



La Crosse Area Synod

2015 Synod Assembly

Lunda Center, Western Technical College, La Crosse

Synod Assembly Minutes

FRIDAY, JUNE 12 - RIVERSIDE PARK, DOWNTOWN LA CROSSE

6 pm A walk through Riverside Park following the "Walk the Word" Trail invited participants to encounter this year's assembly theme. Everyone was encouraged to bring a picnic lunch for the gathering.

7 pm "Lost & Found" concert, which was open-to-the-public and all synod-wide congregational members, took place at the band shell in Riverside Park along the Mississippi River. A free will offering was collected to offset the cost of the concert.

SATURDAY, JUNE 13 - WESTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE

PLENARY SESSION 1 – LUNDA CENTER, WESTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE

319 7th Street North, La Crosse

8:15 am

Worship

BISHOP Jim Arends led the "OPENING OF THE ASSEMBLY LITANY".

- L As there are many members in one body,
C **So we, though many, are one body in Christ.**
L Where two or three are gathered in my name,
C **There am I in the midst of them.**
L I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received, being humble and gentle, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.
C **Let us pursue justice and peace, for mutual upbuilding.**
L The Lord be with you.
C **And also with you.**
L Let us pray,
Lord God, you taught the hearts of your faithful people by sending them the light of your Holy Spirit. Grant that we, by your Spirit, may have a right judgment in all things and evermore rejoice in His holy counsel; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
C **Amen.**
L I declare this assembly to be in session in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
C **Amen.**

Preacher – Rev. Libby Howe, Dir. for Evangelical Mission / Asst. to the Bishop
Presider – Rev. Kevin Jacobson, ELCA Missionary, Suriname

Offering – Menu of options for individuals to choose from.

Bishop Arends introduced the presenter for the first Assembly Mission Story:

Bob Weeks, World Hunger Sub-committee shared the story of providing crop seeds for farmers in Nicaragua.

Bishop Arends led the recognition of pastors and congregations with anniversaries. (Assembly Book, pages 16-17). Rev. Vern Skarstad was added to the 50-year anniversary list, and certificates were handed out to pastors and/or voting congregational members present.

Plenary 1 convened with a song and prayer.

SA 15.6.1 Motion for Adoption of the Agenda and Rules (Green Assembly Book, pages 4-5) **MMSC**

BISHOP Arends welcomed Stephen McDougal, professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, to serve as Synod Assembly parliamentarian.

Mr. McDougal conducted an orientation of Voting Members reviewing Robert's Rules of order (Green Assembly Book, page 4) along with discussion of motions, resolutions and voting.

Assembly General Announcements – Vice-President Lori Toso:

Our Synod is comprised of 74 congregations and our Synod is one of 65 Synods of the ELCA. Voting members were asked to prayerfully discern all matters brought before the Assembly.

- *Deadline for submitting Resolutions to Reference & Counsel Committee noon Saturday.*
- *Reviewed list of Sunday morning workshops and urged discussion with other voting members from your congregation so, as a group, you can see as many different presentations as possible.*
- *Asked for 10 volunteers to serve as communion assistants during Sending Worship service on Sunday; if interested, see Pr. Libby*
- *Reviewed the focus and intention of display tables, all located in plenary room*
- *Welcomed attendees to feel free to take pictures during assembly and then forward them to Melanie or Pr. Libby at the synod office (office@lacrosseareasynod.org or assistant@lacrosseareasynod.org)*
- Vice President Toso called attention to the yellow handout seeking leaders for synod committees (Handout #1). She encouraged voting members to bring this sheet back to congregations and help find people interested in serving on Synod-wide Committees. (See *attachment at end of this document.*)

BISHOP Arends introduced the presenters for the next two Assembly Mission Stories:

Jean Pagliaro described the upcoming **National ELCA Youth Gathering** that occurs every 3 years and will take place from July 15-19 in Detroit with over 30,000 youth. Our Synod will be sending 266 youth from 18 congregations along with pastors and adults.

Bill Newburg, from the **Synod Endowment Fund Board**, shared the overall goal of the Fund to provide for future ministries and the building up of the Synod Seminarian Fund to provide for partial scholarships. The Fund has grown from \$10,000 in 2010 to \$70,000 in 2015, with an additional new bequest of \$100,000. The last 3 years the Fund has granted \$7,000 worth of scholarships each year, and hopes to increase this amount in the future. It is anticipated that the ELCA will need up to 4,000 new pastors in the next 10 years.

Bishop Arends introduced the Synod Assembly's Special Guests:

- Rev. Dr. Stephen Bouman, Exec. Dir. of Congregational and Synodical Mission for the ELCA, who brings the Report of the ELCA, keynote address, sermon Saturday evening, Sunday morning Bible focus and workshop.

