

Minutes
Montana Synod Assembly
“Promote Unity”
June 2-4, 2017
Best Western Heritage Inn,
Great Falls, Montana



Friday, June 2, 2017

Orientation for Voting Members

Tom Gossack and others from the Synod led the assembly voting members in an orientation regarding the business and parliamentary procedures of the Synod Assembly.

Plenary I - 4 -5 PM Friday, June 2, 2017

Opening of the Assembly

Bishop Jessica Crist opened the 30th Montana Synod Assembly at 4:00 p.m. with an opening litany.

Call to Order

Bishop Crist called the Assembly to order.

Introductions:

Officers: Bishop Jessica Crist, Vice President Tom Gossack, Secretary Peggy Paugh Leuzinger, Treasurer Sue Ost

Synod Council: Pastor Brenda Satrum, Pastor Mark Taylor, Eric Nord, Tonja Erickson, Neal Wedum, Lisa Carlson, Doug Allie, Dick Deschamps, Robin Matthews, Alex Tooley, Pastor Linda Webster, Kristi Lobdell, Mary Hutchinson

Parliamentarian: Pastor Lowell Anderson

Churchwide Rep: Bill Horne, ELCA Vice-President

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Michael Trice

Global Mission: Paulina Dasse

ELCA Church Council: John Lohrmann

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Kathryn Schifferdecker

Musician/Worship Coordinator: Rev. Julie Long,

Staff: Associate to the Bishop Jason Asselstine, Director for Evangelical Mission George Karres,

Administrative staff: Susan Hedahl, Colter McCarty

People New to the Synod: Carol Seilhymer, Lou Moua, Jean Hay, Marlow Carrels, Jessie Obrecht, Jayson Nicholson, Scott Thompson, Doris Tollefson. Interns: Annie Langseth, Liz Frey

Credentials Report

Dick Deschamps presented the Credentials Report:

Clergy: 75

Lay: 115

Total Voting Members: 190

Visitors: 41

Total in attendance: 231

Motion

Second: Receive the Credentials Report

SA.17.06.01

VOTE: RECEIVE THE CREDENTIALS REPORT

Adoption of Agenda with Privilege of Chair to Adjust

Motion

Second: Adopt the agenda with privilege of chair to adjust

SA.17.06.02

VOTE: ADOPT THE AGENDA WITH PRIVILEGE OF CHAIR TO ADJUST

Adoption of the Rules of the Assembly

Motion

Second: Adopt the rules of the Assembly

SA.17.06.03

VOTE: ADOPT THE RULES OF THE ASSEMBLY

Report of the Secretary

Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger read a greeting from the Allegheny Synod, the sister Synod to the Montana Synod.

The Minutes of the 2016 Synod Assembly Minutes were presented.

Motion

Second: Adopt of the minutes of the 2016 Synod Assembly (which are on the Montana Synod website and announced in the May 10 News of The Week)

SA.17.06.04

VOTE: ADOPT OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2016 SYNOD ASSEMBLY (WHICH ARE ON THE MONTANA SYNOD WEBSITE AND ANNOUNCED IN THE MAY 10 NEWS OF THE WEEK)

Report of the Treasurer

Sue Ost presented the Treasurer's report:

Thank you to all of the congregations in the Montana Synod for your steadfast and generous support of your Synod and the ELCA. I am honored to serve as your Treasurer, and to report to you on the financial condition of the Synod.

In 2016, Mission Support of \$1,032,000 from our congregations did not meet our budget of \$1,050,000; however, our expenses were also under budget. This is partly because our payments to our ministry partners are pro-rated based on the Mission Support income. That means, if we only receive 98% of what we budgeted for income, our ministry partners only receive 98% of the commitment from the Synod. In addition to that, we underspent the budget in travel and administrative areas. Throughout the year, we monitor income and expenses, and if it looks like income will not meet the budget, we try to cut expenses as much as we can to offset the shortfall. The budget is already tight, so this is not easy to do. As you'll hear in the budget presentation, we have reduced the expected income for 2018 to more closely reflect the 2016 Mission Support received.

In addition to Mission Support, Designated Giving from our congregations totaled almost \$243,000 in 2016. This figure includes almost \$88,000 for ELCA World Hunger, almost \$20,000 to Lutheran World Relief, and over \$38,000 toward the Synod House Campaign. You've supported our Disaster Relief Fund, our camps, and numerous other causes and organizations. Those are just a few examples of your generosity. The many recipients of these funds are, I'm sure, very grateful.

The Synod House campaign has raised close to \$300,000 and we've added that to funds we had prior to the campaign, and the sale of our building, giving us about \$665,000 of the \$1.1 million construction budget. We have obtained a construction loan from Mission Investment Fund for the balance, and will be asking for your continued support as we repay that loan.

After the first three months of the 2017 year were completed, Mission support is about \$12,000 less than it was at that point in 2016. We are a bit under our budget regarding expenses at this point in the year. As always, we watch our spending closely and take stewardship of your financial gifts very seriously.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Treasurer.

Motion

Second: Receive the Treasurer's Report

SA.17.06.05

VOTE: RECEIVE THE TREASURER'S REPORT

Presentation from Montana Synod Disaster Team

Dick Deschamps and Pastor Amanda Liggett (and Ben Liggett) shared about the reality of disasters. Pastor Liggett shared about the reality of the disaster of the flood and fire in the Roundup area several years ago. 60% of people who are faced with natural disasters turn to their church leaders first. Disasters start local and end local; the strength of your community will determine how well you recover from a disaster. Pastor Liggett said that through flood and fire, their community learned what a difference preparation can make. Think ahead what you will do when disaster strikes, not if disaster strikes. Churches can do humanitarian support really well. Preparing for disaster can go a long way toward mitigating the effects of disaster on a community. It's important to assess risk and to have a plan. It may be hard to get motivated when skies are blue but Dick reminded the gathering to think about it like why one buys insurance.

