

SYNOD NEWS

The Spirit of Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

July 2007

Highlights of the 2007 Synod Assembly

Nearly 700 people spent time as **Lutherans in Faith Together** at the 20th annual assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod June 8, 2007.

First Presbyterian Church, Bethlehem, Hosts Assembly

For the first time in decades, the assembly was held in a church. First Presbyterian Church in Bethlehem hosted the assembly since none of the synod congregations were large enough.

The business of the assembly was accomplished in a record three hours. The assembly agenda was shortened because of the LIFT event the next day.

Worship Begins the Day



Assembly activities began at 8:30 a.m. on Friday with worship at Wesley United Methodist

Church, a short distance from First Presbyterian Church. Nearly 400 people attended the service.



Using the story of the Prodigal Son from Luke as the text for his sermon, Bishop Strobel spoke about his experience at Marworth,

a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center north of Scranton, where he spent 25 days in April.

"Again and again, I asked myself: Where had the church gone wrong?" he said, reflecting on the prevalence of those in the community to say that God had forsaken them or they had forsaken God.

"Why were so many of my Marworth companions condemned to the godforsakenness of the pigsty because they were convinced that God was to be feared and loathed, rather than to be loved and

Lutherans in Faith Together



Thanks be to God!

trusted?" he continued, noting that they had clearly heard the Law but not the Gospel.

His challenge to us in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod: "Let us teach our children well about the God who welcomes home his prodigal children. This is the Gospel, the good news our Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted to us to share with all generations, but especially our young, impressionable ones."



(Read the entire sermon on the assembly link at www.godslove.org.)

Hearings Address Assembly Issues

To facilitate discussion of the issues before the assembly, two forums were offered during two sessions, one from 9:30 to

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

10:30 a.m. and the other from 10:45 to 11:45 a.m. Each forum was presented twice.

One forum focused on the report of the Compensation Guidelines task force; the other focused on the four resolutions submitted to the Committee on Reference and Counsel for assembly action.



2007 Churchwide Assembly

Living in God's amazing grace: Thanks be to God!

Three of Four Resolutions Adopted

Of the four resolutions, three were adopted, memorializing the 2007 ELCA Assembly to:

- Direct churchwide units to make changes in rules related to rostered persons in committed same-sex relationships.
- Adopt a resolution asking synods, synodical bishops, and the presiding bishop not

to discipline pastors who violate the church's policy on same-sex relationships.

- Not reopen the issue of ordination of non-celibate homosexual persons before the report of the Task Force is received in 2009.



About the seemingly contradictory resolutions, Bishop Strobel said, "I think it demonstrates how divided the synod remains, particularly over moving quickly to liberalize our policies. We want change, but patiently."

(Read the full text of the resolutions at www.godslove.org.)

Pastor John Richter Presents ELCA Report

Severe weather in Chicago prevented the ELCA representative, the Rev. Rebecca Larson, executive director of the program unit on Church and Society, from attending.

In her absence, Pastor John Richter, a member of the ELCA Church Council and executive vice president for church relations at Diakon, provided an update on the ELCA.

Elections, Other Assembly Happenings

Six of the seven pastors celebrating 50 years of ordination attended the assembly. A DVD with interviews of all seven was shown in the narthex before and during the assembly.



Elected at the assembly:

Synod Council:

Edward Cool, Scott Edelman, Guy Ehler, Fran Ferrari, Pastor Samuel Zeiser
Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia: Pastor John Richter

(Read biographies of those elected at large and of the seven pastors celebrating their 50th anniversary of ordination on the assembly link at www.godslove.org.)



LIFT: Lutherans in Faith Together

LIFT — the event June 9 at Muhlenberg College for people of all ages from all over the synod

— is over. But the memories will linger on.

Here are just a few comments from some of the nearly 800 who participated:

"This is THE BEST event I have ever attended. Everyone was having a great time...children, youth and even old timers like me."

"I cannot think of even one change to make. It has been a well-run program."

"I wanted to do everything because it all looked so wonderful."

"One of the things I liked about LIFT was the time together as a family with other Lutherans."

"The best things: The variety of programs, the music, and meeting new people."

"There were opportunities for learning and sharing and seeing old friends from other churches."

And perhaps the most practical: "The next time you have popsicles for a snack, have napkins."

Want to know the bishop's favorite questions asked of him? Like to know more about the workshops? Wish you could see pictures?

Check out the July issue of *Partners in the Spirit* and the picture gallery, both on the synod website, www.godslove.org.

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