- Ray Makeever, Lutheran musician and composer from Minneapolis, our assembly musician.
- Rev. Ramie Bakken, Region 5 Coordinator for Missional Leadership
- Rev. Cindy Crane, Dir. of Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin and a workshop presenter
- Mary Minette, Dir. for ELCA Environmental Education and Advocacy, workshop presenter
- Aliyah Richling, newly appointed Young Adult in Global Mission from our synod, member of First Lutheran, Onalaska
- Louise Hemstead, Region 5 representative on the ELCA Church Council, member of Bethany Lutheran, La Farge
- Rev. Larry Westfield, ELCA Regional Gift Planner, Lutheran Planned Giving of Wisconsin
- Margie Kissner, Dir. of Quality & Customer Experience, Portico Benefit Services
- Rev. Jennifer Thomas, Deployed Gifts Officer, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago
- Keith Newman, Exec. Dir., Luther Park Bible Camp
- Don Shunkwiler, Exec. Dir., Sugar Creek Bible Camp
- Rev. April and Rev. Judd Larson, Bishop Emerita and former pastor of our synod with a display table regarding Siebert Grant for son, Ben Larson's, music
- Cynthia Halvorson, Pres. of LSS Foundation, Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Peninsula of Michigan

LORI TOSO, Synod Vice President -- Introduced Synod Council:

2014-2015 SYNOD COUNCIL

Bishop Jim Arends	Lori Toso, Vice Pres.	Michael Schnitzius, Secretary
Derek Jackson, Treasurer	Rev. Liz Albertson	Leah Wisnewski
Doug Myhre	Rev. Meg Hoversten	Lynn Joholski
Mike Lusk	Rev. Wendy Ruetten	Sandra Zenor
Dennis Glaman	Rev. Mark Jolivette	Sharon Zimmerman
Jim Howe	Robert Bendiksen	Rev. Libby Howe
Rev. Anna Sorenson	Wes Mack	Carol Leopold

Those going off council this year were given a certificate:

Rev. Liz Albertson	Doug Myhre
Rev. Mark Jolivette	Wes Mack

Introduced Assembly Planning Committee:

<u>Co-Chairs:</u> Lori Toso & Rev. Libby Howe	
Bishop Arends	Rev. Wendy Ruetten
Debbie Dukatz	Rev. Barbara Bruneau
Jim Howe	Melanie Timmerman
Andy Stutesman (adjunct)	Deb Wold (adjunct)

Bishop Arends reviewed the BISHOP'S STATISTICAL REPORT

(pgs. 16-17 in Green Assembly Book and attached at end of this document)

Bishop Arends introduced the presenters for the next two Mission Stories:

Kathleen Sumrall, W-ELCA, described the activities of the **synod Women of the ELCA** and its annual meeting.

Cindy Berg, Mission Interpreters, described the scope of the Synod's Mission Interpreter program and the support it provides to congregations in training mission interpreters to tell the stories of the larger church.

Bishop Arends announced that any business not completed this afternoon will be directed for future consideration and action to the Synod Council.

Bishop Arends asked voting members to consider ideas of where to designate the offering to go from our sending service, Sunday morning.

Bishop Arends introduced Derek Jackson, *Synod Treasurer*. *Derek first reviewed the Synod's Treasurer's report for all budget categories as of January 31, 2015. (Handout #2 – Green - Synod Treasurer's Report) Derek noted that we have been drawing from our Synod Reserve Fund the past several years to meet budgeted shortfalls and that this amount could go down. He also noted the amount in the Replacement Reserve Fund. (see Treasurer's Report on synod web page, www.lacrosseareasynd.org, for 2015 Synod Assembly)* Derek then led the second reading of the proposed 2016 Budget (Handout #3 Blue Proposed 2016 Mission Support Budget). The proposed budget contains an overall 3% salary increase for staff and \$1,000 increase for the Bishop. Costs for personnel insurance are up \$7,000. Costs are up for auto maintenance and insurance, office insurance and building maintenance. There is a new line item 4B.6 for Sabbaticals for Bishop and Asst. to the Bishop of \$1,000 to add to the \$3,000 approved in 2015. Costs for postage are reduced by \$200 and all other categories remain at the same funding as 2015. The proposed 2016 budget continues ELCA first 55% of Mission Support, and based on using the same projected revenue estimate as 2015 will result in the need to potentially borrow over \$10,000 from the Synod Reserve Fund. (see Proposed Budget on synod web page, www.lacrosseareasynd.org, for 2015 Synod Assembly)

Bishop Arends called for the Report of the Registrar.

Vice-President Lori Toso reported:

Lay Voting Members = 153, Lay Synod Council = 9, Young Adults = 17, for a total of 179 Lay Voting members

Pastors: Pastors Under Call = 55, Retired Pastors = 2, for a total of 57 Pastors

Total Synod Assembly Voting Members: 236 Visitors, Guests, Volunteers: 54

Bishop Arends presented the Bishop's Report to the Synod Assembly. (White Handout #4) (see at bottom of this document)

BISHOP Arends introduced the presenters for the next two Mission Stories:

Cathryn Bottem, Lutheran Campus Ministry, shared the new initiatives being implemented at the Synod's Campus Ministry in La Crosse that focus on outreach and meeting the spiritual needs of our university students at WWTC, UWL & Virterbo.

