

Conference of Bishops (COB) Overview
Adapted with permission from Bishop Ray Tiemann
October, 2013

Thursday, October 3, 2013

Seminary candidate assignments took place in the morning with Bishop Jon Anderson, Bishop Mark Narum and Rev. Dr. Paul Baglyos, Region 3 Coordinator. Region 3 received 15 candidates. 7 had restrictions, leaving 8 for assignment. The South Dakota Synod received 1 candidate.

Bp. Mike Rinehart, TX-LA Gulf Coast Synod, preached at the opening worship at 4:15 p.m., with Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson presiding. Bp. Mike's sermon was on the sense of wilderness in which we find ourselves in all facets of our lives. While there can be fear and uncertainty and danger in the wilderness, there are also opportunity for new beginnings, inspiration, new direction, and joy. After worship, the COB traveled from the Lutheran Center to Eaglewood Resort in Itasca for the remainder of the meeting.

After dinner together, we gathered to meet and have fellowship and conversation with the thirteen new bishops to the COB.

Friday, October 4, 2013

The day began with devotions at 8:30 lead by Bishop Teimann. With the day being the commemoration of St. Francis of Assisi, the devotions centered on a biography of St. Francis, the singing of his "Canticle to Brother Sun" (ELW 835), and the Prayer of St. Francis. It included a challenge to serve as stronger stewards of the creation and with deeper care for the poor.

Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson gave his closing report. He gave thanks for colleagues in the churchwide staff and in the 65 synods. He also updated us on ongoing projects in ecumenical work, the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, conversations with the Mekane Yesus church and their decision to break relationship with the ELCA, and other items.

He expressed his deep sense of joy in having served as Presiding Bishop for the past 12 years. He also looked ahead to the challenges facing this church in reaching out to young adults. He quoted a college professor on the Theological Education Advisory Committee who said, "How do we share the wellspring of reconciliation and hope that flow from God's grace in Christ in a culture afraid of doctrine, disengaged from institutions, distrustful of leaders and increasingly pluralistic?" A challenge indeed!

David Swartling, ELCA Secretary, gave his final report. It centered on "Leadership, Legacy, and Love." He reminded everyone that the ELCA constitution is a missional document!

The 2013 Churchwide Assembly was very successful with the use of iPads, saving 500,000 sheets of paper (99% want to use it again!). Data: 952 voting members authorized, with 951 present; 61.5% lay persons/38.5% ordained ministers; 41% of the clergy were female (highest % ever); 16+% youth and young adults (highest % ever); 12% persons of color; 67% first time voting members.

Concerning church disaffiliations, the ELCA reported 647 congregations leaving as of July 31, 2013. The item below provides some detail.

**Synods Most Impacted by Congregations Voting to Disaffiliate
(10 percent or more of the congregations in the synod)**

	Number of Congregations	Percent of Congregations
Southwestern Texas	33	22%
Western Iowa	27	18%
North Carolina	37	16%
Montana	18	14%
South Dakota	35	14%
Northeastern Iowa	24	14%
East-Central Synod of Wisconsin	16	12%
Eastern Washington-Idaho	11	11%
Pacifica Synod	12	10%
Northwestern Minnesota	26	10%
Northwestern Ohio	19	10%
Central Southern Illinois	15	10%
Northern Great Lakes	9	10%
Grand Canyon	9	10%



Bishop Bill Gafkjen, Indiana-Kentucky Synod, gave a report on the Word and Service Task Force to create a unified lay roster. The COB discussed the hopes/fears/wonderings about what an “ordination” to those in this roster may mean. As that group continues to meet, updates on their work will be heard.

A representative from Information Technology at the Lutheran Center updated the COB on upcoming changes at the churchwide offices. They will be eliminating Formatta and going to Adobe for static files and fillable web-based forms for others. This change will better mesh with Apple products. Other technological changes will also be taking place that will provide stronger security. There is also a full website renovation taking place that will be up-and-running later this year.

The afternoon concluded with an extended conversation guided by the TEAC – Theological Education Advisory Council. As background, at its April 2013 meeting the

ELCA Church Council appointed and funded a new theological education advisory council to work over the next two years, consulting with a broad range of leaders both within and beyond the ELCA and accomplishing the following tasks:

a. regularly convene seminary presidents, board chairs and a bishop from each seminary's board to:

- share counsel on churchwide, synodical and seminary priorities and strategic plans, particularly regarding implications of the priorities and plans for our shared work in leadership preparation and support

- share counsel on current collaboration initiatives and explore new collaborative possibilities: within the ELCA seminary system; among seminaries, colleges, universities, and synod-based programs; and with schools of ecumenical and international partners

- share counsel on degree program design innovations and examine implications for our leadership identification and preparation systems

