



Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 God's work. Our hands.

'Humor challenged people ... dazed with boredom?' Not at OUR Synod Assembly!

By Duane C. Pederson, bishop

When I write the bishop's column for *The Lutheran* supplement, I have to submit the article nearly three months in advance of printing. That means I am writing this in early June and you are reading it in September. This also means that only three days ago we completed the synod assembly of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin. The life of the assembly continues to reverberate in my mind.

With two synod assemblies under my belt as bishop, I've spent some time thinking about why we have such gatherings. Early in my ministry I remember parliamentary battles over apartheid, divestiture and abortion that make most of the issues today seem like child's play. Back then I thought assemblies are what you attend in order to argue and fight—in the name of Jesus.

The day after we wrapped up our assembly, Garrison Keillor of *A Prairie Home Companion* reported from Lake Wobegon that Pastor Ingvist has to attend the synod assembly the following weekend. The pastor doesn't want to go because synod assemblies are where you listen to speeches that you've heard for 15 years—the *same* speeches. It's where you sit for 16 hours straight for two full days. It's where your mind is "dazed with boredom." It's where you gather with Lutherans who are "humor-challenged people." No doubt, Keillor has endured such assemblies.

So why *do* we meet in assembly?

- We meet in assembly so we remember that we are part of a ministry much greater than our

own little corner of the church.

- We meet in assembly so that we reflect upon how we live out our faith, how we serve our neighbor, how we are a church dedicated to reaching out in Christ's name.
- We meet in assembly to study, to listen, to think, to sing, to worship, to pray, to look to God's future.
- We meet in assembly to ask God to fill us with the Spirit so that we are mission-bent and outward bound.
- We meet in assembly to determine our life together, to give voice to our concerns and dreams, to make decisions about matters where we seek the wisdom of the whole community.
- We meet in assembly to celebrate ministry milestones, to honor faithful servants, to give and to receive gifts.
- We meet in assembly to renew our connection to the global church, to focus our efforts on peace and justice, to celebrate partnership ministries that we value.

While standing in the back of the assembly hall drinking coffee and visiting with colleagues is no longer a possibility for me (!),



Bishop Duane C. Pederson leads worship during the synod assembly.

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I cherish connecting with hundreds of lay and rostered people from the 212 congregations of our synod. I am uplifted by the worship, blown away by the commitment of the saints and energized by being part of a community of faith that is intent on being faithful to the One who calls us to walk together for the sake of mission in God's world.

Our next gathering is a joint assembly with the East Central Synod of Wisconsin. It will be held May 21-22, 2010, in Stevens Point.

I'll be ready to pray, sing, study, listen, act, worship and laugh. Which reminds me: Garrison Keillor is wrong . . . Lutherans are far from "humor-challenged people." □

One more cup . . . Jay Ticknor, pastor of Bethany, Lutheran Church, Grantsburg, and conference dean for the Apple River Conference, pours another cup of coffee. More than 150 gallons of this Lutheran staple (coffee) were served during the assembly.



Bible Bytes: Christy Canfield and students from Joy Lutheran Church, Prescott, pose as homeless people to emphasize a point about living the Word. Specialized ministries were highlighted in this year's Bible Bytes, brief presentations that explained the impact of Scripture on people's lives.



Mark your calendar for next year's assembly—May 21-22, 2010. "Sowing Seeds of Hope: God's Work, Our Hands" will be the theme for this joint meeting with the East Central Synod of Wisconsin. It will be held at the Holiday Inn in Stevens Point. Mark Hanson, presiding bishop, and Reggie McNeal will be our speakers.



Craig Koester, professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., whetted our appetites for Scripture during his keynote presentations on the Gospel of John.



Jonathan Strandjord brought greetings from Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson and the ELCA churchwide organization.



And the winner is . . . The Extra Mile award (an ark from Malawi) was awarded to Diane Lechman (left) and Ronda Haley, representing Peace Lutheran Church, Dresser. The congregation raised more than \$9,000 in just a few months, enabling them to fill an entire ark (for Heifer International) and give thousands of dollars to local hunger projects.



Opening the Book of Faith: All lay voting members received a complimentary copy of the new Lutheran Study Bible recently published by Augsburg Fortress.



Christine Emerson, pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Strum, leads in singing the word.

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Bishop Duane Pederson looks on as Ralph Thompson, chair of the resolutions committee, reads the resolutions that had been submitted for consideration by the assembly. For details about resolutions, please visit our Web site: www.nswi.org.



The Northwest Synod of Wisconsin now has 212 congregations. Jennifer Bourget (left) and Pam Voigt represent our newest congregation, Living Water Lutheran in Cameron. Half of the assembly offering was given to support this ministry.

Roy Harrisville III, pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Menomonie, leads one of the many Book of Faith workshops offered during the assembly.



Editor of the synod supplement for the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin is Merry Soyck-Doring. You may submit items of interest for future stories to msoyck-doring@nswi.org or PO Box 730, Rice Lake, WI 54868.