Terry Lee, Mission Support, described plans for assisting congregations in increasing overall Mission Support to meet the future needs of our Synod.

BISHOP Arends introduced Rev. Dr. Stephen Bouman, Executive Director, ELCA Congregational & Synodical Mission, for the Report of the ELCA. Rev. Bouman shared information regarding the rapid changes in our church, the need for leaders, and the many ministries the larger ELCA is involved in.

Prayer and Break for lunch at the Union Market.

PLENARY SESSION 2 – LUNDA CENTER, WESTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Plenary 2 convened with song and prayer.

BISHOP Arends introduced the presenters for the next two Mission Stories:

Pr. Kay Wold, Middle East Subcommittee, shared the importance of the ELCA's activities in promoting peace and informing congregations and individuals of issues in this region of the world.

Peter Kirkegaard, Evangelism & Outreach Committee, shared initiatives being planned by the committee to increase evangelism and outreach throughout the Synod.

SA 15.6.2 Motion to approve 2016 Synod Mission Support Budget & Salary Guidelines.

MMSC

BISHOP Arends offered led prayer for 2016 budget:

Prayer for Synod Budget:

God of all things—

This budget is our intention to give and distribute money.

We give this money because you first loved us and we are grateful.

We give this money because we know you are God and money is not.

We give this money because we trust you to give us our daily bread.

This spending plan declares our intentions to volunteer, to minister to each other, to reach out to our community and our world. It says what we want to do in honor and praise of your great love. As givers, may we give joyfully and liberally extend your mercy to those who stand in need of it.

We want to do something more than just meet this budget, O God. We do not want it to be the limit or the target of our giving. We anticipate the celebration of going beyond it, and the ability to do more for you than our little faith allowed us to dream.

We declare our intentions to give and distribute as fully dedicated to you. May we be surprised by all that is done through these efforts.

And may you be pleased. Amen

BISHOP Arends introduced Louise Hemstead, representative from our Synod and Region 5 for the Report from ELCA Church Council. Louise is a member of Bethany Lutheran, La Farge.

BISHOP Arends introduced Mike Schnitzius, Synod Secretary, for the Report of the Nominating Committee. Two Election Ballots, printed on 2 separate sheets – 1 on gray paper and 1 on salmon colored paper, were passed out at beginning of the first plenary session. Bishop Arends explained the salmon ballot structure and voting procedures for the Churchwide Assembly Voting Members. (Handouts #5-gray & #6-salmon; see as one document at the bottom of this document)

SA 15.6.3 Motion to cast unanimous vote for grey Conference Nominees Ballot. MMSC

Casting of ballots took place by Synod Assembly voting members for Churchwide Assembly Voting Members. Mike Schnitzius, Synod Secretary, assembled Synod Council members to count Churchwide Assembly ballots.

BISHOP Arends introduced the presenter for the next Mission Story:

Pr. Dawn Lindberg, Professional Service and Care Committee, who gave a summary report of the committee's activities including the pastor Conference poster project.

BISHOP Arends introduced Rev. Dr. Stephen Bouman, who gave the Synod Assembly Keynote Address.

Reference & Counsel – Resolutions:

SA 15.6.4 Motion to approve Resolution #4: Resolution to Spend "Raising Up Leaders" Account. MMSC

SA 15.6.5 Motion to approve Resolution #5: Resolution to Amend Synod Constitution. MMSC

SA 15.6.6 Motion to approve Resolution #10: Resolution to Reallocate Unused "Restricted Fund" Accounts. MMSC

SA 15.6.7 Motion to approve Resolution #6: Resolution to Increase Congregational Mission Support Giving. MMSC

SA 15.6.8 Motion to approve Resolution #3: Resolution Always Being Made New: the Campaign for the ELCA – La Crosse Area Synod Goals. MMSC

SA 15.6.9 Motion to approve Resolution #2: World Hunger Resolution. MMSC

Plenary was closed with prayer.

PLENARY SESSION 3 – LUNDA CENTER / UNION MARKET / BUSINESS EDUCATION CENTER

Assembly voting members gathered in various assigned meeting rooms for workshops on "Training for One-on-One Conversations".

Assembly BANQUET – Celebrating Synod Surpassing Malaria Campaign Goal.

Assembly voting members gathered for dinner finding memorial "fly swatters" at their place settings.

Bishop Arends gave the Report of Election results for 2016 Churchwide Assembly Voting Members:

Female Clergy: Pastor Julie Wollman

Male Clergy: Pastor Kent Johnson

Lay Male: Joe Vehrenkamp & Trystan Houzner

Lay Female: Cathryn Bottem

Lay Persons of Color: Khadijah Islam & Twyla Sandvick

Bishop Arends introduced the presenter for the next Mission Story:

Dr. Lee Johnson, Malaria Campaign - described the impact of the ELCA Malaria Campaign, which in conjunction with our worldwide partners is lowering the death rate and contraction rate for Malaria.

