**Synod Summary**

**Friday, June 1st**

Bishop Crist opened the 2018 Montana Synod Assembly with a responsive reading and prayer.

Introductions: The synod council and the staff of the Montana Synod. Bishop Crist introduced the parliamentarian and Brenda Smith the church-wide representative and Linda Bobbitt keynote speaker and Leslie Swenson the ELCA church council.

Bishop Crist thanked those who are helping with music, power points and technology and sound. She welcomed new pastors to the synod and 2 new interns.

The synod council secretary directed the assembly to her report in the reports book. She brought greetings from the Synod of Alberta and the Territories and the Allegheny Synod. She brought up the minutes from last year’s assembly, they have been on the synod website. The assembly adopted the agenda and the minutes from last year’s assembly.

The treasurer made a report and presented the budget. The 2018 and 2019 budgets both reflect the projected giving from the congregations. Many organizations receive support from the Montana Synod and they are very grateful. Mission support is right on track. Our expenses are within the budget as well. The treasurer’s report was received. Sue Ost, Treasurer then talked about the budget, including where some of the monies go within the synod office, within the Montana Synod and out into the state, country and the world as a whole. The assembly will vote on the 2019 budget on Sunday.

Pr. Lynne Ogren talked about a ministry review that took place within their church and the results. They decided to add a second service and add it on Wednesdays. Pr. Ogren also decided to try dialogue sermon within these worship services. She learned from David Anderson and used his resources. She brought the resources to her staff and church council as together, they learned the language of faith formation. Pr. Ogren can see the change and new energy at Zion Lutheran. She sees it as the work of the Holy Spirit and is excited to see how it will grow and unfold.

Rev. Brenda Smith addressed the assembly with a report and greeting from the ELCA Church-wide office in Chicago. She shared a video greeting from Bishop Eaton, the video talked about grace in our lives. Rev. Smith is program director for Faith Practices and Book of Faith.

Her talk was titled “Say Amen”. This is because she wanted to affirm our various ministries by having the assembly join her in saying Amen. Rev. Smith listed up the various ministries happening in congregations, baptisms, marriages, funerals and all the occurs during these events. Teaching ministries, food ministries, accepting people. For all this we say, “Amen.”

Rev. Smith also wanted to highlight other ministries in the synod. Prison ministries, two new congregations, congregations on Native American reservations. She also brought up the ministry of missionaries and young adults in global mission, some are from the MT Synod. The Mt. Synod also has seminarians preparing for ordained ministry. We also have two members who serve on church-wide committees.

Rev. Smith thanked the Montana Synod for their ministry of giving generously to Lutheran Disaster support and Lutheran hunger ministries. She also mentioned the work with our companion synod.

Looking forward, the church-wide organization has focused on two priorities. One is Leadership and the other is Congregational Vitality (Communities of Jesus that nurture life changing relationships with God, one another and the world.)

The ELCA is in the last year of a 5 year capital campaign, the monies from this campaign have gone to a variety of ministries to help people.

The ELCA hunger ministry raised $21.3 million for 518 projects that help fight hunger in 62 countres, including the U.S. This is just one example of the many ways that gifts sent to the church wide office are used. The ELCA also supports campus ministries, Lutheran colleges and ELCA seminaries.

The assembly said “Amen” for all the good work done by congregations, synods, and the church-wide ELCA.

Pr. Andy Wendle gave a pop-up from Eidsvold Lutheran Church in Somers. He talked about the process they have gone through to increase vitality. Rearranging pews, designing new entrances, etc. They also developing food bags and put them in the sanctuary so people would see them and bring them home and bring them back, putting good intentions into actions. This resulted in collecting much more food. It also helped them learn more about the Food Bank and all the needs in addition to food. They’ve used the bags so much the bags are worn out and they needed to buy 200 more bags and donated the still usable bags to the Food Bank. The church also decided to partner with local schools in a variety of ways. They worked with 2nd grade teachers to find out what they needed and ended up donating ipads for 2nd gr classrooms. They also painted a mural in one of the schools, they bought pickle ball courts, and doubled the art budget. The projects keep on rolling in and all are about our “Book of Faith,” Pr. Wendle said. The church sought to be involved in mission in the schools and by doing so, became part of the schools and could be a support during all of the events that occurred and all the challenges during the year.

This was followed by a greeting from Andrea Arey our representative from Portico. She announced a pre-retirement seminar occurring the day before the Bishop’s Convo next October. They need to have 35 people registered in order to hold the class. Anyone 50 or over who is a Portico plan member is welcome to attend.

Rev. Kathie Aasheim greeted the assembly from the campus ministry at MSU and stressed how important the support of students was through campus ministry.

Sara Wilson from PLTS and California Lutheran University gave a greeting and a warm thank you to the Montana Synod for its support.

