



Preliminary Minutes

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Tenth Biennial Churchwide Assembly
August 6–11, 2007—Chicago, Illinois

Plenary Session Five

Wednesday, August 8, 2007

2:00 P.M.—5:45 P.M.

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, called the fifth plenary session of the tenth Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to order at 1:58 P.M. Central Daylight Time in Exhibition Hall A at Navy Pier, Chicago, Illinois. The presiding bishop invited those gathered to rise and sing “Be Thou My Vision.”

Bible Study

Following the hymn, Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson asked Ms. Connie D. Thomas, member of Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit in Chicago and also member of the Task Force for Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Studies on Sexuality to introduce the second Bible study. She introduced the Rev. David L. Tiede, Bernhard Christensen Professor of New Testament at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She told the assembly that he had served Luther Seminary in Saint Paul, Minnesota, for more than 30 years.

Prof. Tiede told the assembly that he would greet them as Saint Paul greeted the Galatians, then spoke the words, “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:3). He noted that the letter to the Galatians had been read on the Sundays after Pentecost this year, and thus most congregations had heard it recently. Prof. Tiede pointed out that the epistle was written to Christians in a time of disagreement. He described the letter as Paul’s affirmation that people needed rules, but Paul also denounced self-righteousness.

Prof. Tiede asked how this church is to develop a statement on human sexuality in the midst of deep disputes about what is moral and what is just. He counseled the assembly not to argue over text and translation, but simply to listen to the words that Paul wrote. Prof. Tiede stated that the issue for the Galatians was to decide what would help their neighbors in a world of changing choices.

Prof. Tiede then invited Ms. Thomas to read the text of Galatians 1:1-10. When she had finished reading, the assembly was instructed to consider the reading and then to converse with one another on two questions:

1. How could the Galatians have received comfort from Paul’s fierce words in this opening section?
2. What is the difference between being a people-pleaser and a servant of Christ?

After a time of discussion, Prof. Tiede announced that the Bible study would continue on the following day.

Agenda

In response to a request from the floor, Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson reviewed the agenda for Plenary Session Five, amended earlier in the day. The order of business would include the following items, as time permitted:

- report on justice for women
- follow-up on funding for HIV and AIDS
- first ballot for secretary of the ELCA
- report of the treasurer of the ELCA
- report of the Mission Investment Fund
- introduction of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Mission Funding recommendations
- greetings from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
- Dwelling in the Word
- a “quasi committee of the whole” to discuss memorials related to human sexuality
- the corporation meetings of four church-related colleges.

Report: Justice for Women

(Reference: 2007 Pre-Assembly Report, Section V, pages 33–46.)

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson noted that the 2005 Churchwide Assembly had requested a report relating to justice for women. He called the assembly’s attention to the written report and invited to the platform the Rev. Rebecca S. Larson, executive director of the Church in Society program unit. Pr. Larson introduced Ms. Mary Streufert, director for justice for women.

Ms. Streufert’s report dealt first with how this church is fulfilling its mission of justice for women and then described how the justice for women program is based in the Church in Society unit. She told how the mission of justice for women is carried forward throughout the entire churchwide organization, giving several examples of the work of offices, units, and sections of offices. Ms. Streufert noted that the justice for women consulting committee was composed of the Rev. Charles S. Miller, the Rev. David A. Donges, Ms. Linda Post Bushkofsky, Ms. Jessica M. McKee, Ms. Joyce Schoulte, the Rev. Susan Candea, Ms. Antonia Clemente, Ms. Kristen Kvam, Ms. Agnes S. McClain, Ms. Mikka McCracken, and Ms. Jaime Weller-Lafavor. *Ex officio* members were the Rev. Rebecca S. Larson and Ms. Mary J. Streufert. Finally, Ms. Streufert named three goals of justice for women: to educate, advocate, and lead. She noted that the purpose statement for the program calls for work with all of the expressions of the ELCA to eradicate sexism in this church and to promote gender justice in society at large.

Follow-up: HIV and AIDS

(Reference: 2007 Pre-Assembly Report, Section IV, pages 37-39.)

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson called upon the Rev. Paul W. Stumme-Diers, bishop of the Greater Milwaukee Synod, for a motion related to action the assembly took during Plenary Session Four regarding HIV and AIDS. Bp. Stumme-Diers moved the following:

Moved;

Seconded: Resolved, that the Church Council take steps to develop an additional \$1,000,000 in funding to implement the HIV and AIDS strategy.

The motion had a potential budget implication and was, under the "Rules of Organization and Procedure" (Section 1, page 16, "Appropriations"), therefore referred to the Committee of Reference and Counsel for consultation with the Budget and Finance Committee of the Church Council.

