

## Summary of other assembly actions

- ◆ **removed an item** from the assembly Rules of Procedure that would have directed that any proposed amendments to the budget not increase the total expenditures.
- ◆ elected a synod secretary, **Nancy Gordon**, Zion Lutheran Church, Middletown, Md.
- ◆ unanimously passed a resolution calling on synod congregations to advertise the opportunity of an **English language teacher in the Mara Diocese** of Tanzania, one of our Companion Synods, and that congregations "embrace this ministry and diligently seek to support it with continuing prayer, volunteers and designated gifts."
- ◆ unanimously called on synod congregations to strengthen their commitment to the **ELCA World Hunger Appeal and Lutheran World Relief**, with a goal of increasing overall support by 15%; that congregations observe Nov. 21, 2004, as World Hunger Appeal Sunday; and that each congregation name a Hunger Appeal representative.
- ◆ in response to the **Renewing Worship materials** being developed, directed the Synod Council to ask the ELCA Church Council to "conduct a theological review of all proposals and hymns, placing special emphasis on the Trinitarian language" before making any recommendations for adoption to the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.
- ◆ directed the Synod Council to communicate to Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich the church's **opposition to the death penalty** and to "implore him to reinstate a moratorium on executions" until failures in Maryland's capital justice system can be addressed; and recommended that synod congregations urge their members to convey to state legislators the need to remedy racial and economic disparities evident in Maryland's capital punishment and the need to establish in Maryland law that juries use "beyond a reasonable doubt" as standard of proof in considering the imposition of the death penalty.
- ◆ encouraged synod congregations to become aware of **community health needs**, especially in regard to the uninsured.
- ◆ collected **\$3,704 in offerings** at three worship services to be divided evenly between the synod's proposed Lutheran Adolescent Recovery Center, Jefferson, Md., and Hilltop Lutheran Neighborhood Center, Wilmington.

# Assembly Highlights

Delaware-Maryland Synod ELCA June 17-19, 2004

## 2004 Synod Assembly trip to Delaware proves even more exciting than last year's

The Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly's second trip to Delaware proved even more exciting than the first, with a dynamite keynote speaker, a thought-provoking Bible study leader, inspiring worship, three personal testimonials that brought many assembly-goers to tears, and even a thunder-cracking downpour and an unrelated power outage.

More than 500 Lutherans from the synod's 198 congregations journeyed to the Clayton Hall Conference Center at the University of Delaware, Newark, from June 17-19, for the 2004 Synod Assembly. The three-day convention for clergy and lay leaders, under the gavel of Bishop H. Gerard Knoche, combined several business sessions with education, inspiration, worship and fellowship under the theme, "Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed."



One of the first, and most joyful, orders of business was the official reception of a new congregation. People's Community Lutheran Church, a primarily Liberian congregation in Baltimore, was received with a unanimous vote and a standing ovation. In greeting assembly-goers, the Rev. Titus Clarke spoke of People's expanding ministry and committed the new congregation to working together with the synod and the ELCA.

### Budget passed with no amendments, no discussion

A second significant order of business was passing what the Rev. Richard Goodlin, pastor of St. Stephen Church, Arbutus, Md., and chair of the synod Budget Development Committee, termed "a roll-back budget" of \$2,958,303. "The synod budget is about mission, not money," he stressed, pointing out the specific programs which have been eliminated completely for 2005. "We are rolling back the budget to under the 2004 level," he said.

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**2005 Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly**  
**Clarion Conference Center Antietam Creek, Hagerstown, Md.**  
**June 9-11, 2005 (one week earlier than usual)**  
**"Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are gathered"**

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The synod will continue to share its mission support money with the ELCA in a 53%-47% split, according to the budget, which passed without discussion or proposed amendments from the floor of the assembly.

The item eliciting the most discussion from assembly voting members was the proposed memorial to the ELCA regarding the recent Texas criminal court decision involving a former pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) that resulted in his conviction on 14 counts of sexual assault against children and for possession of child pornography. After initially tabling the memorial Friday morning to allow voting members to read pertinent material, and after many proposed amendments, only some of which were accepted, the memorial in its final form was passed Saturday morning.

