

# A People Called



Twelfth Biennial Convention of the Saskatchewan Synod ELCIC

Friday, June 13 2 p.m.

Attendance at 8:30 a.m. Friday: 73 lay delegates; 87 rostered delegates; 35 visitors  
Attendance at 10:30 a.m. Friday: 76 lay delegates; 90 rostered delegates; 40 visitors

## Who cares?



Do you? Does your community? Do we, as *a people called?* Who do we care about? How do we care?

The local youth prepared the hall banners to get you thinking: what is your answer to the words 'who cares'?

## Friday morning business

Plenary Session Two followed the schedule listed in the revised agenda distributed on Friday.

In addition to Bishop Cindy's written report, she outlined three hopes for the future:

- a refining of the vision for the future,
- a desire to facilitate conversation around the diverse opinions in our synod, and
- increased involvement in shared ministry and with partnerships with other denominations.

The Secretary's report and the Treasurer's report were also presented. Nominations for Synod Council, the Lutheran Theological Seminary board, and the Corporations boards were presented. The Synod Council Report, including the written report and motions 6 & 7 were rescheduled to Plenary Session 4, Saturday morning.

## Delegates at work



*Interested in having pancakes Sunday morning? Please listen for announcements about registering for the meal.*



## *“It is our faith that justifies us, not our orientation”*

With only a few red cards of opposition being shown, a motion to “address the questions asked by the Dialogue Task Force” passed Friday morning.

The Task Force was struck following the 2006 Saskatchewan Synod Convention to explore the issue of same-sex blessing and the ordination of gay, lesbian, transsexual and queer (GLBTQ) individuals.

In its report, the Task Force stresses five main points, saying we must get to know each other through informal discussions about issues non-related to sexual orientation. The eight-member group suggests also that debate on the issue use facts and not feelings as the foundation for discus-

sion: respect for other positions must be shown and personal attacks are not acceptable.

In recognising the volatility of the issue, the Task Force suggests that while positions on the issue might not change, there might be shifts in attitude through greater understanding of other viewpoints.

While the dialogue continues, the Task Force urges that fundamental Lutheran Scriptural positions be maintained and Scriptural interpretation, the relationship of Law and gospel and the nature and authority of the Church always be kept in the forefront.

Finally, the Task Force acknowledges the sensitivity of the issue among

even its own members and urges sensitivity, caution and thorough preparation before a wider discussion is launched.

National Bishop, Susan Johnson, told the Convention that the National Church Council is wrestling with parallel issues and expects to have a preliminary report next year (2009) and a full statement by 2011.

Synod Council Motion #4, “That the convention direct the Synod Council in conjunction with the bishop’s office to develop means to address the question asked by the Dialogue Task Force,” was overwhelmingly approved by delegates.

### *Announcements*

- Sadly, the wet weather has forced the cancellation of Saturday evening’s celebration at Wood Mountain Provincial Park. Instead, we’ll travel to the friendly town of Limerick (10 minutes east on Hwy 13) for supper and fun at 7 p.m. at the Limerick Community Hall on Main Street. Start writing your limericks!
- The museum in Assiniboia will be open for your viewing pleasure from 5 - 7 p.m. on Saturday. The address is 506 3rd Avenue West.
- Messiah Lutheran’s choir is singing during Sunday morning’s worship service, and you’re invited to join them! Anyone who would like to sing with the choir is invited to a practice Sunday at 9:30 a.m. at Messiah Lutheran in the balcony. If you are interested, please sign up at the convention office to ensure enough music is copied for all participants.
- Workshop locations and times have been distributed to delegates. Remember to sign up for Saturday afternoon sessions as well.
- Check those delegate welcome bags! They’re full of interesting information, gifts, and resources. If you missed out on receiving one, please let the stewards know if you’d like any of the material photocopied and delivered to you.



*Bishop Cindy and ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson*



# Learning and sharing together

*Workshop format new at this year's convention*

The workshop sessions are a new feature to the twelfth biennial synod convention. These workshops are an opportunity for delegates and visitors to share their experiences and learn from presenters and from each other.

