

# Report of the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly

Virginia Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America **ELCA**  
June 3-5, 2011 Roanoke, Virginia

## James Mauney reelected as Bishop

▲ As the results of the first ballot were read, and it became apparent that current Bishop James Mauney had been reelected by a landslide, the 350 plus participants of the Virginia Synod Assembly jumped to their feet in joyous –and prolonged– applause. “Thank you for the invitation to walk with you the next six years,” he said.

We also reelected Charles Poston as Vice President and Janet Gomez as Secretary of the Synod Council.

▲ In his report to the Assembly, Bishop Mauney said that we are a **Family Church**, passing the faith from one generation to the next; a **Feeding Church** to the many hungry in our neighborhoods, state and world. We are an **Intersection Church**, sharing our faith for the glory of God where our lives intersect with others. We are a **Bridge Church** engaging in dialog with other Christians to share our understanding of the faith and learn from others. And, we are a **Neighborhood Church**, where we seek to know our neighbor and be involved in their needs. The Synod also needs to strengthen the partnership with congregations to successfully minister to our youth.

## We have turned the corner

“We had a difficult time. We have turned the corner, and thank you for helping us do it,” said David Swartling, Secretary of the ELCA. “Despite the recent turmoil, our faith has survived and thrived! This is not the end of something, but the BEGINNING of something, an opportunity to refocus the church in new ways.” Operations in Chicago have been streamlined and financial stability is imminent. Mark Hanson, Bishop of the Churchwide ELCA said through a video, “Things we could never do alone are possible by joining together in ministry. And, as we serve, we are changed by those whom we serve. We seek to do ministry at the intersection of hope and fear.”

**Q: Who is the ELCA?**

**A: WE are!**

## 2012 Budget passed

We approved a budget for 2012 in the amount of \$1,951,897.

- This reflects a \$114,000 increase over the current year.
- This will allow us to pass on 38% to Churchwide mission.
- This includes a 2% increase in staff compensation, their first in three years.
- More importantly, we, as a Synod, are moving from assigning a “proportionate share” to a congregation; and asking congregations to tithe (10%) their undesignated income --or grow their percentage if they are already giving more than 10%.
- You can be assured that there is no “fluff” at the Synod level. Every penny is spent wisely and every expenditure is made with caution so that *vital* programs and services can be maintained.

# Resolutions and Memorials

- 1.** A Memorial will be sent to the Churchwide Assembly (meeting this August) to support the United Nations General Assembly proclamation that 2011 be the International Year for People of African Descent; and encourage churches to help eradicate racism and deepen ELCA relationships with companion churches in Africa.
- 2.** The Synod declared its openness to the variety of understand-ings of the 2009 Churchwide decisions regarding ministry policies. Some members and congregations are distressed and feel unwelcome even as they stay in the ELCA. The resolution intends to affirm their presence and recognize the differing views on marriage, family, sexuality and ordination practices.
- 3.** A resolution acknowledging and affirming the ministry of Pastor Patti Thisted Arthur, (who died in September 2010) was passed.
- 4.** Rev. Jean Bozeman, assistant to the Bishop, will retire next month after 50 years of service in the life of the church, 22 of them with the Bishop's office. In her honor we are seeking to create a \$2.5 million fund for Christian Formation in our Synod to endow lasting funds for the formation of faith within the lives of its people. If you would like to contribute to this, go to [www.vasynod.org](http://www.vasynod.org) for the link to the Jean Bozeman Endowment Fund.

## LLFF = lifelong faith formation

Simply put, this is living a rich life, kindling and growing your faith and understanding of God. Rev. Dr. Jessica Duckworth, a dynamic speaker, met with the assembly on 3 occasions, pointing out that FAITH is an act of God, and FORMATION is the work of people and congregations. It is in communities (churches, families, etc.) that teaching and learning of Christian practices occur. Many activities are intentional –like Sunday School, adult forums, sermons– while many others are assimilated through family rituals, relationships with others and simple observation.

Which of these FAITH practices do you see in your congregation?

### Prayer

**Study** Each of these is vital

**Worship** to our well being.

**Invitation to others** Who is doing these

**Encouragement** things in your church?

**Service** And, as important, who

**Using the gifts of the Holy** is NOT doing these? **Spirit**

### Giving

**Q.** What do you need to know to be a Christian?

**A.** Love God and love your neighbor.

Churches need to be aware of the peculiar realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and alter their methods and attitudes towards education and discipleship in order for them to flourish. (Many people now say they are more spiritual than religious. Fewer people are participating in the church. There is greater diversity and individualism, changing patterns of marriage and what constitutes a family unit. And, the digital media cannot be ignored as an instrument of communication and instruction.)

Each of our congregations needs to be aware, discuss and implement new ways to bring the Gospel to the changing world and invite the unchurched into our lives by being involved with them where they are. Dr. Duckworth's principles and applications for every age level can be found on the Synod website: [www.vasynod.org](http://www.vasynod.org)

## **Worship words to remember:**

- Pastor John Wertz preaching at the opening service, urged us to **be intentional** to hear, share and live the message of God's love.
- It is through families and communities that faith is given and that God works and equips, said Pastor Cindy Keyser. **"I thank God that he has put people in my path to point me in the right direction."** How do YOU support and equip families for lives of faith? Are you doing YOUR part?
- When someone invites you to **look for the color BLUE**, you see it everywhere. If someone invited you to look for **acts of God**, you would see them too. Those words were delivered by Rev. Linda Pederson, assistant to the Bishop of our sister Synod in SW Minnesota.
- ELCA Bishop Mark Hanson likes to end meetings with these words: **Go now and serve God.....somewhere else!**
- The BIG service was Saturday night, when over 400 gathered for worship. St. Andrew's Roman Catholic Church continues to show their hospitality to us as we worship in their sanctuary. Amid trumpet and organ and passionate singing, we worshipped and heard God's message of love. Bishop Mauney told us, **"We are his treasure. And he gives us intersections with other lives so that we may share the promises of Jesus with others."** Paul Christian was ordained at the service and has taken a call at Our Redeemer, Petersburg.
- Regarding the Bible: No other book **feels** the same when you are reading it.
- **By God's grace, together we have all that we need!**

## **EPIC LIVING WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, HEART & MIGHT**

The Lutheran Youth Organization also met, wearing iridescent yellow t-shirts emblazoned with the words **EPIC LIVING** surrounding the Luther Seal. Emily Depew, LYO president (St. John, Abingdon) thanked all adults of the Synod who were chaperones, mentors, and supporters of youth ministry; and particularly Pastor Dave Delaney, assistant to the Bishop, who oversees youth programs in our Synod. She also thanked the youth of the Synod, "We are proud to represent you!"

**We GET to proclaim Jesus Christ, risen and reigning.**