

Northwest Synod of Wisconsin  
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
2009 Synod Assembly  
***Theme: Book of Faith: Living in the Word***  
May 29-30, 2009

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire  
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Plenary Session I - Friday, May 29, 2009

Bishop Duane Pederson welcomed all voting members, visitors and special guests to the 2009 Assembly of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin.

Prior to giving devotions he announced that all lay voting members of the Assembly received the gift of a new *Lutheran Study Bible*, provided as a resource of the Book of Faith Initiative. Bishop Pederson thanked the students and graduates of the Lay School of Ministry who donated 150 copies of this Bible for the pastors and leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran church in Malawi. Later in the summer two groups of people will be traveling to Malawi and will take these Bibles with them. Bishop Pederson and Diane Kaufmann also will be leaving for Malawi June 3.

Bishop's devotions were from Luke 8 beginning with verse 16. It is his conviction that discipleship is about hearing the Word, and doing it. It's about living for the neighbor. Neighbors are not found inside the church building, but in the everyday people we encounter each day. It's about lighting a lamp that is allowed to shine outward – into the world and into the lives of others.

The Assembly opened with a litany, and Bishop Pederson declared the Assembly to be in session in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Book of Faith: Living in the Word was the theme of the assembly. Throughout the assembly time, brief breaks called Bible Bytes, based on various ministries in the synod were presented to the assembly by: Pastor Rolf Nestingen, Grace, Eau Claire; Christy Canfield, Joy Lutheran, Prescott; Tom Anderson, Twin Ports Ministry to Seafarers; Pastor Aimee Wollman, Chaplain Luther Hospital; Pastor Gary Grindelund, Lutheran Social Service; Pastor Darrell Kyle, Trinity in Lake Nebagamon and an air force chaplain.

At various times throughout the Assembly Pastor Christine Emerson, Immanuel in Strum, led the assembly in singing. Book of Faith video clips were shown at various times showing ways faith is being lived out in our synod.

Within the packets was a wooden cross made by "Joseph's Square" a ministry where men from Zion Lutheran in Woodville gather for Bible study and prayer and to work with wood. Thanks to them for this gift.

Those seated on the dais were introduced: Bill Stewart, parliamentarian, Elaine Moore, secretary and Phyllis Beaström filling in for Sue Zahrbock, vice president, who was unable to be at the assembly.

A motion was made, second and carried to accept the "Agenda for the Assembly" and also the "Assembly Guidelines" found in the supplement.

It is the practice of our synod to have the minutes of the prior year's assembly reviewed and approved by the Synod Council. The Synod Council took this action and approved minutes for the 2008 Synod Assembly. They are printed in the most recent edition of the Synod Directory.

Chairman of the nominating committee, Pastor Kermit Solem, presented their report which was found on pages 26-29 in the blue assembly book. Nominations from the floor were called for. Hearing none, Bishop declared nominations for Synod Council closed.

Monica Bahr of the Credentials Committee presented the initial credentials report as follows: Voting Members: 440; Advisors (voice not vote) 18; Observers; 18 for a total of 491.

Bishop Duane Pederson began his report with "It's time to talk turkey." The church needs to be intentionally speaking the Word to others, doing mission around the world. We are blessed to be a blessing. Will we be a part of what God is doing out there? The Bishop received a standing ovation at the end of his report.

Our keynote speaker, Dr. Craig Koester, Luther Seminary professor of New Testament, a prolific writer and author of numerous articles and books, especially scholarly work on the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation. He presently serves as an associate editor of the journal *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, and is the developer of the interactive introduction of the Bible called *The Bible Tutor*. His first presentation was based on John 1:19-51. John's gospel is a book for seekers. When Jesus first meets his disciples, he asks them, "What are you looking for?" Jesus says, "Come and see." This is an invitation and an offer to be on a journey in relationship to Christ. As we read scripture, we will continually be introduced to the Lamb of God – who will change our life.

Ballots were handed out and the election for synod council members began. Before marking the ballot, Bishop

suggested that we elect all unopposed positions by consensus. A motion was made, seconded, and carried to elect all unopposed nominees by consensus.

