

NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD
Twenty-Third Annual Assembly
Mohegan Sun Arena, Wilkes-Barre PA
June 18-19, 2010

PLENARY SESSION ONE

Friday, June 18
1:00 PM

Bishop Zeiser conducted the Order for the Opening of a Synod Assembly at 1 PM at the Mohegan Sun Arena in Wilkes-Barre. The bishop declared that a quorum was present and expressed appreciation to all involved in making arrangements for this assembly:

- The Local Arrangements Committee, especially Pastors George Mathews and Charlie Grube, who chaired the committee.
- The members of the Worship and Spirituality Ministry Team, who planned the worship.
- The many volunteers, especially the rostered leaders and congregations of the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Mission District and the members of St. John, Emmaus and Zion, Old Zionsville, who helped collate the assembly packets.

Bishop Zeiser introduced Pastor Bob Stover and Associate in Ministry Rick Frederick to review the Rules of Procedure as distributed to the assembly in the Bulletin of Reports. They then introduced staff members from Bear Creek Camp to teach the assembly a camp song.

The bishop introduced Region Seven Coordinator Pastor Peggy Wuertele and our ELCA representative Pastor Steven Bouman and thanked them for their presence.

The bishop announced that the privilege of the floor was granted to mission district chairpersons, representatives of ministry teams and agencies as they reported, presidents of synodical units of Women of the ELCA, Lutheran Men in Mission, and LYF, pastors of our full communion partners, our ELCA representative, and members of Synod Council not serving as voting members.

The bishop called upon the Secretary, who presented the assembly program as recommended by the Synod Council:

The following resolution is recommended to the 2010 Synod Assembly: That the 2010 Synod Assembly program be adopted.

Bishop Zeiser explained that since this motion came from the Synod Council it did not require a second. The same would be true for any resolutions that came from a ministry team or committee. The resolution was thus properly before the assembly. Bishop Zeiser asked for the vote. The resolution was adopted.

The secretary reported that copies of the 2009 minutes had been corrected and certified by the bishop and secretary, and were prepared for deposit in the archives. Additional copies were available at the registration desk.

The bishop pointed out that the next item on the agenda was the report of the Nominating Committee. The list of nominees and biographical information appeared on pages that were distributed.

Bishop Zeiser announced that anyone intending to make a nomination from the floor for any position must see Pastor Ziel to obtain a biographical information form at the time the nomination was made. Those forms were due at the ushers' station no later than 2:15 PM.

The bishop announced that the floor was open for nominations. There were two nominations for Voting Members to Churchwide Assembly: Jim Parks and Pastor Eileen LeVan Smith. A motion to close nominations was approved.

The bishop pointed out that, as noted in the material that was received, there were several nominees running unopposed or who had been nominated by their mission districts for *en bloc* election. The assembly could

elect them by means of a unanimous ballot cast by the secretary. He entertained a motion to do that. The motion was made and seconded. The vote was taken. The bishop declared the following people elected:

- Synod Council: Pr. Nancy L. Moore, Martin L. Everhart, Jamie Anczarski
- Voting Members of 2011 Churchwide Assembly: Steve Barrett; Martin L. Everhart; Pr. Michael A. Frost; Linda M. Maule, AiM; Diane McElwee; Catherine Mordosky; Pr. Harry M. Laubach; Pr. Jami L. Possinger; Anthony Rogers; Barry Schwartz; Kelly Wallace.

Bishop Zeiser presented his report. He asked if there were any questions about his report. There were no questions.

Bishop Zeiser introduced Vice President Dawn Baxter, who presented her report.

Bishop Zeiser called on Secretary Taylor to present the Report of the Secretary. She told the assembly that her report was found on pages 5 to 7 and page 51 of the Bulletin of Reports. She asked that errors or omissions be brought to her attention so that she could make any necessary corrections.

Bishop Zeiser called on Treasurer David Hinrichs, who gave the Treasurer's Report.

Bishop Zeiser called on Pastor Wayne Matthias-Long to introduce the work of the Committee of Reference and Counsel. He thanked the committee and asked them to stand. He reminded the assembly that at the 2005 assembly the following rule of procedure was adopted: *Resolutions received by the Committee of Reference and Counsel less than one week before the opening of the Synod Assembly will be brought before the Assembly to decide whether or not they should be considered. Each resolution will be considered only if the Assembly votes by a simple majority to consider it.*

If anyone wished to submit a resolution to be considered by the assembly, it had to be submitted to the committee by the end of the 3:30 p.m. break.

The bishop drew the attention of the assembly to the fact that some people had colored ribbons attached to their name tags. He explained that the ribbons indicated people who were celebrating major anniversaries and he asked people to congratulate them on this milestone.

The bishop called on Dean Martha Sipe to present to the assembly the rostered leaders celebrating major anniversaries this year. As she announced their names, they came to the front of the assembly hall to receive a round of applause.

Fifteenth Anniversary

- Ellen M. Anderson
- Richard B. Baumann
- Cindy G. Camp
- Gordon A. Camp
- Donna T. Deal
- Gregory W. Frey
- Harry L. Heffelfinger, Jr.
- Jeffrey W. Odgren
- James W. Schlegel
- Janet A. Stump

Fiftieth Anniversary

- Hartland H. Gifford
- Rodney R. Heckert
- James L. Henderschedt, Jr.
- Jay C. Klick
- Norman C. Krapf
- Jerry Mraz
- Walter H. Wagner

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary:

- Arvo E. Beck
- Oliver E. Brown
- Raymond C. Burdick
- Paul E. Buzzard
- Ethel Mae L. Cloughen
- Lesley J. Hand
- Emerson F. Harding
- Melinda R. Heppe
- Karen S. Matthias-Long
- Wayne A. Matthias-Long
- Franklin S. Stinner
- Manuel R. Stivers
- Richard H. Summy

Fifty-Fifth Anniversary

- Manfred K. Bahmann
- Richard R. Boyer
- Paul L. Buehrle
- Robert H. Loucks
- Klaus G.W. Molzahn
- Harold S. Weiss

Fortieth Anniversary

- Donald R. Billeck
- Fred T. Crawford
- William M. Horn
- David C. Newhart
- Florence D. Snyder
- Sylvia A. Snyder
- David M. Werley
- Grant A. Wickert

Sixtieth Anniversary

- Charles E. Fair
- Paul F. Kramp, Jr.
- James R. Laubach, Sr.

