
Assembly Highlights

Delaware-Maryland Synod ELCA

June 14-16, 2007

Yolanda Tanner elected vice president of synod

In one of the main pieces of business to come before the 2007 Delaware-Maryland Synod Assembly, Yolanda Tanner defeated incumbent Donna Kent for the position of vice president, by a vote of 273 to 118. The vice presidency is the synod's highest elected position occupied by a layperson. In her four-year term as vice president, Tanner will chair the Synod Council, which acts as a board of directors for the synod's ministry between meetings of the annual assembly. A member of Immanuel Church, Manchester, Md., Kent was seeking her third term as vice president. Tanner, a member of St. Philip's Church, Baltimore, currently chairs the assembly's Committee for Reference and Counsel and has long been active in synod affairs. Professionally, she is a Juvenile Court Master (magistrate) for the City of Baltimore.

The 464 voting members to the assembly, which met for the second consecutive year at the Eisenhower Center, Gettysburg, Pa., also passed a budget for 2008 with total operating expenses of nearly \$3 million (\$2,984,712). Of that, 53%, some \$1,450,302, will go to the synod's parent denomination, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for shared ministries.

Although the budget passed during Thursday night's business session without much debate, there had been considerable discussion at the beginning of the session when it came time to adopt the assembly's Rules of Procedure. As presented, the rules specified that any amendments proposed to the budget when presented could not increase total expenditures; in other words, amendments increasing one line item must be offset by an equivalent decrease in another line item so that total expenditures remain constant. One voting member moved to modify the rules to delete that specification about amendments to the budget.

Speaking in favor of the rules modification, Pr. Gregg Knepp (St. John Church, Pimlico, Baltimore) said, "As a matter of principle, we should as an assembly be able to make additions and corrections as the spirit moves this body." Pr. Joe Donovan, (Trinity Church, Boonsboro, Md.) addressed one of the assembly's major concerns; namely, that cuts will need to be made in staffing because of declining income. "Unless our congregations are willing to fund the budget, [changing the Rules of Procedure] just puts mission teams in a tremendous struggle to figure out where to cut in order to fund items that the Synod Assembly says they wish to have funded," he said. The assembly defeated the proposed rules change by a vote of 202 to 90.



Strategic Plan presented

Bishop H. Gerard Knoche presented, as his report to the synod during Friday night's business session, a Strategic Plan for the synod's ministry for 2007-2012. The plan was developed over the course of a year by a group from the Synod Council working under the direction of Gary Kulik, Salem Church, south Baltimore. (Copies of the plan summary are available to download from the synod website, *DeMdSynod.org*, in the top right section of the front page and on the 2007 assembly page.)

The plan emphasizes three main goals: expanding the church in response to the Great Commission, developing a mission-focused leadership, and addressing society's needs. Each goal has been developed with a series of action items, strategies and a preliminary list of those responsible for carrying out the action items.

For instance, two of the action items for the first goal, expanding the church, are increasing biblical literacy and increasing the number of synod congregations by one mission start per year. Under the goal of developing a mission-focused leadership, some of the action items are increasing the number of ministry candidates and graduating 60 more people from the synod Leadership Academy. Addressing society's needs, goal three, includes among its action items

addressing racism and creating the Lutheran Adolescent Recovery School.

Judy Bultman galvanizes assembly-goers

Although keynote speaker Judy Bultman was scheduled to deliver one keynote address bright and early Friday morning, she wound up delivering a second Saturday morning, both at full volume, in full pacing mode and with larger-than-life gesticulations. As the director of the Bethel Lutheran Church Hurricane Katrina Ministry (Biloxi, Miss.), she lent a special poignancy to the assembly theme emphasis on service.

The statistics she recited continue to stagger the imagination. "In 11 hours, 200 square miles of the United States' Gulf Coast were totally devastated," she said. Some 770,000 people were made homeless with Hurricane Katrina. Nonetheless, she said, "Every day we are walking in a miracle. Something happens when you step out and step into the light of Christ." She told a series of personal stories that put a face on the tragedy for assembly-goers. But, she said, what she's learned in the last 21 months is that "this is not about rebuilding the coast. This is about renewing and rebuilding our church, the church of Christ. What I have seen happen down there is that you step out and respond to his call." She concluded Friday morning's keynote with a call to action. "When people are going through their hardest time is when God becomes the most real... When God sends you a disaster, know that he's calling you to walk in his light in that time."

Saturday morning's impromptu keynote began in a completely darkened plenary hall, with Judy carrying a single lit candle from the back of the hall through the tables of voting members, singing "Here I Am, Lord." After presenting Bishop Knoche with a large framed picture of a tree that she discovered as having come through the hurricane in the shape of a cross, she said, "This cross has become the symbol for our ministry through you who accept his call along the Gulf Coast. But the important thing is that you answer God's call... and it doesn't matter if you come down there. God is calling you to step out in faith." (To see the picture, visit <http://myweb.cable one.net/LESMBETH/index.htm>.)

In other actions, Synod Assembly voting members...

...reelected **A.M. "Mick" Thistle** (St. Martin, Annapolis, Md.) to a third term as synod treasurer, defeating James Summers (St. Paul, Jefferson, Md.) by a vote of 331-60.

...set aside **Sun., Oct. 21, 2007**, to recognize, celebrate and support the ministry of the Community of St. Dysmas, an ELCA congregation behind the bars of the Maryland Correctional System.

...unanimously pledged to be a **ONE Synod** and invited synod congregations to become ONE congregations, including pledging ONE percent of their congregational budgets above and beyond their requested synodical mission support to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal. (See ONE.org for more information.)

...set aside **Sun., Jan. 13, 2008**, as Companion Synod and Diocese Sunday within the synod.

...encouraged congregations, administrative offices and related institutions "to adjust their wage practices and policies with regard to their fairness, justice and sufficiency, taking into consideration the concept of 'living wage' for their location."

...unanimously voted to create a **young adult task force** for a period of two years to assess current young adult life in the synod and report to the 2009 Synod Assembly their findings on young adult life and participation in the synod, a summary of feedback from young adults, and any further suggestions regarding young adult participation in the synod; asked each congregation of the synod to designate a representative to serve as liaison to the task force and to submit that person's name to the task force no later than Oct. 1, 2007.

...referred to the **Synod Council** a resolution asking for additional council support for interim ministry.

...unanimously endorsed the **Strategy for Outreach with Latino Persons in the Delaware-Maryland Synod**, as proposed by the synod's Latino Ministry Strategy Team, and authorized the strategy team to become the implementation team responsible for managing and monitoring implementation of the strategy's objectives. (A copy of the strategy is available on the assembly page of the synod website, DeMdSynod.org.)