

**NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD  
2005 ASSEMBLY MINUTES  
PLENARY SESSION ONE**

**Sovereign Performing Arts Center  
Reading, PA  
Friday, June 10, 2005  
1:00 PM**

The Eighteenth Annual Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod took place June 10-11, 2005, at the Sovereign Performing Arts Center in Reading, Pennsylvania. The theme of the Assembly was "Blessed to be a Blessing: The Gift of Community."

Bishop David Strobel led the Order for the Opening of a Synod Assembly.

Bishop Strobel declared that a quorum was present. A video presentation expressed the gratitude of all present to those involved in making arrangements for this assembly:

- The Local Arrangements Committee, especially Liz Charles and Bruce Osterhout, who have been invaluable resources.
- Tom Yenser, who directed the worship arrangements, and Rändel Wolfe, who organized the children's choir.
- The many volunteers, including those from Zion, Old Zionsville, and the congregations of the West Berks Mission District.
- Trinity, Reading, for hosting forums, lunches, and other activities, including the Augsburg Fortress bookstore and the display from Ten Thousand Villages.
- Thrivent Financial for Lutherans for the grant to make the International Festival possible.

The video presentation also reviewed the Rules of Procedure as printed in the Bulletin of Reports. The assembly was reminded that the privilege of the floor was extended to:

- Mission District Council chairs
- Representatives of Ministry Teams in connection with their reports
- Representatives of institutions and agencies
- Presidents of the synod Women of the ELCA, Lutheran Men in Mission, and Lutheran Youth Fellowship
- ELCA representative Bishop Margaret Payne, who would address the Assembly later

Members of the Synod Council who are not voting members from their congregation have both voice and vote.

It was noted that several pastors from our full-communion partner denominations are serving Lutheran congregations. They are:

- Jane Kropa, United Church of Christ, Huffs
- Thomas E. Neuviller, Reformed Church in America, Grace, Gouldsboro
- Joyce H. Pfeiffer, United Church of Christ, St. Peter, Mantzville
- Mary Matz, Moravian Church in America, interim, St. John, Kutztown
- Edward Schultz, Episcopal Church in the USA, interim, Grace, Allentown

In our full-communion relationships, it is our privilege to afford these pastors the privilege of voice and vote.

Several other guests were welcomed:

- Pastor President Alan Eldrid, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina and Uruguay
- Bishop Margaret Payne, bishop of the New England Synod, our ELCA representative
- Ms. Christina Von Bank, operations support team leader for the Board of Pensions
- Craig Staller, Associate Director of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania

Finally, the video explained that the red ribbon attached to a name tag indicated that the wearer was celebrating a major anniversary.

Bishop Strobel added to the list of guests mentioned in the video, welcoming:

- Jill Schumann, president of Lutheran Services in America
- Don Johnson, director of the Making Connections program, an effort of the Eastern Cluster of Seminaries, funded by a \$3,000,000 grant from the Lily Foundation
- Eric Shafer, Director of the ELCA Department of Communication, and a member of this synod.

The bishop explained that synod Secretary, Barbara-Anne Taylor was not present because of the death of her husband earlier this week, and asked the assembly to hold her and her family in their prayers. He stated that Pastor Catherine Ziel had agreed to serve as secretary *pro tem*. To facilitate her work on such short notice, he asked the assembly to waive the requirement that minutes of each session be submitted for review at the start of the next session. Hearing no objection, the requirement was waived.

He then called upon Pastor Ziel, who presented the following resolution:

**Resolved, that the 2005 Synod Assembly program (as distributed) be adopted.**

Since this motion came from the Synod Council, it needed no second. The resolution was adopted unanimously by a voice vote. The Secretary stated that copies of the 2004 Minutes Book had been corrected and certified by the Bishop and the Secretary, and prepared for deposit in the archives.

The Bishop pointed out the next item on the agenda, the report of the Nominating Committee. The list of nominees and biographical information was distributed when voting members arrived.

Bishop Strobel 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 is made. Those forms must be returned to the ushers' station no later than 2:15 PM.

The Bishop announced that the floor was open for nominations. There being no nominations, the Bishop declared nominations closed.

The Bishop pointed out that, as noted in the material that everyone received, there were several nominees running unopposed or who had been nominated by their mission districts for en bloc election. If the assembly is willing, these people can be elected by means of a unanimous ballot cast by the Secretary. He said that he would entertain a motion to do that. The motion was made and seconded. He called for the vote and declared the following people elected:

- Secretary: Barbara-Anne G. Taylor
- Treasurer: David Hinrichs
- Synod Council: Susan Wambaugh, Guy Ehler, Michael Reitz, Megan Fatzinger
- Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia: Betty Pettit
- Committee on Discipline: Ronald Kline
- Committee on Discipline: Barbara Shade
- Consultation Committee: Dennis Ritter

Vice President Kinney took the chair. She pointed out the report of the Bishop beginning on page 5 of the Bulletin and asked for questions. Pastor Robert vonFrisch requested that reports on the work of the bishop's staff appear in future Bulletins of Reports.

