

# Synod Summaries III

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Serve the World,  
Especially the  
Poor and Those in  
Need

## Bishop Crist's Report

After lunch we reconvened for the Bishop's Report. Bishop Crist touched on the Synod's five Benchmarks. Then she spoke about leadership.

In 2014 she ordained 8 graduates who are now serving in the Montana Synod and there will be at least another 6 in 2015.

The bad news is that enrollments in seminary are down. We need to recruit and support candidates for ministry.

We train people in a variety of ways. All are fine and helpful ways to produce pastors and we give thanks for the flexibility in our system. But we need people to be on the lookout for likely candidates for ministry and we need to people to suggest it to those who would be good candidates.

Bishop Crist said that in times past, seminary was inexpensive and many graduated debt free. Now seminaries are not supported like they used to be and the average graduate leaves seminary with large debt. However, there is now scholarship help in the ELCA. There is also scholarship help here in Montana. The Ramseth Fund was also established to help graduates with their debt. That fund is now near \$145,000 and the church council just voted to begin distributing the monies. Anyone with seminary loans can

apply to have one month of their debt paid by this fund.

The Montana Synod has many non clergy leaders as well, with people involved in AIM and Deaconess programs and we have over 30 people in our current LPA class and many others that have completed the class. LPAs participate in so many ministries within the church and we are the envy of many other synods.

We need this leadership. We need people in our churches and in our world that understand the complexities of faith.

Bishop Crist spoke of the leadership team at the synod office and the important work they do: Jason Asselstine, George Karres, Susan Hedahl and Susan Smith.

We are still working on raising funds for the synod house but we are not there quite yet.

The mission venture capital fund is available to strengthen congregations by sharing funds with groups that have a vision for a needed ministry or event. Again, supporting leadership.

We also support leadership through Portico and its focus on wellness among our leaders and congregations.

2015 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lutheran/Catholic dialogues.

There have been many events and we continue to dialogue with, not only Catholics, but our other brothers and sisters of faith.

We are involved in Montana Association of Churches and Wyoming Assoc. of churches, both of which involve ecumenical partners working together to stand for, among other things, justice and peace.

When we come together as an assembly, we see that we are larger than our single congregations and that we can do things together that we cannot do alone and we see of all that is going on that we can support and encourage.

Bishop Crist then added that our presiding ELCA Bishop has asked us to look at 4 emphases:

We are Church

We are Lutherans

We are church together

We are church for the sake of the world

Let's take these four emphases and cross them with our 5 benchmarks and see where we go.

## Popups and Greetings

Susan Hedahl addressed the assembly to talk about quilting and how this is only one way that we can reuse what might be thrown away. She has taken the old choir robes from First English and made them into Quilts for LWR. The synod office will also recycle paper from this assembly.

Colter McCarty reminded the assembly that he is available to come to congregations in person or through webinar to train congregations and to train individuals who might not be comfortable with technology. He can also do an audit for technology, looking at what you

have in your office and can train those who work with technology in your office as well.

He said he thinks we need to make sure every congregation has an up-to-date website. Today, a website is like

the front of your building, it's the first thing people see when looking for a church. Please talk to him. Give him a call and he can come work with you and your congregation.

## MAJCO

Next we spoke of the resolution to reaffirm our relationship with Jewish Communities.

Dr. Paul Seastrand who was involved in crafting this agreement 20 years ago spoke. Seastrand gave a brief history of the relationship between Christians and the Jewish people. There were many dark times.

After WWII there were some positive steps taken in this relationship. In 1994 the ELCA repudiated Martin Luther's anti-

semitic writings and in 1995, the Montana Synod first affirmed a relationship with our Jewish brothers and sisters.

Former Bishop Mark Ramseth said the 1995 agreement was the signature event of the time he was Bishop in the Montana Synod. We were the first and only synod to take such an action for some time. Jerry Weissman who was there 20 years ago at that first agreement spoke. He remembered how mo-

mentous the agreement was at the time.

70 years ago today, people of faith entered Europe to do away with the scourge of people of faith and it was done. 20 years ago, we made this momentous agreement.

The assembly was asked to vote on the resolution to renew the agreement that was initially passed 20 years ago. \*Resolved: That the Montana Synod Assem-

bly on June 6, 2015, Re-affirm the Agreement with the Montana Association of Jewish Communities, committing ourselves to ongoing friendship, cooperation and dialogue.

The resolution passed resoundingly!

## Sunday Assembly

The assembly passed three changes to the constitution that had been voted on last year.

Bishop Crist read through those who were elected as voting members to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly and various committees by vote on Friday. To see a list of committee members, please go to the Montana Synod website.

Sue Ost was sworn in as the new synod council treasurer.

Peter Erickson and Valerie Webster presented on the Montana Association of Christians. MAC was created in 1973. Since it was created the Montana Synod and its predecessors have been involved. MAC is now an association of judicatories (such as synods) and also of congregations, individuals, groups and ministries. MAC now includes action teams made up of people who are focused on specific goals/issues. MAC is also now governed by a council meeting three times a year. MAC Connect will be held next fall, a

retreat called "Deep Listening for Collaborative Service," for anyone concerned with outreach ministry and social justice. All are invited.