Report: Credentials Committee

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson called on Mr. David A. Ullrich, vice chair of the Credentials Committee, for a report in preparation for the the first ballot for secretary. He reported that as of 2:07 P.M. on Wednesday, August 8, 2007, 1,066 voting members had registered. The composition of the voting membership, at that point, was:

Ordained ministers	Female	140
	Male	272
	Total	412
Lay Persons	Female	340
	Male	314
	Total	654

Among the voting membership were 127 persons who identified themselves as persons of color or persons whose primary language was other than English:

African American	63
American Indian or Native Alaskan	5
Arab or Middle Eastern	5
Asian or Pacific Islander	21
Black	8
Latino	25

Ten voting members identified themselves as 18 years old or younger.

Registered visitors numbered 543.

Elections: First Ballot for Secretary

(Reference: 2007 Pre-Assembly Report, Section IV, pages 3-4.)

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson informed the assembly that it was about to become a "call committee" as it voted to elect the secretary of this church. He noted that, according to the constitution of this church, the secretary can be either lay or clergy and called the assembly's attention to the responsibilities of the secretary in the printed materials. He explained that the term of

the secretary is six years and referred members to the description of an ecclesiastical ballot, also in the printed materials. He indicated that the process included up to five ballots. Prior to the third ballot, there would be a question-and-answer session in which the seven nominees receiving the most votes would respond to three questions. In addition, prior to the fourth ballot, the final three nominees would address the assembly for five minutes each.

The presiding bishop called the assembly to sing "Come and Fill Our Hearts" and led it in prayer before asking the members to cast the first ballot in the election of the secretary.

Reports of the Treasurer and of the Mission Investment Fund

(Reference: 2007 Pre-Assembly Report, Section II, pages 33-68; Section III, Part 2, pages 9-32.)

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson introduced the treasurer of the ELCA, Ms. Christina Jackson-Skelton, and the Rev. Arnold O. Pierson, vice president for church relations and communications of the Mission Investment Fund.

Ms. Jackson-Skelton reported that the ELCA churchwide organization completed fiscal years 2005 and 2006 with revenue exceeding expense in its current operating budget. She said that the full consolidated and audited financial statements reflect additional consolidated entries, data and footnotes. These statements were included in the 2007 Pre-Assembly Report.

Her report showed that revenue available for current operations increased from \$82 million in 2005 to \$82.9 million in 2006, an increase of about \$900,000. This was the third consecutive year of increases in total operating revenue. Further, operating expenses of approximately \$79.9 million in 2006 reflect an increase of \$1.8 million from 2005. These expenses were favorable to the operating budget in both years.

The treasurer reported that revenue minus expense before nonbudgeted items resulted in a surplus of approximately \$3.9 million in 2005 and \$3 million in 2006. She stated that net revenue in excess of expense, a positive bottom line, is important because it builds cash reserves, gives the flexibility to support new mission opportunities and to meet needs not anticipated in the normal operating budget, as well as encourages careful budget planning and controlled spending. Non-budgeted expenditures include Church Council designated funds.

Ms. Jackson-Skelton said that, after reviewing the 2004 favorable operating results, the Church Council took action early in 2005 to approve Presiding Bishop Hanson's proposal to designate \$4 million from current funds for additional mission and ministry priorities. This resulted in reducing the 2005 net operating results by \$4 million to an unfavorable, but planned, net expense over revenue for fiscal year 2005 of \$.1 million.

In 2006, there were no funds designated by the Church Council for specific purposes. The \$4 million designated by the Church Council in 2005 was allocated to strengthen support of core ministry commitments of this church as follows:

Leadership development: \$2,100,000

Introduction of new primary worship resources: \$900,000

New congregational development and renewal: \$500,000

Ministry among people living in poverty: \$400,000

Churchwide strategy for engagement in Israel and

Palestine: \$100,000

Mission-support income, that is, the unrestricted income from congregations through synods to the churchwide

organization, declined very slightly from \$65.6 million in 2004 to \$65.5 million in 2005, a decrease of \$150,000, or .2 percent.

In 2006, mission-support income increased \$65.7 million, an increase of \$200,000, or .3 percent.

Other categories of revenue, which in 2006 represented about 21 percent of total revenue available for current operations, increased from 2005 by \$.7 million, primarily due to an increase in interest earnings on short-term investments.

In 2006, 37 synods increased the dollar amount of their mission-support sharing with the churchwide organization, as compared to the prior year, while in 2005, the number of synods that increased mission-support sharing was roughly half, with 33 synods increasing their support and 32 synods decreasing in total-dollar terms.

Reporting on the World Hunger Appeal, Ms. Jackson-Skelton noted that World Hunger is not part of the current operating revenue and expense but is instead budgeted and accounted for separately. In the past two years it has seen record income levels. In 2005, contributions to the general World Hunger Appeal reached \$17 million, an increase of \$0.8 million over the 2004 level. In 2006, members again gave very generously to support this appeal, exceeding the prior year by \$2.1 million to reach \$19.1 million in income for World Hunger.

