

**2004 ASSEMBLY MINUTES
PLENARY SESSION TWO**

Saturday, June 5, 2004
8:30 AM

Bishop Strobel called the Assembly to order. Secretary Taylor made several announcements. The Bishop called upon Pastor Martha Sipe to present the Report of the Elections Committee. The results were as follows:

For Synod Council (Clergy):

Number of votes cast: 576	Carl A. Werner - 185
Number of illegal votes: 12	Samuel Zeiser - 379
Number of legal votes: 564	
Number needed to elect: 283	

Bishop Strobel declared Samuel Zeiser elected.

For Synod Council (Lay Male):

Number of votes cast: 544	Edward Cool - 272
Number of illegal votes: 6	Guy Ehler - 266
Number of legal votes: 538	
Number needed to elect: 270	

Bishop Strobel declared Edward Cool elected.

Churchwide Assembly – Group C, Clergy:

Number of votes cast: 572	D. Michael Bennethum - 310
Number of illegal votes: 8	E. Robert Burkhart - 137
Number of legal votes: 564	Richard Chaveas - 178
Number needed to elect: 283	Donald W. Hayn – 172
	Lori Kochanski – 269
	Lyn Langkamer – 248
	Scott Lingenfelter – 227
	Glenn Miller – 185
	Thomas Reinsel – 270
	Martha S. Sipe – 260
	Jimmy Lee Werley – 185
	Carl A. Werner – 169
	Grant Wickert – 181
	Manfred K. Bahmann – 155
	William Maxon – 239

Bishop Strobel declared Michael Bennethum elected.

Churchwide Assembly – Group C, Lay Male:

Number of votes cast: 582	Herbert Breitegam – 152
Number of illegal votes: 3	Edward Cool – 266
Number of legal votes: 579	Guy Ehler – 261
Number needed to elect: 290	Scott Fackenthal – 202
	Robert Hensley – 193
	Kenneth Miller – 294
	Ron Mordosky – 166
	Rene Rodriguez – 216
	Charles Rush – 177
	Harry Russell – 140

Nelvin Vos – 307
Gregory Wood – 156
Bruce Ilgen – 262
Ernest G. Siegfried - 251

Bishop Strobel declared Kenneth Miller and Nelvin Vos elected.

Churchwide Assembly – Group C, Lay Female:

Number of votes cast: 581
Number of illegal votes: 36
Number of legal votes: 545
Number needed to elect: 273

Nancy Bleam – 216
Pam Bonina – 188
Janet Marsh Catina – 196
Barbara A. Keener – 271
Sherry Lockhart – 236
Wendy Merchant – 119
Joanne Rush – 154
Jean Sandberg – 217
Susan Schellenberg – 228
Barbara-Anne Taylor – 287
Marie Wood – 160
Rose Ann D. Smith – 134

Bishop Strobel declared Barbara-Anne G. Taylor elected.

The second ballot was distributed. Pastor Sipe informed the assembly that ballots would be collected by the ushers. Ballots were cast in the categories of Clergy and of Lay Male voting members to Churchwide Assembly. The Bishop declared the voting closed.

Bishop Strobel reflected on the wonderful Tanzania Festival last night. He invited members of the Assembly to contribute generously now as the offering for the South Central Diocese was received.

Bishop Strobel called on Pastor Laura Csellak for the report of the Worship and Spirituality Ministry Team, a musical presentation of “Blessed Assurance” featuring words by Associate in Ministry Michael Krenz.

The assembly viewed the 50th anniversary video of Pastor Dick Schaefer.

Bishop Strobel called on Pastor Cheryl Meinschein to say a few words about the SALM program. She explained the program and asked those who have completed their training to come forward to be greeted.

- Linda Eroh
- Ray Seidel
- Doug Didyoung
- Paulette Obrecht
- Chuck Scharardin

The assembly viewed the 50th anniversary video of Pastor Clarence Reeser.

Bishop Strobel invited the candidates for roster status who are present to come forward to the stage. He invited those present to introduce themselves.

- Jean Huber
- Virginia Goodwin
- Dana Heckman-Beil
- Bob Kramer
- Cinda Brucker (AiM)
- Pam Bonina (AiM)
- Kate Lyon

The Bishop announced that the Synod Ordination Service is scheduled for August 8.

Bishop Strobel introduced the rostered leaders received by transfer from other synods since the last Assembly. They were invited to stand at their seats and received a round of applause:

- Laura A. Csellak, Upstate New York Synod
- Marilyn Hasemann, Northern Illinois Synod
- Fred S. Opalinski, Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod

He also mentioned that Carol Ivey, a UCC licensed lay minister, is serving St. Peter, Lynnville, and pointed to this as one of the benefits of our full communion agreements.