Sixty-Fifth Anniversary

- Malcolm W. Albright
- Walter P. Fetterly
- Warren S. Harding
- Maurice J. Hart
- Glenn G. Neubauer
- Verne E. Snyder

The bishop reported that three new Mission District Deans were elected this spring:

- Pastor John E. Houck, East Berks
- Pastor Peter D. Kuritz, Scranton/Wilkes-Barre
- Pastor Martin A. Milne, Lehigh

Bishop Zeiser noted that Pastor Houck was not present and invited Pastors Kuritz and Milne to come forward. The bishop led the assembly through the order for the Installation of synod deans.

Bishop Zeiser introduced Mr. Ed Cool, chairperson of the Elections Committee. He explained that this year, for the first time, the election process for voting members to Churchwide Assembly would ensure the participation of youth and young adults. The first ballot included only nominees for youth (under age 18) and young adults (under age 30.) The names of those nominated in these categories but not elected on this ballot would be carried forward to the general ballots for the Churchwide Assembly.

The bishop instructed the ushers to distribute the ballots. After they were completed and collected, the bishop declared the balloting closed. Mr. Cool asked the ballot counters to meet him in rooms A & B.

Bishop Zeiser introduced the Rev. Stephen Bouman, the executive director for the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission Program Unit of the ELCA. Pastor Bouman, the ELCA representative to our assembly, addressed the assembly.

A video on Haiti was shown. Pastor Cheryl Meinschein discussed her mission trip to Haiti during the earthquake and the sea container sent with medical supplies.

Following the break, the bishop reminded the assembly that in 1994 this synod in assembly adopted a continuing resolution committing us to taking a special offering for the ELCA World Hunger Appeal at each assembly. He called on the ushers and the offering was received as a video about the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia was viewed.

Pastor Bouman discussed, "Living into the Future Together."

Bishop Zeiser called on Associate in Ministry Kathy Schaeffer. She and Pastor Kurt Garbe presented the report of the Leadership Development Ministry Team.

The bishop noted that during the assembly, videos of five of the seven pastors celebrating their fiftieth anniversaries of ordination would be shown. The video prepared together by Pastors Jim Henderschedt, Jerry Mraz, and Herb Gifford was shown.

Bishop Zeiser called on Pastor Wayne Matthias-Long to present the first report of the Committee of Reference and Counsel. A resolution was adopted to limit each speaker to three minutes during discussion.

Pastor Matthias-Long presented the following resolutions:

I. The following resolution was received from the Pocono Mission District:

WHEREAS the ELCA in its 1999 social statement, *Economic Life: Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*, contains this provision on page 10:

"We commit ourselves as a church to:...compensate all people we call or employ at an amount sufficient for them to live in dignity; provide adequate pension and health benefits, safe and healthy work conditions, sufficient periods of rest, vacation and sabbatical, and family-friendly work schedules;" and

WHEREAS Augsburg-Fortress Publishers is the wholly-owned subsidiary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and

WHEREAS Augsburg-Fortress Publishers has terminated its defined benefits pension plan which was promised to approximately 500 present and former employees; and

WHEREAS the ELCA claims to have no responsibility for this unjust act; and

WHEREAS this action will render many Augsburg-Fortress retirees destitute; and

WHEREAS the ELCA board of pensions has also reduced the income of retired pastors and other members by 9% per annum for three years; and

WHEREAS this church seeks to be an advocate for the hungry and for justice; and

WHEREAS the Holy Scriptures call upon us, as we have opportunity, to do good to all and especially to the household of faith (Galatians 6:10) and Jesus sent out disciples saying that "the worker is worth his keep" (Matthew 10:7-10); and

WHEREAS the ELCA has not taken action to restore the incomes of these plan members in spite of its commitment in the social statement; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly urges the ELCA Church Council to take all necessary actions to fulfill the commitments in the social statement on economic life for these persons who are suffering significantly reduced income.

The committee presented the resolution without prejudice.

A motion was made to delete the Whereas section beginning, "Whereas the ELCA Board of Pensions has also reduced" The amendment was adopted. A motion was made to change the words "these persons" in the final sentence to "Augsburg Fortress employees and retirees." The amendment was adopted. The resolution as amended was adopted.

II. The following resolution was received from the congregation of Community, Vinemont:

WHEREAS Robert's Rules of Order speaks only of the meeting of a group of members who represent local units of an organization as "delegates"; and

WHEREAS "the Churchwide Assembly" of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America it shall use parliamentary procedures in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, unless otherwise ordered by the assembly [Article 12.31.09] as well as its synods [S7.32]; and

WHEREAS the present constitutions of the ELCA and its constituent synods have replaced "delegates" with "voting members" who vote their own consciences which may not always be in accordance with the will of their local units expressed at congregational meetings; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and its synods and congregations take appropriate actions to bring their constitutions into alignment with the language and spirit of this provision by the 2015 meeting of the Churchwide Assembly.

Pastor Matthias-Long reported that the committee had discussed this resolution with ELCA Secretary Swartling and suggested to the chair on the basis of that discussion that the resolution is out of order.

The bishop ruled the motion out of order.

III. The following resolution was received from Nadine Anderson, St. John, Easton:

WHEREAS the ELCA adopted a World Hunger Program to respond to the Holy Spirit's call to share in God's continuing care for all people and for the entire creation; which includes many people in the US and around the world who suffer hunger and oppression, and

WHEREAS the ELCA World Hunger Program includes relief, sustainable development, community organizing, education, and advocacy,

WHEREAS, most of us know little about hunger, either from our own experience or from seeing parts of our community or the world where hunger is the norm; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran, May 10, pp. 14-15, has information and links for resources on this, and

WHEREAS, we can learn about hunger and contribute to efforts to fight local and world hunger by doing something we know how to do, by participating in A Month Of Potlucks; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod asks member congregations to support the fight against world hunger by participating in A Month of Potlucks, wherein they hold a potluck some time during the summer of 2010 and/or during June 2011; that these potlucks include a time for worship, fellowship, education around the issue of hunger, and a time for advocacy both locally with area hunger agencies and globally through an offering collected to support ELCA World Hunger.

The committee recommended that the resolution be adopted.

A motion was made to insert the words “open to the public” following the word “education” in the final sentence. The amendment was adopted. Further consideration of the motion was delayed until the next report of the Committee of Reference and Counsel.

Bishop Zeiser announced the end of the afternoon session. He reminded the assembly to gather for the evening session at 7:00 PM. He then called on the Secretary for announcements. The offering received for the ELCA World Hunger Appeal totaled \$3,075.75.

