

Lay Representative Report
On the Twenty-Ninth Annual Virginia Synod Assembly
Virginia Synod, ECLA
June 10-12, 2016
Roanoke College
Salem, Virginia

VA SYNOD ASSEMBLY:

During the weekend of June 10-12, 2016, over 350 Lutheran clergy and lay people gathered at Roanoke College for the 29th Annual Assembly of the Virginia Synod, ECLA. We the undersigned were honored and pleased to be the representatives for Christ Lutheran Church.

The Assembly Theme was: AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST: A HEART FOR WORSHIP. The Rev. Kevin Strickland, Assistant to the Presiding Bishop/Executive for Worship of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America gave several insightful presentations on worship throughout the course of the Assembly.

CHRIST LUTHERAN REPRESENTATIVES:

Pastor Eric Moehring (Rostered) and lay members Jim Schnellenberger, Tinky Keen and Darren D'Ateno represented Christ Lutheran Church as voting members.

SUMMARY REPORT TO CONGREGATION:

Note:

The full minutes of the Twenty-Ninth Annual Virginia Synod Assembly June 10-12, 2016 are available from the VA Synod website at the following link: <http://www.vasynod.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/7-6-16-Revised-Minutes-of-2016-VA-Synod-Assembly.pdf>

FRIDAY, JUNE 10:

On Friday afternoon the Assembly addressed the routine business of electing Synod officers and delegates to the Church-wide Assembly. We also heard and accepted the reports from the Synod Council and other synod committees as well as the 2017 Synod budget.

Bishop Mauney introduced the ELCA Discussion topic "Called Forward Together in Christ" and present three questions for consideration

1. What kind of church do we believe God is calling us to become?
2. How do we become an inclusive, diverse church that is inspiring and relevant in different communities?
3. If we had to decide that some things were more important than others in the next 5-10 years, what are your top three things?

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SYNOD COUNCIL

Recommendation No. 2: Recommended that the 2017 minimum compensation base be held at the 2016 level due to rising costs of medical benefits.

Recommendation 2 reads as follows: "That the 2017 minimum compensation base be held at the 2016 level. This recommendation is being made after considering the increased costs of medical insurance (approximately 5% annual increase). For congregations whose pastor has family coverage this would represent an additional

medical insurance expense of approximately \$1450 and would be an additional tax free in benefit for a pastor. In addition all pastors continuing to serve in the Virginia Synod would receive a 1.75% step increase in base salary. The minimum base salary for a pastor serving in the Virginia Synod would be set at \$41,732 for pastors with a parsonage and \$52,628 for pastors with housing allowance; and the minimum salary of a rostered layperson serving in the Virginia Synod would be set \$37,784 for a person with a Bachelor's Degree and \$40,327 for a person with a Master's Degree.

The Synod encourages all congregations to meet or exceed these minimum compensation recommendations.”

Motion was made and seconded for approval of recommendation #2: I

Vote: In Favor: 237; Opposed: 33; Motion Approved

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution #1: GOD'S WORK. OUR HEARTS AND HANDS. MEMORIAL FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL, VETERANS, AND THEIR FAMILIES.

Resolution 1 reads as follows:

Whereas 1.2 million Americans are currently serving in the various branches of the United States Armed Forces and about 21.2 million American men and woman are veterans of military service, and

Whereas hundreds of thousands of military personnel have been injured over the years and have returned home with wounded bodies, minds, and hearts, and

Whereas the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is highly committed to ministry among those in military uniform and those who have faithfully and often sacrificially served this nation, therefore

Be it resolved that the Virginia Synod memorialize the 2016 Church wide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage its congregations to express their gratitude and support for all US military personnel, veterans, and their families and friends, and in one or more of the following ways:

- Expressing gratitude often and remaining especially attentive to those serving in the Armed Forces, as well as to veterans and the military and federal chaplains;
- Making direct efforts to present to military personnel and their families copies of the *Prayer Book for the Armed Services*, (Augsburg Fortress), a companion to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* that is designed for those serving in uniform, veterans, and their families;
- Encouraging congregations to donate copies of the above prayer book to ELCA military chaplains for distributions at their discretion via Augsburg Fortress/ ELCA Federal Ministries;
- Regularly lifting up in prayer those who are serving and those who have served, and praying especially with and for members of the military and the families of those who have been emotionally and physically injured or killed in the line of duty during their armed forces service;
- Giving ongoing and prayerful support of the military chaplains who bring on our behalf the Means of Grace in the name of Christ Jesus to the 1.2 million women and

