

Dear Sisters & Brothers in Christ,

Thank you for the opportunity to be our delegate at Synod Assembly. I am amazed how God gives us just what we need when we need it the most. I needed to participate in this Assembly to feel the love of Christ all around me. I needed to participate in this Assembly to see the body of Christ at work. I needed to participate in this Assembly to feel uplifted by Word, music, and fellowship. Most of all I needed to participate in this Assembly to be reminded of the reasons I am a member of the communion of believers here at Lutheran Church of Hope as I witnessed the dedication and hard work of so many members as they shared their love of Christ by taking care of the multitude of tasks to keep the Assembly running smoothly. We are truly blessed at Lutheran Church of Hope!!

The theme for this Assembly was "God's Heaven, God's Earth, God's People...Now". We are challenged to center ourselves in Christ and be the body of Christ in our communities as in faith we turn from our past to view our present and future with new possibilities. Resolutions passed at Assembly challenge us as the body of Christ to tithe or make a greater gift from the monies we receive from the economic stimulus plan to support those living in hunger or poverty. Please make this a priority to thankfully share our bounty with those in need. Other resolutions passed include Lutheran-Moravian dialogue for shared mission opportunities and full communion; recommending a social statement on human disability focusing on the unique issues facing different types of disabilities whether they be physical, sensory, psychiatric or intellectual; and becoming a "Book of Faith" synod and committing ourselves to live in and from the Word of God in all our meetings,

assemblies and events. One resolution dealing with impact of climate change in our communities was tabled to the synod council for further study and development.

Another major resolution passed for all Alaska synod congregations to uplift Native women in prayer and healing after the recent racist comments made by radio disc jockeys in Anchorage. Further we are encouraged to "creatively think of public and private ways to witness to the intrinsic value of all women, and speak a resounding NO to verbal abuse that shows racial prejudice against Alaska native women". This resolution will be published in statewide news media to let the greater community know the Alaska Synod of the ELCA supports Alaska native people and will fight racism in our communities.

Other business items included passing the 2009 spending plan, adopting constitutional changes for cluster reorganization, establishing processes for representatives from mission settings formed with intent of becoming chartered members to serve as voting members of synod council, and providing for background checks on persons nominated for synodical office. Also, positions on synod council elected by the assembly included Twyla Mundy, Christ Lutheran Soldotna, Synod Vice President, Carol Norquist, Central Lutheran, Synod Treasurer, Sandy Skrien, Island of Faith Wrangell, Southeast Lay Representative, Rev. Dr. Carin Bjorn von Letzendorf, Faith Lutheran Delta Junction, Interior Clergy Representative, Pastor Brian Crockett, Brevig Mission, Seward Peninsula Representative, and Linda Myers-Steele, Good Shepherd Lutheran Wasilla, MatSu Lay Representative. The assembly also elected Rev. Frank Macht, Providence Medical Center to clergy position on the Discipline Committee,

Leigh Anne Cox, Fairbanks Lutheran as PLU Interior Cluster Lay Representative, and Rev. Lisa Smith, Central Lutheran to clergy position for Alaska Children's Services. Rev. Karen Sonray, Alaska Native Lutheran, was elected as the clergy representative and Susie Delgado, Alaska Native Lutheran, elected as Alaska Native representative for the 2009 churchwide assembly.

There were a number of workshops presented during the assembly, but only two opportunities to attend. On Thursday evening I attended a workshop on Appreciative Inquiry (AI) presented by Pastor Jim Drury from Sitka Lutheran Church. Pastor Drury explained the principles of AI and how congregations can use AI techniques to positively bring people together to share their stories and through this process discover future visions for mission opportunities to build the Body of Christ. Instead of asking what's the problem, AI focuses on what's best now and what will make it better? I liked the positive aspect of these techniques and believe further investigation of AI could benefit our congregation as we look to the challenges facing us to discover what Christ has called us to be in this place and time.

The second workshop I attended on Friday afternoon was a discussion lead by Dr. Rev. Barbara Rossing, Professor of New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. Dr. Rev. Rossing gave the biblical presentation on Friday and Saturday mornings centering on the book of Revelations. The workshop gave participants an opportunity to ask her questions regarding Revelations and implications of revelation teachings for global warming and stewardship of the earth. I learned that we as the church have an opportunity to be vocal leaders about the dangers of global warming and

be active participants in reducing our carbon footprint on the earth.

For me one of the best parts of the Assembly was the Faith stories. Three of our own members shared their Faith stories: Meredith Rude, John Culver and Todd Bryant. I hope all three will consider sharing their stories with our congregation as each uniquely speak about their faith and reveal the love of Christ.

This was my first experience participating in the Assembly and although at first I felt overwhelmed, I thoroughly enjoyed participating and learning more about our Synod and the challenges we face as the body of Christ. Having this Assembly at our own church was awesome! Everyone should be proud of the hard working and dedicated members of Lutheran Church of Hope who made everyone at Assembly feel so welcomed and well cared for. Our new facility provided ample space for all the various activities and brought everyone together in so many ways.

I felt truly blessed by this experience and thank you all for electing me as your delegate. I left the Assembly on Saturday afternoon with a renewed spirit and sense of hope for the future.

In Christ's love,

Bonnie Bladow