Following the announcements, Bishop Zeiser urged the assembly to watch the video of a song composed by one of our young people, Kyle Hassler, of St. James, Coopersburg. The assembly adjourned for a dinner break.

PLENARY SESSION TWO

**Friday, June 18
7:00 PM**

Bishop Zeiser called the assembly to order at 7 PM. Dr. Philip Krey, President of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, opened with prayer. Dr. Krey brought greetings and introduced student Tom Scornavacchi, who shared a bit about his seminary education.

The bishop welcomed Amber Leberman from *The Lutheran*. She brought greetings to the assembly.

Bishop Zeiser introduced the keynote speaker, Dr. Mark Allan Powell. Following his presentation on *The Bible as our Book of Faith*, there was a question and answer session.

Bishop Zeiser called on Secretary Taylor for announcements. He asked the assembly to remain in their seats for evening worship.

PLENARY SESSION THREE

**Saturday, June 19
8:30 AM**

Bishop Zeiser called the assembly to order at 8:30 AM. He introduced Pastor Peter Bredlau, who offered the opening prayer. Pastor Bredlau introduced Pastor Carl Wenzel, who discussed the Nils Johnson Campus Ministry Award that was presented to Lydia B. Jones. Pastor Bredlau noted that LIFT 2011 was scheduled for June 17 and 18 at Muhlenberg College in conjunction with synod assembly. Dr. Jon Pahl of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia will be the speaker and Marty Haugen will be the musician.

Bishop Zeiser called on Ed Cool, chair of the Elections Committee, who presented the report of the first ballot.

Churchwide Assembly – Group C, Young Adult Lay Female

Number of votes cast:	511	Sierra Fogal	120
Number of illegal votes:	8	Amanda Tompkins	277
Number of legal votes:	503	Elizabeth Schneeberger-Klotz	106
Number needed to elect	252		

Bishop Zeiser declared Amanda Tompkins elected.

Churchwide Assembly – Group C, Youth Lay Male

Number of votes cast:	505	Philip Kaufman	316
Number of illegal votes:	4	Brandon Wood	187
Number of legal votes:	501		
Number needed to elect	251		

Bishop Zeiser declared Philip Kaufman elected. He reminded the assembly that Sierra Fogal, Elizabeth Schneeberger-Klotz, and Brandon Wood would appear on the at-large ballot for Churchwide Assembly voting member.

A video on the Book of Faith Initiative was shown.

Pastor Jira Albers presented the report of the Worship and Spirituality Ministry Team.

Bishop Zeiser introduced the anniversary video of Pastor Norman Krapf.

Sister Amy Jahn de Torres and Diaconal Minister Linda Zawaski presented the report of the Witness and Service Ministry Team.

The bishop called on Dr. Mark Allan Powell, who gave the second part of his presentation.

Bishop Zeiser called on Fran Ferrari, chair of the Synod Council Finance Committee, who presented the 2011 Program Proposal:

Resolved, that the 2011 program proposal (February 1, 2011 to January 31, 2012) be adopted. The Synod Council is hereby authorized to establish the 2011 budget no later than its January 2011, meeting, making any necessary adjustments to the budget proposal in light of both realistic anticipation of receipts and synod priorities (in consultation with the ELCA Treasurer with respect to the ELCA portion thereof.)

Bishop Zeiser asked if there was any discussion and called for the vote. The resolution was adopted.

The bishop introduced Pastor Dennis Ritter of Lutheran Congregational Services. He presented the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA, in assembly gathered, affirm the action of the Board of Directors of Lutheran Congregational Services, Inc., taken at its May 27, 2010, meeting to become an affiliate of Liberty Lutheran Service, Inc., a social ministry organization of the ELCA, on or about July 1, 2010; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA, in assembly gathered, extend to Liberty Lutheran Services, Inc., through the approval of this affiliation full recognition as a social ministry organization of this Synod effective upon the date of affiliation.

The bishop asked for a second, and following discussion, the vote was taken. The resolution was adopted.

The bishop explained that Amanda Tompkins was selected to serve in the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission program in South Africa for the coming year. Kristen Opalinski is currently in South Africa with the program. He noted that in the assembly packets there was a small handout about Amanda and the YAGM program. He invited Amanda to the podium. She introduced herself and talked about YAGM.

Pastors Bob and Janice Lowden presented Bishop Zeiser with a gift from Tanzania and spoke of their missionary work.

Bishop Zeiser announced that during a short break, a video about Augsburg Fortress resources related to the Book of Faith initiative would be shown.

The bishop called the assembly to order and invited candidates for roster status to come forward and greet the assembly. Candidates from this synod and those being received from others synods were:

- Cinda Brucker
- Bradley Burke
- Daniel Caruso
- Aaron Decker
- Timothy Garman
- Donna House
- Eric Moser
- Barry Spatz
- Scott Staub

Those present introduced themselves to the assembly.

Bishop Zeiser asked rostered leaders received by ordination, consecration, or transfer from other synods since the last assembly to stand and be greeted:

- John M. Brndjar, Lower Susquehanna Synod
- Douglas R. Holtz, La Crosse Area Synod
- Albert C. Martin, Metropolitan New York Synod
- Jane R. Mason, New Jersey Synod
- Paul W. Metzloff, Southern Ohio Synod
- Louise E. Williams, Upper Susquehanna Synod
- Ramona C. Daily, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

The bishop then introduced Carol Koch, who was commissioned as an Associate in Ministry recently. She greeted the assembly.

The bishop called on Dean Martha Sipe to introduce pastors who had retired since the last assembly. He greeted and thanked them:

- Richard W. Chaveas
- Susan F. Fox
- Robert F. Hoenich
- William M. Horn
- Lyn L. Langkamer
- Daun E. McKee
- David C. Newhart
- Phyllis A. Pelletier
- Michael J. Peters

Bishop Zeiser introduced Pastor Paul Braden, who presented the Compensation Guidelines for clergy. The vote was taken and the resolution was adopted. Pastor Braden presented the Compensation Guidelines for lay rostered leaders. The vote was taken and the resolution was adopted.

2011 MINIMUM COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

At the request of the 1983 convention of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, LCA, the former Professional Development Committee created annual “*Minimum Base Salary Guidelines*” for pastors and lay rostered leaders. The following guidelines are recommended by the Leadership Development Team for the approval of the 2010 assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA.

These guidelines represent a 2% increase over 2010.