Dr. Jonathan Strandjord, Director for Theological Education of the ELCA, and the churchwide representative to our Assembly, was introduced and gave his report. The theme of his report was “Living in the World” and included a video on our shared ministry from Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson of the ELCA. Dr. Strandjord reminded us that we are messengers of God nourished by the Words of Christ. He thanked us for our mission support which makes possible all kinds of ministries around the world.

Pastor Ralph Thompson, chair of the Resolutions Committee, presented Resolution 7. A motion was made and seconded that we take up resolution #6 at this time. Voting cards were raised and because of a close vote a count was needed. Results: 176 yes, 213 no, 46 abstained. Motion defeated. Resolution 7, “Relocation of the Synod Office” to Luther Park Bible Camp, Chetek with Synod Council being authorized to determine the terms and timing of this relocation in conjunction with the Board of Directors of Luther Park Bible Camp was adopted.

Resolution #5 “Health Care Cost Sharing” was read. Because of the time to break for lunch the Bishop declared recess until 3 p.m.

Following lunch there were opportunities to attend two of the following workshops.

- Venturing Into the Mystery of Revelation – Craig Koester
- Revelation and the End of All Things – Criag Koester
- Living in the Word: Listening as the Whole Body of Christ – Jonathan Strandjord
- Living Well – Phil Blom
- Activate Faith with SPARK! - Leslee Nestingen
- Introducing the Lutheran Study Bible – and More! - Scott Tunseth
- Organizational Ethics Through the Lens of Faith – Lori Peterson & Steve Zitnick
- Being Lutheran in a World of Diversity – Kelly Chatman & David Tiede
- God Is Everywhere – Really! - Diane Kaufmann
- Living in the Word: Experiencing the Bible – S.P.U.N.G.E.S.
- Practical Tools for Opening the Scriptures – Greg Kaufmann
- Pulling the Bible Together – Roy Harrisville III
- Passing on the Faith Through Relationships – Congregational Leaders

### .m.p 3 -Plenary Session II

Bishop Pederson introduced new pastors to the Northwest Synod, Interns & Seminary Graduates assigned to our Northwest Synod.

New pastors to synod:

- Pastor Robert Leshner, Faith, Marshfield
- Pastor Heather Wigdahl, Trinity, Eau Claire
- Pastor Sarah Larsen, Our Savior’s, Superior
- Pastor Nancy Hanson, Messiah, Washburn and First, Port Wing
- Pastor Valerie Peterson formerly serving in Global Missions and currently on leave from call
- Pastor John Peterson, interim at East Immanuel, Amery
- Pastor Jerry Thompson, retired
- Pastor Kristina Jensen, Our Savior’s, Iron River
- Pastor Scott Miller, First, Eau Claire
- Pastor Paul Simmons, Saron, Ashland
- Pastor Bob Bjornlund, Interim at Zion, Winter, and Calvary, Draper
- Pastor Richard Noeldner, Dovre (Dover) and Bethel at New Auburn

Seminary Interns:

- Chad Anderson, Trinity, Eau Claire
- Suzanne Froelich, Osseo Evangelical, Osseo
- Elliott Malm, Evangelical, Black River Falls
- Theresa Riewestahl, Trinity, Birchwood
- Robert Sinclair, Peace, Dresser
- Seminary Graduates assigned to our synod since last Assembly:

- Pastor Linda Marlett, Luther Seminary, King's Valley and South Beef River, Osseo
- Pastor Kathy Wohlers, Theological Education for Emerging Ministries graduate through Wartburg Theological Seminary, serving Meridean in Meridean, and Little Plum, Pepin  
Pastor Kari Burke-Romarheim Luther Seminary, Bethel, Hudson
- Pastor Benjamin Ahles-Iverson, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Trinity Peace Lutheran Parish, Taylor
- Pastor Terry Lorenz, Theological Education for Emerging Ministries graduate through Wartburg Theological Seminary, serving Independence in Independence, and Elk Creek, Osseo  
Pastor Dorothy Sandahl, Luther Seminary serving First and Laketown, Cushing  
Kathy Tulman, Luther Seminary graduate  
Jordan Scott, graduate of Luther Seminary  
Debra Licata, Luther Seminary graduate  
Robert Schoenknecht, Luther Seminary graduate  
Ken Schmitt, Associate in Ministry, Luther Seminary graduate, serving as Youth and Family Minister at Central , Chippewa Falls

The keynote speaker, Dr. Craig Koester presented his second talk on "The Light of the World" from John 9:1-41, "what it means to see Jesus." He suggested what is most important when we read scripture is that you are a human being who knows other human beings. We are folks who need to be there for each other. We trust and go on the journey with the promise that we, too, as the blind man will see Him face to face.

