



South Dakota Synod, ELCA

ASSEMBLY HIGHLIGHTS

A Review of the South Dakota Synod Assembly, May 29-30, 2009, Sioux Falls, South Dakota



Clockwise from top left: Bishop David Zellmer presides at opening worship; Bishop Victoria Cortez Rodriguez preaches at opening worship; the Rev. Dr. Fred Gaiser, Luther Seminary, leads a Book of Faith Moment; the Rev. and Mrs. Judeen Johnson are among the honorees at the banquet; some of the youth attending the assembly.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

“We Live in Turbulent Times...”

ACKNOWLEDGING
THE UNCERTAINTY

THAT WE ALL FACE IN THESE UNUSUAL
AND FAST-CHANGING TIMES, THE REV. DAVID
B. ZELLMER, BISHOP OF THE SOUTH DAKOTA
SYNOD, ELCA, BEGAN HIS STATE OF THE SYNOD
ADDRESS TO NEARLY 800 VOTING MEMBERS, VISITORS,
AND GUESTS OF THE 2009 SOUTH DAKOTA SYNOD
ASSEMBLY, MAY 29 AND 30, SIOUX FALLS.

“We face any number of issues that can distract
us from our primary mission and ministry,” Zellmer
continued. “That is why I begin this report with
the same shared joy that I have for my brothers

to the assembly’s willingness to “ask the hard
questions” and engage in a sometimes difficult
discussion.

Voting members adopted three resolutions with
implications for the larger ELCA:

+ Resolution #4, “Asking for a Two-Thirds
Majority to Change Ministry Policies.” This
resolution memorializes the ELCA Churchwide
Assembly to add the following provision to the rules
of procedure for the assembly: “Any motion to come
before this Churchwide Assembly regarding changes
in this church’s current policy and practice for the
rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers,



*God’s Work. Our Hands • Book of Faith Initiative • Train Up a Child •
Companion Synods • Lutheran Disaster Response • Assembly Banquet*

and sisters in Christ in the South Dakota Synod.
During this past year as I have traveled extensively
throughout South Dakota, I have been blessed with
many signs that you have not forgotten nor have
you wavered in living out the Good News of Jesus
Christ.”

Those words set the tone of the assembly.
Although dealing with complicated issues pertaining
to the ELCA’s proposed Social Statement on Human
Sexuality and proposed changes in ministry policy;
although having strongly held and often disparate
positions on the subject; although concerned about
the future of their church, their synod, and the
congregations, voting members met their resolutions
head-on and debated them in a cordial, respectful,
and honest fashion. More than one speaker referred

associates in ministry, and deaconesses shall require a
two-thirds vote by the assembly for adoption.”

+ Resolution #6, “Asking for Rejection Proposed
Social Statement and Affirmation of Current
Teaching Documents on Sexuality,” memorializes
the Churchwide Assembly to “express the ELCA’s
intention to continue to rely on the social statements
of its predecessor churches ... as historical
documents expressing faithful Christian teaching on
human sexuality.”

+ Resolution #7, “Asking for Rejection of
Recommendations on Ministry Policy and
Affirmation of Current ELCA Policy,” memorializes
the Churchwide Assembly to “reject the proposals
in the Report and Recommendations on Ministry
Policies from the Task Force for ELCA Studies

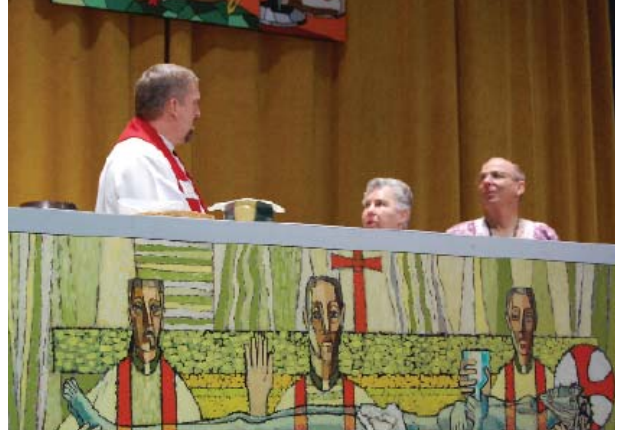
on Sexuality” and also to “reaffirm the ELCA’s current standards for pastors and other rostered leaders as expressed in Vision and Expectations and Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline.”

These resolutions received considerable debate; however, the assembly had adopted rules that limited speakers to no more than two minutes and so the conversation proceeded quickly.

Of other resolutions, the assembly passed, as



amended, Resolution #1, “Opportunity for a Multicultural S.D. Synod Staff,” which “strongly encourages” the South Dakota Synod Council and the Bishop of the South Dakota Synod “to interview at least one person of color and/or one person with English as a second language whenever staff positions are being filled”; and also, as amended,



Provoking the Gospel; and *Technology, the Synod, and You: It’s not Scary. No, Really!* They also had the opportunity to walk a Prayer Labyrinth, available throughout the assembly, and enjoyed an assembly banquet with remarks by ELCA Secretary David D. Swartling, who also delivered the assembly’s keynote and State of the ELCA addresses.

