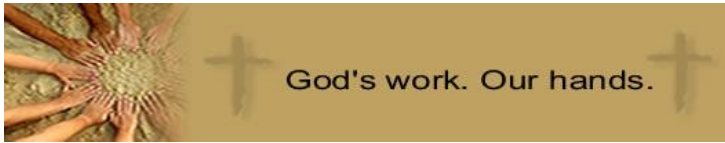


# Assembly Notes (not official minutes)

## 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Assembly of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Redwood Area Community Center, Redwood Falls, MN

Saturday, April 17, 2010



**Assembly Theme:** God's work. Our hands.

**Theme Text:** John 21:1-19

**Theme Hymn:** ELW 708 – Jesu, Jesu,  
Fill Us with Your Love

Serving in Christ's mission...

- ✠ Engaging Leaders
- ✠ Equipping Congregations
- ✠ Serving in God's World

**Mission Statement:** The congregations and all the baptized who are the Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are claimed by this mission: God places us in cities, farms, and towns together under one prairie sky. The Risen Christ surprises us with opportunities to plant God's Word in the world.

Walking together in confidence,

- ✠ we cultivate life-giving congregations,
- ✠ nurture partner ministries, and
- ✠ cooperate in the life of the ELCA.

By God's grace, together we have what we need.

### PLENARY SESSION 1 – SATURDAY MORNING GATHERING MUSIC

Gathering music was provided by the assembly musicians, Dakota Road. One of the band's co-founders, Larry Olson, grew up in our synod, on a farm near Madison, MN. More information is on their website: [www.dakotaroadmusic.com](http://www.dakotaroadmusic.com).

#### OPENING OF THE ASSEMBLY

Bishop Jon Anderson called the meeting to order and led the gathering in the Order for Opening of the Assembly. He then introduced Redwood Falls Mayor Gary Revier, who welcomed us and invited us to spend some time exploring the scenic beauty of the Redwood Falls area.

#### ORIENTATION

Rev. Becca Krogstad, chair of the assembly planning committee, made introductions, including others on the planning committee, and provided a brief orientation for voting members.

Bishop Jon introduced a number of special guests, including Rev. Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl, ELCA Coordinator for the Lutheran Malaria Initiative &

HIV/AIDS Strategy; Rev. Pablo Obregon, member of the ELCA Church Council; Rev. Dee Pederson, chair of the LIFT (Living into the Future Together) Task Force of the ELCA; Rev. Bob Berg of the ELCA Board of Pensions; Beth Lewis, President and CEO of Augsburg Fortress Publishing; and Rev. Mari Thorkelson, representing Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota.

#### ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Synod Vice-President Gwen Arneson assumed the chair. She gave a brief explanation of voting procedures using the colored cards in each voting member's materials.

The agenda, rules, and procedures contained in the printed assembly materials were adopted.

#### OPENING PRAYER

Linda Sandberg, a member of the assembly planning committee, led us in opening prayer.

#### SYNOD VOICE #1

Lee Johnson of Trinity in Sleepy Eye spoke about how powerfully he was affected by a chance to visit South Africa through the Companion Synod program. He described the impact of the chicken project, the rabbit project, and other programs supported by our synod.

#### NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Rev. Kristi Mitchell gave the report from the Nominating Committee and explained the procedures that will be used for voting. Nominations from the floor are permitted for all offices with the consent of the nominee. Several corrections were offered to spelling of names and church affiliations of nominees. It was noted that in two instances, a person had been nominated to serve as a voting member to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly from the synod at large as well as from a conference. If the person were elected in both categories, they would be asked to serve from the synod at large, and the conference would need to identify another voting member.

Several questions were raised about one Churchwide Assembly voting member position, originally designated to be a lay female, person of color. The Nominating Committee had difficulty identifying a qualified candidate, so they nominated Marie Nelson, who is not a person of color. Later the designation for the position was changed to be lay male or female, person of color, and two

additional candidates were nominated. Ms. Nelson's name was left on the ballot for that position, along with the two persons of color.