The Bishop announced the names of the pastors who have retired since the last assembly.

- Denton R. Kees
- James C. Papada
- C. Alton Roberts

Pastor Kees was present to come to the front of the hall to be greeted.

Bishop Strobel announced the names of two pastors new to this synod, Liddy Howard and Gregor Bileck, who were welcomed with a round of applause.

The second ballot for Lay Female voting members to the Churchwide Assembly was distributed. Votes were cast, ballots collected, and the Bishop declared the voting closed.

Bishop Strobel invited Joanne Chadwick to return to the stage to take questions.

He announced that \$2,094.85 was received in the offering for the South Central Diocese of Tanzania.

The Bishop pointed out that the assembly packets contained the latest in a series of study guides prepared by members of the faculty at LTSP. The Assembly saw the video about this study guide.

The Interim Ministry video was viewed by the Assembly.

The Bishop called on the Secretary for announcements.

The Bishop reminded the Assembly that worship would begin in just a few minutes and that the afternoon session would begin promptly at 1:30.

The Service of Holy Communion followed, with Bishop David Strobel preaching. In his sermon he said:

In our Gospel text, Jesus speaks of his followers being salt and light. Here's a pop-quiz, What is the context for this text from the fifth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew? Ah, yes, the Sermon on the Mount:

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

The second question of the pop-quiz, How did Jesus begin to *teach them, saying...*? The answer? The Beatitudes, which I suspect a fair

number of you had to memorize at sometime or another in your spiritual formation. And so, Jesus has us on familiar ground up here on the mountain with him.

Our text for this liturgy begins with Jesus teaching the ninth of the beatitudes: you're having hard times? Rejoice and be glad! And then he continues by telling his disciples – and us! – that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

The light of the world: words familiar from our baptismal service. *Let your light so shine:* these

are the marching orders our Lord gives to each freshly baptized child of God. And as a metaphor, *light of the world* makes some sense. We know what Jesus is driving at. *Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.* That's pretty understandable, and those orders abide throughout our lives as the challenge of discipleship, to put into very visible practice the blessings God bestows in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. *Let your light so shine:* we are blessed to be a blessing.

Light: that I can handle. I've been singing about it ever since I was three years old: "This little light of mine..." "Put it under a bushel? No!" We are not to hoard the our baptismal blessing. No! That cute little song, indelibly impressed into our spiritual memory tells us, We are blessed to be a blessing. All of us can sing about being light. But salt: I've racked my brain and searched my memory, and, for the life of me, I cannot think of a single song about our faithfulness that features salt. [Nor sneezes or cockroaches for that matter!] (Perhaps some of you Christian educators can correct me on that later on.)

Hence my question: What was Jesus driving at when he told his disciples...when he tells us, *You are the salt of the earth.* Salt: In the ancient world, commerce in salt created trade routes. Salt solemnized covenants. Roman soldiers were given a weekly salt ration called a "salarium," from which we derive our familiar and indispensable word, salary. Salt: it seasons, it purifies and it preserves. As the salt of the earth, God blesses us so that we might be something of all these salty blessings to the world.

But what is this *saltiness* that Jesus is talking about. Salt is salt, right? Or, are there differences in saltiness. Could there be such a thing as "Lutheran saltiness" in the ecumenical spice rack? Or is it the case that salt is salt, that there is no appreciable difference between Morton and the rest?

Well, in this day and age, to get answers to my questions I turn to the internet and Google "salt."

The results are fascinating. Just plain salt gets you 17,300,000 results. So we refine (pun intended) our search. Let's try "table salt." That gets us 3,530,000 results, the first of which

informs us that table salt is formed by the ionic bonding of one sodium with one chlorine atom to form the cubic crystalline structure which flavors our sugar peas, tomatoes, sweet corn and green beans. Could we say, then, that in baptism God brings together water and the Word in the binding power of the Holy Spirit to make of his children, his church, the salt of the earth?

But even with this Google search, it still wonders me whether, as Lutherans, we might just add a distinctive saltiness to God's work of seasoning, preserving and purifying the world. So we refine our search even more. Let's Google "gourmet salt." 829,000 results later, I think we're getting somewhere.

There are indeed different gourmet salts. Fundamentally they are the familiar sodium chloride crystals, but they acquire distinctive characteristics because of the trace minerals found in their places of origin. For example,

Celtic salt refers to naturally moist salts harvested from the pristine Atlantic seawater off the coast of Brittany, France. These salts, which are rich in trace mineral content, are hand harvested using the Celtic method of wooden rakes allowing no metal to touch the salt.

