

ASSEMBLY HIGHLIGHTS

South Dakota Synod, ELCA



A Summary of the 2008 South Dakota Synod Assembly



Photos from top left: Bishop David B. Zellmer presides at the 2008 South Dakota Synod Assembly; the Choirboys reunite for the event; voting members gather in the Elmen Center; snare drummers Soren Docken and Will Reynolds launch the Lutherans Outdoors meeting with a bang; Dr. Anna Madsen preaches at closing worship.

“A Sower Went Forth to Sow”

“MAYBE THE CASTING IS MORE IMPORTANT than the seed.”

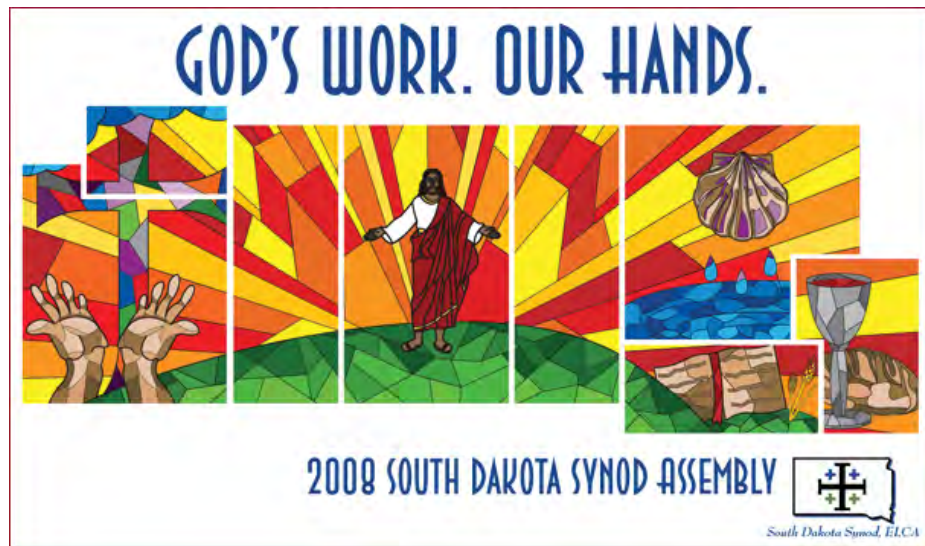
That musing, from Bishop David B. Zellmer’s opening-worship sermon, framed the theme of the 2008 South Dakota Synod Assembly, *God’s Work. Our Hands.* Drawing from the parable of the sower (Matthew 13), Zellmer suggested that this church needs to attempt a new way of casting seed: “We need to be willing to fail,” he told the 700-odd voting members and visitors who had gathered in the Augustana College Elmen Center for the event, May 30 and 31.

“How is this church going to move into this century and be the church Jesus wants it to be?” Zellmer asked. “We look at the head of this church and see how he does things. Jesus keeps casting, and we keep receiving.

“We celebrate the one who is casting seed in our lives,” Zellmer said. “We celebrate the one who sows so extravagantly.”

Presiding over his first assembly since being elected bishop in June 2007, Zellmer shared parliamentary duties with Gary Steuck, Synod Council vice-president. The Rev. Roger Noer served

as Assembly Chaplain. The two major items of business for the weekend were the adoption of the synod’s \$2 million mission plan and the convening of a “Listening Post” or hearing on the Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality, which the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality released this spring. More than two dozen speakers availed themselves of the opportunity to address both specific and general comments on the document to the Rev. Rafael Malpica Padilla, the Executive Director of ELCA Global Mission, who was in attendance as the ELCA representative and keynote speaker. Padilla’s role in this process was to forward comments to the task force for incorporation into the draft that will be put before the ELCA Churchwide Assembly next year. The Listening Post was convened by the Rev. Ray Engh of this synod, who led the assembly through a section-by-section



Original assembly artwork by Shalaine Renee Caudill.
consideration of the document.

Although comments and opinions were many and divergent, the overall tone of the discussion—and indeed, of the entire assembly—was low-key, relaxed, and respectful, as was remarked upon by many in attendance.

(A copy of the Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality, as well as other resources, may be found at the ELCA website, at <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements-in-Process/JTF-Human-Sexuality/Draft-Social-Statement.aspx>)

In addition to the plenary sessions, assemblygoers



participated in half a dozen breakout sessions, including Book of Faith Initiative;

The youths' endeavours resulted in a resolution that they brought to the synod assembly, "Lutheran Youth of South Dakota Habitat Build, 2009 (ELCA Youth Synod Convocation)," which generated positive input from voting members. The resolution called for synod congregations to "commit to a Lutheran Youth of South Dakota Habitat for Humanity Build at sites to be determined by the LYO Board to be completed in the summer of 2009," and was adopted by the assembly.

