



La Crosse Area Synod (ELCA)

ASSEMBLY
EDITION

Coulee Courier

June 10-12, 2016

"Never Alone"

Luther College

*"And remember, I am with you always,
to the end of the age." – Matt. 28: 19-20*

Gathered in faith, the La Crosse Area Assembly met for its 2016 session at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. The theme for this assembly was "Never Alone".

"Our hope for this assembly," Synod Vice President Lori Toso wrote to voting members, "is that through these two easily-memorable words, 'Never Alone,' we claim the promise that Christ accompanies us on all our moments – a presence which is marked by signs of gracious invitation and lovingkindness."

The theme works both ways, of course, as several speakers pointed out: God is with us in our tribulations and triumphs. But, we are never alone is our quests to be faithful children of God. Despite being each a unique child, we work best in community with others in many ways – what is often termed the three "expressions" of the church: Congregation, Synod and Churchwide.

"God does not leave us alone," Bishop Arends told the Assembly. "As the Body of Christ, we can always do more than any one household or any one congregation." He urged members of congregations to get out of their buildings and meet people where they have need... *and* to talk about Jesus.

The Assembly heard a report from Rev. David Wunsch from the ELCA Global Mission Unit. He discussed the full expression of the church – the "whole church" – and how each expression needs the others to do God's work. We are never alone because of our interdependence.

Rev. Pedro Bullón, Pastor Presidente of the Iglesia Luterana del Perú, brought news of its journey of reorganization. In his reflections on Matt. 28:16-20, he showed how the Great Commission leads to community. "All people," he said, implies no distinctions among God's people, especially no nationalistic or ethnic boundaries.

After his presentation, Pastor Bullón and Bishop Arends signed a new covenant of church companionship.

Resolutions

Full resolutions are available at www.lacrosseareasynod.org

- R1: Urging the U.S. Congress to make future aid to Israel contingent on an end to settle-building in the West Bank. *[Passed]*
- R2: Commending the pending "2016 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act" which has bipartisan support, urging its passage into law, and encouraging congregations to engage in education and advocacy. *[Passed]*
- R3: Challenging congregations towards a goal of \$5.00 per baptized member for the ELCA World Hunger Appeal in 2017 and to study and respond to hunger causes in their own communities, and encouraging members to become Monthly Partners through electronic giving. *[Passed]*
- R4: Expressing support for the World Hunger Subcommittee working with regional cooperatives and local dairy farmers in feeding the hungry people in the region. *[Passed]*
- R5: Memorializing the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to establish a time of study and prayer to end human trafficking and to create support materials. *[Passed]*
- R6: Memorializing the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to explore the merits of creating an ELCA organization dedicated to arranging youth mission trips. *[Passed]*
- R7: Encouraging congregation to observe an annual Lutheran Social Services Sunday. *[Passed]*
- R8: That the synod and congregations perform pre-hire interviews to refrain from hiring contractors who engage in payroll fraud through worker misclassification. *[Passed]*
- R9: To close the Raising Up Leaders Endowment Fund and transfer its assets to the General Synod Endowment fund. *[Passed]*
- R10: To pursue a companion synod relationship with the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren. *[Passed]*

Cows for Cash for Hunger

Perhaps you noticed the colorful 'herd' near the Preus Library at Luther College. Actually, it was 138 plywood cutouts in the shape of cows. Each 'cow' represented \$500 raised for the 2016 ELCA World Hunger goal of \$20 million.

The Synod's World Hunger Subcommittee organized the "stomp out hunger" campaign for the 2016 Assembly as part of the ELCA efforts. Each congregation was provided with a cutout 'cow' and challenged to raise funds for hunger relief in whatever way they chose. Some congregations held special events or special offerings.

They were also encouraged to 'gather' as many 'cows' as possible, so many congregations had several cows in the 'herd'.

Congregations were also urged to decorate their cows in distinctive ways. So, it was as diverse and colorful a herd as is ever likely to be seen.

All told, the Synod project raised \$69,000 for World Hunger.

It was also noted the Synod's goal for the ELCA Malaria Campaign was met and exceeded last February, with nearly \$154,000 raised.

Synod Budget Revised

The Assembly approved the 2017 budget and made significant revisions to the current 2016 budget.

The 2016 budget, passed at the 2015 Assembly, called for expenditures of \$867,929. Because of the decline in mission support, the 2016 Assembly voted to revise the 2016 budget downward to \$798,953 – a cut of nearly eight percent for the current year.

The largest cut was to the Synod's ELCA mission support. Historically, the Synod passed along fifty-five percent all mission support received from local congregations. From 2016 onward, however, this will be lowered to fifty percent. The Synod is also still short on its 2015 ELCA mission support pledge and is making that up in yearly increments.

Cuts were also made in the 2016 budget for Synod travel and auto expenses, support for ELCA Region 5 activities, and the contingency fund.

The 2017 budget was approved at \$825,063 – a cut of six percent over the original 2016 budget.

NEXT SYNOD ASSEMBLY – June 9-11, 2017 – Specific Location Within the Synod to Be Announced.