The assembly was then presented with a resolution to affirm Montana Synod's membership in the Montana Association of Christians (MAC). The resolution will affirm that our synod will be part of MAC. A vote was taken. The resolution was adopted.

The next resolution was one from the synod council as well. The synod council recommends that the assembly welcome New Hope Lutheran Ministry into the Montana Synod as a congregation by standing and applauding. The motion passed and New Hope was welcomed with applause.

The Hunger Team talked about the Pedal for Peas bike trip coming up later in June. The trip will include four days of biking to raise money for hunger, which will go

toward ELCA World Hunger.

The budget was addressed next. It had been moved and seconded already by the committee.

There was a Q and A on Friday afternoon about the budget and a narrative budget was presented Friday evening. Sue Ost answered any questions. A number of people presented concerns at the cuts to the campus ministries and to Lutheran Social Services. Others also encouraged congregations to think deeply about giving to the synod.

The assembly voted yes or no on the budget. The vote was to accept the 2016 budget.

Margie Fiedler greeted the assembly from both camps: FLBC and Christikon. Both outdoor ministries thanked the assembly for their support. Camp is both an outreach ministry to the children who attend

camp, it is also a ministry to the counselors, some of whom go on to seminary, global mission and many other ministries and service oriented careers. Thank you for your support and for your prayers.

Scott Hedegaard greeted us from the Mission Table and encouraged us to consider our mission support and also to share with us, all that they are doing out in the world. Thank you for all you do in your congregation.

Jen Asselstine from ELCA Malaria – As a church, we have responded boldly to fight malaria. We have now raised 14.4 million dollars, 96% of our goal.

The synod assembly adjourned at 10:40 pm

The assembly worshipped together at 11:10.

## Churchwide Report

Tammy Jackson, representative from Churchwide brought greetings from Bishop Eaton and the whole church to our assembly.

She spoke of an ELCA program in which M.Div. students can spend their internship year in an international setting. It's a unique opportunity. There is also a program for ELCA professors in which they can take a sabbatical, serving in a global setting.

Jackson wanted us to know that our brothers and sisters are grateful for our passion to serve the gospel. Thank you for sharing your gifts and talents with the whole ELCA. Tammy thanked Bishop Crist as well for the many ways she has selflessly served the

church. She also thanked former Bishop Ramseth.

When one congregation engages in service and ministry, those members are the church, serving and ministering on behalf of all of us. One congregation serving the hungry is doing so on behalf of all of us.

Additionally, when you send money to the synod office it doesn't stop there, it goes to various ministries and to Churchwide. And when you send money to Churchwide, it doesn't stay in the building, it spreads out to many ministries that serve people in our country and around the world.

The 2015 Video Greeting from Bishop Elizabeth Eaton addressed the theme: We are Church. To

watch the video, go to youtube and type in *ELCA We are Church*.

ELCA World Hunger has programs in more than 60 countries and more than 300 programs in the U.S.

Lutheran Disaster Response: in 2014, \$6.1 million in gifts were being put to use. The program responded to 50 disasters globally. One major 2014 disaster in the U.S. was the influx of unaccompanied migrant children who flowed into the U.S., 60,000 refugee children who entered the U.S. with no one to help them. We also helped to provide emergency protective equipment to health workers working to fight Ebola.

The ELCA awarded 241 schol-

arships to seminarians at 8 ELCA seminaries. We also supported 53 new congregations and 363 new ministries currently under development.

The ELCA malaria campaign is making a difference, reducing the impact of malaria in 13 African countries.

We also supported 63 young adults into global mission and supported 246 missionaries in more than 46 countries. We have also asserted our support of women, educating and developing women leaders around the world.

Always Made New Campaign – established to grow the mission of the ELCA. Check it out at [www.ELCAorg/campaign](http://www.ELCAorg/campaign)

## Election Results

**Synod Council Treasurer** (term: 2019)  
Sue Ost

**Synod Council Cluster Representatives**  
(terms: 6/2018)

Beartooth Cluster: Eric Nord

Five Valleys Cluster: Rev. Brenda Satrum

Northeast Cluster: Rev. Mark Taylor

Russell Country Cluster: Lisa Jahraus

**2016 Churchwide Assembly Voting Members,**  
**August 9-18, New Orleans, LA**

Bishop Jessica Crist

Rev. Brad Ulgenes

Rev. Tammy Bull

Tom Gossack, Synod Council Vice-President

Ben Peterson

Rick Mikkelson

Debra Oldfield  
Alicia Moe  
Beverly Bell  
Tracy Gibson  
Carly Tattoo

**Committee on Discipline (term: 2021)**

Rev. Nathan Clements

Rev. Dr. Christine Holler-Dinsmore

Rev. Ellen Ayres

John Trangmoe

Maureen Stiles

**Consultation Committee (Term: 2021)**

Rev. Chris Flohr

Glen Deuchler

Joelene Goodover

**Synod Nominating Committee**

Rev. Greg Holler-Dinsmore (2017)

Rev. Joel Skindlov (2016)

AIM Rob Stuberg (2018)

John Sheppard (2016)

Trudi Schmidt (2017)

Lorrie Vennes (2018)

**Kogodus Renewal Ministry (2018)**

Joy McSparron

Tamara Bushnell