

Bishop's Road Show

June 10, 2009

Synod Assembly summary for Church Newsletters and Bulletins

Dear Friends:

The 22nd Synod Assembly carried the theme of "The Church in Appalachia," and it will be long remembered by elections, Appalachian Minutes, Gettysburg Seminary, resolutions, great music and firsts.

The Rev. Ralph Dunkin was elected to serve a third term as Bishop of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod. Bishop Dunkin's current term concludes on August 31, 2009. At that time, he will have completed 12 years as our bishop. On September 1, 2009 he will begin term three and year thirteen.

The Assembly Elections Committee, chaired by Pastor Wendy Richter, got off easy with this Assembly as there was only one ballot for the election of a bishop and only one ballot for the general elections. Others elected were: **Synod Secretary** Marjorie Wolf (second term); Synod Council laity – James Snyder; **Youth Member at Large** – Synod Council – Amanda Murdurski; **Consultation Committee** – Pastors Larry Cantu and Wanda Childs and Laity, George Friedline; **Discipline Committee** – Pastors Linda Muhly and William Ridenhour and laity Kathy Klingensmith.

The Synod Committee for Appalachian Concerns was responsible for selecting eight pastors to discuss 8 different aspects of Appalachian ministry. These "minutes" covered topics like Pet Ministry, Multiple Parish Ministry, Spirituality, Second Career Pastors and Gifts of Lutheran Ministry to name a few.

This Assembly provided Gettysburg Seminary with three opportunities to address the Assembly. The first was in song entitled, "There's a Hole in my Pulpit." The Rev. Kathleen Reed, a member of the Development staff at Gettysburg, wrote the new words to the above named song that told the story of the need for more pastors. Rev. William Ridenhour, Synod Coordinator for the Seminary Crossroads Campaign, invited congregations to be receptive to the invitation to hear about this important campaign. On Friday evening, the Seminary provided a Beverage and Cheese party. Saturday morning found President Michael Cooper-White of Gettysburg Seminary addressing the Assembly acknowledging his gratitude to this synod for our strong support of Seminaries and seminarians.

Synod Council designated an hour of Assembly time for discussion of the Social Statement on Human Sexuality and the four implementing resolutions. At the start of this hour it appeared that the Assembly was tired of this issue and that no one would speak. That view did not last too long as eventually there was a line at the microphones. When it came time for a mock vote on these items, the Social Statement was defeated by a two-one margin and four resolutions were defeated by at least a three to one margin.

Most of the resolutions were discussed and voted upon on Saturday. The one exception was that concerning Lutheran Disaster Response. This one questioned how synod units are funded, and it was adopted. On Saturday, resolutions concerning "Dissolving of the ELCA," "Mountaintop Mining," "The Development of Theological Statements," "Support for Seminaries" and "Mission" were all debated. All of these resolutions were adopted except for "Mountaintop Mining" which was referred to Synod Council for the creation of a committee for further study. The only resolution to be defeated was the one entitled, "Dissolving of the ELCA."

Synod Council presented 10 Recommendations to the Assembly. These included the 2009 revised budget, the 2010 Proposed Budget, a Mission Support formula for 2010, that the 2011 Synod Assembly be held at Snow Shoe Resort with the 2010 Assembly being held at The Clarion Hotel, Wheeling with the host congregation being First English. First English will be celebrating her 150th Anniversary in 2010. The Assembly also adopted the recommendation that we use the Episcopal program of Fresh Start as needed and that we continue the Mennonite Mediation Process with the addition of two laity to receive the education.

The music for our devotions and for Friday night worship includes more people than I can possibly include. At the Wisp, we made use of the gifts of Lynn Grimm, Sue Peterson, Pastor Scott Robinson and that of Pastors Beth and Steve Folkemer. At St. Mark's we heard the choir, soloists and duets, the bell choir, the organ and guitar. All of the music was magnificent. Pastor Scott Robinson served as our Chaplain, and he inspired us through the prayers of other world religions. The Folkemers and some of our Assembly members played for us during the Gettysburg Seminary reception.

Now for four firsts: The Synod Committees for Church in Society and Worship combined with Community Lutheran Partners, Inc. to create a book entitled, "The Extra Row." This booklet was a response to hunger and to a resolution from 2008. Norma Bowyer and Pastor Brian Bennett were instrumental in seeing that this book was completed. A CD was made of this book for the Tour De Revs through the assistance of St. Timothy Lutheran Church and Dr. James Hansen.

Our second first was a write in election. Our by-laws allow for write ins for elections. It just has not happened before. We had three names written in for the Discipline Committee – Laity with Kathy Klingensmith being elected.

Our third first was the Rev. Matthew Riegel speaking to the Assembly on one resolution or another and then being seated. Seconds later, Tamara Riegel, spouse to Matthew, comes to a microphone and announces that she will serve as Matthew's interpreter.

The final first was the first distribution of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod's Fund for Leaders Scholarships. The Fund for Leaders announced in late April that we would have \$2,600 to award as scholarships in August. Synod Council formed a committee that voted upon to whom and how many scholarships to award. Entering seminary this fall is Grace Lauver and Kara Propst. Both were presented with mock checks in the amount of \$1,300. These gifts will go towards their first semester tuition costs.

Lost and Found: From the 2009 Synod Assembly a navy blue corduroy blazer from St. John's Bay. If this clothing item is yours, please phone the synod office (304-363-4030).

A prayer request: Pastor Lowell Mickelson, a seminary classmate and friend of Pastor Randy Richardson, is a pastor at Reformation Lutheran Church in Wichita, KS, where, on Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2009, a gunman shot and killed an usher during the worship service. Please keep Lowell, his family and the congregation of Reformation Lutheran Church in your prayers.

A second prayer request: Amanda Schlak, daughter to Pastor Ron and Victoria Schlak is to have surgery on Thursday in Pittsburgh for Crohn's Disease.

Student Loan Forgiveness Plan: There is a brand new public loan service plan that has just been established. The program discharges any remaining student loan debt after ten (10) years of full-time employment in public service (Church Roster's count), 120 consecutive payments and a consolidation

through the U.S. Department of Education. For more information on a Federal direct consolidation loan call 1-800-557-7392 or go to IBRinfo.org or www.finaid.org/loans/publicservice.phtml.

Your bishop's travel schedule will take me to the synod office this Thursday. I will be working at home today and part of Friday. On Saturday, Terry and I will be on vacation. When we return from vacation, I will change suitcases and head for a week at Camp Luther. The Sunday after Camp Luther, June 28, I will be at Trinity, Charleston. While I am on vacation, I will not make use of my lap top, nor my cell phone. Should you need me, please phone the synod office and Maureen will know how to reach me. This is also true for the week of Camp Luther. Some times my cell phone works in the mountains of Webster County and sometimes it does not.

For those of you who have asked me about preaching dates, my first open Sunday is December 13, 2009. Presently, I have made no commitments for Sundays in 2010.

Following my vacation and the week at church camp, my first day back in the synod office will be June 30.

In our Lord's Service,

+Ralph