PARISH PASTORS 2011 Minimum Salary Guidelines

Resolved that:

1) The 2011 *minimum* base salary for pastors in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA be in agreement with the following guidelines:

Years completed service in ordained ministry	Recommended Salary Range (including housing allowance)	Recommended Salary Range (parsonage provided)
0 - 1	48,695 - 53,564	33,845 - 37,229
2 - 3	49,775 - 54,752	34,925 - 38,417
4 - 7	50,855 - 55,940	36,005 - 39,605
8 - 10	53,015 - 58,316	38,165 - 41,981
11 - 15	54,635 - 65,562	39,785 - 43,763
16 - 20	57,335 - 68,802	42,485 - 50,982
21 +	60,035 - 78,045	45,185 - 58,740

Note: These figures include a Social Security Allowance equal to one half of the pastor’s social security liability. They should therefore be compared to the figures for total defined compensation in years prior to 2008. This allowance is taxable for income tax purposes. For 2011, the Social Security liability is expected to be equal to 15.3% of the combined base salary and housing provision. (Parsonages are valued at the fair rental value of the house for tax purposes.)

2) It is the responsibility of each congregation to provide housing for its pastor(s). This may be accomplished in either of two ways:

a) Housing Allowance. A portion of the pastor’s salary may be designated as a housing allowance. This amount will vary, depending upon location and the needs of the pastor. Congregations and pastors should check current tax laws in establishing this figure. This amount should be established before the beginning of each year by a resolution of the Congregation Council or the listing of an amount in the congregation’s budget.

b) **Parsonage.** This is free use of a church-owned house, including utilities. A portion of the pastor's base salary may be set aside for furnishings and other housing expenses according to the IRS code. An annual equity allowance of a minimum of 3%-5% of salary is recommended for all parsonage situations.

3) Congregations should remember that the figures in the grid are *minimums*. Congregations are encouraged to exceed these minimum guidelines. Additional compensation should be provided based on criteria such as continuing education, special skills, responsibilities, merit, and local conditions.

4) Each congregation shall establish a Mutual Ministry Committee to facilitate the discussion by which these criteria are evaluated (as well as for carrying out the other functions of mutual ministry).

5) A congregation that fails to meet the synodical guidelines shall submit a report to the bishop on a form to be provided, detailing the reasons why these minimums are not being met and the steps that will be taken to establish these minimums as soon as possible.

The following minimum benefits should be provided in addition to salary:

1) An **Automobile Allowance** equal to IRS guidelines per mile for business travel. Pastors reimbursed for auto expense on a per mile basis do not have to report this allowance as income if they submit written mileage reports to the calling institution.

2) **Continuing Education** provisions including a congregation/agency providing at least \$550 for tuition, books, etc., and two weeks of time (not vacation), and the pastor providing at least \$250. It is recommended that this money be deposited in the synod's PACE program. (Programs that include Sundays must be negotiated with the congregation council.) It is encouraged that congregations/agencies and pastors work towards a partnership goal of \$1,000.

3) Four full weeks of **vacation** time annually.

4) One to two **days off** per week, and, at least once a month, two consecutive days off.

5) For the purposes of **Worker's Compensation**, pastors are considered to be employees of the congregation and therefore should be included in Worker's Compensation insurance.

6) **Health and pension benefits** according to the guidelines of the ELCA, including a 12% pension provision.

7) Congregations may also reimburse the pastor(s) for **professional expenses** such as dues, entertainment, supplies, and malpractice insurance.

PASTORS WITH PART TIME CALLS

Pastors with part time calls should be compensated on a prorated basis in line with the above guidelines, in consultation with the Office of the Bishop. Vacation and continuing education provisions should be prorated, as well. Pension and health benefits are according to the guidelines of the ELCA, including a 12% pension provision.

ROSTERED LAY LEADERS 2011 Minimum Salary Guidelines

Resolved that:

1) The 2011 *minimum* salary for rostered lay leaders in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA be in agreement with the following guidelines:

Years Completed Service in rostered ministry	Recommended Salary Range Bachelor's Degree	Recommended Salary Range Master's Degree
0 – 1	30,841 - 33,925	33,100 - 36,410
2 - 3	31,921 - 35,113	34,842 - 38,326
4 - 7	33,001 - 36,301	35,922 - 39,514
8 - 10	35,161 - 38,677	38,082 - 41,890
11 - 15	36,781 - 44,137	39,702 - 47,642
16 - 20	39,481 - 47,377	42,402 - 50,882
21 +	42,181 - 54,835	45,102 - 58,633

2) **Congregations should remember that the figures in the grid are *minimums*. Congregations are encouraged to exceed these minimum guidelines. Additional compensation should be provided based on criteria such as continuing education, special skills, responsibilities, merit, and local conditions.**

3) **Each congregation shall establish a Mutual Ministry Committee to facilitate the discussion by which these criteria are evaluated (as well as for carrying out the other functions of mutual ministry).**

4) **A congregation that fails to meet the synodical guidelines shall submit a report to the bishop on a form to be provided, detailing the reasons why these minimums are not being met and the steps that will be taken to establish these minimums as soon as possible.**

The following *minimum* benefits should be provided in addition to salary:

1) An **Automobile Allowance** equal to IRS guidelines per mile for business travel. Rostered lay leaders reimbursed for auto expense on a per mile basis do not have to report this allowance as income if they submit written mileage to the calling institution.

2) **Continuing Education** provisions including a congregation/agency providing at least \$550 for tuition, books, etc., and two weeks of time (not vacation), and the leader providing at least \$250. It is recommended that this money be deposited in the synod's PACE program. (Programs that include Sundays must be negotiated with the congregation council.) It is encouraged that congregations/agencies and rostered lay professional leaders work towards a partnership goal of \$1,000.

3) Four full weeks of **vacation** time annually.

4) One to two **days off** per week, and, at least once a month, two consecutive days off.

5) For the purposes of **Worker's Compensation**, rostered lay leaders are considered to be employees of the congregation and therefore should be included in Worker's Compensation insurance.

6) **Health and pension benefits** according to the guidelines of the ELCA, including a 12% pension provision.

7) Congregations may also reimburse the lay leader(s) for **professional expenses** such as dues, entertainment, supplies, and malpractice insurance.