- men in the Armed Forces, as well as to those in Veterans' Hospitals and wherever else they are called to serve;
- Exploring and facilitating congregational, conference, and/or synodical events that equip
 - individuals' and congregations' cooperative ministries to support armed forces personnel and their families;
- Directing efforts by ministries of the ELCA to utilize the resources of Congregations' Support for Federal Ministries for the care and support for returning veterans (Recommended resources: ELCA "Care for Returning Veterans," the Wounded Warrior Programs, Point Man Ministries, and Partners in Care);
- Lifting up the vocational call of those who serve in the Armed Forces, and raising up in our congregations the need for those who may hear the call of the Spirit of God and the church to serve as ordained military and federal chaplains of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
- Remembering that injuries of the mind, spirit, and relationships do not show as clearly as physical injuries, and so offering rituals of healing and reconciliation for active duty members, reservists, and members of the National Guard upon their return from deployment or special duty, and periodically thereafter;
- Realizing that not all honorably discharged veterans transition well, and that some find themselves incarcerated, so that congregations which already have prison ministries will be encouraged to make a special effort to seek out incarcerated veterans, thank them for their service, and help them access their veterans' benefits, in order that such veterans might have a more successful transition upon their release; and
- Designating one Sunday each year for the special recognition of those in military uniform, the veterans who have served, the wounded and their families in their recovery and coping, and the families who live with pain and loss because of loved ones who lost their lives in service to this country. (Recommendations include: the Sunday prior to Veterans' Day or Memorial Day, or the first Sunday in February since the US Congress in 1988 established February 3 as "Four Chaplains Day" in order to honor the four chaplains who gave their lives together onboard the SS Dorchester.)

Motion was made and seconded for approval

Vote: In Favor: 262; Opposed: 12; Motion Approved 95

Resolution #2 RESOLUTION ON THE VIRGINIA SYNOD'S COMMITMENT TO ISSUES OF DIVERSITY

Resolution 2 reads as follows:

WHEREAS, in 2003 the VA Synod Council Assembly authorized the African-American Outreach Team in order to diversify the demographic of the Lutheran Church in Virginia, and

WHEREAS, in 2016 the definition of diversity has expanded in an increasingly multi-cultural, inter-religious, and globalized world, and

WHEREAS, it is the belief of Tapestry, the VA Synod's steering team on the issue of diversity and inclusion, that this is an important aspect of God's mission that includes every congregation and Lutheran in the Virginia Synod, and

WHEREAS, there is a greater need to network and collaborate to respond to the challenge of being a church that together embraces God's vision of a diverse church, and works for the inclusion of all, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that each Conference the Virginia Synod designate one person, rostered or layperson, as a Tapestry Advocate, to work closely with the Tapestry steering team, and to serve as a resource, promoter, and educator to congregations on issues of diversity and inclusion.

Motion was made and seconded for approval

Vote: In Favor: 245; Opposed: 24; Approved

Resolution#3 PRAYER TO DISCERN THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ELECTING A NEW BISHOP

Resolution 3 reads as follows:

WHEREAS members of the Virginia Synod prepare to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in electing a new synodical bishop in 2017;

Therefore be it RESOLVED, that the VA Synod request all its congregations to begin a year of prayer to discern the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and to add into their weekly worship service prayers a petition for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as the Synod prepares to elect a new synodical bishop and to discern a vision of leadership; and

Be it further RESOLVED that the Office of the VA Synod Bishop and the VA Synod Council submit 12 sample prayers which may be used during the next 12 months by each congregation.

A motion to Approve and a second were made.

Comments:

- The Rev. Jim Utt, Pastor, Pastor Emeritus, Grace, Winchester moved to amend the 2nd paragraph next to the last line: "provide for prayers to be lifted up in discerning the future of our synod and its ministries" Rev. Utt spoke to not just who we are going to elect but what are some of the directions that we might be taking as a synod? This motion was seconded from the floor.
 - No one else spoke to the proposed amendment.
 - Vote on the Amendment: to add after the and future directions of the mission and ministry of the Virginia Synod and (continue on the rest of the resolution)
 - Vote on the Amendment to Resolution #3 In Favor: 216; Opposed: 56; Approved.

