

2011 Churchwide Assembly Reflections



Oregon Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

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Oregon Synod, ELCA

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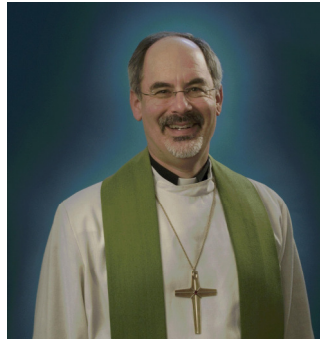
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It's always a joy to put a face on the ministry of our church. In this fall issue of the Update you'll see lots of faces - faces of those who went to this year's Churchwide Assembly in Orlando, FL and faces of interns new to the synod. Enjoy!

We've also seen faces in the news, recently. I'm thinking here of the faces of "Occupy Portland," and the layers of politicians, police and pastors who surround them. There is a

conversation on SoulCafe.org around Occupy Portland which is very interesting. Check it out and offer your two cents worth. I'm fascinated by the "emergent" nature of the movement. There are few real leaders; the agenda is not clear; I hear on the news "I don't speak for the movement, but . . ." and to see what media is engaging the movement, and how, is fascinating. Whatever you might think about "Occupy" I encourage you to think about this emergent aspect. The Church of tomorrow is, and will be, formed in the same way. Watch and learn. That's what I'm trying to do.

Fall is always rich in spirit, tradition and meaning. I want to add "family" to this list because holidays are family times for me, but I know this is not true for everybody. Open up your family. Expand the walls. This is part of what we do, in fact, do well throughout the holidays.

Thanksgiving Eve it will be my privilege to worship with, and preach, for a combined service between Trinity Lutheran and St. Timothy, both in Gresham. My sermon isn't ready yet, but generally we read Psalm 100 at Thanksgiving, "*Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.*" We need joy these days. It's there, it's always there, but sometimes we don't take the time to tune into it and give thanks. This is what worship is really all about. In worship we look at life through a different window. We don't delude ourselves about hardship, quite the contrary, we acknowledge it. But in worship we learn that fear, anxiety and what passes for "reality" may itself be the delusion. Is God alive and well or not? One again in this holy season we will cast our vote - and the faces of those around us will reflect God's glory, or our own lack of faith. So, rejoice!

Bishop Dave

The Rev. Nick Doversberger, Zoar, Canby

Attending this assembly has been another great experience. There was a lot of business to attend to, but there was also ample time for inspiring worship, engaging Bible study discussions and presentations by representatives of other church bodies as well as representatives from ministries of the ELCA.

Certainly the level of intensity was nothing like what I felt at the 2009 Assembly in Minneapolis, when we were dealing with the Sexuality Statement and implementing resolutions. This gathering was far more relaxed and yet also energetic, interesting and often fascinating. Others from the Oregon Synod delegation of voting members will be writing about aspects of this assembly. What I want to share briefly with you are some impressions of the following.

On Tuesday morning I attended the **Global Mission** Breakfast meeting. We listened to several speakers describing this important area of ELCA ministry. People were surprised to hear that the majority of our missionaries are not being sent to places traditionally associated with mission activity, such as Africa and Asia. Rather, the largest number of ELCA missionaries, including Youths in Global Mission, are being sent to Europe for the simple reason that the need seems to be greatest in the very place where Christendom flourished for so long.

Nevertheless, there continue to be ELCA missionaries all over the world. Some are pastors, but most are lay people who bring a variety of skills and gifts in response to particular needs expressed by those with whom we are in partnership. Oregon Synod congregations are invited to consider supporting an ELCA missionary. For information about this, contact the Synod office or the Synod Global Mission Committee.

