

## Our Future.....

A total of 112 youth attended Lutheran Youth Assembly (LYO) this year, concurrent with the Assembly --hearing many of the same speakers and dealing with many of the same issues. **Our Synod has the largest gathering of youth for this type of event within the entire ELCA!**

Keeping Young Adults Connected (KYAC) also met and encouraged congregations to involve young adults in the life of the church. Talk with them for creative ideas for your church: [walterdh@jmu.edu](mailto:walterdh@jmu.edu).

*In a moving speech, Tim Cywinski, president of the LYO shared these words with the combined assembly:*

Every year we are told to go out into the world and represent our faith as “Ambassadors for Christ.” Well, to be honest, I’ve never really known what that means, until this year. I say this because I always figured “Ambassadors for Christ” was a relative term. Everyone’s faith is a little bit different, a little bit special. But, now I’ve grown to believe what being an “Ambassador for Christ” means to me.

I learned that there’s hope. Hope, that in a world this corrupt, this violent and this dark, there are still those out there who believe that we can be the spark that refuses to go out. That we can be like Christ, in a way, where we stand against injustice, and speak for those who don’t have a voice --be people who believe that apathy is no longer an option. People, so amazing, who believe that one individual can change the world, just like Christ taught us to do. This means that there is a chance that we can, in fact, through our faith, get through the problems that don’t only affect us --Lutherans, Christians-- but everyone. That’s what being an “Ambassador for Christ” means.

It means that we have an obligation as followers of Christ to make --not just ourselves --not just our communities --not just our nation, but the **world** better. To fight for a world that truly represents God’s unconditional love. Being an “Ambassador for Christ” means that when a people of faith band together for a common purpose, there is **no obstacle** that can’t be overcome. There is no challenge that is too great, and there is **no person that can’t be saved**; and the potential for reaching this better world is endless in the youth. And it is only with your help that we realize **God’s work is in our hands.**

## Report of the Virginia Synod Assembly

June 5-7, 2009

Roanoke College



## God’s Work Our Hands

**The purpose of the annual Assembly is to hear about and do the work of the church. But it is WORSHIP that is the glue! We began each day with worship; hearing pastors from across the Synod preach the very good news of Christ. There was robust singing and meaningful communions.**

Bishop Mauney told about a weather satellite that was imaging the heavens. Its data, though, was **verified** by 10,000 deckhands on ships around the world. It was “ground truth.” Likewise, God’s work from the heavens is **verified** by thousands of believers who can see the evidence of God’s work and are using their hands to help make it happen!

This was the recurring message of the Assembly, demonstrated by the many speakers, agencies, and programs that do God’s work throughout Virginia, the nation and the world. Thanks to your congregational support, the work is being done in the name of Christ --reaching out with His love to all.

- ✓ Three new pastors were **ordained**: Andrew Bansemer (Ebenezer, Marion); Kristin Hunsinger (Christ, Richmond); and Ryan Viands (Christ, Bedford Cty. PA).
- ✓ **The Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)** is made up of 10,500 congregations organized into 65 synods, representing 4.8 million believers.

## Resolutions of significance:

1. The **2010 minimum compensation** base salary of a pastor serving in the Virginia Synod is set at \$38,660/with parsonage and \$48,750 with housing allowance.
2. Virginia congregations are encouraged to elect at least one lay voting member to the Synod Assembly who is **under the age of 30**.
3. Congregations are encouraged to adopt and implement a **Disaster Response Plan** for their congregation --which would include backing up important data, reviewing insurance coverage, taking inventory of physical assets; and at a second level, reach out to members and the community to meet their needs in a disaster situation.
4. The **2010 Spending Plan for Ministry** was approved. The plan will be reduced in March if necessary. Every congregation is encouraged to incrementally increase their giving. The Virginia Synod passes on 50% of its income to the work of the national church.
5. Authorization is given to the Synod Council to **increase salaries** of Synod Staff if income allows. The Synod staff has not had increases for the last two years. They relinquished their 2% increase when congregational support was not adequate.
6. Our Synod approved the recommendation of the Churchwide Assembly **for Full Communion with the United Methodist Church**. While the Churchwide Assembly, in August, will vote on this, the Virginia Synod sends its vote to the larger church for consideration. This will allow for recognition of baptisms and ordinations between the two church bodies.
7. Our Synod endorses the change in rules for the Churchwide assembly to require a **SUPER MAJORITY** (2/3's vote) by the Churchwide Assembly for adoption on any motion that changes the church's current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers, diaconal minister or associates in ministry. Currently it is a simple majority.
8. Informative and significant discussions on **racism** and the **vision-impaired** led the Assembly to pass resolutions to request the ELCA to "take the necessary steps to abolish racism throughout this whole church and review the factors inhibiting people of color from experiencing the fullness of leadership in this church"; AND to request that the ELCA provide a full-time program to make resources readily available in Braille, audio CD and large print for its members.

## *Though we are not united at times*

### *We are forever united in Christ*

- ✓ Of greatest interest was the topic of the proposed ELCA Social **Statement on Human Sexuality**.
- ✓ A social statement is a "theological and teaching document that assists members in forming judgments on social issues". It also includes "instructions and recommendations on how governing principles and directives are to be carried out by different part of this church."
- ✓ It seeks to answer the question: **What does it mean for us as sexual creatures to love our neighbors as ourselves and thus fulfill God's law of love in this time and society?**
- ✓ **Elements of the statement** deal with God's creative activity in human birth and the need to have relationships with others. Strong families are the foundation for both love and trust. Children must be protected from harm by others. Marriage is recognized as a union between a man and a woman. It speaks against non-monogamous, promiscuous and transient sexual relationships or casual sexual encounters. It also discusses the complexity of same-gender committed relationships and notes that this has "brought biblical scholars, theologians, rostered and lay persons to different conclusions."
- ✓ In an unusual practice, the entire Virginia Assemble became a **quasi-committee of the whole** to allow open discussion of the Social Statement without the rules of parliamentary procedure.
- ✓ Conversation was insightful, faithful, and sometimes painful but always respectful. At one point, the voting results were incorrectly tallied and for a time it appeared that the Virginia Assembly had rejected the Social Statement. However, votes were recounted and the Assembly **PASSED** the resolution by a vote of 220 to 170 to endorse the Social Statement on Human Sexuality. The straw vote and final vote revealed that there is not a clear consensus on the Social Statement and there is still strong, thoughtful and faithful disagreement. The Virginia Synod **rejected the action proposals** and urged the ELCA to **maintain its current standards for ordination**.
- ✓ The Virginia Synod will **send these results** to the Churchwide Assembly, as an indication of sentiment. Our voting members from Virginia who will attend the Churchwide Assembly in August will vote their consciences.