

SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

Highlights from Synod Assembly 2017

Synod Council Election

The Assembly recognized and expressed gratitude for the years of service from Donald Smith, Vice President, and David Hinrichs, Treasurer, both of whom have volunteered countless hours for the work of the synod.



Barbara J. Huffman de Belón, a current member of Synod Council, was elected vice president; and

Donald R. Dillman was elected treasurer. In addition, Louise McCloughan, from the West Berks Mission District, was newly elected to a three-year term.

Save the Date! June 8-9, 2018

Assembly 2018 will be held at the Mohegan Sun Arena in the Wilkes-Barre.



Repentance, Reconciliation, and Common Witness



The Assembly began with a Rite of Repentance, Reconciliation, and Common Witness led by Bishop Zeiser and by Bishop Joseph Bambara of the Scranton Diocese. This was a regional expression and affirmation of an ecumenical commemoration of the Reformation held jointly by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church on October 31, 2016 in Lund, Sweden.



The Lund event highlighted the solid ecumenical developments between Catholics and Lutherans; and the joint gifts received through dialogue, particularly in anticipation of the 500th Reformation anniversary in 2017. It featured a cathedral service following the Common Prayer liturgical guide, based on the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue report "From Conflict to Communion." Bishops Zeiser and Bambara were delighted to celebrate the commemoration at Assembly 2017.

(Photography by Mark Searfoss)

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Kathryn Kleinhans

The keynote speaker was The Rev. Dr. Kathryn Kleinhans, Professor of Religion at Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa.



Her topic was "The Catechism and Vocation for Daily Life." She emphasized that Luther's Small Catechism was written for lay people, not for clergy. Luther wanted to unleash the power of the gospel for ordinary persons. The Small Catechism is designed to be a "Guide to Christian Living," and Luther wanted each individual to wrestle with how each teaching affects "me."

For Luther "vocation" is not limited to religious callings, but is the calling each person receives to live one's daily life. This takes place at home, in community, at church, and at the workplace.

Dr. Kleinhans further suggested that Lutherans be "political, but not partisan"; that is, that Lutherans work for the good of the "polis," (Greek for city). For Luther, government is one of God's good gifts; and citizenship is one of our "callings."

Special Offerings

Two special offerings were received during the Assembly. One for World Hunger collected over \$5,700; and one for the newly formed United Lutheran Seminary collected over \$3,700.

Young Adults in Global Ministry (YAGM)

At the Assembly Banquet on Friday evening two young adults were recognized for their service in the YAGM program. The ELCA invites young adults ages 21-29 into a transformative, year-long journey in international service. Through this experience, they are shaped by the witness of our global neighbors; and they share in the journeys of companion churches and organizations in one of nine countries around the world.



Luke Swanson, who served in Argentina for the 2016-17 year, talked to the Assembly via Skype. He described both the joys and the challenges of ministry in an environment and culture very different from our own.



Annie Herman, who will serve in Israel/Palestine for the 2017-18 year, attended the Banquet and was introduced to the Assembly.

Festival Worship



Gathering music for the sessions was provided by Bobby Siegfried, a singer/songwriter who is well known in the synod, and who has performed at many venues in northeastern PA. At times, Bobby was joined by friends from Emmanuel, Emmanuelsville and First Presbyterian, Allentown.

Singing at the Eucharist was led by Mark Mummert, Director of Worship at Christ the King Lutheran Church, Houston. A number of volunteers assisted with leading worship, reading lessons, and distributing communion.



In his sermon at the Festival Eucharist, Bishop Zeiser talked about the history of the Reformation and about how it resulted in both "a bruised church and a bruised world."

He went on to say that "In the bruised Jesus, God offers repentance, reconciliation, and common witness for the sake of a bruised church and a bruised world. This is our hope, as God's children in Christ Jesus, wondering when this bruised church will be reformed finally, and how much reconciliation it's going to take to mend this bruised world."