I was also able to attend another breakfast meeting sponsored by the **Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service**. One of the speakers was Dr. Junge, director of the Lutheran World Federation. He spoke eloquently about the far-reaching work of LIRS, especially focusing on the drastic situation of drought and famine in the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia and Somalia). The newly created refugee camp Dabaab in Kenya now has over 400,000 people,



many of whom are children. The town of Dabaab, which has a population of 100,000, already existed prior to the existence of this emergency camp. Dr. Junge invited each of us to consider what would be the impact if the population in our own area were to increase suddenly by fourfold. Dr. Junge praised the work of LIRS, Lutheran World Relief and the Hunger Appeal in helping people in that region, in the US and elsewhere. Often, he reported, camps have eventually been disbanded and people have been able to go home...at the same time, it can be necessary for

people to be resettled. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service is crucial to this effort. Bishop Julian Gordy of the Southeastern Synod also spoke about aspects of immigration in our own country. The state of Alabama is a part of his Synod. That state has recently enacted such drastic legislation as to make it a crime for anyone even to give a ride to church to an undocumented immigrant. The effect has been to unite almost every church in the state against this legislation, while there is general agreement on the need for

comprehensive reform of immigration policies. In any case, the ministry focus of LIRS is in four related areas: resettling refugees, protecting children, serving immigrants and their families and fostering a spirit of welcome.

Dr. Junge also reminded us that the biblical roots of the immigration story go back to Abraham and Sarah, to the story of Israel, and to the experience of Jesus himself. We in the US are ourselves a nation of immigrants. Immigration is part of the human story.

Bishop Mark Hanson welcomed **Dr. Sayyid M. Sayeed, National Director for the Office of Interfaith and Community Alliances of the Islamic Society of North America**. It was the first time an ELCA assembly had welcomed and heard from an Islamic leader. "Peace be with you", said Dr. Sayeed; the assembly responded, "and also with you!"

He went on, "Today the ELCA has broken stereotypes when it established a committee on Lutheran-Muslim relationships, and that committee has shared that we love you." He said, "In the past there was a huge mountain of discrimination and hate, and that Lutherans and Muslims must work together in removing mountains of misunderstanding... we pray God Almighty to bless

us and together deliver this mission that is ours.” The Assembly responded to his words with a standing ovation.

Finally, I want to say a few words about the **social statement** entitled, “**Genetics: Faith and Responsibility**”. This social statement was passed with overwhelming support by the assembly. In my estimation, it is one of the best such statements the church has produced. It is a fine resource for local congregations to use for study and reflection. The statement does not attempt to produce definitive answers, but rather to provide a context in which people can think through questions related to genetics. The biblical grounding is clearly present in this document which provides a great framework for moral and ethical deliberation. The science of genetics and the applications derived from that science affect so many areas of life in these days, from health care to agriculture to groceries, etc. I heartily recommend that you spend time in your congregations with this statement, make sure people know about it and can get a copy of it. Not the least of the advantages is a comprehensive glossary of terms that are commonly used in newspaper articles, etc., with regard to genetics, but hardly ever defined. Here they are, and that is most helpful. I am most grateful for the opportunity to have served as a voting member of the Oregon Synod. Not only has it been personally rewarding to have participated with the other members of our delegation, but it is an honor and privilege to see the fine work of the ELCA in this country and around the world in the name of Jesus Christ. And that is made possible by the blessing of God and the faithful support of so many congregations. It is a good time to be part of the ELCA.

Allen Brown, Augustana, Portland

The worship services were an important and integral part of the assembly. Worship was held every morning the assembly was in session and was attended by almost all voting members (and others) at the assembly. There were roughly 1,000 worshipers at each service. For me, these were the largest Lutheran services I've ever attended. The worship style was a blend of traditional and contemporary, with slightly more emphasis on the latter.

One of the themes of the assembly was that the church is both changing and has to change. The population of the nation is becoming more multi-

cultural and multi-national, and to continue into the 21st century, our church must reform to reflect the changing demographics of the United States. This reformation of the church was reflected in our worship services.

Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson preached the sermon at Monday worship. He is a good preacher, but on that day he was on top of his game. Indeed, Bishop Hanson elicited “Amen,” clapping, and shouts of approval to such an extent that I thought we must have been in full communion with the Baptists.

The spirit of reform continued on Tuesday (where I was privileged to serve as a communion minister). We started with the cantor singing in two foreign languages (Japanese was one). The presiding minister, Pr. Sean Forde, was black, and our preacher, Pr. Marysol Diaz Feliciano was Hispanic; her Gospel reading was entirely in Spanish.

Wednesday's preacher was Pr. Joseph Livenson Lauvanus, who is from Haiti and preached powerfully. The Global Mission musicians, a group of talented, multi-cultural artists, ended worship with a rousing rendition of the Civil Rights song “Keep Your Eyes on the Prize.” So many worshipers stayed to clap and sing along with them that now I'm sure we've been infiltrated by the Baptists.

Our preacher on Thursday was Pr. Kevin Cho, who read the gospel in Korean; thus continuing the multicultural/multinational emphasis. At the end of worship, we were blessed and anointed with oil. Bishop Dave, served as a communion minister and anointer.

Our final worship service on Friday was also the official close to the Assembly. Our final preacher was Pr. Renee Splichl Larson (her husband served an internship in Oregon), a young, white woman, who barely survived the Haitian earthquake. She preached about the justice of God.

Worship at the assembly reminded us that the body of Christ is diverse. It was edifying for us to experience that in worship, for to recognize and celebrate our diversity is to recognize and celebrate Christ himself.

Alison Brown, Augustana, Portland

I attended the assembly as a visitor (wife of voting member, Allen Brown). Though I didn't vote, I learned much about what is currently going on in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). A reoccurring theme of the Assembly was

the idea that we are freed both *from* sin and *for* proclamation and service. This is inspirational for me--though we are all imperfect, this does not have to prevent us from serving God and others. In one of the videos presented, the speaker stated that we are freed to serve in our laughter and our pain.

Part of the Assembly was dedicated to the consideration of the Living into the Future Together (LIFT) report. I am glad that the Church considers that, with a growing acceptance of diversity and the advent of social media, we have new challenges and opportunities to reach people in the 21st century. The Church is changing with the times!

The genetics statement passed; it proclaims that we are to value creation, while celebrating good science. I think it is true, as was the intent, that justice and wisdom are the guiding principles of this statement.

At the Assembly, I learned that a child dies from malaria every 45 seconds, and I'm glad that the Church considers what it can do. The Assembly voted to increase funds for the prevention of malaria, above the amount designated for World Hunger Relief. It is good to see a church active in world affairs.

I was so pleased to see that the ELCA voted to endorse the Dream Act, so that 65,000 undocumented youth can have a chance at an education and a good life. I know what a difference an education has made in my life; I am glad that we support making that possible for others.

The Assembly also took a stand against bullying, and I'm especially happy that we acknowledge the pain that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people go through when bullied. Certainly, bullying has occurred to many different people for a long time. We should name it and denounce it.

It was excellent to see that the ELCA partners with others in our work for humanity. I was happy to hear from Bishop George W.C. Walker, Sr. of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and Bishop Susan C. Johnson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. Both expressed an interest to work with the ELCA.

These are just a few of the reasons I was proud to attend the Assembly as a visitor. The ELCA is doing good things.

Karen Jolly, Central, Portland

The 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly began Monday afternoon with "get acquainted" information followed by the opening worship. The worship was a gala event with ribbon banners being marched among the voting members and guests that were gathered in the designated worship space. Inclusive language was used; inclusive hymns were sung. Bishop Mark Hanson presided and preached. In his message, he expressed concern that all marginalized people are truly welcomed in our ELCA churches. He referred to our country as a "consumer-oriented, competitive, 'what-has-God-done-for-me-lately?' place." And he noted that in this culture, we would not hear much about God dismantling structures that marginalized and excluded "people in poverty or those whose race or gender or citizenship or sexual orientation, physical or mental abilities or health make them unwanted, unnoticed." The service ended in song with the words "and the world is about to turn." (The full text of the Bishops sermon and the video to see and hear the sermon are provided at the end of this report.)