- review and consider implications of enrollment and graduation data

- review progress in meeting the challenges of seminarian student debt

- review progress in developing sustainable patterns of providing theological education

b. consider if new Church Council policies and/or other measures (such as incentives) would help our theological education network identify and implement important new adaptive measures (areas where new churchwide policies/incentives could be helpful might include faculty sharing, distributed learning, college/seminary collaborations, international partnerships)

c. develop a set of basic benchmarks for assessing the efficiency of our theological education network (e.g., concerning student/faculty ratios, educational cost per FTE student, trends in net costs to students, trends in student debt, ratio of educational spending/other institutional spending)

d. work with Research and Evaluation staff to assess the effectiveness and adequacy of the ELCA's work in theological education by:

- mapping the ELCA's ecology of theological education (including its ecumenical and international partners)

- developing projections of the ELCA's needs for a variety of forms of leadership over the next ten years

- identifying practices in and among the expressions and institutions of this church that show promise to expand the identification and nurturing of strong candidates for the variety of forms of leadership needed for service to God's mission in this time

- assessing the theological fluency of ELCA leaders and other members and their engagement with our theological education network.

FYI, at the close of each daily session we have three bishops who serve as designated "process observers" who report on how the COB has functioned that day, noting positive and negative components of our conversation, decision-making processes, and items for improvement.

We celebrated this evening at the Fund for Leaders banquet. Twenty-one students were recognized as recipients of full-tuition scholarships to seminary. This year the Fund for Leaders provided for a total of \$1.4 million to 224 recipients. There are currently 41 synods that provide partner scholarships. The SWTX scholarship this year went to Kelsie Theiss at Wartburg Seminary. Statistics show that the median debt for those who receive Fund for Leaders scholarships is \$17K, compared to the general student population where the median debt is \$34.5K.

Saturday, October 5, 2013

Bp. Kevin Kanouse, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod, led morning devotions, which was a Taizé service of prayers and Scripture for Bp. Hanson and Bp. Eaton.

Carlos Peña gave the Vice President's report. In April he went to Washington DC for the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service's Immigration Summit. About 40 church leaders from throughout the ELCA and the LCMS gathered to discuss immigration issues with our elected government representatives in Washington, DC, in anticipation of the Senate's bill on federal immigration reform. He also attended 4 synod assemblies: Northern Great Lakes, Metro Chicago, Lower Susquehanna, and the Grand Canyon synods.

He will be attending the World Council of Churches Tenth Assembly in Busan, Republic of South Korea, on October 29 through November 7. He mentioned he found it interesting that South Korea is a country where many different religions co-exist without violence. South Korea has never experienced a war because of religion. South Koreans have learned to live among many different religions. As a matter of information, the World Council of Churches is an organization of Christian leaders from 110 countries and territories representing over 500 million Christians through its 345 member churches.

Pastor Eric Wester gave a report on military chaplaincy. He gave an update on the important work of the reserve military chaplains. Currently there are 197 chaplains and 25 chaplain candidates. He also noted the "Prayer Book for the Armed Forces" and that Augsburg Fortress is now in its second printing. He encouraged congregations to purchase them for members of their congregations in the military or to supply them to military chaplains to give to soldiers. They will also be working with the Fund for Leaders for scholarships for military chaplain candidates. Military chaplains are also scheduled to visit the 8 seminaries, 2 seminary programs, and 26 colleges and universities. A link is <https://vimeo.com/75448084> or contact eric.wester@elca.org

At 10:30 a.m. the COB and many attending spouses left for the campus of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago for a lunch before the installation of the Rev. Elizabeth Eaton as Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The installation was held at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel on the campus of the University of Chicago, five blocks from LSTC.

It was a wonderful worship service, which I hope you watched through LiveStream. Highlights are on the ELCA website. After the installation, a celebration banquet was held.

Sunday, October 6, 2013

The day began with worship at 8:30 with Secretary-elect, the Rev. Chris Boerger, presiding, and Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson serving as the preacher. His sermon, on 2 Timothy 1, stressed the challenge and joy of passing on the faith.

We then looked at the legislative actions from the 2013 Churchwide Assembly and the seven items that were referred to the COB. These were initial conversations about each and ways to approach them. The Executive Committee assigned bishops to help lead the conversations.

Bps. Mark Holmerud and John Roth brought to the floor CA13.03.12 - Conversations about Ministering to Same-Gender Couples and Families -

To affirm the commitment made in the social statement Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust for “pastoral responsibility to all children of God,” recognizing “familial relationship as central to nurturing and sustaining trust and security in human relationships and to advocate for public policies that support and protect families” (pp. 19, 24);

To invite and encourage conversations and resource sharing among this church’s congregations, rostered and lay leaders and the Conference of Bishops on changing family configurations and their impact on society and the ministry of this church; and

To request the Church Council, in keeping with the recommendations of the Addressing Social Concerns Review Task Force, to authorize a group to explore this concern and to bring a report and possible recommendations to the fall 2014 meetings of the Conference of Bishops and Church Council regarding appropriate next steps in carrying out these commitments to pastoral care for same-gender couples and their families.