Update on Youth Gathering: Associate to the Bishop Jason Asselstine

The promotional Youth Gathering Video was shown. Pastor Asselstine encouraged congregations to encourage their youth to attend the 2018 Youth Gathering.

Greetings from Portico – Portico Video was shown.

Bishop Crist prayed for Andrea Arey, the Portico representative who serves Montana, whose son died this past week.

Montana Association of Christians

Pastor Kendra Wilde, the incoming President of the Montana Association of Christians spoke about how the church is called to feed the sheep. She spoke how MAC is called to “feed the sheep” through being advocates through caring for the hungry, thirsty, those impoverished. She encouraged the members to join MAC through the MAC website at MACMT.org

Hunger Coordinator: Jan Martin

Thanks to those who rode for the Pedal for Peas bike ride during the morning ---over \$5500 was raised. Jan also expressed thanks to those individuals and congregations who continue to give to support World Hunger. She also encouraged congregations and members to respond to the needs through applying for a World Hunger grant that is available for domestic and local programs.

St. John’s Lutheran Ministry: Pastor Karl Guhn

Pastor Karl Guhn brought greetings to the Assembly from St. John’s residents and staff. St. John’s ministry of the Billings area is a leading provider of quality care of the elderly. Pastor Guhn shared how the St. John’s ministry and LSS touch the lives of people through the Montana Synod benchmarks and touch the lives of many people in the whole state.

Greetings – Bishop Michael Warfel from the Diocese of Great Falls and Billings

Bishop Warfel greeted the Montana Synod Assembly and commented on the expressions of unity among Lutherans and Catholics. He lifted up the hope of unity between us all. Bishop Crist mentioned the Joint Worship coming up at the Helena Cathedral on Oct. 30th and the Convocation with the Roman Catholics of clergy on Oct. 27th in Lewistown.

Closing Prayer

Synod Council Member Pastor Brenda Satrum led the Assembly in prayer.

The Assembly was recessed for dinner.

Plenary II 6:30-8 PM, Friday, June 2, 2017

Bishop Crist called the Assembly to order at 6:30 p.m. for Plenary II

Credentials Report

Dick Deschamps presented the Credentials Report:

Clergy: 77

Lay: 125

Total Voting Members: 202

Visitors: 44

Total in attendance: 246

Motion

Second: Receive the Credentials Report

SA.17.06.06

VOTE: RECEIVE THE CREDENTIALS REPORT

Report of the Nominating Committee by Chair John Sheppard:

Synod Council

Pastor Linda Webster: Bear Paw Cluster

Dick Deschamps: Crazy Mountain Cluster

Tonja Erickson: Flathead Cluster

Kristi Lobdell: Southeast Cluster

Jonah Kunka: Youth

Synod Nominating Committee

Pastor Julie Long

Jeanne McCoskery

Committee on Discipline

Pastor Joel Westby

Steve Aadland

Pastor Steve Van Gilder

Consultation Committee

Pastor Jim Darchuk

Pastor Lindean Barnett-Christianson

David Rice

Alicia Moe

Robin Menger

Kogodus Board

Position 1: Ellen Ayres

Position 2: Andrew Smith

Pastor Robert Nagy

Motion

Second: Cast a unanimous ballot

SA.17.06.07

VOTE: CAST A UNANIMOUS BALLOT

Presentation of the 2018 Budget

Treasurer Sue Ost presented the 2018 budget to the Assembly, explaining the process and purpose of the budget through pictures and stories. When working on the budget, the synod council takes into account the synod benchmarks as a guide when determining use of synod funds. The proposed budget for 2018 is \$1,089,000 income, and expenses of \$1,087,747.14

Greetings from FLBC and Christikon

Margie Fiedler, Executive Director of Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp shared some stories from a parent, a camper and a counselor. This summer, 2900 young children and youth will be served between both camps, and 79 young adults will serve as counselors. 70% of seminarians point to camping ministry as part of their experience that shaped their call to ministry. Margie thanked the

Synod for their prayers and support and care! Margie also thanked the Board members of Christikon and FLBC. Margie also mentioned that there were many congregations who used a program from the Mission Venture Capital Fund and gave a gift back to the Fund in gratitude for the help in founding a new program. She presented a check for the Mission Venture Capital Fund in gratitude for the gift given to FLBC to begin a new ministry.

Presentation of Constitutional changes introduction

Pastor Tony Rhodes presented the Montana Synod Constitutional changes that are proposed and required as a result of the changes to the ELCA Constitution at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. He stated that the changes to the Constitution are for the most part in reference to the change for rostered leaders, distinguishing between rostered leaders of word and sacrament and rostered leaders of word and service. An editorial change includes adding All Saints, Big Sky to Crazy Mountains Cluster.

Greetings from Campus Ministry

Pastor John Lund and Pastor Kathie Larson Aasheim offered thanks for the opportunity serve at both University of Montana and Montana State University. Pastor Aasheim asked for the names of individuals who are or will be students at the colleges and universities in the state. Pastor John Lund thanked the Synod and expressed that it has been an honor to serve at UM. The message of hope in the world is a big deal in the world. It makes a difference! Pastor Lund introduced Eamon Ormseth who shared that he joined in a trip to Vancouver with Emmaus a couple years ago. He became the Interfaith Coordinator for Emmaus with the Muslim community in Missoula in the last year. The experience has changed him! And he will continue in his journey as he will be going to Jerusalem and the West Bank with YAGM next year! Pastor Lund encouraged people to support campus ministry, especially in Bozeman as they have been restructuring.