And so it began.

I have been a volunteer at the prior three churchwide assemblies and this opening was in direct contrast to what I had heard before. The Bishop began with a challenge to become even more inclusive; in the past there was tension overriding the plenary sessions and, yes, even the worship services. Marginalized people (as the Bishop listed in his sermon and noted in the above paragraph) were present, but it was rare when they were named.

Perhaps you recall that during the 2005 and 2007 churchwide assemblies, the Social Statement on Sexuality was being prepared and in 2009 it was approved with the exact 66.67 percent of the votes needed voting in favor. This created a certain tension throughout the events of that assembly. Meals with other voting members had underlying tensions; would those voting members—especially from small Midwest town--be friendly with me, a woman from the Pacific Northwest? What conversation topics could we discuss and what needed to be avoided?

At this assembly, Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson presented the Presiding Bishop report on the second day. He began with these words:

I come to this assembly more hopeful, more grateful for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, than I ever have been. The reason is simple: we are a church with clarity about who we are. . . . We are to be clear that we are a church whose unity is in Christ.

Bishop Hanson spoke about the past two years, when less than 5 percent of the ELCA Lutheran churches voted to leave the ELCA and where many Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities (SAWC) have sprung up—and emphasized we are a church of unity, a church for the marginalized, a church of welcome for all.

The stage was set.

So in 2011, the tensions felt during prior assemblies had disappeared. Conversations were now able to take place—without fear but with hope. I had conversations with a Midwest congregational president from a small town. He expressed his fear of two years ago when the social statement on sexuality passed. He discussed the subsequent concern in his congregation that resulted in a wait-and-see stance. The conversation was honest and open. The result? No change to the congregation; the policy seems to be working.

And so this assembly got down to the work of the church. Much was accomplished. Respect and love of God was readily expressed. People were free to speak openly and passionately at the microphone without fear, as noted by the supportive statement of Oregon's own Travis VanHorn when he spoke in favor of the memorial on anti-bullying. (URLs to the text and video are provided below.) Appreciation for all people—those present and those not present—was expressed and felt.

For me, this assembly sealed the fact that the Lutheran Church is *Free to live as every day evangelists to share the good news of Jesus Christ*. (Quoted from Bishop Mark Hanson's Report to the ELCA.) Thanks to the Oregon Synod for providing me this unique opportunity as a voting member from your synod!

*The video of Bishop Hanson's sermon can be heard at <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Secretary/ELCA-Governance/Churchwide-Assembly/Watch-the-Assembly.aspx> Click on Communion-Monday; the sermon begins at minute 23:45

*The video of Bishop Hanson's report can be heard at <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Secretary/ELCA-Governance/Churchwide-Assembly/Watch-the-Assembly.aspx> Click on Plenary Three; the statement begins at minute 11.

*The video of Travis can be heard at <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Secretary/ELCA-Governance/Churchwide-Assembly/Watch-the-Assembly.aspx> Click on Plenary 5, Part 2. The discussion about the memorial begins at minute 188:12 with Travis speaking at minute 193:10.

Kelsey Nedrow, Good Shepherd Albany

The 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly is one that I will never forget. Not only because it took place in warm and sunny (and stormy) Orlando, quite a vacation spot for someone from Oregon, but because I got the opportunity to meet amazing and unique Lutherans from all over the country, and all over the world. I won't go into how much I enjoyed the Plenary Sessions...but I will say that my favorite part of our assembly schedule had to be Bible Study.