Bishop Strobel resumed the chair and asked for a moment of personal privilege. He thanked Ruth Miller for her years of service, and the Assembly thanked her with a standing ovation. He then announced that Associate in Ministry Karen Matthias-Long would be joining the synod staff as Director of Ministry Resources as of September 1.

The Bishop called attention to the Reports of the Vice President and the Synod Council and asked for questions. Vice President Kinney gave a brief oral report on her work and on the work of the Synod Council. She asked the members of the Synod Council to stand and be recognized for their work.

Bishop Strobel reported that the Report of the Secretary was on pages 8-10 and 51 and asked that errors or omissions be brought to Pastor Ziel's attention so any necessary corrections could be made.

Bishop Strobel called forward Treasurer Sandra Bodnyk, who presented the Treasurer's Report. He thanked her for serving since October as Interim Treasurer.

The Bishop reminded the Assembly that we will see anniversary videos from seven of the pastors celebrating their fiftieth anniversary of ordination, all except Pastor Joseph Slusser, who lives in Florida and is afflicted with Alzheimers. Pastor Manfred Bahmann's video was shown.

The Bishop called upon Pastor Herb Gifford, chairperson of the Committee on Reference and Counsel. He invited committee members to stand. Any resolutions to come before the Assembly had to be submitted to the committee no later than 5 PM. Pastor Gifford presented the first report of the committee. The committee asked permission to read aloud only the "Resolved" sections of each resolution, in the interest of time, and no objection was voiced.

**I. The committee received the following resolution from the Christian Education Committee and the Congregation Council of Christ Lutheran Church, Allentown:**

**WHEREAS**, Augsburg Fortress is the publishing ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and

**WHEREAS**, Augsburg Fortress is funded solely through sales revenue; and

**WHEREAS**, Augsburg Fortress is called to provide products and services that communicate the gospel, enhance faith, and enrich the life of the Christian community from a Lutheran perspective; and

**WHEREAS**, any revenue in excess of expenses is reinvested back into the development and delivery of ministry resources for the ELCA and other Christian communities; therefore be it

**RESOLVED**, that ELCA members, congregations, and related institutions of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod examine Augsburg Fortress resources for quality, price, and level of service whenever purchasing decisions are made, and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that when such resources are equal in quality, price, and level of customer service, they will purchase resources from Augsburg Fortress in support of this ministry of the church.

The committee recommended adoption. The resolution was adopted.

Bishop Strobel announced that the annual Assembly offering for the ELCA World Hunger Appeal would be received.

Dean Michael Bennethum presented to the Assembly the rostered leaders celebrating major anniversaries this year and invited them forward to receive a round of applause.

Twenty-fifth Anniversary

Steven E. Belinski  
Elizabeth F. Huwiler  
Ruth T. Miller  
Barry L. Mitchell  
Elizabeth M. Mitchell  
Valerie K. Reinhold

Fortieth Anniversary

LeRoy H. Aden  
Larry R. Hassler  
Andrew J. Stauffer  
Stanley R. Trout

Fiftieth Anniversary

Manfred K. Bahmann  
Richard R. Boyer  
Paul L. Buehrle  
Ralph F. Eberle  
Klaus G. Wolfgang Molzahn  
Harlan J. Slusser  
David G. Volk  
Harold S. Weiss

Fifty-fifth Anniversary

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

Sixtieth Anniversary

Malcolm W. Albright  
Walter P. Fetterly  
Warren S. Harding  
Maurice J. Hart  
William C. Leopold  
Glenn G. Neubauer  
Verne E. Snyder  
Donald M. Wilson

Bishop Strobel then called forward the Mission District deans and installed them into their offices.

The fiftieth anniversary video of Bishop Emeritus Harold S. Weiss was shown.

After a short break, the bishop introduced the video report of ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson. Bishop Strobel then introduced Bishop Margaret Payne, bishop of the New England Synod and our ELCA representative for this Assembly and invited her to speak.

In her remarks, Bishop Payne reflected on the theme of the assembly, calling us to take time to give thanks for the community of the ELCA, and how it enables us to do ministry throughout the world. She mentioned those from the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod who serve on churchwide boards and committees and thanked them for their service. She spoke of the gifts we receive from our companion synod relationships and commended the work done by the ELCA and its agencies, particularly with regard to disaster response. Bishop Payne spoke briefly about her work with the ELCA Sexuality Task Force. She mentioned how proud she is of the way in which the ELCA is making these decisions, not bureaucratically, but after study and discussion across all expressions of the Church.

Bishop Strobel announced that the special offering received for world hunger was \$2,241.10.

The Bishop called on AiM Kathy Schaeffer, who presented the report of the Leadership Development Ministry Team.

Bishop Strobel introduced Jill Schumann, president and CEO of Lutheran Services in America, who addressed the Assembly about the gifts of Lutherans to social ministry.

Bishop Strobel introduced the Rev. Leon Novak, pastor of the Lutheran parish in Murska Sobota, Slovenia, representing the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovenia. He addressed the Assembly.

The Bishop introduced Pastor President Alan Eldrid, bishop of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina and Uruguay. He brought greetings to the Assembly.

The Bishop reminded the Assembly of worship scheduled for 7 PM.

Pastor Ziel made several announcements. The Bishop closed the session with prayer.