Vote on the fully amended resolution:

Comment:

The Rev. Terri Sternberg, Trinity, Pulaski Moved to strike the whole 2nd Resolve of the Resolution. Seconded from the floor.

Comments:

- The Rev. Meredith Williams, Pastor, Ascension, Danville stated the thought for the third paragraph was for the congregations that do not have pastors currently and or strong worship committees.

- The Rev. Chris Carr, Pastor, Christ the King, Richmond, spoke in opposition to the proposed amendment. He is in support of having 12 prayers that can be used, adapted, or not used.
- Voting on the motion to amend Resolution #3 by striking the second Re- solve paragraph: In Favor: 83; Opposed: 185; Failed

Voting for Resolution #3, as amended with Pastor Utt’s additional language in the 2nd paragraph

Comments: None

Vote for adoption of Resolution #3 as amended: In Favor: 245; Opposed 28; Approval

During the Friday evening session the Forwarding Faith Campaign and Tapestry Ministry were introduced and reports given.

FORWARDING FAITH

During the Friday evening session a **Forwarding Faith Campaign** Video was presented. The goal of Forwarding Faith is to endow the youth and faith formation activities, events and programs of the Virginia Synod, ELCA; passing our faith forward to our youth and by believing in both living and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ joyfully and abundantly throughout our lives. Based on our faith in the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—we are empowered to live lives of discipleship, service and mercy.

More information about the campaign and how to make a pledge or donation, including the video can be found at <http://www.forwardingfaith.org/>

TAPESTRY:

The Tapestry Committee also gave a report. TAPESTRY’s mission is to empower congregations in the Virginia Synod to be Ambassadors for Christ in matters of diversity and inclusion, walking with God, and guided by the Holy Spirit to bring healing, reconciliation, and justice. TAPESTRY provides resources, facilitates conversations, and fosters networking across the Synod in order to advocate for God’s desire to weave a rich and diverse Body of Christ!. More information about Tapestry is available at <http://www.vasynod.org/ministries/tapestry/>

Introductions and recognitions were made of rostered Leaders new to VA Synod, anniversaries of commissioning, consecrations, and Ordinations, retiring rostered leaders, and anniversaries of congregations.

SATURDAY, JUNE 11:

Saturday morning’s session began with gathering songs and morning worship. The Rev. Kevin Strickland, Assistant to the Presiding Bishop/Executive for Worship of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America gave the second Theme Presentation.

Breakout sessions occurred during the lunch hour. Jim Schnellenberger attended the Tapestry Ministry breakout discussion; Tinky Keen attended the Power in the Spirit breakout session and Darren D’Ateno attended the Forwarding Faith breakout session.

Rev. Kevin Strickland began the afternoon session with the third Theme Presentation.

In mid-afternoon an ELCA discussion on the topic – Called Forward Together in Christ was conducted. Discussion included but were not limited to consideration of what kind of church do we believe God is calling us to become?; How do we become an inclusive, diverse

church that is inspiring and relevant in different communities?; and If we had to decide that some things were more important than others in the next 5-10 years, what are your top three things?

The afternoon session concluded with the Reports of the Synod Council, Committee of Reference and Counsel and the Committee of Elections.

The spiritual highlight of the weekend was the main assembly worship service held Saturday evening at St. Andrew's Catholic Church in Roanoke. St. Andrew's is a beautiful church and provided a magnificent setting for this service. The choir singing and the acoustics in the church amplifies the sound and improved the fullness of the tone. It was truly a wonderful worship experience.

Sunday, June 12

Sunday morning's session began with opening prayers, Word and Necrology. The Youth Assembly gave their report, as did the Committee on Minutes. The report of the Synod Council included approval of the 2016 Financial Program.

The Rev. Kevin Strickland gave the fourth Theme Presentation and responded to questions after a short break.

Final reports from the Committee on Transportation, on Official Roll and of Reference and Counsel were given.

The Assembly concluded with a worship service with the Reverend Rev. Terrie Sternberg Preacher providing an inspiring sermon.

We appreciated the opportunity to attend the 29th Annual Assembly of the Virginia Synod and we look forward to using what we learned to help enhance the mission and worship experience here at Christ Lutheran.

Respectfully Submitted by Your Congregation Representatives:

Jim Schnellenberger

Tinky Keen

Darren D'Ateno