

**Report of the Virginia Synod Assembly
June 8-10
Salem, VA**

Assembly actions

Bishop Emeritus V. A. “Buck”, 91, was recognized for his amazing record of attendance at 68 consecutive synod assemblies. Now at Grace, Waynesboro, he was honored for his long career, starting with ordination in 1945. After parish ministry, he served as synod president five years and bishop for six years and he led in the restructuring for the new church and retired in 1987. “We pastors knew he was there for us,” said Pastor Dwayne Westermann, a former assistant to the bishop. Moyer said his life has been enriched by the support of this synod.

Ellen Hinlicky, church relations director at Roanoke College, will serve in the new post of executive director of Lutheran Partners in Mission, combining leadership of the United Lutheran Appeal and the vacant position of the synod mission office for planned giving.

Daniel Lehmann, editor of *The Lutheran*, said the magazine is “a mirror reflection of your church and your community. I hope you see yourself and maybe see a tip that will help you and your congregation.”

Among a dozen workshops was a discussion of the 250 million cases of malaria causing 800,000 deaths each year and a presentation of the Draft Social Statement on Criminal Justice. It is “deeply alarming” that the U.S. ranks among top countries in percentage of individuals under control of the criminal justice system, according to the draft.

Grace Clough, Muhlenberg, Harrisonburg, president of the synod’s Lutheran Youth Organization for the past year, reported that the Youth Assembly discussed “God’s people sharing resources with those in need” in their meetings under the theme, “The Hunger Games.” Amanda Downs, Grace and Glory, Fluvanna County, was named president for 2012-2013.

Bread for all in words, music and service

The theme of bread for all—from feeding in soup kitchens to the living bread at the altar—resounded in word, song and service throughout the 25th annual Virginia Synod Assembly at Roanoke College, June 8-10. “Give us this day our daily bread” was on the lips of every speaker, emphasized in stirring music and carried out in a service project of assembling food items for backpacks for poor children at two Salem schools.

Lita Johnson, ELCA representative and a Global Mission official, said food is the most basic of human rights yet we have an abundance—“Don’t store your daily bread, give it away.” Many hands went up when she asked if congregations are distributing food. Churches are increasingly called to fill the widening gap in government spending.

The estimated 925 million hungry people in the world are expected to be cut in half by 2015, Johnson said, but the bad news is that 21 children are dying from hunger each minute. Speaking for the ELCA, she said the national church had 60 mission starts last year through support like the 39 percent from the Virginia Synod. “Together, we are walking with our brothers and sisters in the global community.”

Episcopal Bishop Neff Powell of the Southwestern Virginia Diocese, opening preacher, said scripture is full of references to bread for the body and soul. “All we have is a gift from God.” Pastor Dwayne Westermann, head of a Tanzania scholarship program, challenged the assembly “to know the poor outside our gates... We prefer to sit at home and write a check” rather than getting to know the names of the poor.” Knowing those in need “bridges the chasm between the rich and the poor... We have our daily bread God has given us, not just leftovers.”

Pastor Kelly Derrick, St. Philip, Roanoke, chair of a new World Hunger team, said a child is dying of malaria every 45 seconds. She told of meeting a 3-year-old child on a recent visit to Malawi and learning of her death from malaria shortly afterward. Derrick said the team seeks a world hunger contact in each congregation of the synod.

“The bounty we see around us is a gift, a responsibility, a calling, a sacred trust. It matters to God what we do with it and how,” said Pastor Karen Van Stee, St. Mary, Mt. Jackson.

Boytons ordained, Reynolds consecrated

Ordination of a couple, Jonathan Mark Boynton and Deanna Scheffel Boynton, and consecration of Mindy Schramm Reynolds as a diaconal minister were worship highlights of the assembly. The Boyntons, May graduates of Southern Seminary, have been called to a new North Mountain, three-church parish at Toms Brook. Jonathan Boynton is a Kannapolis, N.C. native and Deanna Boynton comes from Our Saviour, Warrenton.

