



2017 Synod Assembly

DAILY UPDATE

Central States Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Saturday, June 10

Martin Luther trivia:

What leading reformer was known as the Morning Star of Wittenberg?

Katie Luther.

What name did Martin Luther adopt when he was abducted by supporters and taken to the Wartburg Castle?

Knight George.

What were the empty barrels Katie hid in used for? Fish.

With Bishop Roger presiding Saturday morning, the Assembly then moved to elect unopposed candidates Rev. David Strommen, Jeanie Schuler, Susan Boxberger and Grace Vannoy to the Synod Council. In the only contested election, Rev. Kristin Koch was elected to the Council as an at-large member.

Synod Treasurer Scott Schulte brought to the Assembly the proposed budget for 2018 and the financial results from 2016. He noted the trend toward reduced support from congregations continued for the eighth year. In 2016 total revenue and support was \$1.75 million; which was \$78,482 less than anticipated. Total expenditures were \$1,742,268; which was \$90,500 less than budgeted. The synod contributed \$853,733 to the churchwide ELCA, down \$22,068 from the previous year. The synod proposes to spend more than \$1.75 million during 2018.

Synod Council Vice President Dennis Allerheiligen reported the Synod Council is actively addressing studying ways to reduce the cost of operating the Synod and the costs of educating clergy. Under consideration are proposals including centering the annual Synod Assembly at one location and modifying and perhaps reducing steps required for candidates to become ordained and to be available to serve as pastors. An additional approach, already implemented, is the increasing use of lay PMAs, Pastoral Ministry Associates.

Addressing resolutions, the Assembly amended Resolution 17.05 on Environmental Stewardship to change the term "climate change" to "climate damage." The Assembly also approved a resolution on refugees and immigrants following an extended discussion of proposed amendments concerning a resolution that the Synod explore becoming a Sanctuary Synod of the ELCA and to report back on that proposal at the 2018 Assembly. A proposal to schedule next year's Assembly to begin on a Friday and end on the following Sunday was defeated.

The proposed Compensation Guidelines were amended to permit congregations to allocate two per cent of clergy compensation to retirement of the principle of student loan debt.

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The cost of leadership in the church – as well as its quality and quantity – were clearly on the mind of ELCA Presiding Bishop Eaton as she noted the changes coming over the church and its members. For most of the past 500 years, she noted, Christians had been killing Christians. All of a sudden, we are responding to “a vision of a diverse world coming together” ELCA churches and their members had been doing this through a deepening involvement in Lutheran World Relief and the Lutheran Hunger Appeal, “ministries you helped to fund,” she told the Assembly.

Another aspect of this change in leadership is finding expression in the ELCA through efforts to develop programs to increase participation in its programs through outdoor ministries such as Camp Tomah Shinga. ELCA has participated in ecumenical and inter-religious relations with Methodists, United Church of Christ, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and other denominations while Lutherans discover how they may remain true to ourselves and engage with other religions. “There are no more mono-religious communities in the United States anymore,” which reflecting the increasing diversity of the world we live in.

That theme was echoed in a Friday afternoon workshop conducted by Rev. Michael Malone who led several trips for Team 500 to explore Martin Luther’s life and thoughts at several key sites in Germany. He advanced a new way of thinking about Luther, suggesting the Reformation was the start of globalization, a process ongoing today.

What Luther did, he said was something much more than an act by an angry monk nailing 95 theses to a door. Before Luther’s outburst, there was one church in all of Europe and there was one Lingua Franca, Latin. Governments were highly decentralized and the world was slowly adopting capitalism. After 1800, there were multiple church denominations, strong central governments and multiple languages. The Reformation had triggered a reassessment of the culture and theology of Europe and its colonies.

He said the series of trips sponsored by the Central States synod will include one more opportunity to participate in “an invitation to conversation,” in December. More could be arranged in 2018 according to the interest from 14 to 24 participants willing to participate as a group.

Another stimulating workshop session was presented by Dr. Sofia Khan, a Muslim physician from the Peace Clinic in Kansas City, who gave a passionate, objective overview of Islam and its contemporary practice in the world.

Dr. Kahn was a participant along with representatives of the Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, Congregational, Jewish congregations from the Kansas City area at Atonement Lutheran Church in Overland Park.

ELCA Presiding Bishop Eaton presented the sermon. “What a day!” she exclaimed under the brilliant sunlight that flooded the church Saturday afternoon. She noted the ecumenical diversity of those participating in the closing Festival Worship of the 2017 Assembly, “What’s going on here as we meet the word of God?” Referring back to her earlier observation that Christians had spent the better part of the past 500 years killing other Christians, that was a time when there seemed to be a battle of the Gods, when if your God lost you felt you lost, that your God may not have been that powerful or had forgotten his people. That left many feeling like a lonely “lion in a den of Daniels.”

Such feelings came from attempts to make God do what we want God to do. But, as Jeremiah said, it was we who broke the covenant, not God. God is single-minded, and therefore trustworthy. We can give all to God because God can be trusted. “We live because of God’s promises.”

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Editor’s Note: Thank you to Jack Kenward for volunteering to write these Daily Updates. RM