Now I know there is a bit of a joke about how Lutherans don't do Bible study, but you wouldn't know it from this crowd. As fellow brothers and sisters of our wonderful church family I'm sure you can agree that Lutherans, rather than do bible study, really love to eat! (Potlucks, soup suppers, etc.) So, what a pleasant surprise it was when I realized that I couldn't wait for lunch to finish so I could run off to Bible Study. Willingly!

Sitting with a bishop from Pennsylvania, a pastor from Texas, and lay persons from all over the Midwest, the state boundaries and many miles between our synods seemed to disappear. I found myself among people of pure faith and devotion to Jesus. I had the great pleasure of hearing many unique interpretations of readings from the bible, and many different points of view. I saw so many diverse interpretations of these biblical texts that I know I wouldn't have come across had it not been for these bible study sessions. After hearing many different viewpoints, questions, and ideas about various scriptures, I knew I could never learn enough and all I wanted to do was talk. Talk about the scriptures, talk about God, talk about my own faith journey and listen to others. Though I had never met any of these people before, in sitting around that table, listening, exploring, and expanding my outlooks, I had never felt more at home.

The biggest thing I learned at Churchwide Assembly is that it doesn't really matter where we all come from, we're all Lutherans. This means we're all part of an amazing family. I am so grateful I had this incredible opportunity to meet so many of us, learn our stories, and engage in amazing conversation.



Meet the 2011-2012 interns!



Elizabeth Damico is joining the Oregon Synod from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN and serving at Zion in The Dalles. Originally from north western Minnesota, Elizabeth studied music and religion at Concordia College in Moorhead, MN. Between college and seminary Elizabeth served Pacific Lutheran University

and a variety of congregations as worship leader and church musician. Answering the call to ordained ministry has meant some serious discernment of how music will inform ministry, yet this year of focusing on Word and sacrament ministry is very exciting! Elizabeth and her daughter, Micaela (age 5) have been warmly welcomed into the Dalles community and are looking forward to a year of holy adventures, great learning and fun!

Hi. My name is Youngshim Mason. Youngshim means “beautiful heart.” I am a Master of Divinity student at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, IA, and I am an intern at Gloria Dei



Lutheran Church, Coos Bay, OR. I was born and raised in S. Korea. Christian faith is central to my family. Originally, my family was Buddhist, but after my parents married, then they converted to Christianity. I knew from when I was a little child that I called to become a pastor. Thus, I pursued and completed a Bachelor in Theology at Mokwon University in Daejeon, Korea and Master in Theology at Methodist Theological Seminary in Seoul, Korea. There I studied Koran Minjung Theology, religious philosophy, and systemic theology. I am interested in human rights, social justice, and human trafficking issues.



My name is Ray M°Kechnie (pronounced *mick-KECK-nee*) and I'm the pastoral intern at Resurrection Lutheran Church in northeast Portland. I'm pursuing my Master of Divinity at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Iowa. I'm 35, single, and was born and raised in Alaska. I have also lived in Idaho, Colorado, and Seattle, so coming back to the Pacific Northwest was beyond my wildest expectations for internship. I have a bachelor's degree in Sign Language Interpreting from Idaho State University and worked in this field for several years before responding to the Lord's call to go to seminary. Most recently I was on short-term volunteer staff this summer at Holden Village as well as a counselor for The Naming Project, a Lutheran-based week-long Bible camp in Minnesota for GLBT youth. I am passionate about seeing people make meaningful connections in their lives with God and growing in their relationship with Christ, becoming whole-life disciples, sprinkling salt and shining the light! Back when I had time for hobbies, I enjoyed reading, dabbling in art, camping, hiking, road-tripping, movies, music (I listen to music better than I play it, so if you know anyone who offers guitar lessons...), social justice issues, and spending time with family and friends. I have a large extended family (most of who are still in Alaska) including two older half-sisters, two nieces, three nephews, one great-niece and six great-nephews! Also, I am excited about global mission and was able to go on January term trip to Haiti last year. I fell in love with the people of Haiti and hope to make many more trips back in the near future. The picture of me was taken with deaf students at a special education school in Jacmel, Haiti. If you ever bump into me around the synod, be sure to ask me about Haiti; I love to talk about what the Spirit is up to there!