Besides Swartling, the assembly welcomed as a special guest the Rev. Victoria Cortez Rodriguez, Bishop of the Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope, a Companion Synod to the South Dakota Synod. Bishop Victoria proclaimed the Gospel at opening worship, brought greetings from our friends in Nicaragua, and led a breakout session, *Apply Liberally Holistic Theology*.

The Rev. Dr. Fred Gaiser, Luther Seminary,

Prayer Labyrinth • Resolutions • Mission Prayer Breakfast • Guest Bishop • Mayo Health Assessment • State of the Synod Address • Honored Missionaries

Resolution #3, “Synodically Authorized Ministers,” which directs the synod council to “explore ways that this synod might continue the ministry of SAMs in smaller congregations and parishes of the synod making allowances for more than one year of service in a particular congregation or parish which is limited in its ability to call and financially support an ordained pastor.” (See page 4 for a list of all resolutions and their disposition.)

In addition to these and other resolutions, assemblygoers participated in more than two dozen morning and afternoon breakout sessions, on such diverse topics as *Book of Faith: Samples from Congregations*; *Got Fear? Have Faith! Stewardship Ministry*; *Working Ecumenically*; *Book of Faith*:

served as “guest preacher and teacher,” preaching at closing worship and presenting two of several “Book of Faith Moments” that underscored this synod’s commitment to the Book of Faith Initiative. Dr. Richard Swanson and the *Provoking the Gospel Troupe* lent their talents to that undertaking as well.

Time was made to acknowledge some special contributions to the synod and the larger church, specifically those made by long-time Cameroon missionaries Jim and Karen Noss; the Rev. Dr. Craig Boehlke, who is retiring from his position as Region 3 Coordinator for Ministry Leadership; and the Rev. Keith Zeh, who has worked with this synod as Mission Director–Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission. In addition, the assembly saw the commissioning of half a dozen Parish



Assistants and the installation of the new synod council, and uplifted rostered leaders who observed 25, 50, and 55 years of ministry as well as those who have retired from active ministry.

Next year's synod assembly will travel far from its traditional home in the Augustana College Elmen Center: As announced last year, the 2010 assembly will venture to western South Dakota and Calvary Lutheran Church, Rapid City. Plans are underway to make motorcoaches available for "Easterners" to make the great westward trek. In commenting that this will be the first time since 1977 that this body

has met in Rapid City, Zellmer pledged that the assembly will meet "West River" every 33 years—a promise received with great laughter and applause.



Photos: Page 2: David Swartling, Secretary of the ELCA. Page 3: Bishop Dave addresses the assembly and thanks Jim and Karen Noss for their missionary work. Page 4: Suzanne Hansen, AIM, and Jodi Hanson, AIM, discuss the Book of Faith Initiative; preparing for worship. Many more photos are posted to the synod's Flickr photostream, at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/sdsynod/>

- *Keynote Address* • *ELCA Churchwide Representative* • *Guest Preacher and Teacher* • *Provoking the Gospel* • *Luther House of Study* • *Luther Seminary* •

Actions on Resolutions

Resolution	Title	Action
1	Opportunity for a Multicultural South Dakota Synod Staff.....	Adopted as Amended
2	Lutheran Campus Ministry at Black Hills State University	Adopted
3	Synodically Authorized Ministers.....	Adopted as Amended
4	Asking for a Two-Thirds Majority to Change Ministry Policies	Adopted
5	Asking for Adoption of the Proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality and for Following the Recommended Decision Making Process on Ministry Policies at the ELCA 2009 Churchwide Assembly.....	Separated into 5A and 5B
5A	Asking for Adoption of the Proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality and for Following the Recommended Decision Making Process on Ministry Policies at the ELCA 2009 Churchwide Assembly.....	Resolution 6 substituted for Resolution 5A
5B	Asking for Adoption of the Proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality and for Following the Recommended Decision Making Process on Ministry Policies at the ELCA 2009 Churchwide Assembly.....	Resolution 7 substituted for Resolution 5B
6	Asking for Rejection Proposed Social Statement and Affirmation of Current Teaching Documents on Sexuality	Adopted
7	Asking for Rejection of Recommendations on Ministry Policy and Affirmation of Current ELCA Policy	Adopted
8	Advice to Churchwide Assembly Voting Members.....	Adopted
9	Affirming Marriage.....	Defeated
10	2010 Compensation and Guidelines for Clergy and Lay Staff	Adopted
11	Enabling Congregations to Continue to Support the South Dakota Synod.....	Ruled out of order