Greetings from Immanuel Lutheran Home

Jason Cronk, CEO of Immanuel Lutheran Home in Kalispell stated that the organization began 60 years ago as people began to fundraise to offer a comfortable place for the elderly to live. In 1957, the doors opened. Immanuel was one of the first facilities to open a dedicated wing for people with Alzheimer's. He shared about the impact of the ministry across the Flathead valley. He also shared about the challenges due to the financial and other infrastructure issues as well as recruiting and training staff. It is today the only full-service life plan facility in Western Montana.

Greetings from ELCA Church Council

John Lohrmann greeted the Montana Synod on behalf of the Eastern Washington/Idaho Synod and the ELCA Churchwide Council. Mr. Lohrmann described the duties of the Churchwide Council, meeting twice a year seeking to discern God's will for the church. As part of the Council, he has been a part of the "Called Forward Together in Christ" strategic plan that gives form to the church facing the future. John is also chair of the Theological Education Advisory Committee that is looking at the Seminaries of the ELCA to help them to be sustainable into the future. He also lifted up the document on Justice for Women and encouraged members and congregations to be engaged in conversations regarding the Called Forward Together in Christ plan and the study on Justice for Women.

Greetings from Global Mission

Paulina Dasse, Manager for Relationships for the Latin America and Caribbean desk within the Global Mission unit greeted the Assembly on behalf of Global Mission. Paulina works with 30 other

companion synod relationships to deepen church-to-church relationships in South America. She will be back in Montana in July with the delegation coming from Bolivia.

The Assembly recessed for worship.

Opening Eucharist:

Bishop Jessica Crist presided over the Opening Eucharist. Rev. Dr. Kathryn Schifferdecker delivered the sermon. Members of congregations participated in a parade of intents, bringing forward their estimations of giving for the coming year. Pete's Little Big Band of Great Falls performed.

Saturday, June 3, 2017

Morning Prayer: Pastor Seth Nelson, of Ronan led the Assembly in worship.

Keynote—Dr. Michael Trice (Reconciled to God)

Bishop Crist introduced Michael Trice, commenting on how he is connected and reconnected to a number of people in the Synod. Michael thanked Bishop Crist and commented on how the Montana Synod is involved in the world and the synod. There is a sense of joy and gratitude in all that is going on in the Synod.

Vocation and Voice share the same Latin root. What we do is always evident in who we say we are. Just like in the first century climate, we all now have to be witnesses, voices of unity that exist in the disunity that existed then and exists now.

The church is the assembly of every seeking soul. (Gordon Lathrop). This brings to mind the first Pentecost when the early Christians were inspired by the breath of God that blew through that assembly of seeking souls. At that time, life had changed and suddenly they were speaking languages not their own. Pentecost reminds us of who we are as an assembly of seeking souls and how we discover anew the language of God and grace.

Unity in the World: there have been huge changes in our country and our world. These are seismic changes and we need to talk about them in our ministries. In addition to this, we are preparing for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Can what we bring as Lutherans be a gift to the world to address this disunity?

Fact: After WWII, 1 out of 5 Lutherans in the world were displaced. This resulted in the formation of varying organizations such as the Lutheran World Federation and the United Nations (among others.) These were formed so people could have trust in the world—trust that people were working for unity.

Story:

Luther talked of the Potter and the Clay. God is the Potter, we are the Clay. God shapes us, the Clay, for connection, for unity, for koinonia. The artist's capacity to shape clay is identical to what is emerging. The artist loves what the artist is creating.

God sees us as whole, as unified and one. It's a story of unity. But there is also a story of disunity. We can see God's deepest love in our fractures, in our disunity. Already, in the second Chapter of Genesis, we see a staggering display of disunity, one brother killing another. Abel and Cain. The covenant between them was broken.

But nothing can separate us from God. (Unity does not mean uniformity.) Christians disagree with each other ardently right now and yet, unity is already ours in Christ. We are all already members of the one body. We are not uniform, but we are all members of the body of Christ.

And we can work for reconciliation.

Scripture:

Every year the World Council of Churches comprised of 150 different countries, asks one region to provide scripture around unity. This year, one of these provided scriptures is 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 in which Paul is appealing to the idea of koinonia; reconciliation and unity in fellowship. This term is one of the oldest in Christian vocabulary. How we are one, while on a pilgrimage that can take place in the valleys of the world. Reconciliation and unity is messy and complicated, this is true in our families, our congregations, our states, country and world.

This early usage of the language of koinonia has arced over time and events that Paul could not have imagined. But unity can always arise from a place of disunity and failure. Seeing one another through God's eyes as the unbroken clay jar. Through the brokenness of ourselves, God can make an appeal. Unity requires forgiveness.

Another scripture for the year is the Luke story of the prodigal child.

What if we read this story in a different way? From the Orthodox Christian belief that our connection with others is of utmost importance. Being disconnected means one's humanity is disappearing. Our humanity is dependent upon our connection.

The prodigal child is the story of our returning to relationship, reclaiming our humanity together right now.

The assembly was tasked to share the facts, stories and scriptures that speak to us, that we use to shape a vision of unity, especially right now. Several of the small groups shared their insights.

Plenary III 10:30-11:30AM, Saturday, June 3, 2017

Credentials Report

Dick Deschamps presented the Credentials Report:

Clergy: 87

Lay: 134

Total Voting Members: 221

Visitors: 51

Total in attendance: 272

Motion

Second: Approve the Credentials Report

SA.17.06.08

VOTE: APPROVE THE CREDENTIALS REPORT

Report of the Bishop

My friends, do you realize that this is the 30th Montana Synod Assembly? Thirty years ago we gathered for the first time in our Constituting Convention, eyeing each other warily, like newlyweds not so sure about the in-laws. We brought to this merger different traditions, different emphases, and different history. And while what we had in common was infinitely more significant than what kept us apart, still, well, you know.

So we gathered, thirty years ago, looked at each other and decided we could do it, we could come together as congregations from a different branch of Lutheranism. And we did it. We elected a

bishop and a vice president and a secretary and a treasurer. We elected a Synod Council and committees, adopted a budget and a constitution. We acknowledged the gifts that each tradition was bringing to this union, and then we agreed to move forward. In unity.

