

**2003 ASSEMBLY MINUTES  
PLENARY SESSION TWO**

Friday, May 16, 2003  
7:00 PM

Bishop Strobel called the session to order and introduced President Philip Krey of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. He presented the Muhlenberg Medal to the Rev. Fred T. Crawford, III.

The bishop called on Pastor John Pearson to present the report of the Constitution Committee. Pastor Pearson presented the following resolution:

Resolved, that a new provision S8.25, be adopted:

**S8.25. The Vice President shall be ex-officio a member of the Churchwide Assembly.**

This amendment was approved by the assembly on first reading last year and is presented for final approval this year. The bishop called for discussion, a vote, and the resolution was adopted.

Pastor Pearson presented the following resolution:

**Resolved, that BLS12.01.d.1. be amended to include the following additional wording:**

**The Mission District Assembly shall also consist of those persons of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America who serve a congregation on the Mission District territory.**

The bishop called for discussion and a vote, and the resolution was adopted.

The video presentations of two fiftieth anniversary celebrants, Pastor Marvin Dewalt and Sister Janet Hoover, were shown.

Dave Hinrichs of the Connection Building Ministry Team presented the team report.

Bishop Volker Kress, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony, greeted the assembly as Pastor Manfred Bachmann translated. Bishop Kress said:

Dear Bishop Strobel, dear Sisters and Brothers,

I want to thank you for inviting Superintendent Rudolph and me to be with you at your assembly. For us this is

our first visit to your huge country. As a result we are quite excited!

I bring you greetings from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony. These are greetings from the mother church of the reformation. But they are

also greetings from a country in which faith does not fare well any more. Two kinds of dictatorships have expelled faith from many of our people. There are now only 25% of our people who still belong to the church.

The people have forgotten that they have forgotten God!

Nevertheless, we are rebuilding the Frauenkirche (Our Lady's Church) in Dresden! Two weeks ago we were able to welcome and to dedicate its new bells in our city. We held two worship services in the open air. Each one of them was attended by more than 20,000 people. Church bells conduct a dialogue with the soul of the people. It is our task to return the soul to our world!

But we were also shaped by quite a different experience in this last year: Saxony was afflicted by an enormous flood of rain. Many towns and villages were flooded. It felt like an outbreak of nature's wrath against the human beings. You here in America have your own experiences in this regard. We hear again and again about the terrible tornadoes you are having. These events remind us of the responsibility we have for the created world. Taking care of creation is more important for the survival of humanity than any economic

problems. The famous Albert Schweitzer talked about the "reverence for life" already more than eighty years ago. Today we need an ethic of reverence for life throughout the whole world!

Such an ethic will also deal with the question of right or wrong of our wars. You are aware that Germany as a whole and also the churches in Germany were extremely critical concerning the war in Iraq. I hope you can understand this. Germany has had bitter experiences with her wars, both with what she has done to other peoples and with what she then had to suffer through in her own country. These experiences have transformed the people in Germany. We know that we owe a great deal to the U.S.A. But we also have had our own historic experiences. We have read the public declaration of your Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson to the war in Iraq with appreciation and full approval. Just as you, we are grateful that this war is now over and we hope for a world in which peace, justice and the preservation of the creation will be the guiding principle for all actions.

I wish God's blessing personally for all of you, for your church, and for your country!

Bishop Robert Berg addressed the assembly and led a discussion on the ELCA Evangelism Strategy.

Bishop Strobel reminded the assembly of the continuing resolution adopted in 1994 committing us to receive a special offering for the ELCA World Hunger Appeal at each assembly. The offering will be received tomorrow.

Secretary Taylor made announcements, and Pastor Jane Kropa led closing devotions.