



A newsletter of the Lutheran Ecumenical Representatives Network

IN THIS ISSUE

The National Workshop for Christian Unity took place in San Jose, California, May 8 to 11. The theme was "Where Two or Three Are Gathered in My Name." This issue includes reports and articles on several of the plenary meetings and keynote presentations held during the workshop. Carlos Pena, Vice-President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, attended the workshop and shared his experiences at the 9th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches. (He has also provided the article – see below.) Many thanks to all who helped make it possible to turn around this issue so soon after the end of the workshop.

Note: The July issue of *LERning* will provide additional articles on specific sessions and other events at the Workshop. You can submit material to any of the newsletter editors (listed on Page 4).
-Rocky Piro, editor

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES ASSEMBLY – BRAZIL 2006

Porto Alegre, Brazil was the site of the World Council of Churches' 9th Assembly this past February under the theme "God in Your Grace, Transform the World." This was quite a learning experience for me as I have never been involved in such an international event. I witnessed several firsts at this assembly including the first to

1. Be held in a Latin American country.
2. So heavily involve youth. The youth attending reported many times that the issues which engage the ecumenical movement today are the same issues which attract young people.
3. Use consensus as a voting procedure in an effort to build the common mind.

The most memorable times for me were the worship services. The common prayers in the



Closing Prayer – WCC Assembly – February 2006

worship tent, the Lord's Prayer being said in more than 100 languages, and the sheer diversity of all those who came together to praise God combined to make the worship times especially fulfilling to me. Common prayer makes it possible for Christians in divided traditions to praise God together and offer prayer for Christian unity.

I left the WCC with a better understanding of unity as a divine gift and calling from God, as we are reminded in John 17:21, "That they may all be one." As a united fellowship of churches, we can make a difference in confronting the issues facing the world today such as hunger, poverty, clean water, HIV/AIDS and others.

I also left with a better understanding of the importance of inter-religious dialogue. People want to live in peace and harmony, and religious conflicts often prevent this. The solution is to honor God's commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves.

As a newly elected WCC Central Committee member, I look forward to the challenges that lay ahead.

- Carlos Peña

WORKSHOP KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

The Keynote Speaker at the National Workshop on Tuesday, May 9th, was the Rev. Dr. Richard Mouw, President of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. Dr. Mouw spoke to the Workshop of an “inclusive ecumenism.” He noted the importance of conducting dialogue and discussions with a conviction to “Christian civility” – that is, in a manner that lowers polemical rhetoric and allows for genuine interactions to come to terms with the brokenness of the body of Christ.

The Closing Address on Thursday was delivered by Dr. Kevin Mannoia, chaplain at Azusa Pacific University, who has also served as bishop of the Free Methodist Church and President of the National Association of Evangelicals. Using for his theme the river imagery from Ezekiel 47, he offered that God beckons us into the river – a river that is always changing, always moving, and always life-giving. Similarly, our common calling in the world is to unity, mission, and leadership.



Cathedral Basilica of Saint Joseph, San Jose

LERN PLENARY SESSIONS

At the San Jose National Workshop on Christian Unity, the Lutheran Ecumenical Representatives Network held two plenary sessions and regional caucuses. At the first plenary on Tuesday, May 9th, Sierra Pacific Synod Bishop David Mullen greeted the representatives and challenged them to consider “Who is Christ for the Church?” and “Who is Christ for the world?”

The Rev. Dr. Randall Lee, Director of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations for the ELCA, and Dr. Michael Trice, Assistant Director, provided updates on various activities in which their office is currently engaged. Within the U.S., work is going forward on the eleventh round of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, focusing on topics and issues relating to the

afterlife and pastoral care to the dying. A guidebook for Lutherans and Orthodox that addresses studying and praying together is under development.

A proposal for full communion with the United Methodist Church, titled *Confessing Our Faith Together*, has been drafted and is now available for review and comment. The multilateral efforts of the Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC) are focusing on recognition and reconciliation of ministries.