Our theme at this 30th Montana Synod Assembly is “Promote Unity.” In his farewell discourse on Holy Thursday Jesus prayed the prayer that is our mandate for Christian unity. “The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17:22-23)

Our theme comes from one of the Synod’s five Benchmarks:

Meet the future boldly.

Serve the world, especially the poor and those in need.

Deepen faith and witness.

Promote unity.

Strengthen congregations.

Promote unity. It is a mere 2 words, but those 2 words expand, even as our understanding of who might be at the table expands. When Jesus talked about them “being one,” he was talking on one level, about the unity of his closest friends, one of whom was to betray him. When our Synod Council first started talking about promoting unity we were a synod that was pulled apart by painful discussions of human sexuality, but also about our relationships with other religious groups. As we looked at where we were and where we knew we needed to be as followers of Jesus Christ, we knew that “Promote unity” was part of our calling. And indeed it has remained very important as new issues challenge us.

This past year the election process divided us deeply as a nation. Strong feelings have run especially high, and have continued. The church can and should be a place where people of differing points of view, opposing political parties, different favorite news channels can come together and actually listen to one another.

A lot has changed in 30 years. The ELCA has become a leader in ecumenism. We have developed, over the last 30 years, full-communion agreements with 6 other church bodies—The Presbyterian Church USA, the United Church of Christ, The Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, as well as the Moravians and the Reformed Church in America. We are in bilateral conversations with the Historic Black Churches. And we are leaders in ecumenical organizations statewide, nationally and globally.

Unfortunately, even as we are in broader dialogue with other Christians and even non-Christians, we are no longer in dialogue with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, who broke off conversation, even informally, some 5 years ago.

This year is the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Last year, to get a head start on the commemoration, we focused our Synod Assembly and Theological Conference on the Reformation, with the keynote speaker and multiple workshops exploring various aspects of the Reformation, past, present and future, and globally. Our Montana Synod website, www.montanasynd.org has a whole section of congregational educational resources that a group from our synod developed. Look at them. Use them. And there are resources on elca.org, and all over.

And here’s a real example of God working in our midst. While the Reformation began as a break in the church, this anniversary has become a time of reconciliation, if not unity. And just as the Reformation did not appear ex nihilo on October 31, 1517, the reconciliation did not come from nowhere, either.

In 1962, Pope John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council and opened up the Catholic Church in ways that were every bit as overreaching as the changes brought about by Luther and the Reformation. Soon after the end of Vatican II, high-level Lutheran-Catholic dialogues began, and have been going for fifty years since. There was a major break-through in 1999, when the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation signed the historic agreement, the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. In this agreement, the Catholic Church basically agreed with the Lutheran understanding of justification, which had been a major stumbling block for 450 years.

We have kept at it. And I want to bring to your attention 3 books. The first is From Conflict to Communion, a book with joint Lutheran-Catholic authorship that chronicles some of the issues that have been faced in the conversations across the globe. There is an accompanying study guide, and it is very thorough.

A second resource I want to share with you is also co-authored by Lutherans and Catholics, including one from our Synod—Julie Aageson. One Hope: Re-Membering the Body of Christ. was written for congregations—or, even better—Lutheran and Catholic conversations. It is very accessible, very readable.

The third resource is Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist. A group of US Catholic and Lutheran scholars decided to search through 50 years of dialogues to find out how many theological and ecclesial conflicts had been solved, and this book is the findings, which surprised even the team that set out to do the research. They had no idea that we had come this far. This document was adopted by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, by the ELCA Conference of Bishops, the ELCA Church Council, and, last summer, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly. One of the most memorable moments of the Assembly came when Presiding Bishop Eaton gave the Catholic co-chair of the committee that produced the document the gift of a chalice. And as he held it up and gave thanks, he said, “I look forward to the day, soon, when we will drink from this cup together.”

I mentioned earlier that the Montana Synod has been preparing for this 500th anniversary for a couple of years. And we have not been doing it alone. On October 30, 2017, at 7 pm at the Helena Cathedral, we are having a joint Lutheran-Catholic service of Common Prayer. Bishop George Thomas and Bishop Michael Warfel will be representing the Catholic Church, and I will be representing the Lutherans, along with former Bishop Mark Ramseth. You are invited.

I know that there are various things planned in communities across the state. I hope as you make your plans for commemorating the Reformation that you will be ecumenical. And I hope you will come to Helena on October 30.

Next, I'd like to give you some updates on things we did at last year's Synod Assembly. The one substantive piece of business that we conducted, other than adopting a budget and doing some elections, was to pass a memorial repudiating the doctrine of discovery, and asking the Churchwide Assembly to do likewise. The Doctrine of Discovery originates from a 16th century papal bull that declares any land not inhabited by Christians to be not only fair game, but a moral obligation for Christian empires to subdue and take over. This Doctrine was made a part of US law in a Supreme Court case in the 19th century, and has enormous legal, social, ethical and theological implications.

The Churchwide Assembly received our memorial, and similar memorials from many synods. The Assembly began with a blessing from a tribal leader from the land where we were meeting. Our Vice President, Tom Gossack, had brought sweet grass to the Assembly for all our voting members, and some to share, and several of our folks went backstage and presented the Louisiana tribal leaders with the Montana sweet grass. After some debate, the Assembly passed the Repudiation overwhelmingly.

As it turns out, it is much easier to pass a resolution than it is to live with its consequences. Not long after the Churchwide Assembly, a remote piece of prairie on the Missouri River in North Dakota became a household word. Standing Rock. It started with the Standing Rock Sioux trying to prevent the Dakota Access Pipeline from crossing the river just upstream from their drinking water source. It escalated. It became a large protest. Indigenous people from all over the country gathered at several campsites in the area. It became the largest gathering of indigenous people ever recorded in this country. Others came too, some with very different agendas. It became an international cause, and people arrived from across the globe.