She observed that ELCA members also gave generously to support disaster response in the Gulf Coast area and across the globe. Over a two-year period, \$46.2 million was received for disaster response. Of this, \$31.8 million was designated for the Gulf Coast hurricane response, \$27.5 million in gifts, and \$4.3 million in grants.

Ms. Jackson-Skelton next reported on fiscal year 2007. She said that for the five months ending June 30, 2007, revenue available to cover the current budgeted expenses had increased \$800,000 from the same period in 2006, and was favorable to budget by \$100,000. Mission-support income also was favorable to budget by \$300,000, or 1.1 percent ahead of the same period one year ago. Expenses were well within the approved spending plan, resulting in a modest operating surplus that was favorable to budget expectations. World Hunger income has continued its positive trend for these past two years. For the first five months of this fiscal year, \$5.5 million was received, an increase of \$600,000 from the same period in 2006.

Ms. Jackson-Skelton voiced thanks to Presiding Bishop Hanson, Vice President Carlos E. Peña, and Secretary Lowell G. Almen for their outstanding support and collaboration, as well as to the Church Council and Conference of Bishops, other ELCA staff, and to the many ELCA members who pray for the leadership of this church on a regular basis. She also expressed gratitude to her congregation, Joy Lutheran Church in Gurnee, Illinois, and to her husband and their two children.

The Mission Investment Fund (MIF) report was introduced by a video depicting two congregations, St. Paul Lutheran Church in Decatur, Georgia, and Emanuel Lutheran Church in Dallas, Texas, which were beneficiaries of this important source of funding. Pr. Arnold O. Pierson provided a financial update on the fund. He reported that at the close of 2006, the Mission Investment Fund had 708 loans outstanding with balances of \$383 million. This represented an increase of 137 loans and \$85 million since the end of fiscal year 2004–2005.

Pr. Pierson reported that, as of July 2007, loans to ELCA ministries surpassed \$400 million, an increase of \$200 million since 2002. These loans were supported by MIF investors—ELCA members, congregations, and related ministries that invested through the fund in order to enable ministry to happen while at the same time earning a competitive return on their money.

Total investments increased over the 2005 and 2006 fiscal years, reaching a high of \$335 million and closing the year at \$327 million. This represented approximately 20,000 accounts for 11,000 investors.

The majority of investments in the Mission Investment Fund were from congregations, synods, and ELCA-related ministries. Individual members of this church had invested \$95 million. Total assets at the close of 2006 were \$491 million.

Pr. Pierson identified the mission priority of the MIF, which was to make low-interest loans to new mission congregations for the purchase of land and the construction of initial church buildings. This priority gives congregations in the process of development a place to turn for support and capital financing. Mission congregations pay no interest for the first two years for a property loan and then pay 2 percent for an additional five years. The interest rate for a congregation's first building was set at 3 percent for seven years.

Pr. Pierson added that the MIF also made loans to established congregations for new construction and renovation projects, as well as for refinancing debt. Loans for capital projects made to ELCA-related ministries such as seminaries, outdoor ministries and social ministry organizations are made possible through the investment of dollars of congregations and their members, synods, and ELCA-related ministries.

In conclusion, Pr. Pierson thanked the many members, congregations, and related ministries of this church who are already involved in the fund and asked those who have not chosen to invest to reflect upon his report of the important work of this fund and consider joining this vital ministry.

Presiding Bishop Hanson thanked Ms. Jackson-Skelton and Pr. Pierson for their reports and wished Pr. Pierson well in his retirement.

Introduction: Blue Ribbon Committee on Mission Funding

(Reference: 2007 Pre-Assembly Report, Section V, pages 1ff.; Section IV, page 11.)

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson introduced the presenters of the report of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Mission Funding. They were the Rev. Philip L. Hougen, bishop of the Southeastern Iowa Synod; Mr. Grieg L. Anderson, member of the Church Council who co-chaired the committee following the death of Mr. Earl L. Mummert in October 2006; the Rev. Jennifer J. Thomas, member of the Church Council from Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and the Rev. Craig A. Settlage, director for mission support.

Bp. Hougen said that the report was grounded in the recognition of God's abundant grace in the life of the ELCA. Every facet of life belongs to God, he commented, and every facet of life was an opportunity to give in response to God's amazing grace. He explained that mission funding, sometimes known as mission support, was based on the ELCA's unique structure as one church in three expressions. Congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization were interdependent partners sharing

responsibility for God’s mission. He reminded the assembly that mission support is the foundation for supporting synodical and churchwide mission and ministry. He said, “the decisions made by congregations and synods make the difference in what we are able to do together as ELCA in three expressions.”