A delegation of ELCA representatives recently visited church leaders abroad, including Pope Benedict XVI, the Orthodox Patriarch in Istanbul, and leaders of the Anglican Communion. The latest discussions between the ELCA and the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod have focused on reviewing materials produced in the 1970s through the Lutheran Council in the USA.

Christine May, Director of Racial Justice Ministries for the ELCA, reminded the representatives that scripture tells us we all have special gifts to share. She discussed the growing ecumenical dimension of the multicultural ministries work of the ELCA. The *Ecumenical Justice Partners Network*, initially began with the full communion partners who adopted the Formula of Agreement and now includes the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ, as well as others. The network’s current efforts are focusing on a new paradigm of anti-bias in children. Anti-racism resources, including materials addressing situations involving relationships with African-Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, and Arab-Americans, are available at: www.elca.org/cmju/intex.html.

Carlos Peña, Vice-President of the ELCA, spoke about his experiences at the 7th Assembly of the World Council of Churches held this past February in Brazil. (See his article on Page 1 of this issue of *LERNing*.) For more information on the assembly, visit the website at: www.wcc-assembly.info/.

The guest presenter at the Thursday LERN plenary was Enrique Morones, Vice-President of Hispanic and International Marketing for the San Diego Padres baseball organization. Mr. Morones is also founder of an organization known as *Border Angels*, that provides food and water in desert lands of the American southwest, to help illegal immigrants and others survive the harsh conditions in that part of the world.

An advocate for the rights and humane treatment of individuals within and entering the United States illegally, Mr. Morones spoke of the need for immigration reform and improved relationships with the people of Mexico. More information is available at:

www.borderangels.org/portal/

REFLECTIONS – SEMINARY ESSAY CONTEST WINNER 2006

For the first 22 years of my life, I lived across the street from a Presbyterian congregation. I have never worshipped there or even been in the sanctuary. My family would drive two miles to our Lutheran parish for worship, choir practice, youth group and myriad other activities. I lived in a Lutheran bubble.

Of course my Lutheran bubble was boiling in the soup of a vast religious milieu. I have gone to school with people who are Catholic, Methodist, and of a variety of faiths. However, in my mind, I was Lutheran. I went to a Lutheran congregation, attended a Lutheran college, worked at Lutheran camps, and now attend a Lutheran seminary.

Over the past several years, I have gradually started to pop my Lutheran bubble. A seminal experience for me was with a New Testament reading group in college. A group of students and local clergy met weekly to translate Greek. Active participants included Lutheran pastors from the ELCA, LCMS and WELS traditions, as well as Methodist, Disciples of Christ, Evangelical Free, and Roman Catholic leaders. This ecumenical gathering included vastly different opinions on scriptural authority and ecclesiology, but those differences made the dialogue all the more fruitful.

I have become attracted to the ecumenical movement because I see that mine is not the only way to practice Christianity. In seminary, I have been intentional about popping my Lutheran bubble. Attending seminary in Chicago has been a gift. Cross-registering arrangements between the seminaries of several denominations allows for experiencing coursework in multiple perspectives. I have learned social justice and community organizing with Roman Catholics and taken bible courses with Presbyterians. I am experiencing ecumenism as more than top-down policies and agreements from my denomination. I am able to study, converse, and fellowship with many faces of the Body of Christ. I look forward to years of ministry with colleagues from many expressions

of a Church that is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

As a seminarian in the 21st century, I follow the footsteps of those who have gone before. The nascent stages of ecumenical dialogue happened long before I was born. Major strides have been made recently in ecumenism, such as the ELCA's various full communion agreements. However, the ball is proverbially in my court. As part of a future generation of religious leaders, my fervent hope is that I will be a part of a grassroots ecumenism. Joint community worship services, shared ministry resources, ecumenical periscope studies, and informal dialogue can lead to the fruition of ecumenical and interdenominational cooperation.