Bp. Michael Burk introduced CA13.03.10 – Communion Practices –

To invite members, congregations, synods and the churchwide organization into conversation and study regarding the Use of the Means of Grace;

To request the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Conference of Bishops, to establish a process to review current documents concerning administration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion; and

To request the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to bring a report and possible recommendations to the April 2014 meeting of the ELCA Church Council.

Secretary Chris Boerger and Bp. Bob Rimbo introduced CA13.06.28 – Term Limits -

To amend the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* by inserting the following provisions:

13.23. No person shall be eligible to be elected to a third consecutive six-year executive term to the office of presiding bishop.

13.33. No person shall be eligible to be elected to a third consecutive six-year term to the position of vice president.

13.43. No person shall be eligible to be elected to a third consecutive six-year term to the office of secretary.

To refer to the Church Council and Conference of Bishops for broadbased conversation (e.g. inviting the input of synodical vice presidents) beginning in Spring 2014 with a possible report to the Church Council at its November 2015 meeting and recommendations to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. The items for attention include identifying the needs of the churchwide organization for each office that are deeper than the constitutional descriptions, identifying leaders to potentially serve, and discussing the possible limitation of duration in terms.

Bp. Michael Girlinghouse introduced CA13.06.29 – Confirmation –

WHEREAS, the word “confirmation” does not appear in Scripture or in the Confessions; and
WHEREAS, the ritual and tradition of “confirmation” no longer confers real responsibility for discipleship, leadership, or vocation from congregational leaders to youth emerging from “childish ways”, and only really frees most youth from needing to continue to attend to study, worship, service, and receiving the Sacraments with this church once the requisite number of recorded instances of study, worship, service, and receiving the sacraments needed to achieve “confirmation” have been achieved; and

WHEREAS, the youth are not the future of the Church, but the once and immediate Church; and
WHEREAS, the congregations of this church who grow spiritually also study, worship, serve, and pray intergenerationally; and

WHEREAS, various (though few) congregations of this church have discovered avenues toward lifelong intergenerational discipleship among their members either by delaying such rituals of passage known as “confirmation”, or by replacing a “confirmation” tradition with an intergenerational model of faith formation and discipleship training; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the ELCA discontinue published use of the term “confirmation” as it relates to the education tradition of the ELCA from all future publications (curricula, model constitutions, hymnals, etc.); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the congregations of the ELCA discontinue practice of “confirmation” as it relates to the ritual of passage for youth or young adults into voting membership in congregations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA fully implement Luther’s doctrine of vocation as the rationale and basis for preparation for lifelong discipleship; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA encourage congregations to develop and establish rituals of passage into adult discipleship and ministry, such that those congregations’ baptized members who recognize and who are able to articulate God’s call to practice their various vocations and Spiritual gifts as disciples of Christ in the world also receive the public recognition and affirmation of those gifts and vocations by the congregations into which and among whom those individuals live out their vocations and Spiritual gifts; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the congregations of the ELCA become centers of lifelong and intergenerational study of Scripture and catechesis, worship and service, prayer and giving; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the congregations of the ELCA end “confirmation” as ritualized right of youth who have completed required steps and requirements.

To refer the motion to the Church Council in consultation with the Conference of Bishops.

Bp. Wolfgang Herz-Lane introduced CWA action CA13.06.26 - A Social Policy Resolution Concerning the Guarantee of Voting Rights to All Citizens -

WHEREAS, the guarantee that all citizens may exercise the right to vote on an equal basis is a fundamental requirement for a just society; and

WHEREAS, the laws and practices that, in effect, exclude whole groups of citizens from fully and equally exercising this right; and

WHEREAS, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed and subsequently reauthorized by the United States Congress to remedy or prevent patterns of discrimination that preclude racial-minority groups from fully and equally exercising the right to vote; and

WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court has recently held Section 4(b) of the Voting Rights Act unconstitutional, a holding that four of the Court's nine justices believe "terminates the remedy that proved to be best suited to block that discrimination" (US Supreme Court, *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 US_ (2013), dissenting opinion by Justice Ginsburg); and

WHEREAS, this church has recognized that "many find it difficult to participate in public life because of racial or ethnic barriers...", and it has committed to "actively promote a public life worthy of the name. We encourage public witness by members, and stand publicly as a church against injustice." (ELCA Social Statement on Race, Ethnicity, and Culture, p. 6); and

WHEREAS, this church has established, as a matter of social policy, that it "will support legislation, ordinances, and resolutions that guarantee ... to all citizens, the right to vote" (ELCA Social Statement on Race, Ethnicity, and Culture, p. 7); and