People from Montana were there, on both sides. The governor responded to a plea from North Dakota law enforcement to send in re-enforcements. And others were there in support of the Standing Rock Sioux, including Ron Martin-Dent, who took firewood. I was there, too. I listened, I prayed, I met with both law enforcement and tribal officials, and met lots of people.

What is the church's interest in all this? What business do we have there? The answer is simple. We made a commitment at our Churchwide Assembly to repudiate the doctrine of discovery, to repent of our complicity, and to stand with our neighbors as they seek justice. The support expressed by numerous church leaders was not an attack on law enforcement, not an endorsement of violence, not an energy policy decision, but rather a simple gesture of accompaniment. For us, it is the consequence of adopting the repudiation of the doctrine of discovery. Promoting unity is harder than it sounds.

Also we spent some time at the Synod Assembly last year working on the Called Forward Together in Christ initiative. After lunch our Churchwide representative, Kevin Strickland, led us in a conversation on where we think God is leading us as a church. It is a conversation across the whole church, and I am sure that our churchwide representative, Bill Horne will be addressing it in his churchwide report tomorrow morning as well as his workshop this afternoon.

The conversation across the church has yielded these five aspirations:

- +To be a thriving church, spreading the Gospel and deepening faith for all people.
- +To be a church equipping people for their baptismal vocations in the world and in this church.
- +To be an inviting and welcoming church that reflects and embraces the diversity of our communities and the gifts and opportunities that diversity brings.
- +To be a visible church deeply committed to working ecumenically and with other people of faith for justice, peace and reconciliation in communities and around the world.
- +To be a well-governed, connected and sustainable church.

And leadership has boiled it down to two: congregational vitality, and leadership. And they are related.

You may have heard that it is getting harder and harder to find pastors. It is true. We have about half the seminarians that there were when I started, 10 years ago. Half. And combine that with the surge of baby boomer retirements, we have a new reality. One piece of it is that our seminaries are not producing enough pastors to fill the openings that we have. And it is not for lack of trying. There has been a great cultural shift and seminary enrollment is down across the board—all denominations.

Another piece is that many of the congregations who are looking for a pastor cannot afford one. Or at least they think they cannot afford a pastor with the experience they need.

So what are we doing about all this? Actually, a lot. Bishop Eaton has started a churchwide emphasis on recruiting leaders, identifying leaders. It turns out that waiting until someone is in college to suggest that he or she might look into the ministry is way too late. Some synods are

targeting middle schoolers, and some research says that we ought to start in elementary school. Wow. So check out who is listening to the children's sermons, asking questions. Who volunteers to take the offering? Who is curious in Sunday School or Logos? They won't be filling our pulpits next year, but maybe next generation.

Most of us baby boomers graduated from seminary debt-free. That is no longer the case. Just as college costs have skyrocketed, so have seminary costs. And while seminary costs are a little lower than costs for other professionals, the earning potential for seminary grads is substantially less than for other professionals. Not that anybody goes into it for the money.

The ELCA has set up an ambitious scholarship program to help with this problem. The Fund for Leaders provides full tuition scholarships for at least two students at each of our seminaries, and partial scholarships for many other students. The hope is that eventually we will be able to fund all our students. And we want to do that by raising more money, not by losing more students! The Montana Synod has a Fund for Leaders Scholarship Fund, started by several bequests, and supported now by offerings at ordinations and installations in our synod. You are invited to make a contribution to the Fund, even if you are not at an ordination or installation. It is a great investment in our future.

In addition, we have a loan repayment fund, set up in honor of former Bishop Mark Ramseth, when he completed his service as Bishop. As of two years ago we were able to cover one month's student loan repayment for each of our pastors who applied. And we continue with that program.

So what else are we doing to help congregations with pastoral leadership? Our 6 full-communion agreements benefit our congregations, and the congregations of our partners. We have congregations who share a pastor with a congregation in their community from another denomination. We have our pastors serving other denominations, and vice versa. That is what all those agreements were intended for, and it works.

We also continue to explore congregational yokings, parish agreements, or even contractual arrangements. We have some retired pastors coming back part-time to help out with congregations in transition. We have pastors who are bi-vocational. Does your congregation need a pastor who can afford only part-time pay? What other employment opportunities are there in your community?

And of course there are LPAs. How many of our pulpits are filled with LPAs this weekend? How many congregations have used LPAs over the years? Lay Pastoral Associates do fill-in in their own congregations, and in others. Some serve as regular supply, some occasional. In some congregations the LPA is their Synodically Authorized Minister. And we are grateful.

The LPA program started when Mark Ramseth and Tom Lee were in the Synod Office. Pastor Jason Asselstine coordinates the program now. We now have over 100 active LPAs in our Synod. And the class which started last October has more than 30 people enrolled. We are seriously exploring starting another class this October in eastern Montana. Stay tuned and be thinking of people you think would make good LPAs. Leadership is not just about pastors.

Leadership is about all of us, learning more about our church, making connections between church and world, in our communities, through our church. In the last year I decided to take on all of our church's social statements. Do you know that we have 13, and a 14th on the way? In my words from the bishop in the weekly e-news I have written about each of our social statements, week by week. If you haven't seen them, go to our web site, where they are archived. I've also taken on 9 of the 13 social messages, also archived. And if you do not get our weekly e-news, sign up for it. Just go to our website and sign up.

You notice I mention our web site. And you notice that you had the opportunity to register online and pay online. And you will have an opportunity to do your evaluation online. As my staff says, we are staggering into the twenty first century. We are becoming much more intentional about

our use of technology. Many of our committees meet through skype or web ex or zoom. Sometimes we meet with call committees or church councils that way, saving lots of time and money. We are committed as a Synod to make good and appropriate use of technology.