Bp. Hougen described a pattern in mission-support funding that has impacted negatively the ability of synods and the churchwide organization to do their mission and ministry: members of the ELCA congregations continue to increase the amount they give to congregations; yet, giving from congregations to synods and the churchwide organization continued to decrease over a 40-year period. He stated, “What we see is that mission support as a percentage of total giving in congregations has declined from 17.7 percent in 1965 to 6 percent in 2006. It is this pattern that limits synods and the churchwide organization in their ability to carry out mission and ministry.”

He continued, “We are a church that is rich in resources, both people and dollars. Yet, we have fallen into a pattern of sharing less and less of our financial resources beyond the local congregation. This trend could lead to the unintended consequence of weakening synodical and churchwide ministries.” He stated that the synodical and churchwide mission and ministries are treasures this church cannot lose if it is to remain strong and vital.

A video illustrated several of the ministries supported through the mission-support contributions of the members of this church.

Following the video, Pr. Settlage concluded the report. He said, “The Blue Ribbon Committee report challenges us all, each baptized member of this church, to grow in faithful and generous giving. The report affirms that the dollars that we all give in the offerings in our congregations that leave the congregation enable the mission and ministry of synods and the churchwide organization. This practice of sharing continues the goal of sharing income established at the beginning of the ELCA.”

The report called for stewardship education for those preparing to serve as rostered leaders in this church. It included a clear and challenging call to the leaders of this church to model personal stewardship, including the importance of tithing and giving beyond tithing. It envisioned the congregations, synods, and churchwide expressions of the ELCA to continue to work together as interdependent partners in support of the mission and ministry of this church.

Consideration of the Blue Ribbon Committee Recommendations

(Reference: 2007 Pre-Assembly Report, Section IV, page 11.)

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson put before the assembly the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Mission Funding as recommended by the Church Council.

Moved;

- Seconded:**
1. To give thanks for the manifold ways in which God has blessed richly the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with faithful members and abundant resources;
 2. To acknowledge God’s summons to be good stewards in commitment to the mission

entrusted to the Church and in the responsible management of the resources entrusted to members;

3. To receive with gratitude the report of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Mission Funding in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
4. To commend the content of the report for study and reflection throughout this church; and
5. To foster renewed commitment to vigorous mission-support efforts throughout the congregations, synods, and churchwide ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in a wide variety of ways, including:
 - a. examination of “best practices” for mission funding, alternative methods of generating mission-support income, and an improved consultation process for synods and the churchwide organization;
 - b. commitment by the churchwide organization to convene stewardship leaders—including synodical stewardship committees, Lutheran professional advisors, and others—to encourage greater widespread ownership of stewardship endeavors throughout this church and to provide training, motivation, and inspiration;
 - c. evaluation of stewardship education programs as well as the development and implementation of a strategy for stewardship leadership and staffing;
 - d. development of educational opportunities for all those preparing for rostered leadership in this church through seminaries, programs of theological education for emerging ministries, and lay schools of theology;
 - e. establishment of a requirement, by autumn 2009, for continuing education (6-10 hours) in financial stewardship for first-call rostered leaders to help them build upon competencies learned and practiced during their seminary education;
 - f. engagement of new models for the role of the churchwide organization in financial leadership; and
 - g. dissemination by the churchwide organization and synods to an increasing number of member households of regular, clear, and concise communication that is focused on mission interpretation.

The chair opened the floor to discussion.

Mr. John D. Litke [Metropolitan New York Synod] offered an amendment.

Moved;

Seconded: To amend by addition after Paragraph 5.c. (and to re-letter the remainder accordingly):

- d. presenting to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly a proposal for the development and implementation of a resource to help congregations assess their responsible and accountable use of God's resources commended to their care.

Speaking to his amendment, Mr. Litke noted that the assembly had heard that income had risen, but without a proportionate rise in giving to mission support. He observed that in periods of high fixed costs, variable costs such as benevolence often fall victim to reduction or elimination. He argued that his amendment was aimed at providing assistance to congregations "to help them decide among various bitter choices."

Hearing no other speaking, Presiding Bishop Hanson put the amendment before the assembly for a vote.

Moved;

Seconded;

Yes-811; No-154

Carried:

To amend by addition after Paragraph 5.c. (and to re-letter the remainder accordingly):

- d. presenting to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly a proposal for the development and implementation of a resource to help congregations assess their responsible and accountable use of God's resources commended to their care.

The amendment was adopted.

Mr. R. Brandon James [Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod] also offered an amendment to add a new section 6 to the recommendation.