Todd Ahneman of the Elections Committee shared the results of the voting for synod council members: They are:

- Rev. Diane Norstad, Apple River Conference Clergy
- Rev. Russ Sorensen, Heart of the North Conference Clergy
- Gerald Borchardt, Chequamegon Conference Lay Male
- Ellen Potterton, Lake Superior Conference Lay Female  
Kirk Myhre, Chippewa Valley Conference, Lay Male  
Roxanne Studelska, St. Croix Valley Conference Lay Female  
Linda Trotter, Dairyland Conference Lay Female  
Grace Lenhart, Youth Representative

Bishop Pederson acknowledged the nine women from our synod recently returned from Brazil. He also read greetings from the Bishops of Malawi and Brazil, our companion synods.

Pastor Phil Blom from ELCA Board of Pensions is a strong advocate for the health and well being of the leaders of our church because healthy leaders are the basis for healthy ministry. In his report he announced that our Synod is "#1" for the second straight year being the first to reach the 75% goal for on line health assessments. He told the assembly that moving from "disease care" to "well care" is the way to save money in terms of health care.

Pastor Amy Odgren introduced our new congregation, Living Water, in Cameron by showing a video. Living Water is the 212th congregation in our Northwest Synod of Wisconsin.

We continued with resolution # 5, "Health Care Cost Sharing" from the morning session. Resolution #5 was amended by deleting the words "and implement". This amendment was seconded and carried. The question was called to end debate. Seconded and carried. The amended original motion that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin memorialize the ELCA Church Churchwide Assembly, (held in August, 2009) through the Board of Pensions to explore a change to a cost sharing contribution for congregations and members at a 70% - 30% ratio. This was defeated.

The assembly was recessed until 8:45 a.m. Saturday.

The 5:30 p.m. dinner was held at the Davies Center. Following the meal pastors who have served in the office of Word and Sacrament for 25 and 50 years were honored. Pastors' Ordinations: 25 years – Keith Anderson, Karen Johnson, Scott Miller, Craig Nelson, John Peterson, Valerie Peterson, Scott Tunseth. Fifty years – Robert Binge, David Johnson, Ray Reinholtzen, Andrew Tetzlaff.

The worship service, with reception following, was held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Eau Claire with Bishop Duane Pederson preaching. At the close of the service, Pastor Paul Tobiason and his wife Jeanette were honored as they retired from congregational ministry after 41 years of service, having most recently served the rural Colfax parishes. Also

retiring was Pastor Daniel Olson who was unable to attend.

Morning Eucharist was held Saturday at 6:30 a.m. at University Lutheran with Pastor Alan Buresh. Church Mutual sponsored the Saturday morning breakfast at the Davies Center where many displays and information booths had been set up for our perusal.

#### Plenary Session III - Saturday, May 30, 2009

Devotions were led by our three, full-time campus ministers, Pastor Alan Buresh of UW-Eau Claire, Yvonne Wilken, at UW-River Falls, and Pastor Kurt Larson, UW-Stout.

Monica Bahr reported the following credentials report: Voting Members: 482; Advisors (voice not vote) 27; Observers: 37 for a total of 546.

Reports of synod initiatives were given:

- Fund for Leaders – Mary Eide, of Our Savior’s, Menomonie
- Bishop’s Initiative – Mary Toufar, initiative coordinator for our synod
- Cherish Our Children – Sarah Dodge, from Zion in Woodville
- Charitable Giving Initiative – Pastor Karna Baseman-Stark, Immanuel in Pepin

The annual Big Cheese award was presented to Good Shepherd, Ashland, which had the largest increase in giving in spite of being in most depressed county in the Synod. The Extra Mile award (an ark from Malawi) went to Peace Lutheran, Dresser, for raising over \$9,000 in just a few months, enabling them to fill an entire ark plus extra animals and give thousands extra to local hunger projects.