Stacey, who is serving at Grace & Mercy in Umatilla, grew up in Havre, MT, and went to college at the U of M in Missoula, MT. Since she was young, Stacey claims she has always had an interest in the church and its mission in the world, especially pertaining to concepts of community and social justice. In college, she therefore studied a variety of

topics pertaining to the humanities, majoring in Liberal Studies with an emphasis in Religious Studies. Stacey was at counselor at Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp in Montana for two summers, was involved in InterVarsity Christian Fellowship for a time, and also served as a peer minister for Lutheran Campus Ministries.

After college, she went to Argentina for a year to serve as a volunteer through the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission Program. In Argentina she worked with a young female pastor in her church, and it was there that Stacey began discerning her call to become a pastor. Back in the U.S., Stacey worked at the Poverello Center, a homeless shelter and soup kitchen in Missoula, MT, for two more years before applying for seminary. Her hope while working at the shelter was to discover and further understand the needs of the forgotten and vulnerable in our communities. Now, she is currently pursuing a MDiv and rostered ordination in the ELCA at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, CA. She is following the newly developed Justice and Evangelism track at PLTS, which is helping her develop and fine-tune her passion for networking and community development. Particularly, she desires to help create and maintain relationships between people in respect to God's working and ever-loving relationship with humanity.

Stacey looks forward to being in conversation with everyone in the Oregon Synod this year and discovering what God's up to in the world together! She occasionally blogs and her blogspot can be found at <http://soyluterana.blogspot.com>. Stacey can also be contacted at stacey.siebrasse@gmail.com or you can give her a ring at 541-571-9477.



Greetings! My name is Laura Stephenson and I am happy to be the 28th intern at United Lutheran Church in Eugene, OR. I am working towards a Masters of Divinity at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, CA. Our time together will certainly be filled with learning, joy and fellowship. Likewise, I pray that our time will include growth in faith and ministry for everyone. I was born and raised in Colorado. At the University of Colorado I earned a B.A. in Environmental Studies, with minors in Geography and Community Leadership. After college, I joined a group with my home congregation in a mission trip to Haiti that changed my life. After I saw the wonderful things God was doing in Haiti I was called to mission with the ELCA in Indonesia. I spent six months with a deaconess community in Northern Sumatra teaching. When I came home from Indonesia, I felt God's call to ordained ministry. These last two years I have been renewed in my faith and look forward to learning more about parish ministry with you. In my free time I dance, hike, do yoga, read, cook, garden, and bird watch. I love the outdoors, my family, art and scripture.



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Dates to watch

November 11

Jazz Vespers

5:00 p.m., St. James Lutheran Church, 1315 SW Park Ave, Portland

Jazz Service

6:00 p.m., Augustana Lutheran Church, 2710 NE 14th, Portland

November 11-13

Breaking Barriers – OLYO High School Gathering

Camp Cascade, Lyons, Oregon.

A gathering of awesome high school youth who are willing and excited to explore their faith!
\$99 includes housing, meals, and fun. Keep an eye on Soulcafe.org/group/olyo for registration info.

November 12

Holden Village 50th Anniversary Fall Celebration

1:00 p.m. gathering, 5:00 p.m. seated dinner (reservation only), 7:30 p.m. worship

Reserve your dinner online at www.holdenvillage.org

November 13

Fall Into Jazz

6:00 p.m., Mt. Carmel Lutheran Church, 515 SW Maplecree Dr, Portland

Free-will offering. (503) 244-5143 or www.mtcarmellutheran.com for more information.

December 8

Retired Pastors & spouses luncheon

11:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., R.S.V.P. Susan Carder (503) 659-0990, kokochurchmouse@aol.com