

announced that a fund for pastors' scholarships to attend Power in the Spirit has raised \$30,000 in Gunsten's memory.

Emphasis was placed on the 25 years of the Synod after the formation of the ELCA in 1988. Retired Pastor Jim Utt of Grace, Winchester, author of a forthcoming 25-year history of the Synod, gave several "history moments" and the Assembly recognized Synod leaders during that quarter-century.

ELCA plans a day of service on Sept. 8

Duran, a frequent speaker in the Synod, said the ELCA is "reaching out to a variety of communities" in more than 100 countries and plans are being made for a churchwide day of service on Sept. 8. He said he senses "a feeling for the Gospel in this Synod... We are missional in our thinking... Every member of the ELCA is a missionary of grace." The ELCA has 42 congregations of homeless members and new communities are being formed, "being the church in the public arena." Duran recalled that the ELCA was formed in 1988 by three church bodies who decided "they can be stronger together than apart."

In his annual report, Bishop Jim Mauney talked about the Assembly voting members as "people of influence," sharing faith and relationships. "You are intentional about the leadership we bring into the Synod." The ELCA Malaria Campaign has raised \$119,000 in the Synod toward a goal of \$250,000. Virginia ranks 28th among the 65 ELCA synods in Malaria Campaign receipts, up from 52nd place. Planning is underway for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in October 2017. The bishop is asking that no child in the state will be hungry at that date. Congregations are caring for the homeless and feeding children, he said.

A highlight of the festive service at St. Andrew's Catholic Church in Roanoke on Saturday night was the consecration of Dr. Phyllis Milton as the Synod's minister for Christian formation. Bishop Mauney preached at the service, celebrating the 25th anniversary of Synod.

Five speakers on the 5K "knows"

Dr. Tony Everett, who is retiring as pastoral care professor at Southern Seminary, said, "knowing your relationship starts with Jesus and continues with the flocks." He stressed the importance of "knowing people, sharing deep, interpersonal relationships. Go where people are not like you."

The Rev. Deborah Stehlin, director of evangelical mission in the Minnesota Synod, urged the Assembly to "know your neighborhood and God's mission in it." Too many people don't know about God, she said, but there is a growing number of people with a vision of church growth. The goal of relationships is "making God visible and tangible." Dr. Marcus Miller, retired president of Southern Seminary, talked about "knowing your colleagues." They are "a great source of encouragement." Look around, he suggested. "Find good in the other. These are your colleagues, a gift to you. In supporting each other, congregations can rejoice when good things happen in the neighborhood, Miller said.

(Report of the Virginia Synod Assembly, June 5-9 at Roanoke College)

Synod Assembly "runs" 5Ks, debates gun violence

More than 400 people "ran the 5K" of knowing their neighborhood, colleagues, their people, Martin Luther, the Confessions and Jesus and the Scriptures at the 25th annual Virginia Synod Assembly at Roanoke College in Salem, June 5-9. Relationships were a common thread of five speakers on "know" subjects.

In a debate on gun control, voting members decided to postpone indefinitely affirmation of a 1993 ELCA social message calling for action on gun control and for opposition to the "culture of violence." In a separate resolution asking for advocacy to restrict the sale of military-style weapons, the convention asked Synod Council to name a committee to study the issue and report to the 2014 Assembly. Pastor Lou Florio of Messiah, Mechanicsville, a former policeman, and Gregory Bergeret, Our Redeemer, Petersburg, an ordnance officer, questioned the accuracy of the resolution language, saying the issue demands research for the use of accurate wording. A half-dozen voting members urged immediate action, citing the Virginia Tech shootings and other recent gun violence. "Do we really want to say nothing" Nia Indelicato of St. Michael, Blacksburg, asked. A member of Our Saviour, Richmond, said, "We want to talk about it in the right terms."

The Assembly approved two other resolutions encouraging support of people living in isolation and for expansion of cross-cultural conversations in "every willing congregation." Two mental health professionals—Dr. Amy and William Assiker of Holy Trinity, Wytheville, said isolation "separates individuals of all ages from the love and support of a helping community." Their resolution encourages congregations and individuals to partner with institutions and agencies to identify and reach out to those who are living in isolation.

The multicultural ministries resolution asks congregations to talk as Christians cross-culturally with members of their communities and calls on the Synod's African-American Outreach Team to develop and implement training for leaders to expand cross-cultural conversation. The resolution cites the growth of Latino and African-American populations and says the church is "called in scripture to be reflective of and involved in the wellbeing of its community."

Another resolution asking that the ELCA consider moving its main office from Chicago to a more centrally located smaller city was referred to the Synod Council. J. Lee Wall, Shiloh, Blacksburg, said expenses would be less and the church would be closer to areas where it could influence growth.

Pastor Chip Gunsten, Bishop Emeritus V. A. Moyer recalled Two men who were not there—the late Pastor Chip Gunsten, assistant to the bishop, who died in December, and Bishop Emeritus V. A. "Buck" Moyer, 92, who is recovering from a fall—were remembered by many at the Assembly.

Gunsten "served our church with great passion and integrity. His gifts made the church stronger," said the Rev. Ruben Duran, director of new congregational development for the ELCA. Moyer had attended 68 annual synod assemblies through last year, said Bishop Jim Mauney. The bishop dedicated two torches and said a tree will be planted in memory of Gunsten. A picture of Gunsten at a baptismal font was shown and a report Dr. Paul R. Hinlicky, Roanoke College religion professor, spoke about "What it is to

know Martin Luther.” In Europe, Luther is “iconic” but in the U.S., his image is less known. “He often is the object of indifference. We are trying to remediate that indifference.” Hinlicky has circulated a series of essays about Luther’s hymns and he plans to write on the lectionary, “lessons on what it is to know Luther” in the coming year.