I want to talk a little bit about our Synod House project, our meeting the future boldly. For lunch today we are inviting you all to come over to the site to eat barbeque and see what we are up to. We're going to have the Mission Builders there, as well as the architect and the mayor. And you. Special thanks go to Jeanne McCoskery, who has spearheaded the campaign to raise awareness of the project and to kickstart our funding. All good things come to an end, and she will no longer be working with us after the Assembly. We owe her a great deal of thanks, for her tireless work these last 3 years.

It is becoming a reality. The hole is in the ground. The mission builders are here, and volunteers are coming from around the synod, and around the country. We have a group coming from Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp. We have a group coming from the Allegheny Synod, our partner synod. And we have room for more volunteers from every congregation. And, we'd like to raise as much money as we can before we have to start paying a mortgage. Could your congregation pledge \$1000 each year for 5 years? Could you identify individuals with more capacity to give who might make a substantial gift?

This Synod House has been a long time in coming. Our previous building, built in 1975, was showing its age and lack of flexibility. There was no way to make it ADA compliant, there was not enough space, and it wasn't designed for 6 people using technology. The Synod House will be accessible, environmentally green, expandable, with a chapel space, room for meetings and for technology. And it is in the works.

We hope you'll come for lunch, and also consider how you might help with the people's house.

I want to thank all of you who have participated generously in the Synod House project, and ask you to keep it up. I know that a number of our congregations are also having capital appeals at the same time. And indeed the ELCA is in the midst of a large Churchwide Campaign with a goal of raising 198 million. Last year our Assembly offering went to the campaign, some \$9,104.76. We have not emphasized the campaign heavily in our synod because of our own synod house campaign. But as I was talking with the campaign manager, feeling slightly guilty about our light participation, he reminded me of the many ways our synod's congregations and individuals have been generous to ministries that are supported by the campaign. During the campaign in the last 3 years, our synod has given \$700,000 to world hunger. Since 2009 we've given 2 million. And during the campaign our congregations have given more than \$100,000 to Global Mission. Thank you.

Our Synod has 2 global partners, companion churches. One is the Cape Orange Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa. Last year we announced that we were excited to have a young South African pastor come to spend several months in our Synod. Unfortunately Pastor Edwina was turned down for a visa twice and was not able to come. Since we last met, the Diocese there elected a new Bishop. Motsumai Manong was elected in October, replacing Bill Bowles who stepped down early for health reasons. Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger was my able representative at that election.

Our other companion synod is the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church. We have a July visit planned for Pastor Presidente Emilio Aslla Flores and 3 others from Bolivia, with stops in Great Falls, Rocky Boy, Bozeman and Billings.

Our Saviour's, Rocky Boy is the site of the national gathering of the American Indian Alaska Native Lutheran Association. We are delighted that our Bolivians guests will be able to be a part of that gathering, sharing perspectives on indigenous people from the southern hemisphere, as well.

And in October we will focus north, as we gather with folks from the Synod of Alberta and the Territories on the Fort Peck Reservation to explore indigenous peoples' concept of the land. Our Director for Evangelical Mission Pastor George Karres is coordinating this event with our Native American Accompaniment Team.

I want to say a few words about the Churchwide Assembly. Last summer there were a number of actions at the Churchwide Assembly that affect us. One was changing the name of AIMs to Deacons. Another was a whole series of constitutional changes that we will be adopting tomorrow. As for other assembly actions affecting synod, they fell into 7 categories, including:

- +Ministry among people in poverty
- +Energy and environment
- +Anti-racism
- +Global Mission
- +Foreign policy
- +Support of people in the military
- +Well-being

If you want to know more about them, you can read my February Synod Council report online.

Next summer we will elect voting members for the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. That Assembly's agenda will include consideration of a social statement on women and justice, and election of Secretary and Presiding Bishop. The nominating committee will be seeking names starting in January, so be prepared to nominate people to participate in this important meeting.

I want to take a moment to thank our outstanding Synod Staff. Susan Hedahl, Colter McCarty, George Karres and Jason Asselstine make it a joy to come to work most days. Susan has been with us the longest. For sixteen years she has been behind the scenes making sure that things run smoothly, organizing assemblies, overseeing documentation, and answering an unbelievable variety of questions that pop up from just about everywhere. Susan has also been through the LPA program and is an active member of her church, First English in Great Falls. She also organized a multi-congregational quilting group in Great Falls, pooling resources and talent to make quilts.

Colter McCarty is our newest staff member, administrator for information technology. In addition to handling registrations and communications, he goes out to congregations across the synod and helps them with their technology needs. Got a tech problem? Call Colter. Before coming to work at the Synod fulltime, Colter was an office administrator in his congregation, Bethel Lutheran in Great Falls, where he has been a youth director since he finished college. Colter is also in Candidacy, where he is a candidate for a Deacon.

Jason Asselstine has been Associate to the Bishop for 3 ½ years and has been just about everywhere in the state. He keeps a map in his office of where he goes. In addition to working with the LPA program and First Call Theological Education, he has organized buses to go to the Youth Gatherings, and he has worked with others to re-establish youth activities on a synod level. At my request he is currently enrolled in a Systems Academy that is giving him training in ways to defuse and prevent conflict situations. Jason and his family live in Choteau, and are members at Trinity there.

George Karres is Director for Evangelical Mission, and has at least 2 bosses. He is both churchwide staff and synod staff. He works with the mission table in the areas of stewardship and

outreach and mission support. He has developed a congregational review process wherein he brings a team of LPAs to a congregation for a weekend visit, doing extensive interviews with congregation and community members, culminating in a report back to the congregation. They have done a number of these reviews, and are open for more. George is a member of New Hope in Great Falls

Jenny Kunka fills out our staff, as Director of NRIT. She and her committee are seeking ways to continue the mission of NIRT to provide continuing education and lifelong learning, and they are expanding online and distance learning, to make their offerings more accessible to everyone. Jenny is a member of Our Savior's in Great Falls

A special word of thanks to Pastor Bob Quam. Since his retirement, he has been serving as our coordinator for candidacy. He works with all our candidates and our committee and helps them navigate the sometimes rather complicated system. What a good and faithful servant!