JoAnn Salava was recognized for her work in leading the Synod's Malaria Campaign committee and fundraising effort over the past three years.

Worship

Preacher – Rev. Dr. Stephen Bouman - Executive Director, ELCA Congregational & Synodical Mission

Presider – Carla Stanton, First Lutheran, Onalaska

Offering – Synod General Fund (*blue offering envelopes handed out at worship*)

Bishop Arends introduced the presenter for the next Mission Story:

Aliyah Richling, Young Adults in Global Mission - shared background on the YAGM and her excitement at being involved in YAGM during the coming year as a young adult from our Synod.

SUNDAY, JUNE 14 - Western Technical College

PLENARY SESSION 4 – LUNDA CENTER / BUSINESS EDUCATION CENTER

Plenary 4 convened with song w/ Ray Makeever, assembly musician, and prayer

BISHOP Arends introduced special guests who arrived today.

- Rev. Scott Anderson, Exec. Dir. Wisconsin Council of Churches – workshop presenter
- Rev. Margaret Kelly, pastor from the St. Paul Area Synod - workshop presenter
- Sam Scinta, publisher, author, educator and community activist – workshop presenter

- Joanne Richmond, Ethics Professor, Western Technical College – workshop presenter
- Beth Moore, Dir. of Tour Planning, Friends of Tent of Nations for North America – workshop presenter

Announcements:

BEST EVER SUNDAY SCHOOL WORKSHOPS -- *Announced where each session was located, referring to workshop handout.*

Bible Focus was given by Rev. Dr. Stephen Bouman, Exec. Dir. of ELCA Congregational and Synodical Mission

BEST EVER SUNDAY SCHOOL WORKSHOPS: (Handout #7) (see attached at end of this document and on synod assembly web page, www.lacrosseareasynd.org / Synod Assembly 2015)

Two back-to-back workshops sessions were held – 9:15 am and 10:20 am in various classrooms and group settings on campus.

11:30 am **Sending Worship** – Lunda Center
 Preacher – Rev. Jim Arends, Bishop
 Presider – Rev. Jason Stanton, First Lutheran, Onalaska
 Offering – Lutheran World Hunger

Bishop Arends introduced the presenter for the last Mission Story:

Pr. Anna Sorenson, Synod Council, gave an overview of the importance of the role that the Synod Council plays in the support and leadership of our Church during the year.

BISHOP led "CLOSING OF ASSEMBLY" Litany

L You will be my witnesses
C To the ends of the earth.
 L I chose you and appointed you
C To bear fruit which abides.
 L Lo, I will be with you always
C To the end of time.
 L The Lord be with you
C And also with you.
 L Let us pray,
 Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor and
 further us with your continual help, that in all our works, begun,
 continued and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name and finally,
 by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
C Amen.
 L Lord God our Father, you kept Abraham and Sarah in safety throughout the
 days of their pilgrimage, you led the children of Israel through the midst of the
 sea, and by a star you led the Wise Men to the infant Jesus. Protect and guide
 us now in this time as we set out to travel, make our ways safe and our
 homecomings joyful, and bring us at last to our heavenly home, where you
 dwell in glory with your Son and the Holy Spirit, God forever.
C Amen.
 L I now declare this assembly closed in the name of the Father, and of the Son,
 and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen
 L Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
C Thanks be to God.

FOLLOWING ARE VARIOUS HANDOUTS FROM THROUGHOUT THE 2015 SYNOD ASSEMBLY.

LEADERS to SERVE on SYNOD COMMITTEES

Do you or someone you know have the gifts and passions to serve in any of the following ministries? We need both clergy and laity.

PLEASE NOTE: By writing names, you are NOT signing up this person for any commitment. This is simply a way to generate names for our Nominating Committee and/or synod staff, who will then be in contact with him/her to discern gifts, desire, and availability.

YOUR NAME _____ HOW TO CONTACT YOU _____

COMMITTEE: Synod Council, board of directors, serving as legislative authority between assemblies, exercising trusteeship responsibilities and recommending program goals and budgets

Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Church in Society Committee, help synod interpret Gospel within the context of the world in which we live (advocates for peacemaking, justice, for hungry/oppressed/excluded)

Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Evangelism and Outreach Committee, assisting congregations and ministries of this synod in their gospel outreach into their membership, communities, synod, and world

Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: LYLE, Lutheran Youth Leading Evangelism, strengthen the faith of synod youth through education, fellowship, worship, service and witness

Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Global Mission Committee, nurture and engage, through theology and the practice of walking together, the relationships we have with the global church

Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Mission Support Committee, interpret and communicate to congregations the mission of this church, including stewardship needs and responsibilities

Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Nominating Committee, identify and recommend for nomination individuals qualified and willing to serve in synod leadership positions—synod council and committees

Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Book of Faith Team, *increase Biblical literacy and fluency for the sake of the world; encouraging all members to open scripture, dig deeper and join the conversation*
Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Partners in Evangelical Worship Team, *provide worship resources and consultation to congregations; to contribute to worship events in the life of the synod.*
Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Assembly Planning Committee, *develop and plan the theme and its logistics through speakers, worship and workshops for the annual synod assembly*
Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Middle East Subcommittee, *advocate for peace and justice in the Middle East through education and experiences*
Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Hunger Subcommittee, *provide education to congregations about the cause and effects of hunger, generate assistance for those in need, and advocate for just systems/policies*
Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Professional Service & Care, *oversee the care of rostered leaders in the synod by planning educational events, compensation guidelines and providing wellness resources.*
Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Endowment Fund Board, *responsible for receiving, investing, and distributing funds from gifts, memorials, bequests, wills, estates, etc.*
Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Candidacy Committee, *aid the bishop in the care of candidates from the synod preparing for ministry (ordained, associates in ministry, deaconesses or diaconal ministers)*
Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Lutheran Campus Ministry Board, *oversee the work of LCM in La Crosse, provide for the maintenance of Common Ground & supervision of the Campus Pastor, develop funding sources for LCM.*

Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Reformation Quincentennial Task Force, *(to be convened in Summer 2015) plan events and develop resources to aid congregations in the 500th commemoration of the Reformation in 2017.*

Please list name and congregation

COMMITTEE: Great Practices Series (GPS) Team, *design, plan and carry out educational events for church leaders that relate to practical matters of everyday congregational life.*

Please list name and congregation

Bishop's Statistical Report

Ordination Anniversaries for 2015

5 Years

The Rev. Douglas Andersen
The Rev. Ben Morris

10 Years

The Rev. Lori Kleppe
The Rev. Melinda Pupillo

15 Years

The Rev. Wendy Ruetten
The Rev. Julie Wollman

20 Years

The Rev. Erik Feig
The Rev. John Stennes-Spidahl

25 Years

The Rev. John Ashland
The Rev. Kevin Jacobson
The Rev. Peter Jonas
The Rev. Gary Wees

30 Years

The Rev. John Carrier
The Rev. John Dumke
The Rev. Kathryn Ingbritsen
The Rev. Bruce Iverson

35 Years

The Rev. Joseph Irvin
The Rev. Joel Oines

45 Years

The Rev. J. David Bersagel
The Rev. Roger Hjelle

50 Years

The Rev. Roger Grow
The Rev. Kenneth Melby
The Rev. Frederick Ohlrogge
The Rev. Edward Olson
The Rev. Vern Skarstad

55 Years

The Rev. Harris Hostager

Roster Update as of March 1, 2015

New Clergy in our synod:

The Rev. Kary Jonas, Living Hope, Ettrick
The Rev. April Larson, retired
The Rev. Judd Larson, retired
The Rev. Dawn Lindberg, Peace Lutheran Church, Tomah, Wis.

The Rev. Benjamin Morris, Lutheran Campus Ministry, La Crosse, Wis.
The Rev. Kyle Svennungsen, St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church,
Prairie du Chien, Wis

Members of our Synod in the candidacy process:

Heidi Anderson
Amy Heinz
Levi Powers
Christopher Sesvold

Clergy Transferred:

The Rev. Cassandra (Sauter) Anderson to Calvary Lutheran Church, Perham Minn.
The Rev. Cheryl Fleckenstein to Salem Lutheran Church, Deerwood, Minn.
The Rev. Kimberly Jordan to Trinity Lutheran Church, Fort Atkinson, Wis.
The Rev. Curtis Matz to New Hope Methodist/Presbyterian Church, North Pole, Alaska
The Rev. Tom Meyer to Immanuel Trinity Lutheran Church, Fond du Lac, Wis.
The Rev. Susan Sheffer-Meyer to Immanuel Trinity Lutheran Church, Fond du Lac, Wis.
The Rev. Corinne Thul, to Mayo Health System, Rochester, Minn.

Clergy Changes Within our Synod:

The Rev. Nicholas Barootian, to resigned from the roster
The Rev. Wendy Haberman, to removed from the roster
The Rev. Christine Hallemeier to retired
The Rev. Meg Hoversten to Middle Coon Valley Lutheran Church, Chaseburg, Wis.
The Rev. Lanny Westphal to On-Leave-From-Call

Churches Celebrating Anniversaries in Our Synod in 2015

St. John Lutheran Church, Alma – 125 years
St. Peter Lutheran Church, Camp Douglas - 125 years
Immanuel Lutheran Church, Cashton - 125 years
Peace Lutheran Church, Readstown – 50 years

WALK THE WORD
let us love...in truth and action
(1 John 3:18)

What is the La Crosse Area Synod about?

We are continually accepting the call to Walk the Word (the Living Word of God, Jesus the Christ).

Almost all of our 74 congregations:

- Proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ each week in public worship.
- Provide opportunities for youth to grow in faith each week.
- Encourage youth
 - o as campers at Sugar Creek and Luther Park Bible Camps,
 - o in youth servant trips, and
 - o in the ELCA's National Youth Gatherings.