The bishop announced that two weeks ago the members of Christ, Schoenersville, voted to give the Synod their facility to be used as the synod offices. He called on Ed Cool to discuss what this means for the future. Ed Cool presented a Power Point presentation and Fran Ferrari commented on financing. The bishop asked for questions. Mr. Cool presented a resolution of gratitude:

WHEREAS our God, who makes all things new, continues to call us to grow in faith in an ever-changing world, and

WHEREAS the people of Christ Lutheran Church, Schoenersville, have been faithful witnesses to God's love for 230 years, and

WHEREAS the members of Christ, Schoenersville, having heard God's call to continue their ministry by merging with St. John Lutheran Church, Bath, have made a gracious gift of their property to be used as the offices of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the members of this synod give thanks for the generations of dedicated Christians who have heard God's Word, gathered at the Lord's Table, and served their neighbors at Christ Lutheran Church, Schoenersville, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly expresses its gratitude for the generosity of the people of Christ, Schoenersville, and be it further

RESOLVED, that all those gathered here today join the members of Christ, Schoenersville, in renewing our commitment to sharing the Good News of God's love, forgiveness and endless gift of salvation, here in Northeastern Pennsylvania and to the ends of the earth.

The resolution was adopted with a standing ovation.

Bishop Zeiser called on Pastor Wayne Matthias-Long for the second report of the Committee of Reference and Counsel.

Consideration of Resolution Three resumed. The question was called, and the amended resolution was adopted.

IV. The following resolution was received from the congregation of Community, Vinemont:

Whereas, the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America adopted resolutions on ministry policies that included a commitment to "finding ways for people in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders of this church" [CA09.05.26] and a process of 9(structured flexibility" that would eliminate the prohibition on rostered service by individuals in such relationships while not imposing such service on any expression of this church [CA09.05.271; and

Whereas, in compliance with and in order to implement the actions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly, the ELCA Church Council has amended the policy on reinstatement to the roster and "Visions and Expectations," "Definition and Guidelines for Discipline," the "Candidacy Manual," and other documents; and

Whereas, members of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America seek the rescission of the actions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly on ministry policies and of the actions adopted by the Church Council to implement them and desire the restoration of ministry policies that authorize sexual intimacy for rostered persons only in the context of heterosexual marriage; therefore be it

Resolved that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2011 Churchwide Assembly the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as follows:

1. to rescind actions CA09.05.26 and CA09.05.27 of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly; and

2. to direct the appropriate churchwide units and offices to prepare, the Committee on Appeals to make, and the ELCA Church Council to approve and adopt, appropriate amendments to the policy documents, which were revised in response to those prior actions, in order to re-establish the prohibition of rostered service by homosexual persons in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships and to restore the requirement for rostered persons that sexual intimacy take place only in the context of heterosexual marriage.

The committee presented the following resolution as a substitute motion, so that the assembly's action on Resolution Five would be its response to Resolution Four:

V. The following resolution was received from Pastor John Pearson, St. John, Boyertown:

Whereas some members of congregations of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod have been deeply distressed by the actions of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly regarding the recognition of same-gender relationships and regarding the ability of rostered leaders of this church in such same-gender relationships to serve under call; and

Whereas some in congregations of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod have urged their congregations to leave the ELCA and join another Lutheran church body because of these actions, therefore be it

Resolved, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to rescind two actions of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, for the sake of the unity of this church, namely 1. "that the ELCA commit itself to finding ways to allow congregations that choose to do so to recognize, support and hold publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships" and 2. "that the ELCA commit itself to finding a way for people in such publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders of this church."

The committee presented this resolution without prejudice.

The resolution was defeated.

Secretary Taylor made announcements. A Mission Investment Fund video was shown as people left the hall.

PLENARY SESSION FOUR

**Saturday, June 19
1:30 PM**

Bishop Zeiser called the assembly to order at 1:30 p.m., and Diane McElwee, vice president of the synodical unit of the Women of the ELCA, opened the session with prayer.

The bishop called on Ed Cool for the report of the Elections Committee:

Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia – Clergy

Number of votes cast:	445	Gary Langensiepen	191
Number of illegal votes:	2	John Richter	252
Number of legal votes:	443		
Number needed to elect	222		

Bishop Zeiser declared John Richter elected.

Churchwide Assembly – Group D, Clergy

Number of votes cast:	454	Mary Gade	364
Number of illegal votes:	0	Lori Kochanski	285
Number of legal votes:	454	Diane LaFauci	258
Number needed to elect	228	William Maxon	297
		Susan Ruggles	313
		Glenn Simmons	325
		Mary Wolfe	306
		Eileen Smith Le Van	269

The bishop declared Mary Gade, Glenn Simmons, Susan Ruggles, Mary Wolfe, William Maxon, and Lori Kochanski elected.

Churchwide Assembly – Group D, Lay Male

Number of votes cast:	457	Edward Cool	288
Number of illegal votes:	1	Craig Babcock	278
Number of legal votes:	456	James Parks	227
Number needed to elect	229	Anthony Mell	293
		Ronald Mordosky	200
		Rene Rodriguez	179
		Brandon Wood	307
		Thomas Yenser	344

Bishop Zeiser declared Thomas Yenser, Brandon Wood, Anthony Mell, Edward Cool and Craig Babcock elected.

Churchwide Assembly – Group D, Lay Female

Number of votes cast:	455	Nancy L. Bleam	153
Number of illegal votes:	2	Charleen Burik	215
Number of legal votes:	453	Frances Ferrari	162
Number needed to elect	227	Sierra Fogal	281
		Kelsi Kegerize	172
		Elizabeth Schneeberger-Klotz	231
		Kathleen M. Schaeffer	257
		Barbara-Anne G. Taylor	251

Bishop Zeiser declared Sierra Fogal, Kathleen Schaeffer, Barbara-Anne Taylor and Elizabeth Schneeberger-Klotz elected. This concluded the elections.

A second Book of Faith video was shown.

Bishop Zeiser called on Dr. Mark Allan Powell, who gave his third presentation.

Bishop Zeiser introduced the anniversary video of Pastor Walter Wagner.

Pastor Mike Bennethum introduced members of the Source of Love Indonesian Worshipping Community. Their pastor, Yafet Tolaksoru, addressed the assembly, and the visitors were greeted by the assembly.

Bishop Zeiser indicated that the reports of all synod ministry teams, committees, and task groups were before the assembly. There were no questions.

The bishop called on Pastor Matthias-Long to continue the report of the Committee of Reference and Counsel. A resolution was adopted that the "whereas" clauses of resolutions not be read.

VI. The following resolution was received from Pr. John Pearson, St. John, Boyertown:

WHEREAS the actions of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly regarding the recognition of same-gender relationships and regarding the possibility of rostered leaders of this church in such same-gender relationships to serve under call, have caused great distress for some persons in our congregations and great rejoicing for others, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, recognizing the variety of opinions within this synod, ask its rostered leaders, congregations and social ministry organizations to commit themselves to the action of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly "to bear one another's burdens, love the neighbor, and respect the bound consciences of all" for the sake of the unity of this church.