Leslie Swenson, an ELCA church council member greeted the assembly. She lives in Fairbanks Alaska. She commented on the MT Synod benchmarks. She loves the idea and said the ELCA has been working on benchmarks as well. This year they are working on nurturing a well-governed and sustainable and connected church. She also had an excellent conversation with Colter, the Administrator of Information Technology for the synod and was pleased and interested to hear about the work he does. Part of her job as a church council member is to help with the communication between congregations, synods and the church-wide and she asked that people come and talk to her during the assembly.

Beth Adams charitable gift planner for the synod came to talk about how to support congregations and how to be sustainable. She said it is challenging right now but there is a lot of generosity in the synod as well. She gave a plug for a workshop she is presenting tomorrow on Endowments and how endowments can support ministries. Her job is to visit congregations and help them with endowments and charitable planning so contact her.

Jason Asselstine gave an update on the ELCA National Youth Gathering. It will take place in Houston TX at the end of June, beginning of July. There are 26 congregations who are sending youth to the gathering. 266 youth and adults will be going to the gathering from the MT Synod. Over 30,000 youth from the ELCA. Please pray for the youth who are attending and for those who are planning the event.

Alex Tooley, youth synod council member closed this session with a prayer.

The assembly dispersed for supper, to convene again at 7pm

Plenary II opened with the nominating committee presenting the names of those nominated for synod council, for church-wide assembly voting members, for synod council and other synod committees. Biographies of nominees have been available on the synod website and in the assembly packets. Bishop Crist took addition nominations and then voting members voted.

Report from the Bishop:

Bishop Crist began by welcoming everyone!

She said the assembly was based on one of the five benchmarks: Support Congregations. At the same time, we must keep all the benchmarks in front of us

Meet the Future Boldly:

* We have a new synod house that has given us the capacity to have meetings in a conference room, conduct meetings electronically, is handicapped accessible and energy efficient. While synod staff will still travel and feel that its important to come to congregations, they can steward resources by holding some meetings electronically.
* We have a new Dir. Of Evangelical Mission, Peggy Paugh Leuzinger.

Serve the World, Especially the Poor and Those in Need:

* You do this in your congregations already in so many ways.
* Our synod is committed to this. One example is our assembly offering that will go to Puerto Rico to be used to help them as they try to recover from hurricane damage.
* The people of our synod were very generous in helping those affected by forest fires this summer as well as in helping those affected by severe winter weather. Last winter, the Montana Synod identified those most in need of help through the winter. Dick Deschamp helped us to realize those in the Northern Cheyenne reservation had been deeply affected by the winter and synod members answered the call to give what they could.
* We work to support ministries at Our Saviour’s in the Rocky Boys Reservation and Our Savior’s in Laurel as well as prison ministries and other good work.
* We support missionaries and the 7 young adults we have in Global Service this year. We also work closely with our companion synods. We are partners with them. We aren’t bringing the Gospel, the Gospel is already there. Instead we go to learn and share.

Deepen Faith and Witness:

* This is done daily in our churches through word and sacrament. It is also done in our communities in interaction with our neighbors.
* Through God’s Work Our Hands and other volunteering within communities we are witnessing by what we do, by our actions.
* NRIT is a ministry providing lifelong learning opportunities and continuing education for clergy, LPAs and lay people. This ministry is supported by the synod. If you’d like to host or cosponsor an education event, contact NRIT Dir. Jenny Kunka (j.kunka@nrit.org). She is here to support education throughout the synod.
* The LPA program does this work as well for many across the synod.
* Youth ministry is occurring throughout the synod and in new ways through a yearly leadership gathering and the national ELCA Youth Gathering.

Promote Unity:

* We live in a fractured time, but we share fundamental beliefs, we share our commitment to our faith and our confessions.
* We have renewed our ties with the Roman Catholics during the anniversary of the Reformation.
* We take our ecumenical work very seriously. We work closely with other denominations and are also aware and supportive of our brothers and sisters from faiths other than Christian. Interreligious relationships.
* This is also about finding new ways to work together within congregations.

Support Congregations:

* Much of what we do at the synod office is about supporting congregations. We are all about this, it is what we are here for.
* The LPA program is also about this work.
* During the assembly Brenda Smith will be talking about faith practices and Linda Bobbitt will talk about congregational vitality. Tomorrow’s workshops will also address ways to support congregations.
* This includes supporting seminaries, seminarians and seeking out new candidates for ordained ministry.

After Bishop Crist’s presentation, Cheryl Muncy talked about the TEEM program through which participants can become ordained by traveling to seminary campuses to learn, doing some work online and also learning within their contexts with the help of mentors.

Cheryl said often the support we receive is not something we can see. It is prayer. We can also walk with people on their journeys. The TEEM program is a way to walk with people on their journeys. The program has been very meaningful and energizing for Cheryl. They learn to accompany their congregations on their own faith journeys. Cheryl has also learned that the synod office is more than just an office. It is a network of support for those who lead congregations and for those in congregations.

At this point the Assembly participated in a closing workshop, a Native American Liturgical Celebration with Brenda Smith preaching.