Two of our congregations have had members serving as ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission.

Many of our congregations have trained leaders in the synod sponsored Great Practices Series (GPS).

Most of our congregations hold Bible studies for adults monthly and/or weekly.

Five of our congregations have helped to train intern pastors this year.

Some of our congregations

- House food shelves and clothes closets to help our neighbors in need,
- Host monthly or weekly free meals for the hungry, the lonely, and those who like to socialize,

While many members of our congregations help at or provide for these ministries.

The La Crosse Area Synod's presence in service has increased at the La Crosse Warming Shelter.

Many ELCA folk are volunteering with ethnic specific ministries.

Many of our congregations sponsor

- Missionaries and
- Lutheran Campus Ministry of La Crosse.

Almost all of our congregations take special offerings for

- the ELCA's World Hunger Appeal.
- for Lutheran Disaster Response as special needs arise.

And ALL of our congregations participated in the Malaria Campaign.

And the list goes on.

This is what the La Crosse Area Synod is about. This is our synod at work – as individuals, as congregations, as clusters of congregations working together, and in synod-wide projects. We are living out the most basic of mission statements, straight from Jesus the Christ in the Gospel of Matthew:

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
and with all your soul, and with all your mind."
And ... "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

And

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.
And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

Portable Love

I am thankful for all that we do. I am thankful for all who volunteer. I am thankful for all who pray. And I am thankful for all who give. The farther we serve beyond our congregations, the more we serve through financial gifts – **our money becomes our portable love** reaching farther than most of us can travel. Coming together as Synod enables us to share God's Word and love farther than any one household or any one congregation can go alone. Thank you for the distance your love travels.

I especially appreciate two of our Synod's accomplishments over the last year. First, to repeat, ALL 74 of our congregations joined in the Malaria Campaign, taking us beyond our three-year goal of \$150,000 to over \$167,000! Thank you.

Second, you responded beyond my dreams to the challenge I put before you at last year's assembly. As we are in the process of reshaping Lutheran Campus Ministry in La Crosse, I asked you to provide an additional \$30,000 in gifts to LCM-L for each of the next three years. You are doing it! Thank you.

Today, in a way we are voting on three special appeals: (1) World Hunger, (2) Always Being Made New: the Campaign for the ELCA, and (3) a goal to surpass our budget. Each of these challenges us to go far beyond where we have gone.

From 2013 to 2014 our Synod lifted our per baptized giving to the Hunger Appeal to \$3.50. This raised us from 64th among the 65 synods of the ELCA to 46th. Last year our Assembly adopted the Hunger Subcommittee's goal of increasing to \$4.00 per baptized member within the past year. This year we are asked to challenge ourselves to give \$150,000 in 2016 (\$4.30 per baptized member). Gifts to the ELCA Hunger Appeal will fight hunger in this country and throughout the world through assistance, instruction and advocacy. We can do this.

In 2014 this assembly named the La Crosse Area Synod as participants in "Always Being Made New: the Campaign for the ELCA." The campaign aims to increase our church's efforts and effectiveness in a number of areas:

- Starting and renewing congregations,
- Ministries with those with disabilities,
- Raising up leaders,
- Working with youth,
- Fighting hunger and malaria, and
- Serving the global church through
 - o Missionary sponsorship,
 - o Young Adults in Global Mission, and
 - o Support for women leaders in our partner churches.

The Synod Council appointed a task force to suggest a goal for the five year Campaign that ends January 31, 2019. The Task Force discovered that present giving rates to the Hunger Appeal plus the gifts already given to the Malaria Campaign assume at least \$775,000 counting toward the Campaign - **without any additional effort**. So the Task Force is asking

this Assembly to challenge our synod to raise a total of \$1.1 million. Yes, that is \$1,100,000. But it is just \$335,000 beyond what is presently expected. We can do this.

Finally, we will be voting to accept our budget. The proposed budget assumes increased giving to Mission Support (the monies congregations put to use through the synod's general fund enabling the Synod and the ELCA to reach out into the world with God's Word and love). And the budget assumes the need to borrow over \$10,000 from our Synod's Reserve Fund. This, in the long run, is a losing practice. But the Synod's Mission Support Committee is inviting us to challenge ourselves to increase our congregations' giving to Mission Support by \$100,000 over last year. They have a plan to accomplish this. We can do this.

In these three special appeals we are invited to put our money where our ministry is. We are being asked to put our portable love where our ministry is. We are being challenged to Walk the Word in action and in giving. We can do this.

With Gratitude

We will spend much of this assembly celebrating the ministry we do together and exploring ways to more deeply affect God's world for the future. As we do this I must say thank you. Thank you for all you do to serve Jesus in your daily lives, in your congregations, and through this synod. Thank you to all who have accepted the invitation to serve on the Synod Council, on Synod committees, subcommittees, task forces and special projects. You are appreciated. It is because of you led by the Holy Spirit, that we can do this.