"Feed My Sheep": Fighting Hunger through Relief, Development, and Advocacy; and New Orleans and the 2009 National Youth



To underscore the assembly theme, *God's Work. Our Hands*, this year's synod assembly saw the debut of six vignettes that highlighted ELCA activity in six different areas of need. The vignettes consisted of a short video followed by a "live" presentation, followed by a hymn. The subjects included Disaster Relief, Hunger, Healing, and Education efforts in the U.S. and elsewhere, and were presented by the Rev. Jeff Whillock, Jill Stoefen-Fisher, Becky Blue, Cindy Hansen, Carla Borchardt, and the Rev. Erika Lehman. The video presentations were scripted and

Gathering; walked a Prayer Labyrinth that was available throughout the assembly; and attended an assembly banquet with remarks by South Dakota Lieutenant Governor Dennis Daugaard.



Voting members considered more than a dozen resolutions, as well, on topics ranging from participation in the process of the ELCA Social Statement on Human Sexuality to support for the ELCA Book of Faith Initiative to support of the ELCA World Hunger Appeal. (See sidebar for a complete list and actions.)

narrated by Cara Hetland with music composed and performed by Justin Ehrman. Copies of the vignettes will be available on the synod website, www.southdakotasynod.org, this autumn.

A new feature of this year's synod assembly was the simultaneous convening of a synod youth assembly. Fifty or so young people, under the theme *Find Our Fit*, engaged in worship; attended breakout sessions on discerning vocation, taking "Sunday faith" into Monday, global social issues, and more; and enjoyed a "Meet the Bishop" forum with Bishop Dave. The youth assembly also allowed time for the youth to observe and join in on some of the main assembly's plenary sessions.

In his State of the Synod remarks, Bishop Dave explained the significance of the Jerusalem cross that he put forward as the synod's logo or landmark upon his installation: The Jerusalem cross has historically been used to express evangelism, the bishop said, explaining that the synod's utilization

Photos from top: Associates to the Bishop Pastor Bill Tesch and Susan Marone, AIM; Assembly Chaplain Pastor Roger Noer; scholarship recipients Megan Eide, Cassandra Lamb, and Jessica McKnight.



Bishop Dave installs Pastor Bob Hansen and Suzanne Hansen, AIM, as Synod Council vice president Gary Steuck observes.

of it includes blue crosses to symbolize the sky and green crosses to symbolize the earth, superimposed on an outline of the state. (The synod landmark appears on page one of *Assembly Highlights*.)

Bishop Dave also used the opportunity to introduce a series of “teaching events” this autumn across the synod. These events grew out of the bishop’s visit to this synod’s Companion Synod partner, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon (EELC). “Cameroon does discipleship better than we do,” Bishop Dave said, and so he asked the EELC’s president, Dr. Thomas Nyiwe, “for his best teacher,” the result being that Dr. Joseph Ngah, the Dean at the Institut Luthérien de Théologie de Meiganga, EELC, in Meiganga, Cameroon, will visit this synod this fall, where he will conduct a series of sessions on Evangelism and Discipleship as well as speak at the Fall Theological Conference in September. (See the synod Events page at www.southdakotasynod.org.)

The Rev. Paul Hanson, Director, ELCA Fund for

Leaders, was on hand to thank this synod’s congregations for their support for seminary scholarships. He introduced Duane and Phyllis Sander of Brookings, who are benefactors of the Fund for Leaders and who presented scholarships to three South Dakota seminary students, Megan Eide, Sioux Falls; Cassandra Lamb, Willow Lake; and Jessica McKnight, Sioux Falls.

The assembly concluded with a closing worship service, with Bishop Dave Zellmer presiding. Jodi Hanson, AIM, Faith Builders Director, presented Parish Assistants to be commissioned; and the Rev. Bob Hansen and Suzanne Hansen, AIM, were installed as pastor developer of Family of God Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, and Faith Family Style Director, respectively.

Preaching at closing worship was the Rev. Dr. Anna Madsen, Assistant Professor of Religion, Augustana College. In her sermon, Madsen reiterated Zellmer’s opening worship illustration references to the parable of the sower as well as drawing upon the assembly theme, *God’s Work. Our Hands*.

“Without the hands of the cultivator(s),” Madsen said, “the seed is in real danger of being snatched away, withering prematurely, blown about, or choked. But with attention, when the clumps and the rocks and the thorns and the hardened topsoil have been softened, the seed has a fighting chance.” S

Resolution	Title	Action
1	Elect 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Members	Adopted
2	Elect Synod Council Members	Adopted
3	Thank You and Appreciation	Adopted by Acclamation
4	2009 Compensation and Guidelines for Clergy and Lay Staff	Adopted
5	Participation in Process toward ELCA Social Statement on Human Sexuality	Adopted
6	ELCA Churchwide Assembly Decision “to continue to respect the guidance of the 1993 statement of the Conference of Bishops”	Defeated
7	Reaffirmation of Current ELCA Standards of Sexual Behavior of Ordained Pastors	Defeated
8	Authorization of a New Worshipping Community: Family of God Lutheran Church	Adopted
9	South Dakota Synod Book of Faith Initiative	Adopted
10	Add the Chapel in the Hills as a Partnership Ministry of the South Dakota Synod	Adopted
11	Encouragement of Mission Partner Support	Adopted
12	Make Poverty History	Adopted
13	Addition to the Candidacy Committee of Clergy Ordained in the TEEM Candidacy Track	Adopted
—	Lutheran Youth of South Dakota Habitat Build, 2009 (ELCA Youth Synod Convocation)	Adopted as Amended