WHEREAS, this church continues to "encourage members, congregations, synods, and agencies and institutions to join the churchwide organization in its commitment ... to confront the scandalous realities of racial, ethnic, cultural ... barriers that often manifest themselves in exclusion, poverty, hunger, and violence; and pursue ardently the ELCA's commitment to becoming more diverse, multicultural, and multigenerational in an ever-changing and increasingly pluralistic context"

RESOLVED, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America call upon local, state, and federal governments to guarantee the right to vote to all citizens and to discourage or eliminate all laws, ordinances or regulations that would have the effect of racial and ethnic discrimination in the exercise of that right; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Presiding Bishop and synodical bishops of this church be urged to support publically and stand as an advocate to proposed local, state, or federal legislation and regulations that, consistent with this church's social teaching, seek to guarantee to all citizens the right to vote; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Conference of Bishops be requested to include, as part of one of its 2014 meetings, an educational session on voting rights; and be it further

RESOLVED, that members, congregations, and synods of this church be encouraged to "promote public life worthy of the name" by speaking out as an advocate and engaging in local efforts such as voter registration and supporting legislation to guarantee the right to vote to all citizens; and be it further

RESOLVED, that appropriate churchwide staff be requested to identify and publicize resources for members, congregations, and synods of this church to advocate for voting rights for all citizens.

Bp. Wilma Kucharek introduced CA13.02.04 – Book of Faith Initiative -

To affirm the Book of Faith initiative as a continuing emphasis and priority in this church, and to request that the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—who "as its pastor, shall be a teacher of the faith of this church and shall provide leadership for the life and witness of this church" (ELCA constitutional provision 13.21.)— continue to lead this initiative

personally and in collaboration with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, other appropriate churchwide units, and the Conference of Bishops;

To reaffirm the overall goal of the Book of Faith initiative to help individuals and congregations throughout the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to open Scripture and join the conversation;

To call on congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and other ministries of this church to continue to promote deep biblical engagement that approaches the Bible as the written Word of God, using “multiple methods” to engage persons individually and in community with others;

To call upon Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, as the publishing ministry of this church, to consult with all expressions of this church and its related institutions and agencies as appropriate to undergird and support the Book of Faith initiative in order to enhance the biblical literacy of all members of this church as well as those seeking a better understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ;

To encourage engagement of the Book of Faith initiative by colleges, universities, and seminaries of this church, recognizing the continuing challenge of assisting pastoral and lay leaders in taking up their roles as teachers of the Bible in ways that engage and inspire the current and future members and seekers in this church;

To encourage the Book of Faith initiative leadership in conversation with its many partners to continue implementation of the initiative so as to respond to such challenges as: biblical illiteracy, Bible and mission outreach, addressing the great variety of cultures that make up this church and world, appealing to the growing number of persons in society claiming to be “spiritual but not religious,” creative use of social media, and the importance of family and home as centers of faith development; and

To give thanks to God for all of the individuals, congregations, synods, and churchwide ministries for their deep and abiding commitment to the centrality of God’s transforming Word in Christ, in proclamation, and in Scripture.

Bp. Shelley Wickstrom introduced CA13.06.28 - American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples -

WHEREAS, the ELCA has proclaimed its welcoming of all people with special emphasis on immigrants from all parts of the world; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA, as do so many institutions and people, often forgets the people who were and are native to these lands before and while immigrants arrived to these lands; and

WHEREAS, most of the population of the United States of America and most of the membership of our church are uneducated about American Indian and Alaska Native People and their history, culture, and oppression and atrocities suffered, and

WHEREAS, Lutheran church bodies were once the leaders of advocacy for American Indian and Alaska Native legal rights, most directly when partnered with and supporting the American Indian Movement during the 1960s and 1970s, and the development of the National Indian Lutheran Board; and

WHEREAS, all treaties made by the United States of America with tribal nations and governments have been broken, and promises made 25 years ago by this church to American Indian and Alaska Native leaders and the National Indian Lutheran Board, when it was encouraged to dissolve, have not been kept; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples have suffered tremendously for too many years, and continue to suffer rates of poverty, homelessness, disease, addiction, violence against women, among a list that is too long to list here, is much higher than the national average; our faith tells us that when one suffers, we all suffer; and

WHEREAS, culture and language is important to our American Indian and Alaska Native sisters and brothers, and supporting their needs and rights to preserve and live out and share their culture in all regards should also be important, even within the church; and