The memorial calls on the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to "uphold 'Vision and Expectations' as the enforceable and enforced policy concerning the doctrinal and behavioral standards of all rostered persons...; it further resolves that 'Vision and Expectations' be adhered to in every expression of the ELCA; ...that all candidates be fingerprinted and receive a national criminal background check...; and that in every expression of the ELCA a child protection policy be developed and implemented to protect our children and youth from abuse of any kind."

### **Church vitality dependent on strong sense of identity**

The Rev. Kelly L. Fryer galvanized the assembly with her keynote address Friday afternoon and brought many worshipers to tears with her story-sermon at Saturday's 8 a.m. worship. The author of several books, most recently and most notably, "Reclaiming the 'L' Word," Fryer spoke with humor and conviction of everything from her recent purchase of a bright yellow pick-up truck to her decision that "the job of a pastor is not to do ministry but to help people hear their own call to do ministry and to see themselves the way God sees them--as incredibly gifted children of God." She focused repeatedly on the idea that "We are God's people through Jesus Christ, people who happen to be Lutheran," emphasizing that "the vitality and renewal of our churches will begin when we are really clear about that identity."

Gettysburg Seminary faculty member, the Rev. Dr. Richard Carlson, also focused on the assembly theme in his Bible studies, specifically on the book of Galatians. As the assembly opened Thursday evening, he explored the differences between the 21<sup>st</sup> century world and that of the Apostle Paul, especially as each would regard the idea of being marked with the cross of Christ. On Friday night, Carlson challenged listeners with the question, "What does God's sending mission look like in your spot in the world?"

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After again comparing the past and present churches, he said, "Neither your congregation nor your synod came up with the crazy idea of taking the gospel out into the world--God did... The community is sent to bring the cross into the world, and the very fact that God sees you and your congregation as spearheading that mission is proof of God's wacky sense of humor."

Continuing with what is now a long tradition, three "Faith Byte" segments provided moving testimonials. Dave and Sue Pumplin, New Hope Church, Columbia, Md., spoke of the recent unexpected death of their 34-year-old daughter, saying, "Our faith made Beth's death a painful but bearable experience instead of one which left us with no hope to endure the rest of our lives." The Rev. Jimmie Schwartz, chaplain at Carroll Lutheran Village, Westminster, Md., told the story of one of his undergraduate professors who ended life as a patient in the Village's Alzheimer's unit. Scott Amores, Salem Church, Catonsville, Md., had listeners alternating between laughter and tears as he talked about his Jewish heritage and eventual adult baptism at the same time as his three sons were baptized. It "has made all the difference to me and my boys," he said. "I carry that mark...I never forget it."

## **Where were you when the lights went out?**

ELCA representative Kenn Inskeep was at the podium, just beginning his first presentation, Friday morning shortly after 9 a.m., when the huge plenary hall in the Clayton Hall Conference Center went dark. As isolated emergency lights flickered on, it became apparent that the entire building was without power.

After 10 minutes or so, the Rev. Barbara Bornemann, pastor at Evangelical Church, Frederick, Md., and assembly chaplain, made her way to the piano and, with Mr. Clair Johannsen, Trinity Church, Hagerstown, Md., gamely playing in the dark from memory, began an impromptu sing-along. An enthusiastic version of "Shine, Jesus, Shine" was punctuated by participants who brought forth small flashlights (or maybe blue laser pointers--it was too dark to tell) and played them on the ceiling in time to the music.

When even familiar songs, concert antics, and bad jokes about keeping the assembly's light under a bushel began to wear thin, Bishop Jerry Knoche made an executive decision to rearrange the agenda. Using his own powerful voice rather than the portable bullhorn supplied by Clayton Hall staff, Knoche instructed participants to break into their small groups in the plenary hall and two nearby rooms to discuss *Part Two: The Church and Homosexuality*, part of the materials for the ELCA studies on sexuality.

Just as it began to sink in that the power outage meant no air conditioning, the power came back on in time for the end of the small groups and resumption of the agenda.