#### **RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE REPORT**

Michael Wojahn gave the report of the Resolutions Committee and moved that the assembly allow the WHEREAS clauses to be omitted in the reading of the resolutions. Motion carried.

#### **BIBLE STUDY #1**

Bishop Jon introduced Rev. Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl, ELCA coordinator for the Lutheran Malaria Initiative & HIV/AIDS Strategy and former bishop of the South Dakota Synod.

Rev. DeGroot-Nesdahl focused her presentation on the first 15 verses of the theme text, John 21:1-19. She identified three major themes and how they might connect to us as readers of the text.

The first theme was the call of the disciples to be followers of the risen Christ. After a night of unsuccessful fishing, we can imagine that the disciples were discouraged, tempers were growing short, they may have been bickering and finding fault with one another. The call that they received was to keep trying, don't be afraid, don't give up. The disciples' reaction was one of pure faith; all their fisherman's instincts would have told them there were no fish to be caught.

The second theme was God's abundance. When the disciples responded in faith to Jesus' voice, the catch was abundant. These were not small fish that were caught up in the net, but large fish, and a large quantity. The precise number of the fish was given, reminding us that God counts even the hairs on our heads. The fish belong to God, who gave them to the disciples. The fish were counted so precisely because they were a treasure. We, too, have been given God's abundance, and we are stewards of that abundance.

The third theme was Jesus' care for his disciples, illustrated by his presence among them, preparing a meal for them. We, too, experience Jesus' presence, which gives us the power to "do all things through Christ who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13)

#### **AUDITOR'S REPORT AND BUDGET PRESENTATION**

Synod Treasurer David Anfinson presented the auditor's report. It was moved, seconded, and passed to accept the report.

The budget for 2011 was introduced; discussion and voting will take place on Sunday. Mission support is lower than the 2010 budgeted amount. Personnel costs for the synod are down by more than 10%, due largely to staff reductions of .6 FTE.

#### **COMPENSATION GUIDELINES**

Rev. Evelyn Weston presented the proposed 2011 compensation guidelines. She noted that the proposed compensation for each step will be increased by 2.0% from 2010. This compares to a Consumer Price Index increase of 2.7%, making 2011 the third year in a row that synod compensation guidelines were adjusted by less than the amount of inflation. Discussion and voting on the compensation guidelines will take place on Sunday.

#### **CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT**

David Leitzman reported that there were 205 rostered leaders registered, with 158 having checked in, and 457 lay voting members registered, with 440 having checked in. The total, for voting purposes, is 662 registered persons, with 598 having checked in by Saturday morning. There were also 71 advisory persons and visitors registered, with 59 present.

#### **ELECTIONS, BALLOT #1**

Synod Minister Jeff Engholm explained the procedures for filling out the ballots.

It was moved, seconded, and passed that all unopposed positions would be considered elected. Gwen Arneson offered prayer, and ballots were cast by voting members.

Synod Minister Linda Pedersen made announcements while worship was being set up. She thanked the congregations who brought banners to display and those who had created videos using the assembly's theme: God's work. Our hands. Lunch will follow worship.

#### **WORSHIP**

Presider: Rev. Michelle Rowell  
Preacher: Bishop Jon Anderson  
Music: Dakota Road  
Offering: Will be used toward fulfilling the synod's commitment to Shared Ministries  
Scriptures:

- Acts 9:1-20
- Revelation 5:11-14
- John 21:1-19

Bishop Jon preached on the first lesson. He observed that "memory is strong, but God's hope is stronger." All of us have rebelled against God, as

Saul did before his conversion; most of us have more Saul in us than we would like to admit. But God comes after us to turn us around, because God has called us to be witnesses.

In addition to God calling Saul from his blood-lust, God also called Ananias from his fear. God uses the loud, violent, and overly certain ones; God also uses the quiet, timid, and uncertain ones. We trust that God will use us, turning Saul into Paul, turning Ananias into a healer, turning us into witnesses.

Following worship, the assembly recessed for lunch.