Fleur de Sel (flower of salt) is the premier condiment salt. This artisan sea salt is comprised of "young" crystals that form naturally on the surface of salt evaporation ponds. They are hand harvested under specific weather conditions by traditional "Paludiers" (salt farmers). True Fleur de Sel comes from the Gu erande region of France. Like fine wine regions, different areas within Gu erande produce salts with their own unique flavors and aroma profiles.

Other gourmet salts are the sulfuric Indian black salt and the Hawaiian salt that gets its distinctive color and flavor from red volcanic clay.

There are distinctive salts, with their own characteristic colors, flavors and uses. There are distinctive kinds of saltiness. And so I ask again: What about our Lutheran saltiness? What are those trace elements from our confessional tradition that distinguish our saltiness from the generic protestant variety?

Here are just a few: As Lutherans we carefully distinguish and never confuse law and gospel; we maintain that the article of faith on which the church stands or falls is the justification of the ungodly by grace through faith; we profess and experience in our own lives that we are at the same time saints and sinners – a tension that is never relaxed in this life; in our theology of the cross we acknowledge that God is not constrained by our human expectations, that God will continually surprise us by her redemptive presence in the most unlikely places, like the godforsaken cross on Golgotha; we understand that God is at work in the world in two kingdoms – one marked by justice and law, the other by love and forgiveness; and, yes, we have those distinctive Lutheran “solas” – sola fidei, sola gratia, sola scriptura, faith alone, grace alone, scripture alone. All these, and more, mark our distinctive Lutheran contribution to God’s salting of the earth. Allow me to reveal my own prejudice: I believe that these elements of our tradition qualify us Lutherans to be in the absolute top ranking of gourmet ecumenical saltiness.

There is one more trace element that distinguishes our Lutheran saltiness, one that we seem often to neglect. Luther called it the “joyful exchange.” In the Latin vernacular of our ecumenical tradition it is known as the *communicatio idiomatum*. In his own salty way, this is how Luther described it:

“...(an) incomparable benefit of faith is that it unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. Christ and the soul become one flesh...everything they have they hold in common. ...Thus the believing soul by means of the pledge of her faith is free in Christ, her bridegroom, free from all sins, secure against death and hell, and is endowed with the eternal righteousness, life and salvation of Christ her bridegroom. ...She has that righteousness in Christ, her husband, of which she may boast as of her own and which she can confidently display alongside her sins in the face of death and hell and say, ‘If I have sinned, yet my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned, and all his is mine and all mine is his.’”
(*The Freedom of A Christian*, pp. 286f.)

The joyful exchange, it is an incomparable benefit of faith, the grace-full root of our evangelical

freedom and confidence, a precious and indispensable element of our Lutheran saltiness. Have you ever experienced such salty Lutherans? Have you ever been with congregations whose joy and freedom and confidence helped you to taste and see that the Lord is good? That was certainly our experience in village after village during our trip to the South Central Diocese. Clearly the joyful exchange was energizing their faithfulness. Despite their poverty, the ravages of AIDS, next to impossible transportation and communication...despite these hardships there was gladness and rejoicing in those churches. God had blessed them with salt and light so that they could be a blessing to us.

How about closer to home, here in northeastern Pennsylvania? In the midst of our material abundance there certainly should be evangelical joy, freedom and confidence, generated by the gospel, celebrated in our congregations, exercised in our commission to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. These should be crucially important elements of our confessional heritage, our Lutheran saltiness. But are they? Joy, freedom, confidence: are they powerfully and characteristically present in our life together as ELCA Lutherans today? Or, is our salt losing its taste? Have we settled for the dull and uninteresting generic protestant variety? Or, even worse, has our saltiness been leached out by our preoccupation with budgets and buildings, with secularism and survival, with sexuality and structure, with paralyzing nostalgia and spiritual weariness?

Can our salt lose its taste? Jesus tells us that it can. He also warns of the dramatic consequences when that occurs. But it need not happen. An enduring challenge for us as Lutheran leaders in this new millennium is to help our church to appreciate and appropriate those treasures of our tradition that give our saltiness its gourmet Lutheran character. It is even more important that we cling to Christ our bridegroom in the joyful exchange so that our joy, freedom and confidence can be continually renewed by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is in that embrace that we experience the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit. It is in that embrace, through that joyful exchange, that we are equipped and sent to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. It is in that embrace, that joyful exchange, that we are blessed to be a blessing.