I feel ashamed that I never worshiped at the Presbyterian congregation next to my boyhood home. As I develop ecumenically, I see my own culpability in not taking opportunities to share life with my Christian neighbors. The next time I return to my hometown, I will walk across the street to worship.

- Paul Bailie, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

REGIONS TAKE ON TASKS BETWEEN WORKSHOPS

Representatives from each of the nine ELCA regions met in caucus to discuss ecumenical activities, identify ways to assist with the development of the LERN Manual, and to commit to tasks that they will undertake between now and the next National Workshop. Here is a quick summary of the tasks each region agreed to pursue.

Region 1 – Increase interactions with the Alaska Synod.

Region 2 – Improve communication structures.

Region 3 – Participate in a 1-day retreat (one on east side of region and one on west side).

Region 4 – Work on improving interactions with Nebraska Synod.

Region 5 – Get to know one another better; Work with those synods currently without designated representatives.

Region 6 – Create an electronic bulletin-board.

Region 7 – Hold a 1-day gathering; Work on getting ecumenical representatives from other synods to attend the National Workshop.

Region 8 – Communicate by e-mail with each other at least once a month; Conduct a regional meeting around some event.

Region 9 – Work on mutual consultation concerning new mission starts.

NETWORK ACTS ON GOVERNING DOCUMENT

At the Thursday plenary, the Lutheran Ecumenical Representatives acted to approve the LERN Governing Document. The document addresses (1) expectations of LERN members, (2) responsibilities within synods, (3) regional and national responsibilities, (4) structure, (5) duties of officers, (6) the Network's newsletter, and (7) changing the document. The Network adopted an amendment calling for the Board to revise the paragraph addressing at-large membership (under the section titled "Structure"). Revised language will be circulated to LERN membership and presented at the next Workshop for consideration and action.

REGIONAL ELECTIONS

In regional caucuses held on Wednesday, May 10th, five regions held elections for regional representatives, who serve on the Network's Board. New members to the Board include Bill Sappenfield (Region 4), Chris Olkiewicz (Region 5), and Larry Kemp (Region 8). Re-elected to the Board were Scott Cady (Region 7) and Russell Meyer (Region 9).

EXECUTIVE BOARD ELECTIONS

The positions of President and Vice-President were up for election in 2006. Scott Cady was reelected to a two-year term as president, and Russell Meyer as vice-president. Jan Flaaten continues to serve as secretary.

REFLECTIONS FROM INTERNSHIP AT ECUMENICAL AND INTER-RELIGIOUS RELATIONS

In beginning work as an intern for the Office of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations (ER), I was excited about the possibility for learning more about the ELCA and specifically its work with other churches and faith traditions. Over the past months I have assisted with the preparation of the draft full communion document with the United Methodist Church, the "J-Term" in Geneva, *Ecumenical Life*, and now the National Workshop on Christian Unity. Most importantly, this internship has given me the opportunity to experience ecumenism at the local "grass-roots" and national levels. I know many seminarians have taken part in ecumenical services at local congregations. Some have even planned and led special ecumenical services as their capstone project in the parish. I feel privileged to have experienced how ecumenism at the congregational and

national levels integrate with each other in order to advance the ecumenical mission of the ELCA.

Attendance at the National Workshop has become my capstone experience. The opportunity to hear speakers and develop relationships has inspired me to attend future ecumenical conferences. I am profoundly thankful to ER for this internship program. This experience will have a profound impact on my future ministry as a pastor in the ELCA; I look forward to many years of continued involvement in LERN and the ecumenical movement.

- Nathan Allen



Trinity Episcopal Cathedral – San Jose, California

CHRISTIAN UNITY IS COMING SOON!

The 2007 National Workshop on Christian Unity will be held between January 29th and February 1st at the Key Bridge Marriott Hotel, which is across the Potomac River from the National Mall in Arlington, Virginia. Check the Workshop's website for regular updates at www.nwcu.us.

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