The committee recommended that the resolution be adopted. The resolution was adopted.

VII. The following resolution was received from Pr. Bruce MacLaughlin, Pr. Peter Pettit and Pr. Jimmy Lee Werley:

Whereas, the ELCA has repeatedly and continuously committed itself to working for justice and peace in the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, including significant commitments of Global Mission staff and resources to accompaniment with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Lands (ELCJHL) and including the establishment of partner relationships between several ELCA synods and the ELCJHL; and,

Whereas, the Kairos Palestine Document includes a "word to the Churches of the world" and was accompanied by a "call ... to the World Churches, in order to accelerate the achievement of justice, peace and reconciliation in this Holy Land" from the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod in assembly memorialize the 2011 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to:

1. receive and acknowledge the Kairos Palestine Document as a clear expression of the perceptions, experience, theological assessment, cry of pain, word of faith, and vision of hope shared by many in the Palestinian Christian community; and,
2. affirm the expressed commitment of the Kairos Palestine Document to justice, peace, and mutual reconciliation; and,
3. recognize and reaffirm that God calls the ELCA, its members and agencies, to engage the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in all its realities from our distinctive North American context, deepening our awareness, theological understanding, and public advocacy; and
4. reject the document's singling out of Israel as "the enemy" (4.2.4) and Israeli policies and practices as "the reality on the ground" (1.1-1.5.1) as though these alone require our witness and engagement; and,
5. re-affirm this church's exclusion of the possibility of divestment from its corporate social responsibility process and, further, reject the call for boycott and economic sanctions as one-sided and counterproductive, while exploring and facilitating investment, particularly in Palestine, that will support state-building and the creation of a two-state solution; and,
6. re-commit this church to partnership and accompaniment with the ELCJHL in mutual encouragement and critique for the sake of our best possible respective contributions to justice and peace for Palestinians and Israelis; and,
7. communicate these actions as appropriate to our ecumenical and interfaith partners in the United States and in the Middle East.

The committee presented the resolution without prejudice. Following discussion, a motion was made to postpone action on the resolution indefinitely. The motion to postpone was adopted.

VIII. The following resolution was received from Pr. Manfred Bahmann, Richard Doty, Ruth Doty, Fran Ferrari, Pr. Hartland Gifford, Pr. Virginia Goodwin, Pr. James Henderschedt, Pr. Bruce MacLaughlin, Pr. Elizabeth Mitchell, Ruth Miller AiM, Pr. Paulette Obrecht, Pr. Jimmy Lee Werley, and Pr. Jay Wetzel

Whereas God calls us to care for creation in ways that protect the fruitfulness and viability of the Earth and its creatures; and

Whereas many scientists continue to voice concern that human activity is contributing to climate change that may cause severe and disruptive changes to all creation through frequent extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and more frequent heat waves; and

Whereas there is a danger that such change will result in disruption of food supplies, the spread of tropical diseases, the extinction of some species, and the displacement of human communities; and

Whereas such change will most likely disproportionately impact those already living in poverty in this country and around the world; and

Whereas taking action now to reduce our use of fossil fuels, reduce carbon dioxide emissions, as well as other steps to protect the environment, can all help to mitigate and lessen the ultimate severity of global warming and provide a more hopeful future for the generations that will follow us; therefore be it

Resolved, that we commit ourselves to thoughtful and intentional use of the world's resources, striving to live in ways that preserve and protect the gifts of creation which God has entrusted to us, and be it further

Resolved, that the synod through its communication resources make its congregations aware of the information and assistance readily available through organizations such as *Lutherans Restoring Creation and Web of Creation*.

The committee recommended that the resolution be adopted. The resolution was adopted.

IX. The committee recommended the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the 23rd Annual Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod is now drawing to a close; and

WHEREAS, we have enjoyed the friendly confines of Wilkes-Barre's own Mohegan Sun Arena, the hospitality of the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Mission District and the beautiful weather and other amenities arranged by the Local Arrangements Committee; and

WHEREAS, we hold up our red card in grateful approval of the spirited leadership of our bishop, Samuel Zeiser, in addition to his bewitching and regal staff, and

WHEREAS, it is to be wondered whether colorblindness might be a consequence of prolonged exposure to the old synod office and yet one more reason for an Exodus; and

WHEREAS, in Christian Community we have enjoyed the healing power and table fellowship of worship, debated important issues, and made significant synodical ministry decisions; and

WHEREAS, we have been blessed by the presence of churchwide teachers and leaders Pastor Steven Bouman and Dr. Mark Allen Powell who have taught and encouraged us for our neighborhoods...or the ditch; and

WHEREAS, we go forth to continue doing God's work with our hands around the corner and around the world; now therefore be it

RESOLVED that we humbly and wholeheartedly thank:

- Bishop Samuel Zeiser for his faithful and prayerful leadership in this assembly and this synod
- Members of the Bishop's Staff and Mission District Deans for their continuing dedication to supporting the congregations of this synod in their ministries

- The congregations of the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Mission District for their graciousness and preparations
- All who gave their time and commitment to serve as voting members of this assembly
- The many people necessary to support the operations of this assembly—planners, ushers, tellers, secretarial and support staff, and volunteers
- The musical talent and worship leaders for leading us in the praise of God
- Rostered leaders who are celebrating major anniversaries
- Ministry Teams for their ongoing work in this synod
- Pr. Stephen Bouman, who challenged us to be witnesses to faith in our wider communities
- Dr. Mark Allan Powell who led us to discover the sweetness of God’s Word, consideration our “Social Locations,” and gain new insights into familiar parables
- The congregations of this synod for their commitment to the work of Christ through the mission of the Church
- And most especially, the one who always loves us back, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

The resolution was adopted.

Bishop Zeiser called on Pastor Virginia Biniek, who gave the report of the Committee on Minutes.

