetings from Dr. L. Jay Lemons, president of Susquehanna University; Barbara Debski of the ELCA Board of Pensions; the Rev. Dr. Marja Coons-Torn, conference minister of the Penn Central Conference of the United Church of Christ; Elizabeth Hunter, representative of *The Lutheran* magazine; and David D. Swartling, the secretary of the ELCA, who served as the churchwide representative to the assembly.

The main topic of discussion was the ELCA’s proposed social statement, “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust.” Following lengthy discussions, the assembly rejected a memorial to the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly urging adoption of the social statement and urging defeat for the Report and Recommendation on Ministry to ordain those who are in monogamous homosexual relationships. A memorial was adopted urging the Churchwide Assembly that “Any and all motions to come before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes in this church’s current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require passage by a two-thirds vote of the assembly voting delegates for adoption.” The assembly also adopted a memorial affirming the work of Lutheran Disaster Response and asking for the ELCA to reaffirm its commitment to the mission of disaster preparedness.

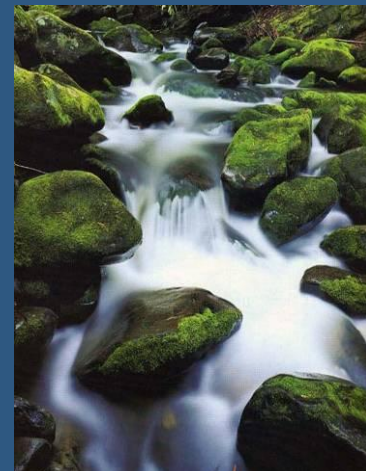
The assembly adopted a resolution that the synod work to abolish racism and review factors inhibiting people of differing cultures from experiencing the fullness of leadership in the Upper Susquehanna Synod. This was sent to the Synod Council for implementation. The two in-gathering offerings totaled \$2,796.05 for the Seminarian Scholarship Fund.



David D. Swartling, the secretary of the ELCA, served as the churchwide representative to the assembly. Swartling brought greetings to the assembly from Chicago and also answered questions that were submitted to him from delegates.

Summary of Synod Assembly Actions:

- *Adopted 2010 Budget*
- *Adopted 2010 Salary and Housing Guidelines with no percentage change in either. Step increases remain in place.*
- *Rejected a memorial urging adoption of “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust.”*
- *Adopted memorial calling for any changes regarding current policies in rostering be done by a 2/3 vote at Churchwide Assembly.*
- *Affirmed work of Lutheran Disaster Response*
- *Asked synod council to work on promoting different cultures*





During a service of Holy Eucharist on Friday morning, conference deans were installed: **Pastor Jill Seagle** (St. John, Delaware Run), Buffalo Valley; **Pastor Erin Bovendam** (Trinity, McAlisterville), Juniata Valley; **Pastor Breen Sipes** (Zion, Kratzerville), Middle Creek; **Pastor Chad Hebrink** (Grace, Berwick), North Branch; **Pastor Brian Beissel** (Grace, Point Township), Tulpehocken; **Pastor Maurice Frontz III** (Messiah, South Williamsport), West Branch. Elizabeth Yenchko was also installed as the Director for Evangelical Mission and an Assistant to the Bishop. The Rev. Otto Reimherr, Ph.D. was also remembered during the service. Reimherr, a retired pastor, died September 15, 2008, and was professor emeritus of religion and philosophy at Susquehanna University.

Report of the Election Committee

Elections also were held for several synodical positions. Michael S. Schrey of Botschaft's (Grubb's) Lutheran Church, Mount Pleasant Mills, was re-elected to a third four-year term as synod vice president. Margaret "Peggy" Biesecker of St. John's Lutheran Church, Northumberland, was re-elected to a third four-year term as synod secretary. Elected to Synod Council for three-year terms were the Rev. Cheryl L. Berner, Trinity, Milton; the Rev. Christopher Mathiason, St. Stephen's, Licking Creek, Mifflintown; Margie L. Krebs, Beaver, Beaver Springs; Nancy Heller, Good Shepherd, Berwick; Richard Kitchen, Grace, Point Township, Northumberland; and Howard J. Best, Church of the Savior, Williamsport. Elected to a two-year term on Synod Council was Jody Esh, St. Mark's, Alfarata.