## **PLENARY SESSION 2 – SATURDAY AFTERNOON GATHERING MUSIC**

Gathering music was provided by Dakota Road. A special feature was a solo, “Held”, sung by Alli Schiller of Franklin, a sophomore at Cedar Mountain High School.

### **RESOLUTIONS**

Following the pattern of prior years, the assembly paused for prayer every 20 minutes during the consideration of resolutions.

Resolution 09.01 was brought forward for consideration. This resolution would change the name of one of the three synod boards from Serving in Christ’s Mission to Serving in God’s World. This proposed constitutional amendment was originally passed in 2009. Because it is a constitutional amendment, it requires passage at two consecutive assemblies by a 2/3 majority. The resolution passed.

Resolution 10.01 was brought forward for consideration. This resolution would memorialize the 2011 Churchwide Assembly to rescind the actions passed by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly that modified ministry policies.

It was voted to enter a 30-minute quasi-committee of the whole (a period of less formal discussion, alternating speakers pro and con, 2-minute time limits, without any procedural motions such as calling the question). Discussion ensued. After 30 minutes, formal consideration of the resolution resumed.

It was voted to use paper ballots when it came time to vote on the resolution.

It was moved and seconded to strike the words “including (number) of (number) voting on this

resolution” from the resolution. This would have the effect of allowing someone to support the resolution without claiming that the 2009 actions are contrary to scripture. Voting by red and green cards was inconclusive, so the chair called for a division of the house. The amendment passed with 267 votes in favor and 231 votes opposed.

Discussion of the amended resolution continued until it was time for the orders of the day.

### **SYNOD VOICE #2**

Lisa Bonds, Vice President of External Affairs at Lutheran World Relief, spoke about how it was God’s work in her life that led her to LWR. She talked about the ways in which the faith and prayers of family and friends, her congregation (Augustana in Washington, DC), and the staff of LWR had carried her and her husband, Aaron, through seven months of intensive treatment for his cancer.

### **BISHOP’S REPORT #1**

As in prior years, the bishop’s report will be delivered in several parts throughout the assembly. The first part is entitled “God’s Work.”

Bishop Jon introduced his report by showing a picture of a stained glass window depicting a woman clinging to a large stone cross, against a background of stormy seas. Noting that the woman was looking only at the cross, not at the storms around her, the bishop noted that what we focus on is important.

Turning to a portion of the theme scripture, the bishop noted Jesus’ instructions to Peter: Feed my lambs...tend my sheep. We are called to share the Gospel always and all ways.

The work of the church is to equip people for ministry and send them out in God’s name. That equipping, the work of the church, happens in four major ways: kerygma, koinonia, didakai, and diakonai.

Kerygma – proclamation. We are to proclaim the Gospel always, using both actions and words. This is everyone’s work.

Koinonia – fellowship and community. God’s work is to create communion. To illustrate how that might happen, the bishop challenged all members of the synod to read the book of Acts during the season between Easter and Pentecost. He noted that this task will take only the amount of time it takes to watch two episodes of “American Idol.”

Didakai – teaching the faith. As we pass the faith on to others, we have three tasks: to learn, to think

about what we have learned, and to live out what we have learned. Passing on our faith is something that God inspires and guides.

Diakonai – serving. God sends us to serve. God’s mission is bigger than the church; God has a mission for the whole world. Instead of thinking that the church has a mission, we realize that God’s mission for the world has a church to carry it out.

Bishop Jon briefly reviewed the state of the synod, stating that some are ready to move on in mission, while for others the language of moving on causes a struggle. Noting that it has been a challenging year on many fronts, the bishop reported that synod income is down 8.5%, campus ministry staffs are being paid 80% of their prior salaries, seminaries have experienced cutbacks, congregations are facing staff cuts or reductions in compensation, and that there is much tension in congregations. The bishop expressed appreciation that there is so much conversation going on and that Lutherans are becoming more passionate about what they believe.