WHEREAS, there has been a decline in some congregations of participation by American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples, leadership in the ELCA among American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples has declined; presently there are only three students who are members or citizens of a

federally recognized tribe who are seeking ordination in the ELCA through the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries program, and presently there are zero full or part-time Master of Divinity students and one part-time Master of Theology student attending our eight seminaries; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that this assembly commits this church, the ELCA, to go beyond apologies and begin working on renewed, healthy and responsible relationships with American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA commits to becoming the leader among churches in the area of advocacy and active support of justice, self-determination, sovereignty, and advancement of American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples and their nations and governments; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA endorses the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on September 13, 2007, adopts the declaration as the standard for our own practices, and commits to implementing the values and principles of the declaration within the work and structure of this church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this assembly asks the presiding bishop to write to the president of the United States of America, encouraging the president to continue building strong government-to-government relationships with all of the federally recognized tribes, as well as to work collaboratively with tribes and the National Congress of American Indian on discerning how to best fully and effectively implement the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for the sake of justice in the lives and communities of American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA actively supports the work and goals of the ELCA's director of American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries, the American Indian and Alaska Native Advisory Team, and the American Indian and Alaska Native Lutheran Association and, further, that this church will actively seek their counsel, in order to deepen our understanding of the oppression and colonized histories lived and remembered by American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples, as well as to gain insight on the present situations of injustices experienced by and opportunities that lie before American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA encourage its membership, and especially its leadership, to educate themselves about American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples; starting with the tribes and Peoples whose reservations and/or nations are nearest us, then the tribes and Peoples who first inhabited the lands whereupon church buildings now sit; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA actively explore funding opportunities to better serve American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples and social services organizations that provide direct services such as the Oaks Indian Mission, Lakota Lutheran Center, Navajo Lutheran Mission and others, so that they may have sufficient resources to feed and house children and families in serious poverty; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA periodically encourage synods and congregations to go beyond mission trips to American Indian and Alaska Native communities and become active advocates for and supporters of them; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA commits to being a part of dreaming, praying and working together with American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples for a reconciled and hopeful future, recognizing that immediate action and long-term commitment are required for renewed, healthy and responsible relationships to be built.

After lunch, we heard various committee reports.

Academy Committee, Bp. Larry Wohlrabe, reported on this continuing education event in 2014 and 2015. In 2014 the theme is "Good News – from, with, for - the Nones," January 2-7, 2014, Hyatt Regency, Savannah, Georgia. Three presenters will be Dr. Shauna K. Hannan, Assistant Professor of Homiletics, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC; Dr. Anna Madsen, OMG Center for Theological

Conversation, Sioux Falls, SD; Dr. Andrew Root, Olson Baalson, Associate Professor of Youth and Family Ministry, Luther Seminary, St Paul, MN.

In 2015, plans are to go to Germany for the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. Dates are January 2-11, 2015 with optional extensions before (Christmas/New Year's in Nuremberg) or after (Berlin/Dresden). The "core" Academy would likely be from Erfurt to Berlin, using a travel pattern that would minimize the number of times we move from one hotel to another hotel. Possible theme - "The Impact of Lutheranism from the Reformation through the Peaceful Revolution to the Ongoing Reformation of the 21st Century Church." Tentative cost, excluding airfare, \$1800-2000 per person.

Theological and Ethical Concerns, Bp. Jon Anderson, reported on discussions on feminine justice issues and suggested the book, "Lutheran Formative Theologies." Also, later at COB, we will be voting on Corporate Social Responsibility issues.

They also discussed the observance of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. We were asked to consider the "long arc" of conversations, from knowing our Lutheran identity to what it means to be the Lutheran movement in our day.

Synodical-Churchwide Relations, Bp. Marie Jerge, presented their report. The first part concerned a study of DEM's work in synods. That report will be sent to the CSM: Leadership Committee for further work. Also, the ELCA's Operational Plan is posted on Net Community and bishops are asked to review it before presentation to the Church Council in November. A third item was conversation with the Mission Advancement unit, particularly things related to the Campaign of the ELCA and the ELCA's 25th Anniversary.

Bishop Formation, Bp. Jim Justman, gave a report on the orientation process for the thirteen newly-elected bishops. Four of the bishops gave a brief "testimonial" of the experience and their thankfulness for it.

Roster Committee, Bp. Bill Gafjken, brought to the COB items for action including extensions of On Leave from Call, three-year waivers for first call candidates to specialized ministries, non-stipendiary calls, and removals beyond maximum OLC parameters.

A follow-up of a particular issue is to recommend to the ELCA Church Council the initiation of a conversation that may allow first call candidates to serve in Full Communion ministries. These will begin with ecumenical conversations, which, if positive, would also require a constitutional change.

Ministry Among People in Poverty Committee

The MAPP committee meeting was largely focused around deepening the conversation about how the ELCA and its congregations engage with people living in poverty or who are otherwise marginalized in society. Although there are many notable exceptions, the ELCA's experience is that frequently what people in our congregations see as their response to the poor is to see the poor as clients for their charity rather than living in faith community among the poor or facilitating the fullness of community

among the poor. The essential or nuclear structure of any mission community consists of the intersection of three interlocking circles of PROCLAMATION, SERVICE, AND JUSTICE, but cost of a standard ELCA mission model is prohibitive. Therefore, the committee requested COB conversation at a future meeting to discuss questions like: What sort of leadership does it require? What sort of space does it need? Could it be imagined as a community affiliated with some other congregation rather than as a completely independent entity? Could one leader shepherd several of these communities? What is the role of synods and churchwide structures in giving birth to these communities? What sort of ongoing support structure might be necessary to sustain them? How might this model change our approach to small immigrant communities, ex-offenders, runaway or throwaway teens, women who become mothers too soon and must drop out of high school, etc.?