Special thanks are always due the Synod Staff: DEM & Assistant to the Bishop Libby Howe, Executive Administrator Melanie Timmerman, Receptionist and Mobility Specialist Deb Wold, and Bookkeeper Alice DaFoe. And most special thanks to my wife Lynn who supports me in keeping this crazy schedule while keeping me mindful of the needs for self-care and grandkid time.

It is a privilege to Walk the Word with you all,

Jim Arends, Bishop

2015 Ballot

LACROSSE AREA SYNOD – ELCA

2016 Churchwide Assembly Voting Members

In addition to Bishop Jim Arends and Synod Vice President Lori Toso

CLERGY

2016 Churchwide Assembly, Female Clergy: VOTE FOR 1

____ Pastor Amanda Schultz, Bethany/Immanuel/Trinity Lutheran Parish, Cashton

____ Pastor Julie Wollman, Westby Coon Prairie/Vang Lutheran Parish, Westby

2016 Churchwide Assembly, Male Clergy: VOTE FOR 1

____ Pastor Kent Johnson, Prince of Peace Lutheran, La Crescent

____ Pastor Leonard Liptack, Faith of Black Hammer Lutheran, Spring Grove

LAY – In this section at least 2 of your votes need to be for a youth

2016 Churchwide Assembly, Lay Male: VOTE FOR 2

____ Trystan Houzner, Grace Lutheran, Elroy -- **youth**

____ Derek Jackson, Mt. Calvary, Trempealeau

____ David Kwiecien, Woodland Lutheran, Nekoosa -- **youth**

____ Richard Miller, Blair Lutheran Church, Blair

____ Joe Vehrenkamp, North Beaver Creek Lutheran, Ettrick – **youth**

____ _____

2016 Churchwide Assembly, Lay Female: VOTE FOR 1

____ Allison Chambers, St. Stephens Lutheran, Camp Douglas -- **youth**

____ Linda Dahl, Lower Coon Valley Lutheran, Chaseburg

____ Paula DiBenedetto, Peace Lutheran, Tomah

____ Gwen Hatfield, Brush Creek Lutheran, Cashton

____ Kathy Kirking, Trinity Lutheran Church, Cashton

____ Carla Stanton, First Lutheran, Onalaska

____ _____

2016 Churchwide Assembly, Lay, Persons of Color: VOTE FOR 2

____ Khadejah Islam, Journey Lutheran, Onalaska -- **youth**

____ Twyla Sandvick, Middle Coon Valley Lutheran, Chaseburg

____ Rob Reider, Prince of Peace Lutheran, La Crescent

____ _____

2015 BALLOT

LA CROSSE AREA SYNOD

CONFERENCE NOMINEES

NORTH CONFERENCE:

Synod Council, Lay Male (3-year term to 2018): VOTE FOR 1

____ Steve McDougal, Living Hope Lutheran, Ettrick

Evangelism and Outreach Committee, Clergy (3-year term to 2018): VOTE FOR 1

____ Pastor Anna Sorenson, French Creek Lutheran, Ettrick (incumbent)

Evangelism and Outreach Committee, Lay (3-year term to 2018): VOTE FOR 1

Church in Society Committee, Clergy (3-year term to 2018): VOTE FOR 1

____ Pastor Kary Jonas, Living Hope Lutheran, Ettrick

LYLE Adult Advisory Team, Clergy (3-year term to 2018): VOTE FOR 1

____ Pastor Steve Meyer, Journey Lutheran, Onalaska (incumbent)

Mission Support Committee, Clergy (3-year term to 2018): VOTE FOR 1

____ Pastor Joel Bacon, St. John Lutheran, Alma

Church in Society Committee, Lay at Large (3-year term to 2018): VOTE FOR 1

SOUTH CONFERENCE:

Synod Council, Lay Female: VOTE FOR 1

____ Lynn Joholski, Middle Coon Valley Lutheran, Chaseburg (incumbent)

LYLE (Lutheran Youth Leading Evangelism) Adult Advisory Team, Clergy
(2-year term to 2017): VOTE FOR 1

____ Pastor Kyle Svennungsen, St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran, Prairie du Chien

Mission Support Committee, Lay (3-year term to 2018): VOTE FOR 1

EAST CONFERENCE:

Synod Council, Lay (3-year term to 2018): VOTE FOR 1

____ Sandra Zenor, Woodland Lutheran, Nekoosa (incumbent)

Church in Society Committee, Clergy (3-year term to 2018): VOTE FOR 1

____ Pastor Jeff Ruetten, St. Stephen's/St. Peter's Lutheran Parish, Camp Douglas

Evangelism and Outreach Committee, Lay (3-year term to 2018): VOTE FOR 1

____ Dennis Glaman, Trinity Lutheran, Sparta (incumbent)

LYLE (Lutheran Youth Leading Evangelism) Advisory Team, Clergy
(2-year term to 2017): VOTE FOR 1