The assembly elected the following to a six-year term on the Consultation Committee: The Rev. David Byerly, Grace, Shamokin, and St. Paul, Gowen City; the Rev. John R. Koons, Good Shepherd, Berwick; Ann Gardner, Zion, Turbotville; and John Hunter, St. Luke, Sunbury. Elected to a two-year term on that committee was the Rev. Sarah Hershberger, Trinity, Milton.

Elected to six-year terms on the Committee on Discipline were the Rev. Joel Zeiders, St. Matthew, Bloomsburg; the Rev. Gary Roth, St. John, Lewistown; Craig Bingman, Messiah, Troxelville; Sandy Nelson, St. Michael, Quiggleville, Cogan Station. The Rev. John Yost, Christ's United, Millmont, was re-elected to the board of Susquehanna University.

2010 Compensation Guidelines Set for Rostered Leaders

The assembly voted to accept the recommendations from the Synod Council for 2010 Compensation and Housing Allowance Guidelines for Clergy and Associates in Ministry. An updated guidelines book will be forwarded to congregational leaders and rostered leaders later this summer.



Contemporary Worship Featured on Saturday

A contemporary-style was featured during worship on Saturday morning. The praise band from First Lutheran Church, Mifflinburg, provided music.



Saturday Workshops Focused on Mission

Mission in Action Day was part of the agenda on Saturday. Throughout the assembly, small mission moment videos were shown that were also made available to each congregation. On Saturday, an interactive ministry fair and workshops were held. Pictured here are some assembly attendees during the ministry fair.

Milestones Celebrated at Friday Banquet

A Friday night dinner highlighted significant pastoral ordination and congregational anniversaries including the anniversaries of ordination of both bishops of the synod, Bishop Robert L. Driesen (30 years) and Bishop Emeritus A. Donald Main (40 years)

Other Pastors celebrating ordination anniversaries: 60th Anniversary- Pastor Harry Billow; 55th Anniversary- Pastor Boyd Gibson, Pastor John Ballantine, Pastor Preston Dusman, Pastor Bernard Engelhardt; 50th Anniversary- Pastor Ray Jones; 45th Anniversary- Pastor P. Philip Zimmerman, Jr.; 40th Anniversary- Pastor Kenneth Louder, Pastor Gary Owens; 35th Anniversary- Pastor H. Franklin Showers, Jr., Pastor Frederick Faust, Pastor Thomas Livernois, Pastor Theodore Cockley; 30th Anniversary- Pastor Timothy Bingman, Pastor James Fladland, Pastor Gary Roth.

Churches honored for celebrating anniversaries in 2009 were St. John, Belleville, 175 years; St. John, Potts Grove, 175 years; Emmanuel, Middleburg, 175 years; St. Peter, R.D. Sunbury, 150 years; Trinity, Danville, 150 years; Canby, Bloomsburg, 150 years.

Also honored were two pastors celebrating retirement. They are Pastor D. Elinor Allison and Pastor Mary A. Peterhaensel.

Lay Leaders Celebrated

A Blessing and Sending of Authorized Lay Leaders and a Celebration of the Ministry of the Laity was held on Saturday morning. The graduates of the Lay Ministry Institute were sent to do their ministry within the synod. On Friday afternoon, Pastors Wayne Muthler and Melody Sell gave an update on the Lay Ministry Institute to the assembly.



2009 Graduates of the Lay Ministry Institute



Camp Staff Installed

Friday afternoon featured the installation of the 2009 Summer Ministry Team at Camp Mount Luther, the outdoor ministry site of the synod. Nineteen of the camp's leadership and program staff were installed following a report on this year at Mount Luther, given by Chad Hershberger, Executive Director.

New Website Unveiled

An "unveiling" of the synod's new website as given on Saturday afternoon. The new website can be viewed at www.uss-elca.org. In addition, there is a "Ning" site for sharing ministry stories and resources which can be accessed through the main website.



Bell for Liberia

Pictured here is Bishop Robert L. Driesen with a bell from a one-room school house in Loganville which will be sent to our companion synod in Liberia to be used at Reed Memorial Church whose bell was stolen during the country's civil war.

Photos provided by Harry Deitz and Beth Yenchko

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