And I want to thank the Synod Council, and especially the officers you see up front here. All were Synod Council members before being elected officers.

Thanks to you officers, to the executive committee and to the synod council, all of whom volunteer your time. Wow.

I want to conclude with a quote from the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, who was recently awarded an honorary degree from Notre Dame University. "It is a great honor and encouragement to continue leaving conflict behind and face a future of unity." May it be so.

Jessica Crist, Bishop

Greetings:

Luther Seminary

Rev. Dr. Kathryn Schifferdecker who teaches Old Testament at Luther taught a class about Jews and Christians. The student had visited the Holy Land who had heard someone say while on a bus, "Abraham, may he rest in peace." The student wondered if that was typical. The Rabbi said he doesn't hear Christians talk that way. The class erupted in laughter. Dr. Schifferdecker shared that the hope for the Christian is in the resurrection of Jesus! It is about new life and resurrection life. A video was shown. Because of the reality of the shortage of clergy and the decline of enrollment in Seminaries, she encouraged people to encourage one another and encourage others to consider Seminary! She also offered a word of thanks to congregations and individuals who give to help provide scholarships for support for students.

PLTS/CLU – Sara Wilson

Sara is a 2013 graduate of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. She thanked Bishop Crist and the Synod for their support of both PLTS and California Lutheran University. Without support, they could not train leaders for mission. She shared some news from California. The PLTS seminary moved last week. They have decommissioned their hilltop campus which they called home for 65 years. It is a place where people had life-changing and sacred experiences. As the number of students declined, the Seminary leased space in downtown Berkeley. The new space is more centrally located and will be a place for new opportunities. They say thanks and yes! Thanks for the past and for the future. She offered an invitation to come visit. She also encouraged the Synod to send students! The Seminary welcomed Ray Pickett into the community who will serve as Rector. The CLU/PLTS video was shown.

Mission Investment Fund – LuAnn Ferguson

The Mission Investment Fund video was shown. LuAnn shared about the opportunities for congregations to invest in the Mission Investment Fund and to make use of opportunities for the sake of their congregation in the midst of a building or expansion and for individuals to invest through the Mission Investment Fund, too.

ELCA Foundation – Beth Adams

Beth works in the Montana Synod as a gift planner. Using the theme for the Synod, gift planning helps people to do more with their money locally and globally. She invited congregations to invite her to come to assist with gift planning.

Mission Builders – Sue Ost, Jim Dyess

Jim greeted the Montana Synod a couple years ago to talk about Mission Builders. He is here now to build! He will see people at the Synod House soon. Sue and her husband, Allen became involved and have structured their lives to continue to be part of the building team. Sue encouraged anyone in the Synod to consider how they can volunteer and assist with the Synod House project in the coming weeks.

Synod House – Jeanne McCoskery, Arne Bergland

Jeanne McCoskery offered a word of gratitude to the Synod. This is not the house that Jack built, or others.... This is the house that the Synod built! Hard hats were passed out to all in the room.

Synod Council member, Kristi Lobdell led the Assembly in prayer before the lunch recess.

Bishop Crist declared the Assembly in recess.

Lunch was served at the building site of the new Synod House, catered by Big Mouth Barbecue. Lunch was free, thanks to the Mission Investment Fund and The ELCA Foundation.

The Assembly was reconvened at 2:30 p.m.

Keynote II– Dr. Michael Trice Reconciled to the World: A Lutheran App

This year we mark the half millennium and true to our theology we live in the “both” and the “and.” Both on the journey toward unity and living within disunity.

Trice suggested that “We need a Lutheran app to help us think about what we can bring to the world.” He suggested that an i phone is not a phone, it is a window to interpret the world. It’s a medium to allow access to everything, everywhere. The apps on the phone are the story. The Lutheran app is the story we bring as Lutherans to that interpretation of the world.

If we had an app, what would we include in the app? What do we believe are the features of our Lutheran identity in the world today?

1. We are a people who believe in the gift of hope as a response to a world of fear.
2. We live the gift of the gospel in a world bound by law.

3. We believe in the gift of abundance in the world of scarcity.
4. We believe in the gift of reconciliation in a world of division.

Trice stated, “When I think of Pentecost, that’s what I hear.... “Rise up.” He invited people to gather in small groups to share, responding to the question: “What are the features of our Lutheran identity in the world?”

The Assembly recessed to attend workshops. The following workshops were offered:

Montana Synod Small Church Network; led by Pastor Doug Peterson

The Generosity Project; led by Dr. Michael Trice

The ELCA: Where Are We Going?; led by Vice President of the ELCA Bill Horne

Disaster Preparedness; led by Pastor Amanda Liggett, Dick Deschamps and others

Intermountain: Mental Health Issues for Children; led by Jim Fitzgerald, Director of Intermountain Children’s Home

Women and Justice: Introducing the Resource and the Social Statement Process; led by LPA Gloria Lannen and Trudi Schmidt

Accompaniment; led by Paulina Dasse, ELCA Manager for Companion Synod relationships in Latin America

Can We Talk? The Church and Human Sexuality; led by Rev. Dr. Laurie Jungling

My Neighbor, the Refugee; led by Wilmot Collins and Pastor Lue Moua

My Neighbor’s Faith: Islam; led by Pastor Larry Quanbeck

The Recognitions Banquet was held beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Vice President of the Synod Tom Gossack served as master of ceremony.

Pastor Pete Erickson, outgoing President of Montana Association of Christians received the Spirit of Hope Award for 2017.