Bishop Zeiser called on Pastor Nancy Moore, who presented the report of the Committee on Registration and Excuse.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON REGISTRATION AND EXCUSE

1. There were 643 persons in attendance, consisting of 215 ordained pastors on the synod roster (including 30 retired pastors, three UCC pastors, and four pastors of full-Communion partnership).
2. There were 345 lay voting members (182 women and 163 men), 18 Associates in Ministry, and three Diaconal Ministers on the synod roster. There were 62 visitors, guests and assembly staff in attendance.
3. The following 39 pastors presented an excuse for absence:

Harry Bohn	John Houck	Gene Parker
Scott Davis	Jean Huber	Robert Reier
Kelly Denton-Borhaug	Elizabeth Huwiler	Michael Reist
Norman Dresher	Carol Kehler	Dawn Richie
Maureen Duffy-Guy	David Kidd	Edith Roberts
Byard Ebling	Lori Kochanski	David Rowe
William Fairchild	Robert Machamer	James Schlegel
Gilbert Furst	George Matthews	Carl Schmoyer
Richard Gardner	Douglas McKeeby	Sherrie Sneed
Kenneth Gould	Tricia McMackin	Manuel Stivers
Lesley Hand	Barry Mitchell	David Strobel
John Hart	Robert R. Mitchell	Suzanne Trump
John Hazel	David Newhart	Mark Wimmer

4. There were 21 absent pastors who did not present an excuse:

Steve Belinski	John Kunkel	Jack Steltzer
Paul Buzzard	John Miller	Gregory Stoddard
Mark Christy	Drahomir Oslík	Laura Stoneback
Amy Godshall-Miller	Peter Pettit	Donald Stricker
George Grubb	Keith Rohrbach	Mark Swanson
Dana Heckman-Beil	David Schaeffer	Christopher Thomforde
Werner Koch	Paul Schoffstall	William Weiser

5. Four Associates in Ministry and two Deaconesses presented an excuse for absence:

Pamela Bonina	Millicent Drake	Janet Stump
Cinda Brucker	Patrice Kidd	Leesa Wimmer

6. One Hundred twenty-seven retired pastors (out of 157), nine retired AIMs (out of nine), and three retired Deaconesses (out of three) were absent and are automatically excused from attendance.

7. 27 congregations presented an excuse for having no lay voting members:

Bethlehem/Easton

Zion 1st Hungarian, Bethlehem
New Jerusalem, Saucon Valley
St. Luke, Williams Twp.

East Berks

Hope, Bowers
St. Michael, Hamburg
St. Joseph, Hill Church
Friedens, Kempton
St. Paul, Lobachsville
Salem, Shalters
Christ, Spangsville
Grace, Topton Home
Trinity, Topton

Hazleton/Lehigh

St. John, Mahoning
St. John, Ringtown
St. Paul, Summit Hill
St. Paul, Weissport

Lehigh

Zion Lehigh, Alburtis
St. Peter (Ridge), Allentown

Northern Lehigh Valley

Holy Trinity Slovak, Northampton
Shepherd of the Hills, Whitehall

Pocono

Faith, Blakeslee

Schuylkill

Friedens, Llewellyn
Outwood, Pine Grove

West Berks

St. Paul, Reading
Grace, Shillington
Christ, Stouchsburg
Advent, West Lawn

8. 65 congregations had no lay voting members and did not present an excuse:

Bethlehem/Easton

Rosemont, Bethlehem
St. Stephen, Bethlehem
Christ, Easton
St. Andrew, Easton
St. Paul III, Easton
Christ, Lower Saucon
Good Shepherd, Martins Creek

East Berks

New Bethel, Kempton
Zion, Maxatawny
St. Luke, Shoemakersville
St. John, Gernants

Hazleton/Lehigh

St. Paul, Big Creek
Salem, Audenried
St. Paul, Beaver Meadows
Trinity, Bowmanstown
St. Luke, Freeland
Sts. Peter & Paul, Freeland
St. John, Jim Thorpe Heights
Advent, New Ringgold
Holy Trinity, Palmerton
Ascension, Quakake
Christ, Barnesville
St. John, Shenandoah
St. Matthew, Weatherly
Zion Stone, West Penn Twp.

Lehigh

Redeemer, Allentown
St. Matthew, Allentown
Trinity Memorial, Allentown
Christ, Schoenersville
St. Peter, Macungie

Northern Lehigh Valley

St. John, Bath
Holy Trinity, Catasauqua
St. Peter, Lynnvillle
Holy Cross, Moorestown
Holy Trinity, Northampton
Zion, Northampton
Faith, Whitehall

Pocono

Holy Trinity, Dingmans Ferry
St. Luke, Greeley
St. Paul, Hawley
St. Mark, Minisink Hills
St. Peter, Plainfield
St. Jacobi, Shohola
Christ, Stone Church

Scranton/Wilkes Barre

Shepherd of the Hills, Dushore
St. James, Zenith
St. Luke Reformation, Noxen

Schuylkill

St. John, Auburn
Zion, Frackville
Zion, Minersville
English, Minersville
Trinity, Buck Run
Zion, Orwigsburg
St. Paul, Middleport
Zion, Girardville
St. Paul, Gordon

West Berks

St. John, Gibraltar
Trinity, Gouglersville
Christ, Grill
Schwarzwald, Jacksonwald
St. James, Reading
Altalaha, Rehrersburg
Trinity, Robesonia
Zion/St. John, Stouchsburg
Kissinger, Wyomissing

9. 12 congregations had only one lay voting member and presented an excuse:

Bethlehem/Easton

Grace, Bethlehem
Arndts, Easton
St. John, Farmersville

East Berks

Maidencreek, Blandon

Hazleton/Lehigh

St. John, Brandonville
St. Matthew, North Weissport

Lehigh

St. John, Fogelsville

Scranton/Wilkes Barre

St. James, Hobbie
St. Paul, Mountaintop

West Berks

Faith, Mt. Penn
Peace, Reading
Zion, Womelsdorf

10. Twenty-six congregations had only one lay voting member and did not present an excuse:

East Berks

St. Paul, Hamburg
Friedens, Shartlesville

Hazleton/Lehigh

Trinity, Hazleton
St. John, Jim Thorpe East
St. Peter, Mantzville
Trinity, West Hazleton

Lehigh

St. Luke, Allentown
Jerusalem, Eastern Salisbury
St. Andrew, Summit Lawn
St. Paul, Trexlertown

Northern Lehigh Valley

St. John, Coplay
Heidelberg, Heidelberg
Morgenland, Lowhill Twp.
St. John, Nazareth
Holy Trinity, Slatedale

Pocono

Trinity, Bangor

Schuylkill

St. John, Friedensburg
Friedens, Hegins
St. Paul, Port Carbon
Trinity, Pottsville

Scranton/Wilkes Barre

St. Peter, Hughestown
St. Peter, Scranton

West Berks

Robeson, Plowville
Grace, Reading
St. John, Reading
St. Daniel, Robesonia

The committee recommends:

- a. that names of the ordained pastors absent without submitting an excuse be brought to the attention of Synod Council for appropriate action;
- b. that congregations having only one (male or female) or no lay voting members without submitting an excuse be brought to the attention of Synod Council for appropriate action.