The bishop noted that 14 congregations are at some point in the disaffiliation process, and 15 congregations are withholding benevolence from the synod and the ELCA. Many congregations have lost households, though some are seeing growth. In light of all this, the bishop urged congregations to “take care of your pastor; pastors are tired, and some are breaking under pressure.” There are signs that people are doing better at navigating their differences.

Focusing on the spirit of lament that seems to be present in the synod, the bishop quoted Augustine, saying that “hope has two beautiful children, anger and courage. When anger does not contain hope, it becomes destructive.” The bishop asked us to consider how much of our sadness is really about other issues and the feeling that we are not in control.

Bishop Jon showed photos and shared memories of rostered leaders who have died in the past year:

- ✠ Rev. Art Aadland
- ✠ Rev. Lowell Berg
- ✠ Rev. Art Berthelsen
- ✠ Rev. Clifford Grindland
- ✠ Rev. Dr. Clair Johnson
- ✠ Rev. Ken Kilheffer
- ✠ Rev. Dean Larsen
- ✠ Rev. Clifford Nelson
- ✠ Rev. David Otterness

- ✠ Dr. Jim Mahler (Associate in Ministry)
- ✠ Rev. Palmer Sevig
- ✠ Stan Smidt (Synodically Authorized Minister)

The bishop recognized congregations that have closed in the past year:

- ✠ Kansas Lake Lutheran in Butterfield
- ✠ Ellsborough Lutheran in Balaton
- ✠ Good Shepherd Lutheran in rural Appleton

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Synod Minister Linda Pedersen made announcements about workshops and dinner. Synod Vice President Gwen Arneson declared the assembly in recess until 7:00 P.M.

### WORKSHOPS

Two rounds of workshops were held at various locations in the facility and outside in the community. Topics addressed included: Doorway Evangelizing: An Experiential Workshop in Evangelizing; The Green Church: What can your church do to cut energy costs?; Gods Handiwork, Our Working Hands; There Is Hope: Working Together Feeding the Hungry; Lutheran World Relief Quilting Ministry; Nurturing Young People’s Faith in the Midst of Facebook and iPods; Lutheran Malaria Initiative: Walk with Us; Using Home and Community Gardens as a Way of Serving; Helping Families Practice Faith at Home; HIV and AIDS Strategy: Becoming an HIV-Competent Church; and Hearing for the Draft Social Statement on Genetics.

In addition, members could take part in several hands-on service projects, including Red Cross Comfort Kits, Seed Packet Stapling, Relay for Life Luminary Bags, Habitat for Humanity Storage Shed, Women of the ELCA Quilting, Women of the ELCA Knitting Hats, and Women of the ELCA Prayer Shawls.

### ADDITIONAL PLENARY SESSION

An additional business session was scheduled for 7 P.M. following dinner, moving the Dakota Road concert to 7:30.

### CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT

David Leitzman gave the Credentials Committee report as follows: 205 rostered persons registered, 184 present; 457 lay persons registered, 450 present; total 662 registered, 634 present; 62 advisory persons and visitors present.

## RESULTS

The results of Ballot #1 were announced. The following people were elected by the assembly:

For Synod Council, At Large: Rev. Julie Anderson, Winds of the Prairie, Ivanhoe; Kristy Henriksen, First, Pipestone; Youth: Alec Koster, Gloria Dei, Redwood Falls

For the Consultation Committee: James Swanson, American, Gaylord; Rev. Kathryn Skoglund, Trinity, Montevideo

For the Discipline Committee: Sandra Beito, Trinity, Sleepy Eye; Marilyn Chindvall, First English, Ortonville; Rev. Joyce Capp, Our Savior's, New Ulm; Rev. Kendall Stelter, Grace, Dawson

For Lutheran Campus Ministry: Rev. Ann Ward, Salem, Montevideo; Kristin Ruud, St. Stephen, Marshall

For Churchwide Assembly: Jane Wolle, First, St. James, alternate voting member; Rev. Yolanda Lehman, Atonement, St. Cloud, and Ferman Woodberry, Garfield, Madison, voting members, persons of color; Rev. Matthew Peterson, Faith, Spicer, voting member, clergy male

Before casting votes for Ballot #2, Vice President Gwen Arneson led us in prayer.