Dr. Shauna Hannan, homiletics professor at Southern Seminary, speaking on “Know Jesus and the scriptures,” said, “We know Jesus Christ through the cross... The way of the cross is central to what it means to practice Christianity, to know Jesus.” Hannan said she wants “a God who commands through strength. We want a Jesus who can kick butt around here.”

After each of the “know” lectures, the 70 members of the Youth Assembly joined adults at tables of a half-dozen seats for discussion of each topic. They talked about such questions as “What does it look like to follow Jesus in your own life? In your congregation? Describe some indicators that Jesus ‘knows’ you.”

Synod budget for 2014 increases 5.01 percent

The Assembly approved a 2014 spending plan of \$1,739,539 for next year, an increase of 5.01 percent from the 2013 budget. George “Skip” Zubrod, Synod treasurer, said the plan was designed to meet the needs of the Synod and its members. Churchwide support was raised very slightly to 38.2 percent from the current 38.1 percent. Compensation for the bishop, staff and support staff was increased by 5 percent. Zubrod said the Synod hopes to fill the office of the bishop-east as soon as financing is possible. In 2013 and 2014, Synod Council eliminated funding for operational committees, except for Virginia Missions, supporting new congregations, and Leadership Support and Candidacy.

Synod Council elections

Five Synod Council members were elected. They are Robert Burger, Epiphany, Richmond; Barry Proctor, Redeemer, Bristol; Rosemarie Stephens-Booker, First, Norfolk; Debbie Mintiens, Emanuel, Woodstock, and Jody Smiley, St. Michael, Blacksburg. Three members elected to the Committee on Discipline are Charles Downs, Christ, Roanoke; Keith Robertson, Salem, Mt. Sidney, and the Rev. Steven Ridenhour, Holy Trinity, Wytheville.

LFS announced Hearts & Hands winners

In celebration of its 125th anniversary, Lutheran Family Services presented awards recognizing people with passion, energy and delight in service. Steve Kipps, Mt. Zion, New Market, and Elisa Mangubat, a youth from First, Norfolk, won diamond awards. Gold awards went to Jane Perry, Zion, Edinburg; Patty Sensabaugh, Muhlenberg, Harrisonburg; George Kegley, St. Mark’s, Roanoke, and Tim Cywinski, a youth from Our Saviour, Warrenton. Honorable mention was given Wally Coffey and Sidney Miller, St. Mark’s Roanoke; Connie Fauber, St. Peter, Toms Brook; Garry Lautenschlager, College, Salem; Rev. Jim Utt, Grace, Winchester, Dianne Krallman, St. Michael, Blacksburg; and Melissa Whetzel, Martin Luther, Bergton.

Reports of organizations, institutions

Dr. Michael Maxey, Roanoke College president, said that after the 171-year history of the college, “our ties with you are deeply appreciated.” Over \$33 million in scholarships support the college’s student body of over 2,000. About \$130 million has been pledged toward the college campaign to raise \$200 million over the next five years. Maxey said the planned Cregger Center, likely a new home for Synod assemblies in the future, will have a Luther Plaza, providing a grand entrance court with “a statement about Lutheran support for quality higher education at Roanoke.”

The Rev. Clay Schmitt, new provost at Southern Seminary, said the seminary has had “an amazingly good year” after its merger with Lenoir-Rhyne University. Southern is “leading the way for ELCA seminaries in every category,” he said. The 21 ELCA students entering Southern this fall is three times as many as last year, according to Schmitt. An estimated 4,000 ELCA pastors will retire in the next 10 years, he added. “Imagine the leadership that creates.”

Amanda Downs of Grace and Glory, Palmyra, outgoing president of the Synod’s Lutheran Youth Organization, said the young people have learned that “adults really care about the importance of youth.” Their Youth Assembly theme was “We know we are Christians.” Will Southard, Salem, Mt. Sidney, is the incoming LYO president. Ellen Hinlicky, director of Lutheran Partners in Mission, said the United Lutheran Appeal represents “the face of Christ” through eight organizations. She encouraged prayer and financial support for them.

Along with his work on a Synod history, Pastor Jim Utt asked the Assembly to list six significant programs of the past 25 years and six proposed for the next 25. Voted as the most important past programs were youth ministry, ACTS, Power in the Spirit, Healthy Congregations, Companion Synod and Ministerium emphases/gatherings. Other “very close” programs were the Malaria Campaign, United Lutheran Appeal, Roots & Wings and women pastors.

Suggestions presented for the next 25 years: mission outreach to new congregations, recruiting and training young adults, greater diversity, Synod youth events; celebration of the Reformation anniversary in 2017 and biblical and confessional life. Other programs predicted are social ministry, global missions, campus ministry and pluralism/interfaith.

After 24 years of the Synod’s partnership with the New Guinea Island District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea, the Rev. Tobby Eleazar, district president, will be visiting in Virginia this fall, according to Diane Giessler of the Global Mission Committee. He will be traveling before and after a presentation at the Ministerium in October. Giessler said a project to help pastors’ children in the Island District is about 80 percent funded.

Pastor Robert Sorenson of the Southeastern District, Missouri Synod, said the Virginia Synod is “a valued partner. We are different members of the same family.”