Bishop Zeiser indicated that this was the conclusion of business. He asked Secretary Taylor for final announcements.

Bishop Zeiser called for a motion to adjourn. It was made, seconded and the motion was approved.

The service of Holy Communion followed, with Bishop Zeiser preaching. Taking as his text Matthew 9:27-34, he said:

Scripture readings like today's gospel require additional time to size up – teeming as it is with tightly-packed drama and attention-getting characters. Stepping into settings already astir makes me feel the way I do when late for a meeting. In this corner a few folks are huddled, over there a little commotion erupts and turns into a burst of activity, and then someone (like Jesus in the reading) tries to settle things down.

I get self-conscious when late for a meeting. I don't always know everyone there, and I'm wondering what I've missed. I have to get caught up, focused on *what's happening*.

There was catching up for me to do with this gospel reading. So I looked back at previous verses in Matthew nine and discovered even more dramatic healings by Jesus. Jesus touched their eyes; their eyes were opened. He spoke to a paralytic who stood up and walked home. A demon was cast out here, another one there. The crowds were amazed, but the religious leaders indignant.

Engaged more fully in the story, I worked my way back further into chapter eight: more demoniacs brought under control - and that episode where pigs jumped off a cliff! Peter's mother-in-law's fever is gone in a flash. Then "*many* [people] possessed with demons." Demons: gone in word.

Working my way back even further I get to the Sermon on the Mount. Then reading forward to Matthew 10 brings the growing presence of the Twelve. Catching up and getting focused on what's happening, it's clear that there's no getting around the drama and the large number of people to give shape to that drama: a leper, a centurion, a scribe, a tax collector, the leader of a synagogue, a hemorrhaging woman. All of these people were part of a journey that took Jesus from villages to cities, into houses and across the water. Jesus was on the move with healing in hands and words, bestowing restoration of life upon an array of people in diverse places. You encounter it all, all at once, in this reading, once you've caught up.

What's happening in today's reading, supported by previous and subsequent verses, is that God's power is at work in Jesus, at particular places, restoring particular lives, and not stopping. For the Northeastern PA Synod gathered in assembly, what's happening in today's reading is that the

dimensions of that Christ-centered mission are proclaimed in our midst. Furthermore, the opportunity is afforded us to imagine the outcome if we affirm and apply those dimensions to the nearly 300 mission locations that comprise this synod.

On this synod's best days and in our most difficult times, congregations are called to bear witness that God is at work in Jesus Christ at particular places – your places – restoring life, and not stopping throughout these fourteen counties. My hope for this synod is that our commitment to that call will be evident when you walk into an annual assembly while a session is underway...because you find that you're missing something dramatic and have to catch up. My hope for this synod is that anyone who picks up the assembly bulletin of reports and turns to page 24 discovers that in the program/ministry reports God is at work in Christ Jesus at particular places with particular people – and will want to catch up because God's work there doesn't seem to stop.

I want diverse people to wonder how much they've missed when visiting our congregations for worship, when they receive care from one of our social ministry organizations, or when they walk on the campus of Muhlenberg College and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. I pray that those unaffiliated with any church in this synod will be roused by the baptismal faith that generated and sustains everyone of those manifestations of God's restoring intention for all creation, and will go all out in order to grab hold of and keep up with those ministries.

The decade that lies ahead, perhaps more than any that has come before it, must be a time when those who discover the ministries of this synod feel as if they've arrived late, and want to run to catch up. What if we understood the decade ahead to be a gift of God offered to us for the sake of enhanced witness to God's power at work in Jesus at particular places throughout this synod's territory, restoring lives, and not stopping – so that Matthew 9:31, ("...they went away and spread the news about him throughout that district") can be adapted for this synod to read "they went away and spread the news about him throughout that *mission* district;" so that, when read through the witness of this synod, Matthew 9:33 can be heard to proclaim, "Never has anything like this been seen in Old Zionsville or

Easton, in Shoemakersville or North Weissport, in Whitehall or Honesdale, in Ashland or Nescopeck or Womelsdorf.

The danger, of course, is a commitment to *activity*. When that happens we hit rock bottom and resort to evaluating discipleship with a motion detector, or a “doing dial.” We Lutherans hold a doctrinal position, however, that sets off an alarm when we succumb to such works righteousness. In *The Bondage of the Will*, Martin Luther sounded the alarm clearly as he admonished Erasmus almost 485 years ago. Luther wrote:

Paul sets the one who works and the one who does not work alongside each other...and he asserts that righteousness is not reckoned to the [one who works], but that it is reckoned to [the one who does not work] provided he has faith. (Timothy Lull, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, page 202; italics mine)

Mindful that Luther would want us to heed the alarm, I humbly offer counsel intended to spur further congregational ministry and mission. First, be sure to confront your fears with your faith. Fear can dash ministry in a moment, bringing to naught a congregation's purpose, as well as its relationship to the Risen Jesus. Fear walks away from today's reading remembering the words, “By the ruler of the demons, he casts out the demons.” Faith drives us to insist on ministry in Jesus' name. Second, explore what it means to be a community of faith grounded in word and

sacrament. This grounding may be our most underdeveloped asset. It makes clear that we are a Bible-based church and that we live as if Jesus is truly present. Third, find ways to connect with the community in which you are located for more reasons than fund raising. Your congregation's members have received gifts through baptism that can satisfy your neighborhood's *spiritual* hunger too. Fourth, talk with neighboring Lutheran congregations about collaborative ministry. This is not an underhanded way to get congregations to merge. It is meant to encourage congregations to expand their capacities to serve our Lord and Savior where God has planted them. Finally, pray for each of the three expressions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Praying for the people and ministries of other congregations, of this synod, and of our churchwide expression affirms the restoration to wholeness that Jesus' healing ministry exhibited in Matthew, chapters eight and nine.

In Matthew 9:29, Jesus pressed the men who'd come for healing mercy, “Do you believe that I am able to do this? They said to him simply, “Yes, Lord.” In our time the Holy Spirit presses the Northeastern PA Synod – every individual member, every congregation and SMO, our college and seminary. We are called to witness that what's happening is God's power in the Risen Jesus at work around the world and around the corner at every location on this territory, restoring life, and not stopping. Do *you* believe that Jesus is able to do this?

At the conclusion of the service the bishop conducted the Order for the Closing of a Synod Assembly.

Barbara-Anne G. Taylor
Synod Secretary