Moved;

Seconded:

To amend by addition:

6. To instruct the Church Council to continue the work begun by the Blue Ribbon Committee on Mission Funding, using methods they see as appropriate, with emphasis on the patterns and practices of how congregations determine what mission-support dollars they will offer to their respective synods:
- a. The purpose of this process would be the development of additional strategies aimed at reducing, over a period of years, the wide variations in mission support received by the 65 synods as measured by the percentage of congregational mission support remitted or the dollars per attending member received;
- b. Congregations would be encouraged to share with the synods and the churchwide organization a minimum of 10 percent of their mission-support dollars received, with planned annual increases to 15 percent.

- c. Preliminary reports of this effort would be shared by the Church Council and with the Conference of Bishops with the final report presented at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly.

Mr. James stated that the intent of his amendment was to produce continued investigation, dialogue, and the development of strategies to increase the awareness of members about the issues of stewardship and resource allocation as this church strives to fulfill the mission to which it is called.

The Rev. Gregory R. Pile, bishop of the Allegheny Synod, requested that the amendment be posted on all screens because some areas of the hall had obstructed views. The problem was corrected.

Mr. Jerry U. Key [Greater Milwaukee Synod] spoke against the amendment in light of his congregation's limited budget. He was concerned that it was unclear what the consequences would be should the mission-support percentage not be met.

The Rev. Martha J. Hampton [La Crosse Area Synod] offered an amendment to Mr. James's amendment to insert "at least" in the final clause of section "b."

Moved;

Seconded:

To amend by addition:

- b. Congregations would be encouraged to share with the synods and the churchwide organization a minimum of 10 percent of their mission support dollars received, with planned annual increases to at least 15 percent.

Pr. Hampton said that the expectation in the recommendation should not be limited to 15 percent.

There were no other speakers, so the chair put the Hampton amendment to a vote.

Moved;

Seconded;

Yes-686; No-298

Carried:

To amend by addition:

- b. Congregations would be encouraged to share with the synods and the churchwide organization a minimum of 10 percent of their mission support dollars received, with planned annual increases to at least 15 percent.

Presiding Bishop Hanson declared the Hampton amendment adopted. The motion on the floor was now the James amendment as amended.

Mr. John G. Munding [Montana Synod] opposed the recommendation, stating that mission support should not be a matter of law. He said the recommendation could be construed as saying "stewardship is our wallets but not our message."

The Rev. Charles R. Bade [Northwestern Minnesota Synod] did not support the amendment as he believed it complicated the proposed recommendations.

Presiding Bishop Hanson asked members at microphones to register so they would have their turn to speak when the assembly

returned to the discussion of the recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Mission Funding. He called the assembly to the Orders of the Day.

Greeting: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson welcomed the Rev. Raymond L. Schultz, national bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC). Presiding Bishop Hanson expressed gratitude for the strong partnership of the ELCIC in joint projects and shared mission. Earlier in 2007, the Church Council had honored Bp. Schultz in recognition of his retirement. Presiding Bishop Hanson described him as “a gifted theologian, ever curious about the relationship of faith and science.”

Presiding Bishop Hanson also expressed delight as he announced that the Rev. Susan C. Johnson had been elected national bishop of the ELCIC at its assembly in June 2007. He observed that he looked forward to continuing with her the strong relationship he had experienced with Bp. Schultz.

Bp. Schulz commented that it was an honor to bring greetings one last time. He spoke of National Bishop-elect Johnson, on whose behalf he also brought greetings. He told the assembly that she had served as an assistant to the bishop in the ELCIC’s Eastern Synod and had been serving as the bishop’s commissary during his sabbatical. She also had been vice president of the ELCIC and an advisor to the Lutheran World Federation Council. He announced that with her consecration as bishop in September 2007 there would be “complete gender parity” in the ELCIC’s Conference of Bishops.

Bp. Schultz reminded the Churchwide Assembly that the ELCIC exists because of mission initiatives based in the Lutheran churches of the United States. He reported that the ELCIC, which had participated in the development of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, had received it enthusiastically. He said the ELCIC also had received permission to adapt and use the Bible study from the Task Force on ELCA Studies on Sexuality, “Free in Christ to Serve the Neighbor.”

Bp. Schultz continued by saying that the ELCIC participated with the ELCA in placements for missionaries, that their bishops met with ELCA bishops in the Academy for Bishops, that they shared with the ELCA a commitment to mutual prophetic stewardship, and that the two church bodies had worked together to make AIDS drugs affordable in places throughout the world where the need was great.

Bp. Schultz noted shared frustration with governmental leaders in the U.S. and Canada treating leaders of the Church “as a nuisance.” He applauded Presiding Bishop Hanson for his international work in advocacy and his courage to call leaders to justice. He observed that while the two nations are occupied with concern for border issues and national security, in many ways their economic dominance endangers the security of others.