This year’s quarter offering is designated 1/3 to ELCA World Hunger and 2/3 for food sustainability in Malawi. Amount of offering collected at the assembly was \$42,728.82. The congregations and worship offering will go ½ to Living Water Lutheran Church, Cameron (our newest mission congregation) and ½ to Malawi clean water projects. This offering was \$8,541.42.

A one-time award know as “The MacGyver Award” was presented to Elliott Malm, intern at Evangelical Church at Black River Falls. He was called to the dais by Bishop Pederson (to Elliott’s “probable embarrassment”) as he related a humorous “restroom” experience Elliott had while attending a Synod Council meeting with his intern supervisor, Pastor Eric Bakken, Bishop said, “It is my joy to award you a key to the synod office restroom in honor and in memory of your restroom ordeal. May you continue to grow in wisdom!”

Dr. Craig Koester gave his third presentation, “The Resurrection and the Life” from John 11:1-44. The Bible has something to give you. A gift. It shapes you over time. Jesus weeps with us. Jesus offers us encouragement, even in times and events we don’t understand, just as he did to Martha. The hope of the resurrection. Jesus asks, “Do you believe this?” Martha says, “I believe.” We need to hang on to God’s promises as we continue to live in the Word.

Merry Soyck-Doring, administrative assistant and coordinator of the assembly presented gift bags to Dr. Jonathan Strandjord and Dr. Koester in gratitude for being with us at our assembly.

Dennis Knutson, synod treasurer walked us through Resolution #1, “Mission Plan”. We did need to cut \$300,000 from the Mission Plan (budget), including lowering our commitment to churchwide from 58% to 55%. This resolution was adopted.

Resolution #6 “Super-majority Vote on Sexuality” was read. A “friendly amendment” to amend this resolution by removing the word “clergy” and adding the words “rostered leaders” was carried. The original, amended, resolution, “that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Synod Assembly memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to require that any votes at that Assembly concerning same-sex marriage and rostered leaders sexual conduct require a two thirds majority vote to pass,” was adopted. Yes: 251; No: 139; Abstain: 20.

Resolution #2. 2010 Minimum Standards for Compensation and Benefits that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin approve the salary guidelines included in the pre-assembly packet of materials. A motion from the floor to “recommend that pastors and congregations maintain current levels of pay for pastors into 2010” was made. After discussion and with advice from the parliamentarian this was ruled out of order. The question was called for and to end debate was passed. Resolution #2 was adopted.

Resolution #4, “Jesus is the only Savior” The Northwest Synod of Wisconsin affirm the witness of scripture that Jesus is the only Savior; and that all pastors and churches of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin be encouraged to prayerfully study and reflect upon this witness and join as one voice in proclaiming such from all pulpits and teaching avenues; and that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at its 2009 Churchwide Assembly to keep such an important and necessary proclamation at the heart of its public statements and

teaching documents and all it does in planning for mission. A motion to postpone this resolution indefinitely was made, seconded and carried.

Resolution #3. "Interim Pastor Call" that if the Interim Pastor has refrained from exerting any influence in the selection of a pastor and if the Interim Pastor has been serving the Congregation/Parish for a period of twelve months or more, that the Call Committee and/or the Congregation/Parish, shall have the right to extend a "Call" to the Interim Pastor; and that the Interim Pastor shall have the right to resign his/her "Letter of Agreement for Interim Pasroal Ministry" and accept the call if so desired. After debate and the vote taken, this resolution was defeated.

Monica Bahr presented the final Credentials Report.

Voting Members

Lay Male	148	
Lay Female	170	
Clergy under Call	154	
Associates in Ministry under Call	2	
Diakonal Minister	1	
Conference youth – female	2	
SAMS under appointment	5	
Synod Officer-Lay	2	Total: 484

Advisors (voice not vote)

Retired clergy	15	
ELCA representative	1	
Synod Council members not serving as voting members	9	
Associates in Ministry not under call	0	
Clergy on leave from call	1	Total: 26

Observers

Visitors	29	
Guests	1	
Staff	7	Total: 37

GRAND TOTAL: 547

Bishop Pederson led us in the closing litany and declared the assembly closed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Elaine Moore

Secretary  
Northwest Synod of Wisconsin