Synodical and Rostered Leader Care Committee

Synodical and Rostered Leader Care serves in two capacities for the Conference. First, it oversees the Shared Risk Fund, established by the Conference of Bishops in 1992 which permits participating synods a degree of protection against the costs of disciplinary proceedings against rostered leaders and congregations. Synods are normally assessed premiums of \$2.00 per rostered person and \$2.00 per congregation. The current fund balance is \$332,107.94, which the committee believes is sufficient for the foreseeable future; therefore, there will be no assessment for 2014.

Second, it oversees the Good Samaritan Fund, which provides limited financial aid to rostered leaders/spouses. It reviews the history of the usage of funds and appropriate application forms. The purpose and parameters of the Good Samaritan Fund are sketched on the ELCA website. (For information, go to www.elca.org and type 'Good Samaritan' in the search bar) The Good Samaritan Fund balance is \$82,625.95. No synodical contributions are needed at this time.

Global Missions Committee

The Committee shared the following items of discussion:

Young Adults in Global Mission -- Working to send 74 YAGM's in 2014; 60 are serving this year -- 100 applicants. Rwanda will be opened as a site in 2015, with possibilities for Senegal and Nepal and Australia. The hope is to grow the program to provide for 100 YAGMs per year. The YAGM program has led to increases in church vocations -- 25-30 % of alumni are going to seminaries/divinity schools

Lutheran Global Health Volunteers -- This emphasis is present in India, Liberia, and Tanzania. Teaching medical professionals follow the accompaniment model.

Lutheran Office For World Community -- Dennis Frado is the main representative at the United Nations headquarters, addressing advocacy towards food security.

Ecumenical Advocacy Days -- March 21-24 "Jesus Weeps: Resisting Violence, Building Peace." Scholarships are available! Go to www.advocacydays.org

Global Synergy -- Defined as "independent actions contributing to a common goal." Two hopes are that this will be a lens through which the three expressions of this church and its eco-system (colleges/seminaries/etc.) function and the measure by which the impact of global missions is affecting the work of Christ in the world.

CSM: New and Renewing Congregations, Bp. Mark Narum, noted four items of conversation:

1) Reviewed a report provided by Research and Evaluation concerning this church's efforts to start new congregations and renew existing congregations. Particularly of note is that it is taking longer for New Starts to be financially sustainable. There is a suggestion that the LIFT call for mission planning shift to help congregations enact the Mission Plans they have developed and some wonderment about experimenting with a grant process that might help expand staff in locations where ministry is going well - where such staff expansion might fuel stronger evangelical outreach;

2) Discussed "Report on the Views of Synod Bishops on the Position of Director for Evangelical Mission." We will continue to discern the next steps with the report, including the possibility of helping to create measurable outcomes for Directors of Evangelical Mission.

3) Heard the final report of those synods who were engaged in the first cohort of the Macedonia Project. Synods in the first group are initially reporting this has been very helpful. A fourth cohort group is in the planning process.

4) Reviewed CSM response to a memorial from Metro Chicago Synod concerning Boy Scouts of America. CSM's response noted that this church does not have an official relationship with the Boy Scouts of America. It is congregations who sponsor troops, so congregations respond and CSM can provide resources from ELCA's official documents of how this church believes we are called to love and care for those who are LGBTQ.

CSM: Leadership, Bp. Brian Maas, reported that work was done on

1) "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, etc." form used in many synods will be updated to reflect changes in ways in which health benefits are provided;

2) Book of Faith Initiative update received;

3) Leadership Formation for Latino/Latina candidates/leaders

a. Received report on development of resources/courses for use with lay leaders in Latino communities through lay schools of theology, etc. to help raise up pastoral leaders. Spanish-language courses in: Lutheranism, Biblical studies, history, teaching in Faith Formation (Sunday School, e.g.) settings, worship assistance/leadership, evangelism. Intent is to have low-cost resources for use in resource-poor settings. Lutheran Church in Mexico is willing to share, at little cost, electronic media/online resources they've developed.

b. Latino/Latina leaders who are trained/ordained in other traditions (usually Roman Catholic) need additional formation to immerse them more fully into understanding/perspective in/of ELCA. A one-year process has been developed for identified leaders to be engaged in.