Bp. Schultz assured the assembly that the ELCIC was praying for the ELCA and the assembly. He commended Presiding Bishop Hanson for his sermon’s theme of being a “sent church” and noted that the theme of the ELCIC convention had been “In mission for others: a people sent.”

Dwelling in the Word

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson recognized the Rev. Marcus J. Miller, president of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, South Carolina, to lead the assembly to “dwell in the Word.”

Pr. Miller told of finding the *Thomson Chain Reference Bible* that had belonged to his father-in-law. He had wondered what to do with it. He noticed the wear on the edges of the pages of the Psalms and gospels. It had been given to his father-in-law by a confirmation class on the same day Pr. Miller had, himself, been confirmed: Pentecost Sunday, 1959. Pr. Miller said the Bible now occupied a place on his desk and he continued to use it for his own personal devotion. He said it reminded him he was never by himself in his reading; he was reading the Word with his deceased father-in-law, just as he was still reading it with those with whom he had shared it in many settings over the years. Through this Bible he was reminded how the Word sustains him and others in daily life.

Quasi Committee of the Whole

(Reference: 2007 Pre-Assembly Report, Section VI, Category E, pages 53-72)

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson explained that under the adopted agenda the assembly would move into a time of general discussion of responses proposed by the Memorials Committee to synodical memorials on issues related to human sexuality. This would be accomplished in the form of a “committee of the whole.” He explained that, according to *Robert’s Rules of Order*, an assembly can go into a “committee of the whole” if it wants to discuss a matter more informally than in a plenary session.

Presiding Bishop Hanson indicated that since he would continue to chair the discussion, according to *Robert’s Rules* this would be a “quasi committee of the whole.” The rules of the assembly regarding speeches and applause continued to apply. He noted that this format was not legislative and that motions would not be in order, other than a motion to return to plenary.

Secretary Lowell G. Almen presented the motion to move into a “quasi committee of the whole.”

Moved;

Seconded: To go into a “quasi committee of the whole” for 45 minutes for the purpose of discussing the responses proposed by the Memorials Committee to synodical memorials on issues related to human sexuality.

Presiding Bishop Hanson invited discussion on the motion. Hearing none, he asked the assembly to vote on the motion to move into a “quasi committee of the whole.”

Moved;

Seconded;

Carried:

To go into a “quasi committee of the whole” for 45 minutes for the purpose of discussing the responses proposed by the Memorials Committee to synodical memorials on issues related to human sexuality.

Yes-903; No-83

Presiding Bishop Hanson reported that the motion had carried and at 4:23 P.M. he declared the assembly to be constituted

as a “quasi committee of the whole” to discuss issues related to human sexuality. The committee would dissolve automatically after 45 minutes. He called upon the Rev. Marie C. Jerge, bishop of the Upstate New York Synod, to lead the assembly in prayer.

Presiding Bishop Hanson gave instructions on seeking recognition to speak: those in favor of the recommendations of the Memorials Committee or who wished to speak in support of current standards for rostered leaders were to speak at green microphones; those who favored another approach, including a change in standards, were told to speak at red microphones. He also indicated that he would call upon speakers alternating between green and red microphones.

Mr. Johannes I. Olsen [Upstate New York Synod] said that it would be a mistake to dishonor the established process for considering issues of human sexuality and reverse the decision of the previous assembly. He also was concerned that a new action now would come as a surprise to the membership of this church.

The Rev. Lisa D. Barry [Florida-Bahamas Synod] supported a change in the current standards for rostered leaders. She identified herself as a bisexual person, who knew many people who have gifts for ministry but who are precluded from service.

Ms. Darcy M. Lund [Southwestern Washington Synod] supported the recommendation of the Memorials Committee to refer. She called upon the members of this church to respect the counsel of the Conference of Bishops. “We should not interrupt the process that allows all in the church to have a voice,” she argued.

The Rev. Peter Rogness, bishop of the Saint Paul Area Synod, spoke against the recommendation of the Memorials Committee, favoring instead an approach like that of the memorial passed by his own synod. He explained that he was “looking for a way to open a window in this process.” Bp. Rogness mentioned Anita Hill, who is engaged in a “valued ministry in his synod.” He concluded by saying, “We would be well served by having fewer exclusionary rules.”

Mr. Joshua Buzzard [Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod] took as an example the results of the Task Force on Education, saying that “the process can work.” He said, “. . . let decisions be made in a setting that allows for easier spiritual discernment and not in the emotional rashness of a plenary floor.”

Ms. Nadine R. Anderson [Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod] spoke in favor of allowing persons in committed relationships to be rostered. She argued, “We can disagree about this and still live together faithfully.” She observed that there had been no consensus on the ordination of women, but the decision to ordain them did not destroy the church.