The following were recognized upon Anniversaries of Ordination

Deacons

5th Anniversary

Mr. Allen Sasser-Goehner, Immanuel Lutheran, Missoula

20th Anniversary

Ms. Karen Henrikson, Retired, Missoula,

Pastors

5th Anniversary

Rev. Barbara Gwynn, Great Falls

Rev. Kristina Mitzman, Billings

Rev. Roberta Pierce, Fairview

10th Anniversary

Rev. Audrey Rydbom, Cody, WY

Rev. Carol Ramseth, Retired Bozeman

Rev. Linda Rose, Absarokee

Rev. Louise Christensen, Retired Sidney

15th Anniversary

Rev. Bradn Buerkle, St. Petersburg, Russia
Rev. Lindean Barnett Christenson, Bozeman
Rev. Mark Donald, Christikon
Rev. Robert Nedbalek
20th Anniversary
Rev. Darren Paulson, Billings
Rev. John Lund, Missoula
25th Anniversary
Rev. Christian Flohr, Missoula
Rev. Lynn DeYoung, Retired, Helena
Rev. Sandra Van Zyl, Butte
30th Anniversary
Rev. Barbara Westhoff, Retired, Fargo ND
Rev. Philip Wold, Sheridan, WY
Rev. Thomas Schlotterback, Billings
35th Anniversary
Rev. Karl Guhn, Billings
Rev. Leonard Shatkus, Baker
Rev. Loren Gustafson, Retired, Helena
Rev. Melanie Martin-Dent, Sidney
Rev. Steven Rice, Miles City
Rev. Steven Benson, Retired, Fortine
40th Anniversary
Rev. James Aageson, Retired, West Glacier
Rev. Mark Gravrock, Retired, Kalispell
Rev. Thomas Peterman, Retired, Missoula
45th Anniversary
Rev. Michael Borge, Retired, Missoula
Rev. Robert Quam, Retired, Billings
50th Anniversary
Rev. Carl Rohr, Retired, Ronan
Rev. Donald Melchert, Retired, Missoula
Rev. James Holmlund, Retired, Billings
Rev. Paul Hanson, Retired, Billings
Rev. Peter Sethre, Retired, Hopkins, MN
Rev. Thomas Lee, Retired, Missoula
55th Anniversary
Rev. Donald Jacobson, Retired, Elmo
Rev. Lynn Strand, Retired, Spanish Springs, NV
Rev. Wayne Olsen, Retired, Helena
60th Anniversary
Rev. Walter Kirkegaard, Retired, Great Falls

Congregation Anniversaries

50th Anniversary
Christ the King Lutheran Church, Bozeman

Broadview Lutheran Church, Broadview
100th Anniversary
First Lutheran Church, Wolf Point
Bethel Lutheran Church, Grain
Devon Lutheran Church, Devon
First English Lutheran Church, Bainville
Volmer Lutheran Church, Dagmar
125th Anniversary
Gold Hill Lutheran Church, Butte

The following were recognized upon their retirement:

Rev. Joel Brosten
Rev. Jan Johnson
Rev. Loren Gustafson
Rev. Paul Rowold

The guests of the Synod were recognized:

Bill Horne, Dr. Michael Trice, John Lohrmann, Paulina Dasse, Dr. Kathryn Schifferdecker

The Great Falls High School Music Department, led by Mr. Patrick Ryan provided music during the evening.

Following the Banquet, Concordia and PLU sponsored a Hymns and Root Beer sing.

SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 2017

Morning Prayer was led by Pastor Katie Emory from Fallon

Plenary I - 9 – 10:30 AM Sunday, June 4, 2017

Bishop Crist called the Assembly back to order.

Report of the Churchwide Representative

Bill Horne, ELCA Vice-President was introduced. The video for Synod Assemblies was shown.

Mr. Horne began by thanking the Montana Synod for the warm hospitality. He has been grateful for the ELCA Synod Assembly video, which he sees as a focus for the church in the coming year. He shared his phone number and email with the assembly.

He shared the ELCA Churchwide Report: the link for the report is:

http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/2017_SA_Detailed_Report.pdf?_ga=2.198368943.1433822018.1497562446-810507372.1473857579

Mr. Horne responded to questions and comments.

Adoption of the Budget for the MT Synod for 2018

Motion

Second: adopt the 2018 MT Synod budget

SA.17.06.09

VOTE: ADOPT THE 2018 MT SYNOD BUDGET

Adoption of the Constitutional Amendments

Motion

Second: Adopt the amendments to the Constitution

SA.17.06.10

VOTE: ADOPT THE AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Greetings:

Concordia – Trina Pisk Hall shared about ways that Concordia is working to shape young adults for leadership in the world. The campus is preparing to welcome over 500 new students this coming fall. This marks another year of increased enrollment at Concordia. Trina also shared ways that Concordia is celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

PLU – Doug Page shared greetings from Pacific Lutheran University. He stated that PLU takes its middle name very seriously. PLU is engaged in a new approach to congregational relations. Dr. Merit Trelstad will begin as new professor on Lutheran studies. He encouraged the Assembly to check out the website. He announced that the University will begin a process of transition as they begin a search for a new president and that they have people who have stepped into leadership in the midst of the transition.

Bishop Crist thanked Barb Gwynn and Jean Mazur for the banner for Pentecost which was hanging in the Assembly Hall.

Announcements: The Synod Assembly evaluations will be available on the Synod Website following the conclusion of the Assembly.

Close of the Assembly

Bishop Crist declared the Montana Synod Assembly closed

Closing Worship

Pentecost Closing worship was held with Bishop Jessica Crist preaching and Pastor Carol Seilhymer assisting. The reading of the Pentecost story in Spanish, Arabic and Hmong enhanced the Pentecost worship. The Assembly offering went to Intermountain Children's Home.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger

Secretary, Montana Synod