Ecumenical and Interreligious, Bp. Don Kreiss, reported on the following:

1) Reminded bishops that they are "chief ecumenical officer" for their synods;

2) Recognition of Kathryn Lohre and Don McCoid as great resource people at churchwide;

3) Thanked Bp. Hanson for presenting updates concerning "Conflict to Communion," a Roman Catholic document describing the trajectory of RC/ELCA relations, produced out of the US Catholic Conference of Bishops; "Declaration on the Way," a Roman Catholic document describing the documents and agreements shared to date between RC/ELCA; and relationships between Jewish and Christian leaders, especially in light of the 2012 letter Bp. Hanson signed re: US support of Israel; and

4) Invitation to join "Shoulder-to-Shoulder: Standing with American Muslims, Upholding American Values," the ELCA partners with 27 Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and interfaith organizations to speak with a unified voice to counter hatred in the United States. On October 15 at 2 pm central/3 pm eastern, the Shoulder-to-Shoulder Campaign will host a one-hour call-in to share with you how you can join in this important interfaith work in your own contexts. Call 1.800.250.2600. Passcode 56631172#. This is an informational call, intended to offer interested Christian leaders resources to interface with and support the American Muslim community.

The COB enjoyed a break in the afternoon for rest and relaxation. After dinner together, we had a time of farewell for Presiding Bishop, Mark Hanson, and Secretary, David Swartling.

Monday, October 7, 2013

Bp. Michael Girlinghouse, Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod, led opening devotions on selected verses from John 21, sharing personal stories related to Jesus' question, "Do you love me?" and Jesus' challenge, "Feed my sheep."

We began with issues concerning roster. The first is a reminder that call process questions will be handled by the particular synod office, not the ELCA Secretary's office. Second, there is need to update the "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor" that is part of the call process. Sue Rothmeyer from the Secretary's office provided a short "primer" on roster issues for the COB, particularly for new bishops.

We had conversation on call processes related to LGBTQ candidates. Stories were shared about processes that led to a call, those that did not, and the relationship between Candidacy requirements and changing state laws. The COB also heard from visitors with us from Reconciling Works and Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries who explained their ministries and the resources they have that could assist the COB and synods. This conversation will become more important, as there are approximately 30 LGBTQ candidates on internship this year.

We began conversations on Corporate Social Responsibility topics. Since the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1988 brought together The American Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches and The

Lutheran Church in America into a new Church, these churches not only shared beliefs and missions but also shared an involvement in advocacy and in corporate social responsibility (CSR) work. At the time the focus of corporate advocacy was the anti-apartheid movement and the ELCA joined in with both shareholder work surrounding the issue and over time, divestment from several corporations. Other initial shareholder work, which at times included as many as 30 resolutions per year, focused on the issues surrounding tobacco. At this point in time the ELCA Board of Pensions (now Portico) filed resolutions but so did several ELCA colleges and seminaries.

As the Church concentrated on how corporate responsibility would take place in this new denomination, investment screens were developed. Between 1988 and 1993 screens concerning alcohol, tobacco, pornography, gambling, weapons, environment, labor, and community development were developed and approved by the Church Council.

Updates on four that were reviewed and approved by the COB and are referred to the Church Council for action are: Sufficient Sustainable Livelihood for All: Codes of Conduct; Caring for Health: Domestic Access to Health Care; Freed in Christ: Nondiscrimination in Business Activities; and Pornography Social Criteria Screen.

Linda Norman, ELCA Treasurer, gave her report. There was revenue in excess of expenses of \$2.5 million in current operating funds for the seven-month period ended August 31, 2013, an unfavorable variance of \$0.6 million compared to the seven months ending August 31, 2012 and favorable to the period budget by \$5.6 million. Revenue totaled \$39.5 million for the seven-month period compared with \$38.7 million the previous year, an increase of \$0.8 million or 2.0 percent.

Income from congregations through synods in the form of Mission Support income for the seven months was \$26.7 million, a decrease of \$0.5 million or 2.0 percent compared to same period last year

Income from endowment distributions of \$1.1 million, bequests/trusts of \$4.2 million, and other income of \$2.3 million, resulted in favorable variances to the year-to-date budget, with bequests/trusts and other income also positive compared to the seven months ending August 31, 2012.

Total contributions to ELCA World Hunger for the seven months were \$7.3 million – unfavorable to the same seven-month period in 2012 by \$0.2 million. The ELCA Malaria Campaign received gifts of \$2.6 million in the seven months ending August 31, 2013 and has raised approximately \$9.2 million campaign-to-date.

ELCA members contributed \$4.4 million for the Lutheran Disaster Response in the seven-month period, primarily \$1.7 million in support of the ELCA's response to domestic tornadoes. The Lutheran Disaster Response has also deployed the first installment from the American Red Cross to assist in our mission with those affected by Hurricane Sandy.