Mr. Benjamin E. Landon [Upper Susquehanna Synod] observed that the members of this church should make every effort to live together without divisiveness. Since the social statement on sexuality was scheduled for consideration in 2009, abandoning that process would create deep division, in his opinion. He called upon the assembly to avoid actions that could “rip this church apart.”

Mr. Jeremy Posadas [Metropolitan New York Synod] suggested that much of the debate about human sexuality was driven by fears for the ELCA’s survival. These fears could best be countered by bringing in new members, he believed, but he questioned whether keeping the current policy would help in evangelizing new members.

The Rev. Steven C. Berntson [Eastern North Dakota Synod] supported the Memorials Committee’s recommendation. He expressed care for gay and lesbian family and church members, but also urged that the ELCA continue to listen to other voices in this church. He expressed respect for the work of the Rev. Merton P. Strommen in his book, *The Church and Homosexuality: Searching for a Middle Ground*, and commended it to all.

Ms. Susan Cyr [Greater Milwaukee Synod] supported memorials requesting change. She called on the Churchwide Assembly to deliberate and vote and said that the assembly owed it to the 21 synods that had submitted memorials.

Mr. Timothy Deal [North Carolina Synod] noted that in 2005 the Churchwide Assembly had prayed for and received the Holy Spirit when it made decisions on sexuality issues in Orlando. He stated that to alter that decision would express distrust of God’s guidance.

Ms. Ester A. Johansson-Lebron [New Jersey Synod] identified herself as a member of the Memorials Committee who had voted against the recommendation to refer the synodical memorials. She said that social change can be uncomfortable. Being a Lutheran is not about always being comfortable, however, but about taking a stand that is right.

Ms. Clarissa Finley [Southeastern Iowa Synod] spoke in favor of the recommendation of the Memorials Committee. She urged trust in the Task Force for Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Studies on Sexuality and called upon the members of the assembly to honor and respect the decision-making process. She asked for prayers for the task force.

Mr. Jeffery L. Herman-May [New England Synod] identified himself as a gay man. He recounted that after a time of struggle over his sexual identity he found welcome in a church as part of the body of Christ, fully able to participate in its mission. He was looking to see what the Holy Spirit was doing with Bradley E. Schmeling and with St. John’s Lutheran Church in Atlanta.

Mr. Roy Gibbs [Northwestern Ohio Synod] commented that as a voting member of the 2005 Churchwide Assembly he thought the decisions made there were complete. To reopen the question now, he argued, would mean that all previous discussion and decisions had been for nothing.

The Rev. Paul D. Erickson [Saint Paul Area Synod] recalled his participation in 1982 in a Lutheran Student Movement assembly that urged “all Lutheran church bodies to ordain all qualified candidates without regard for their sexual orientation.” He remarked that, after 25 years of waiting, the effect of the Memorials Committee recommendations would be to delay longer. He observed that there would always be reasons given to wait. “Meanwhile the mission of this church is being hindered by its refusal to ordain all those who are being called and gifted by God into ministry,” he said.

Mr. Randy Willhite [Saint Paul Area Synod] observed that this was his first assembly, and he wanted to listen and discern. He asked, “What if this work is thrown away in two years?” He called members to honor the work of the 2005 Churchwide Assembly.

Because of a timing concern, Presiding Bishop Hanson recalled the Rev. Lisa D. Barry [Florida-Bahamas Synod] to finish her remarks. She expressed concern about further delay in changing ELCA policies.

The Rev. Jill J. Jennings [Southeastern Synod] described how Bradley Schmeling had baptized her nephew and called Mr. Schmeling an agent of grace. In light of the disciplinary action against him, she asked, "How does his relationship [with his partner] change that role?"

The Rev. Sarah A. Gausmann [Lower Susquehanna Synod] indicated that any change in policy would pull members of this church away from the treasures of its faith and heritage. She identified the *Small Catechism* as one of those treasures, basic to faith. She said that "to abandon God's created order invites chaos."

The Rev. Brian E. Brandt [Oregon Synod] stated his belief that the ELCA should change its policy because the current policy harms this church. He noted that congregations wanted pastors and pulpits stood empty. He told of two lesbian women, a couple, in his congregation. One he identified as having the gifts to be a pastor, but she would not pursue ordination because of the potential for heartbreak and humiliation.

The Rev. Deborah O. Lunde [Eastern North Dakota Synod] stated that there were declines in membership in the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches and the United Church of Christ as they have explored sexuality issues. She advocated support for the Memorials Committee recommendations.

Presiding Bishop Hanson advised the assembly that, due to timekeeping issues, the time for the "quasi committee of the whole" would be extended by two minutes and therefore would conclude at 5:10 P.M.

Mr. Randy L. Weitz [Sierra Pacific Synod] referred to Luther, who said that he would gladly give up his coat in the name of unity, but would not compromise God's Word and sacraments. He urged the assembly not to compromise God's Word and not to trust feelings over God's Word.