## RESOLUTIONS

Discussion regarding Resolution 10.01 as amended resumed. The question was called, which was supported heartily by the assembly. The bishop offered brief clarification on the spirit of the resolution and the ballots were distributed. After prayer led by Rev. Dell Sanderson, ballots were cast.

Attention moved to consideration of Resolution 10.02. Notice was given that Rev. Pablo Obregon would be offering a substitute resolution on the issue. Copies of the substitute resolution were distributed to the assembly. Attention was then turned to the orders of the day.

## DAKOTA ROAD CONCERT

The assembly musicians offered an evening of music. Interspersed with songs were various introductions and the presentation of the Servant of Christ Award.

## GUESTS

Bishop Jon introduced several distinguished guests: former synod bishop, Rev. Paul Ranum and his wife, Caryl Nelson; and former synod and presiding bishop, Rev. Herb Chilstrom and his wife, Rev. Corinne Chilstrom.

## SYNOD STAFF

The bishop then called the synod staff to the stage and introduced them. The synod staff includes: Tammy Sather, Communication Coordinator; Liza Eekhoff, Administrative Assistant to the Bishop and Synod Assembly Coordinator; Marlis Jacobsen, Financial Administrator; Carla Klawitter, Call Process and Candidacy Coordinator; Sara Johnson, Resource Service Center Coordinator; Lowell Krogstad, Men's Ministry Coordinator; Bill Elmstrom, Planned Giving Coordinator; Sarah Hausken, Synod Youth Ministry Coordinator; Rev. Larry Strenge, Director for Evangelical Mission; Rev. Linda Pedersen, Synod Minister; Rev. Joyce Piper, Synod Minister; and Rev. Jeff Engholm, Synod Minister. The bishop thanked these people for serving the synod so faithfully, and the assembly offered warm thanks by way of applause for all the work they do.

## SHARED MINISTRY PARTNERS

Next, the synod's shared ministry partners were presented. Each representative introduced himself or herself and offered a one-sentence summary of what God is up to in his or her ministry setting. These shared ministry partners are: Doug Swanson, Minnesota Council of Churches; Rev. Mark Peters, Lutheran Coalition for Public Policy; Paul Hanson, Luther Crest Bible Camp; Marv Nysetvold, Shetek Lutheran Ministries; Dave Eliason, Green Lake Lutheran Ministries; Rev. Sandy Rothschiller, Board of Pensions; Beth Lewis, Augsburg Fortress; Rev. Darrell Jodock, Gustavus Adolphus College; Rev. Jayne Thompson, Lutheran Campus Ministry, St. Cloud State University; Rev. Mike Carlson, Lutheran Campus Ministry, Ridgewater; Rev. Margaret Yackel-Juleen, Shalom Hill Farm; Paula Kitt, Mission Investment Fund; Kate Campbell, Augustana College; Rich Omland, Luther Seminary; Ben Stadler-Ammon, Wartburg College; Dave Leitzman, Great River Partnership; Marion McCrory, Women of the ELCA; Rev. Jim Rothschiller, Gustavus Adolphus College; Rev. Paul Baglyos, Region 3.

## PASTORS NEW TO THE SYNOD

After more music, pastors new to the synod were announced and asked to stand at their tables. These pastors include: Rev. Robert Amundson, retired; Rev. James Rothschiller, Gustavus Adolphus College; Rev. Christian Muellerliele, Zion, Litchfield; Rev. Ronald Letnes, Interim at American, Windom; Rev. Thomas Kolden, Interim at Hope, Minneota; Rev. Matthew Williams, Calvary, Willmar; Rev. Mahlon Bekedam,

Bethlehem, Hills; Rev. Yolanda Lehman, Atonement, St. Cloud; Rev. Tim Holt, English & St. Olaf, Walnut Grove; Rev. Joyce Graue, St. John's, Raymond; Rev. Daryl Thul, Trinity & Sillerud, Balaton; Rev. Lori Wold, Our Saviour's, Baxter & Saron, Montevideo; Rev. Christa Forsythe, First, Litchfield; Rev. Kristina Waters, Immanuel & Union State Line, Jackson; Rev. Joel Langholz, First, St. James; and Rev. Maggie Cumings, Beckville, Litchfield, and First, Cosmos. Unable to attend was Rev. Erin Wilkin, Gustavus Adolphus College.