____ Pastor Dawn Arndt Lindberg, Peace Lutheran, Tomah

LYLE (Lutheran Youth Leading Evangelism) Advisory Team, Lay
(2-year term to 2017): VOTE FOR 1

____ Kris Stauffacher, Trinity Lutheran, Hustler

WEST CONFERENCE

Synod Council, Lay Male (3-year term to 2018): VOTE FOR 1

____ James Howe, Prince of Peace Lutheran, La Crescent (incumbent)

Synod Council, Lay Female (3-year term to 2018): VOTE FOR 1

____ Sharon Zimmerman, Bethel Lutheran, La Crosse (incumbent)

LYLE (Lutheran Youth Leading Evangelism) Advisory Team, Lay
(2-year term to 2017): VOTE FOR 1

____ Jessica Zinniel, Our Savior's Lutheran, La Crosse (incumbent)

Best Sunday School Ever

La Crosse Area Synod Assembly 2015 – WORKSHOPS

The Church and Immigration: The Big Picture, Specific Opportunities, The Church's Response

Rev. Dr. Stephen Bouman, ELCA Exec. Director, Congregational and Synodical Mission

Please join Stephen Bouman as he gives insight to ways our church is working to engage the issues of refugee children migrating from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

Now What?

Bishop Jim Arends, La Crosse Area Synod

How do we Walk the Word in parish life? How do we raise up ideas in our home congregations? How do we build up our congregations' ministries with those in need? How do we take our congregations further into understanding root causes of hunger, poverty, criminal justice issues and more? Let's talk with the Bishop.

Gracious Conversations About Difficult Issues

Rev. Scott Anderson, Executive Director, Wisconsin Council of Churches

In this workshop we will draw upon the work of Parker Palmer and the Wisconsin Council of Churches' *Season of Civility*, following the protests in Madison in 2011. Participants will learn about the tools of civic dialogue and have the opportunity to practice them.

Doing Advocacy as People of Faith

Rev. Cindy Crane, Lutheran Office for Public Policy-Wisconsin & Bridget Crave, LOPPW Advisory Council, member First Lutheran, Onalaska

Public policies make a huge difference in our lives. Discuss doing advocacy for just policies as Lutherans and the relationship between justification and justice. Explore ways your church can build an advocacy ministry to accompany your valuable outreach work.

Water Ethics

Joanne Richmond, Ethics professor, Western Technical College

As an instructor of Ethics, Joanne Richmond will introduce three ethical approaches to responding to the water crisis facing our world. Students will be guided through a scriptural analysis of each approach.

Walk Across the Water: Songs for Living Faith

Ray Makeever, Assembly Musician

After 40 years of doing so, I am still happiest when standing with my guitar before a group of people who really want to sing, who love to hear each other sing, and whose spirits are lifted as they make music together about God's presence in their lives and in their hopes for a just and peaceful world. If you are one of these people, please join me for this sing-a-long workshop.

God, Hunger, and the Coulee Region

Rev. David Bersagel, World Hunger Subcommittee Chair

Discover in Scripture God's work to provide food for all. Celebrate the success of Domestic Hunger Grants in the Coulee Region. Take home ideas to support the ELCA World Hunger Appeal in your congregation.

White Privilege: What is It and Why does It Matter?

Sam Scinta, publisher, author, educator and community activist

Join Sam Scinta for an interactive conversation about white privilege, its historical basis and its presence in society today, at both the national and the local levels. Through this informative session, consciousness and awareness of the topic will be developed in a supportive and constructive environment. In the process, the group will work collaboratively to develop an ongoing commitment to social change and understanding.

We Refuse to be Enemies

Beth Moore, Dir. of Tour Planning, Friends of Tent of Nations, North America

Come hear about the witness of the Lutheran, Palestinian Nasser family's creative and persistent work for peace and justice through the Tent of Nations farm near Bethlehem. Ask about the complexities of the Middle East conflict and hear how you and your congregation can follow Jesus' call to non-violent actions for peace.

Back to the Basics, With a Food Truck

Rev. Margaret Kelly, MSW

Learn how a little new start in St. Paul, Minn., built relationships and followed the Holy Spirit. God is calling you to be in the world, too! Learn how public health and liberation theology can come together in your neighborhoods. Imagine the possibilities as we ask questions about our neighborhoods and remember the basics of our tradition.

Caring for Creation: Faithful Tools for Dealing with Difficult Issues

Mary Minette, Director, ELCA Environmental Education and Advocacy

Care for God's creation is a central theme in Scripture, rooted in the theology of Martin Luther, and the subject of an ELCA social policy statement. Often care for God's earth is seen in conflict with economic interests: from fracking to protecting clean water, communities can divide between a desire to protect God's creation and a need to ensure economic sustainability and job creation. Come explore the biblical foundations for creation care and examples of how communities facing conflicts between care of creation and economic growth have used scripture and shared faith and values to pray, learn and discern together and find a way forward on tough issues.