Mr. Timothy Fisher [Minneapolis Area Synod] questioned the recommendation of referral to the task force because he saw the 2005 report of the task force as failing to give a single clear answer. He recalled that Prof. Tiede had indicated that the 2009 social statement would tend to be a deliberative piece for the purposes of facilitating discussion. He drew the conclusion that the social statement would not address policy. In conclusion he said, "A sent church doesn't spend money keeping people out."

The Rev. Heidi R. Kvanli [South Dakota Synod] expressed her support for the recommendation of the Memorials Committee. She said the term "committed relationship" needed to be defined. Pr. Kvanli called for careful discernment and asked the assembly not to sidestep the process.

Ms. Allison A. Guttu [Metropolitan New York Synod] disputed any contention that a change of policy would alienate persons of color. She noted that there is no uniform position among persons of color any more than there is among white persons. She suggested that persons of color more likely would be alienated by exclusionary practices.

Ms. Katie K. Abercrombie [Florida-Bahamas Synod] remarked that the social statement process is important and participatory. She called on the assembly to honor and trust the process rather than undermine it.

The Rev. William A. McKee [Southern Ohio Synod] called the assembly's attention to the fifth chapter of Acts, in which Gamaliel warned his companions that a movement that is not of God will fail, but to oppose a movement from God is futile. The

quote ended with the words "You might be found opposing God! (Acts 5:39)." Pr. McKee said, "We should let them serve and see what work God does at their hands."

At 5:11 P.M., August 8, 2006, Presiding Bishop Hanson called the "quasi committee of the whole" to a conclusion and reconvened Plenary Session Five. The assembly sang "O Holy Spirit, Root of Life" as it moved to the next item of business.

Introduction of Presidents of Colleges and Universities

Since the last Churchwide Assembly several of the ELCA-related colleges and universities had welcomed new presidents. Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson introduced them and invited those present to stand:

Dr. Paul Pribbenow, Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minn.;
Mr. Robert Oliver, Augustana College, Sioux Falls, S.D. (*not present*);

Dr. Edward Leonard, Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kan.;
Dr. Denvy Bowman, Capital University, Bexley, Ohio (*not present*);

The Rev. Dr. Philip Johnson, Finlandia University, Hancock, Mich.;

Mr. Mike Maxey, Roanoke College, Salem, Va.;

Dr. David Anderson, St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn.;

The Rev. Ann Svennungsen, Texas Lutheran University, Seguin, Texas;

Dr. Steven Fritz, interim, Midland Lutheran College, Fremont, Neb. (*not present*); and

Dr. Robert Olson, interim, Thiel College, Greenville, Pa.

Following these introductions the presidents of other ELCA-affiliated colleges and universities were asked to stand and be recognized. Presiding Bishop Hanson welcomed them all and thanked them for their commitment to Lutheran education.

College Corporation Meetings

(Reference: College Corporation Booklet)

At 5:18 P.M. Central Daylight Time, Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson announced that the assembly would move into the corporation meetings for four of the ELCA colleges. He explained that the governing documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America provide for a variety of relationship patterns between the ELCA and its colleges and universities and that four of this church's colleges and universities had chosen to relate to this church through the Churchwide Assembly.

Presiding Bishop Hanson declared the Churchwide Assembly in recess, pursuant to bylaw 8.32.06. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, to convene, sequentially, the college corporation meetings for Dana College (Blair, Nebraska), represented by President Janet S. Philip; Luther College (Decorah, Iowa), represented by President Richard L. Torgerson; St. Olaf College (Northfield, Minnesota), represented by President David R. Anderson; and Wartburg College (Waverly, Iowa), represented by President Jack R. Ohle. The minutes of those proceedings are kept in the records of those institutions.

The Rev. Stanley N. Olson, executive director of the Vocation and Education program unit, provided an overview of the corporation meetings and of the work of the colleges and universities of this church. He then introduced each of the college representatives.

At the conclusion of the college corporation meetings, Presiding Bishop Hanson declared Plenary Session Five of the 2007 Churchwide Assembly again to be in session at 5:30 P.M.

Following the resumption of the plenary session, Presiding Bishop Hanson recognized Interim President Howard Wennes of California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, California.

Recess

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson called upon Secretary Lowell G. Almen to make announcements. Secretary Almen reminded the assembly of the deadline for items not germane to the agenda, of the Lutheran Campus Ministry 100th Anniversary Celebration following the plenary session, and of the college and university receptions being held throughout the evening at the assembly hotel.

The Rev. Charles "Charlie" W. Mays, a member of the Church Council from Everett, Washington, led the order for Evening Prayer. At 5:39 P.M., Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson rang the bells and extinguished the candle, signifying that the assembly stood in recess.

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