#### **SEMINARY GRADUATES**

Seminarians who will soon graduate and have been assigned to the Southwestern Minnesota Synod were then called to the stage to introduce themselves to the assembly. They are: Bethany McCaughan, Luther Seminary; Linda Wimmer, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago; Willie Rosin and wife Jennifer, Wartburg Theological Seminary; Andrew Schensted and wife Lisa, Luther Seminary; Jennifer Thul and husband Rev. Daryl Thul, Luther Seminary. Unable to attend were Joseph Midthun and his wife Kelsey, Luther Seminary.

#### **INTERNS**

The five interns in the synod were called forward to introduce themselves. They are: Jacqueline Harvestine, Winds of the Prairie, Ivanhoe; Tina Mills, Prairie Star Ministries, Dundee; Lindsay Stolen, Grace, Dawson. Unable to attend were Jackie Rostad, First, Marshall; and Kathy Ulland-Klinker, Our Savior's, New Ulm. Dakota Road continued their concert.

#### **ANNIVERSARY OF ORDINATION**

Next, the bishop honored pastors who are marking milestone anniversaries of their ordinations. Each was invited on stage with his or her spouse and presented with a certificate. Celebrating 25th anniversaries are: Rev. Jerry Lanes and wife Bonnie, Scandian Grove, St. Peter; Rev. E. Corinne Chilstrom and husband Herb, retired; Rev. Todd Mattson, First, Morris; Rev. Robert Lehner and his wife Karen, St. Paul, Stewart; Rev. Ron Bockhaus, Peace, Cold Spring. Unable to attend were Rev. Randy Freund and wife Stephanie, Faith, Hutchinson; Rev. Donald Holmstrom, First, St. Peter; Rev. James Tetlie and his wife Louise, Faith Evangelical, Silver Creek.

Gwen Arneson and Jeff Engholm announced an additional 25th anniversary of ordination—Bishop Jon's. In recognition, the assembly joined in singing

“Silver Hair” (to the tune of “Silver Bells”). The original lyrics were based on Proverbs 16:31, “The silver-haired head is a crown of glory.”

Celebrating 50th anniversaries of ordination are: Rev. Arlen Foss and wife Lavonne, and Rev. Arlen Stensland and wife Lois. Unable to attend were Rev. Vernon Bigalk and wife Karen; Rev. Alvin Lewis Jr.; Rev. Paulus Pilgrim and wife Gladys; and Rev. Alan Schmidt and wife Clara.

#### **RETIRED LEADERS**

Pastors and AiMs who have retired in the past year were introduced and came forward to receive a certificate and a gift. Bishop Jon also read a fitting Bible verse he had chosen for each person. The retirees are: Signe Gray, AiM, and husband Thomas (Mt. 23:11); Rev. Carlton E. Nelson and wife Marsha (Mt. 13:31-32); Rev. Steven Quist and wife Ruth (Ps. 126:2); Rev. James Gronewold and wife Marsha (Romans 3:23-24). Unable to attend were Rev. Roy Williams and wife Lois. The music resumed.

#### **SERVANT OF CHRIST AWARD**

Bishop Jon then introduced Richard Andersen from Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota to present the 2010 LSS Servant of Christ Award. The congregation chosen for their outstanding service in their community and beyond was Trinity Lutheran in Grove City. Rev. Jean Smith and council member Mike Hendrickson, along with his wife, Karri, accepted the award.

After a little more music, Rev. Larry Strenge concluded the evening with announcements and prayer. The assembly was reminded to gather 15 minutes earlier than the printed schedule dictated the following morning at 8:45A.M.