

SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

Highlights from Synod Assembly 2016

World Hunger Challenge

The assembly heard how earlier this year two members of the synod offered a challenge: "If the special offering for ELCA World Hunger received at the 2016 Synod Assembly totals \$15,000, we'll match the \$15,000!"

In response to this challenge the congregations of our synod collected approximately \$80,000, including a gift of \$50,000 from Christ, Conyngham. With the match and additional contributions received after the Assembly, the synod was able to contribute over \$96,000 to World Hunger.



Save the Date! June 2-3, 2017

Assembly 2017 will be held on June 2-3 at the Kalahari Resort in the Poconos. Mark your calendar now and plan to attend the grand finale of "UNLEASHED for Reformation 2017."

ELCA Representative Andrea Walker



On Friday and Saturday, June 17-18, approximately 500 delegates and visitors from congregations of the synod gathered for this year's assembly. After reports from Bishop Zeiser and the officers of the synod, the Rev. Andrea L. Walker, ELCA Global Mission Area Director for Madagascar, West and Central Africa, brought greetings on behalf of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and the entire churchwide organization. She reminded the assembly that we are part of a larger story that makes up the ELCA. We are one church in 9,300 places, nearly 4 million people strong, "members of one another" (Romans 12:4-5) moving forward together.

Rev. Walker reported on a variety of mission efforts both here and around the world. In 2015 the ELCA started 92 new congregations in the USA, including Common Ground in Wyomissing. We have also made tremendous progress in fighting hunger and malaria. Reporting on "Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA" she reported that after two years we have raised \$80 million toward the five-year goal of \$198 million. Our synod has raised nearly \$550,000 so far. She presented a video from Presiding Bishop Eaton highlighting four strategic statements: We are church, We are Lutheran, We are church together, and We are church for the sake of the world.



For the second year the assembly enjoyed God's Playground, an area set aside for celebrating ministries and other ways to be UNLEASHED. Those attending the assembly had several opportunities to wander through the Playground and interact with a variety of other folks.

Festival Worship Service



The assembly closed with a Festival Communion Service. The music and hymns were led by the Mark Mummert, who in 2015 served as Distinguished

Visiting Seminary Cantor at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg; and by Aimée and Joel Pakan, a folk rock duo who perform together as Tangled Blue.



In his sermon Bishop Zeiser challenged the congregations of the synod to look at what they are hoarding, that is, what traditions and ideas they hang on to even though they may clutter a healthy relationship to Jesus Christ.

Spending Proposal for 2017

The assembly adopted a Spending Proposal for 2017. Because income for the past year was about \$100,000 under budget, the finance committee proposed to reduce spending in the 2017 plan by the same amount. The proposal retains a split of 47% of income to the ELCA and 53% for synod operations. However, support for "Other Institution & Agency Support" was reduced from 10% of income to 8%.

The Synod Plants a Tree in Luthergarten



"Even if I knew that the world were to collapse tomorrow, I would still plant my apple tree today" (ascribed to Martin Luther). In 2017 Lutheran churches will commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, that had its beginnings in Lutherstadt Wittenberg. To commemorate this anniversary, the Luthergarten has been established in Wittenberg on the grounds of the former town fortifications. 500 trees will be planted in the Luthergarten and elsewhere in the town, as a concrete sign of the optimism so clearly expressed in Luther's apple tree quote.

The assembly heard how on June 13 a team from our synod visited Wittenberg and planted the tree, *Tilia tomentosa* 'Brabant' (Silver Linden Tree), identified as number 323.

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Cheryl Peterson



The Rev. Dr. Cheryl M. Peterson, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Lutheran Theological Seminary in Ohio, offered two keynote presentations. In the first she talked about how the church needs to be freed from its captivity to "cultural Christianity" and unleashed for God's ministry. Immigration and procreation will no longer support our efforts. We must learn how to reach out to the so-called "nones," who claim no religious affiliation but often describe themselves as "spiritual but not religious."

In her second presentation, Dr. Peterson talked about "Twelve Suggested Shifts for a church unleashed by the Spirit." Some of these were "From survival to revival," "From fear to bold proclamation," "From planning to preparation," and "From attractional to incarnational evangelism." She emphasized the need for building relationships into an expansive, inclusive fellowship.

Synod News is published monthly by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA
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