

Built on a Rock 500: Rooted, Reforming, Resilient. Report of the Vice President – May 5, 2017

This is the year of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation! It is a time to look back and celebrate successes and to contemplate and recognize what we need to reform. Scholars say that major developments in world religions have occurred in a 500 year cycle. What changes will we see in our lifetime locally, nationally, and in the world?

Looking back over our successes we need to honor those who have been a major part of the mission of the Oregon Synod. Our Synod Treasurer, Grieg Anderson, has been the key shepherd of our financial resources for over 20 years. Grieg has retired due to health issues. His enthusiasm for presenting complex and important information about finance is unforgettable. We will miss his incredible dedication and professional stewardship. Thank you, Grieg!

Norene Goplen is another good and faithful servant who has decided to focus on her health and pass her work on to others. Norene is highly respected throughout Oregon and the ELCA as an effective advocate for all issues Lutherans care about. As the Lutheran Advocate for the Oregon Synod she was a major force in passing the law to outlaw pay day loans. She coordinated resources and networked individuals and organizations to respond to hunger, natural disasters and other issues that impacted people throughout Oregon. Not just Lutherans, but also all Oregonians owe Norene a debt of thanks for her tireless work. Thank you, Norene!

Pastor Jim Norlie is also retiring this year. Jim has served as pastor at Luther House, in Corvallis, the only Lutheran campus ministry in the Oregon Synod. Without the resources of a traditional congregational structure, Jim has had to be creative in order to raise the money for his own salary and the campus ministry. Luther House has been a home away from home for hundreds of youth over the years of his ministry, and a safe place to ask questions during critical times in a young adult's life. Thank you, Jim!

In August of 2016 the Churchwide Assembly was held in New Orleans. Voting members from Oregon included Bishop Dave Brauer-Rieke, VP Deb Chenoweth, Roseta Akin, Pastor Barbara Punch, Joel Eichler, Pastor Scott Dunfee, Rachel Kramer, Bonnie Beadles-Bohling, and Stan Ihuri. In spite of record rainfall, the City of New Orleans rolled out the red carpet for the ELCA and many residents commented on the great impression the ELCA Youth gathering had made on the city a few years earlier. Significant actions taken during Assembly included:

- The election of a new Vice President, Mr. William Horne, who was elected on the 4th ballot.
- The historic *Declaration on the Way* was presented and affirmed with 32 statements of agreement between the Catholic Church and the ELCA.
- The Word and Service Proposal was adopted which created one unified roster for diaconal ministers, deaconesses and Associates in Minister.
- The Assembly voted to repudiate the historic *Doctrine of Discovery* responsible for settlement of the U.S. without regard or care for Native peoples.

- The Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, and Opportunities (AMMPARO) strategy was presented and approved. More details about this program will be presented during this synod assembly.
- ELCA, churchwide, budgets for the next 3 years were approved: 2017 Budget spending authorization of \$65,296,005; and 2017 ELCA World Hunger spending authorization of \$24,800,000; 2018 Budget of \$64,057,220; and a 2018 ELCA World Hunger income of \$25,000,000; and 2019 Budget of \$64,151,175; and 2019 ELCA World Hunger income of \$25,000,000.

A Memorial from the Oregon Synod encouraging the ELCA to declare itself to be a “Sanctuary Denomination” was also submitted for churchwide Assembly consideration. This Memorial was referred to the Domestic Mission Unit of the ELCA and a report of their actions is included as an addendum to this report.¹

The worship, music, and Bible studies were outstanding. We all came home tired but energized and inspired. The next Churchwide Assembly will be held in August 2019 in Milwaukee, WI. We will be electing Oregon Synod Voting Members for this Assembly at our 2018 Synod Assembly.

During this Synod Assembly you will hear about the progress on grants and initiatives that were partially funded from the New Beginnings fund for a total of \$560,000 over 3 years. These initiatives are a key part of how we are “reforming” how we do mission in the constantly changing culture of Oregon. The future is not clear, but it is full of opportunities; we need to support new leaders and new ideas while honoring our strong roots and values.

Debby Chenoweth
Vice President Oregon Synod

¹ Sanctuary Resolution Addendum

The following was passed at our 2016 Oregon Synod Assembly. The third "Resolved" memorialized the Churchwide Assembly to declare itself a Sanctuary Denomination. This Addendum reports on the Assembly's response to our Memorial:

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod endorse and fully support the existing Sanctuary congregations of the Oregon Synod, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod declare itself one of the first Sanctuary Synods in the ELCA while encouraging all congregations to become Sanctuary churches ready to protect refugees and undocumented sisters and brothers from arrest and deportation by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers (ICE), and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Oregon Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to declare itself the first denomination in the country to call itself a Sanctuary denomination, encouraging all 10,500 Lutheran churches to become Sanctuary congregations.

The following is from the ELCA Secretary's Report of Church Council Responses to Synod Resolutions and Churchwide Assembly Actions (Nov. 10-13, 2016)

P. EXAMINING THE IMPLICATIONS OF BECOMING A SANCTUARY DENOMINATION

The Report of the Memorials Committee of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly includes the full text of the synod memorial to that assembly under category B9: Examining the Implications of Becoming a Sanctuary Denomination.

Churchwide Assembly action [CA16.02.03j]

To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Oregon Synod regarding the sanctuary movement;

To reaffirm the ELCA's partnership with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service in calling for fair and compassionate immigration policies and practices that keep families together;

To encourage ELCA synods, congregations and members to advocate for legislation that welcomes the stranger to this country and to their communities;

To refer the request to the Domestic Mission unit to examine the opportunities and implications of endorsing the practice of congregations offering sanctuary and of the ELCA declaring itself a sanctuary denomination and request a report and recommendations be provided to the Church Council.

Response from the Domestic Mission unit and Office of the Secretary (November 2016)

The Domestic Mission unit, the general counsel of the ELCA, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) discussed next steps for the Domestic Mission unit to examine the endorsement of congregations offering sanctuary and to consider the ramifications of the ELCA declaring itself a sanctuary denomination. The group intends to pursue additional conversations with leaders from the Oregon Synod to further understand the purpose and to define terms in the memorial. This conversation may lead to consultation with other denominations and will be followed by research and analysis. The unit expects to bring a report and possible recommendations to the November 2017 meeting of the Council.

Church Council action:

To receive the response from the Office of the Secretary and the Domestic Mission unit; and

To anticipate a report with possible recommendations by the November 2017 Church Council meeting.

[Note: A follow-up phone conversation including Bp. Brauer-Rieke and Oregon pastors Mark Knutson and Ron Werner was held April 5, 2017. Online were Alaide Vilchis Ibarra, ELCA Program Director, Migration Policy; Mary Campbell, ELCA Program Director AMMPARO; Linda Hartke, CEO Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services; Thomas Cunniff, attorney for the ELCA; three bishops of other synods and Rev. Amy Reumann, Director of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry for the ELCA. Our Memorial is being taken serious and responsibly by our churchwide partners.

In addition, Bp. Brauer-Rieke reports several phone conversations and requests about the synod's work as a Sanctuary synod, and both Pr. Werner and Pr. Knutson likewise report many calls and emails about our work.]