Mindy Reynolds was installed in the new post of synodical minister for healthy leadership and wellness. She will oversee the Healthy Congregations and Bridgebuilder programs, re-establish pastoral leadership coaching groups and direct a wellness program for rostered leaders. Reynolds, who has worked in parish/faith community nursing and health ministries for 15 years, is married to Charles F. Reynolds, executive director of wellness ministries in the Virginia Conference of United Methodist Church. They live in Fishersville.

In a sermon at the annual assembly service at St. Andrew's Catholic Church in Roanoke, Bishop Jim Mauney said Jesus taught the disciples his word of life all day long because they were hungry for his teaching before the feeding of bread and fishes for the five thousand. "Jesus was moved with compassion for their hunger and pain and fed them."

Music throughout the assembly was led by David Ludwig, talented singer and musician from Redeemer Lutheran Church, Winter Park, Fla.

Two resolutions defeated, two approved

For the first time, assembly members voted electronically with hand-held machines. After a few minor glitches, the process appeared to work, saving time and paper.

Assembly voting members defeated resolutions related to religious freedom and a proposed new category for congregation membership. Lee Manhart, Redeemer, McKinley, offered a resolution asking the synod bishop to send a letter to the Richmond and Arlington Catholic dioceses supporting their opposition to the Affordable Care Act directing the Catholic Church and its organizations to include coverage for contraceptives. Manhart said this is a religious freedom issue. He also wanted the resolution to be sent to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly next year. It was defeated after short debate.

Pastor Ken Ruppert of Our Saviour, North Chesterfield, said his congregation council asked for a memorial to the ELCA Assembly seeking a constitution change to allow a new category of congregation membership for "members who disagree by faith or conscience with

ELCA Assembly decisions." These members would retain local congregation voting status but would not be counted in national ELCA membership totals. This would "keep the family together," he said. This was rejected after brief debate.

Two other resolutions were approved with little comment. The first asks the synod to recognize the Lutheran Association of Christian Educators (LACE) as a key organization supporting Christian education in ELCA congregations and synods. Another resolution said all congregations will have by next December a conversation among the council, pastor and other appropriate leaders about steps to reach out to other races and cultures in their communities.

2013 Budget increase

The assembly approved a 2013 budget of \$2,028,360, an increase of 15.6 percent from the \$1,754,236 in the current program. Much of the increase comes from a 3 percent raise for synod staff, salary for a full-time staff person in the office of the bishop east and a small increase for conference deans who have more responsibilities. Support of the ELCA will be 39 percent of unrestricted giving in 2013, up from 38 percent this year (2012). The 2013 program is "achievable and it will allow us to move forward," said George "Skip" Zubrod, synod treasurer.

Approval was given to 2013 minimum compensation of \$50,227 for a pastor with a housing allowance and \$39,831 for a pastor with a parsonage.

Elections

George "Skip" Zubrod was re-elected synod treasurer. Pastor John Wertz, St. Michael, Blacksburg, was re-elected and three were elected to the synod council. They are Phyllis Milton, Reformation, Newport News; Matt Wertman, Grace, Waynesboro, Lucille "CeCee" Mills, St. Timothy, Norfolk and Pastor Bill Nabers, St. Jacob-Spaders, Pleasant Valley. Pastors Wynemah Hinlicky, College, Salem, and Jim Utt, Grace, Winchester, were chosen as nominees for ELCA Churchwide Council.

Those elected as voting members for the 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly are Rose Stephens Booker, First, Norfolk; Elizabeth "Lizzie" Franz, St. Philip, Roanoke; Nancy Reed, St. Mark, Luray; Lucas Hakkenberg, College, Salem; Matt Wertman, Grace, Waynesboro; Rev. Phillip Martin, Epiphany, Richmond; and Rev. Karen Taylor, Bethlehem, Waynesboro.