Bps. Brian Maas and Claire Burkat gave an update on “Always Being Made New: The Campaign of the ELCA.” The hope for this campaign to lift up important ministries we already do, but can do more! The goals for this 5 year campaign are to provide 1,000 grants for congregational renewal initiatives; spread the good news far and wide

by planting more congregations in the United States and Caribbean; grow a permanent endowment fund that will allow hundreds more of the most promising leaders to respond to the call to serve our congregations; expand our support to communities in at least 10 countries, including the United States, as they work to solve challenges that perpetuate hunger and poverty; meet and exceed our goal of \$15 million by 2015 to help overcome malaria in 12 countries in Africa; initiate new evangelism projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America; intensify our efforts to develop more than 200 women leaders from our global companion churches through increased scholarship support and educational opportunities; and give 200 additional young adults the opportunity to participate in a year of global service; and \$4 million each for Youth and Young Adults and for Disability Ministries, with a total of \$198 million (\$121M in current funding goals and \$77M in expanded goals). For a brief video introducing the Campaign, you can use Windows Media: <http://we.tl/oUpGt9o8SZ> or Quicktime: <http://we.tl/8XsQJ3mZSE>

Members of the Mission Advancement unit will be contacting each of the bishops at a date very soon to determine how this Campaign might best be conducted in each synod and what portions fits each synod uniquely best. More information will come.

A book that was encouraged as a resource for this Campaign and congregational campaigns was “A Spirituality of Fundraising,” by Henri J.M. Nouwen, who approaches fundraising from a position of strength rather than weakness, seeing it as spiritual work. This text can easily be read in one sitting. Sections of this booklet include: Fundraising as Ministry, Helping the Kingdom Come About, Our Security Base, People Who Are Rich, Asking, A New Communion, Prayer and Gratitude, Your Kingdom Come.

Pr. Stacy Martin, newly called Director of Advocacy in Washington, DC, was introduced and she addressed the COB. Ready Benches (COB members relating to social/political issues) will be gathering to meet with elected officials in Washington in late March or early April. During lunch, Ready Benches met around the topics of Middle East, Immigration, International, Domestic, Care of Creation, and Justice is not “just us.”

I attended the ready bench on immigration, where we had a conference call with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. We heard that the government shut-down is affecting immigration services on all levels, and there has been little/no movement on the bills currently in the House. They thanked the SWTX synod for the recent immigration event in Austin on October 6 at St. Martin’s Lutheran Church and the op-ed piece by Bp. Tiemann in the Austin American-Statesman.

FYI that the “Journal of Lutheran Ethics” will devote its December issue to immigration concerns.

Jeff Thiemann, CEO of Portico Benefit Services, gave an update on various items. With 47% of sponsoring organizations reporting, 94% have chosen Gold+, 3% Platinum+, 2% Silver+, and 1% Bronze+.

He also addressed the issue of age rating – the accusation that Portico is discriminating against older members. In the open market, there is a 5-to-1 cost difference between the youngest and oldest members covered. With Portico, there is a 2-to-1 ratio, which means the older members are still being subsidized by younger members.

Portico initiated a Fund for Leaders scholarship with a contribution from trustees, staff, etc. of \$32,301.17. That is over the \$25K needed to grant a scholarship in 2014.

He provided a legislative update on the Church Plan Clarification Act of 2013 (removes restrictions on managing church retirement plans harmful to members) and the Church Health Plan Act of 2013 (S.1164 – which ends discrimination against employees in church plans, allowing same tax credits as those in Exchanges). It is unlikely that the Clergy Housing Allowance will be eliminated at his time.

A new program offered through Portico is a one-time enrollment period for life insurance, with no proof of health and no medical exam, for up to \$200,000. It is for this year only, with medical exams necessary for subsequent years. It is a high value for members who are without insurance, are underinsured, or are paying too much. Watch for this information from Portico.

Also, Portico will begin to offer Long-Term Care Insurance in 2014. Members participate on a voluntary basis, which can cover sponsored and non-sponsored members and immediate and extended family. It will have group pricing and will be done through LTC Financial Partners. Watch for more information in 2014.

The evening was spent in Regional Dinners and fellowship.

Tuesday, October 8, 2013

Bp. Brian Maas, Nebraska Synod, led devotions on a text from First John. Through the analogy of air travel and flight attendant instructions, he encouraged and challenged us on our way back to our synods and trusting that God goes with us.

David Swartling initiated some conversation concerning the recent churchwide assembly, reviewing a variety of areas of evaluation and improvement.

COB Chair Bp. Crist reported on several items the COB will bring to the Church Council, including looking at the details of the ecclesiastical ballot and an invitation for CC to contribute to the Mark S. Hanson Fund for Leaders scholarship.

We continued some conversation on the ELCA Campaign about how to make this a successful effort, both toward raising important funds for specific programs and to build capacity for new ways of funding the ministry of this church. Details for how this will be implemented in each synod will be determined by the synod in conversation with staff of the Mission Advancement unit and the Campaign.

The meeting concluded at 11 a.m. with a sending blessing by Bp. Crist.