Participants had options to participate in a Sacred Circle, learn about pension planning, discuss the stewardship of creation, learn about the emerging church mission, and much more. Four workshop sessions are being offered on Friday and Saturday afternoons.

At the Natural Church Development workshop, participants heard from Pastor Chris Bishopp from the National Church Development Organization, an affiliate of Willow Creek Canada. Pastor Chris shared that a survey of 1,000 churches in 32 countries on six continents found that 85 per cent of those churches were stagnant or declining. Survey results are online at [www.ncdcanada.com](http://www.ncdcanada.com). He told the workshop that the traditional statement of a profession of faith has been replaced with the claim of being “a spiritual person.”

Natural Church Development is seen as a “strategic process to provide a framework for action.” That action is, of course, to develop a

stronger Christian community based on the NCD assumption that “every organism in the universe has independent growth potential.”

Across the street from the convention hall, a Sacred Circle was formed. A group of 20 came together to worship in the tradition of our First Nations. Diane Bignell has been involved with Saskatoon Native Ministries for a number of years. She told the workshop that it was hard to attract First Nations people to worship - the pastor at the time asked her why she thought that was. She said that her people eat in circles, dance in circles, and interact with each other in circles. Worshipping in pews didn't make sense. The Sacred Circle idea was born!

At this workshop, participants sat in a circle to sing hymns and hear the Word. They also shared their prayers, thoughts, and reflections with each other.

Pastor Chad Moir presented two workshops on Friday afternoon discussing the Emerging Church mission he facilitates, funded by Canadian Mission. In his engaging, conversational style, Pastor Chad led a lively discussion on the unique purpose of the Emergent Church mission, reaching out to people in Saskatoon who have little or no experience with Christianity or churches.

One of the participants, ‘Greg’ enjoyed “seeing people get passionate about ministry in a new way of operating and thinking.” Another participant, ‘Stephen’ thought “it was really cool how we got a sense of hope. When the conventional church does not work for people, they can come to know Jesus and grow in their own personal faith.”

Those three workshops were just a sampling of the interesting options available to convention delegates and visitors.



*Reference and counsel committee hard at work*

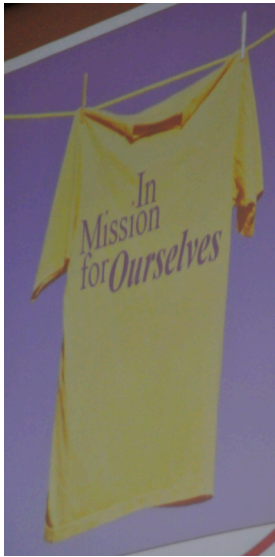
Don't forget about The Creator's Sacrifice - Kisemanito Pakitinasuwin series of paintings by artist Ovide Bighetty. This is a self-guided tour.

*A reminder that expense cheques are available for pick-up at the registration desk.*



# Signs of Hope - National Church Update

Bishop Susan Johnson addressed the convention Friday morning to update the Synod on the ELCIC's five new organizing pillars and explain how those pillars will guide and support the work done as a national church.



*What's wrong with this picture?*

## Effective Partnerships

*"Do we need to do this on our own?"*

This pillar recognizes that while we no longer have the resources to do everything by ourselves, there's likely an opportunity to do work with partners. We're called to be creative in partnering with other groups locally, nationally, and internationally. "It's good stewardship," says Bishop Susan, "but even more so it's a stronger witness to the rest of the world!"

## Diverse Faces

*"It is God's desire for people in all their diversity to be part of the body of Christ."*

Our church communities and church leadership need to be more representative, in terms of ethnicity, gender, and age. Adopting this pillar means being open to sharing leadership and accepting change.

## Compassionate Justice

*"What does the Lord require of you? To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8*

Bishop Susan explained that compassionate justice means reaching out with compassion, providing humanitarian aid, advocating for those who do not have a voice – including our creation.

## Focused Framework

*"Not always the most exciting aspect of the mission of the church, but a reality."*

Exciting or not, Bishop Susan reminds us that reforming structures in order to help the gospel flourish is part of the Biblical call to mission. Many structural options are on the table, from adopting a smaller governance structure to considering whether the national church relates primarily to synods or to congregations. Clarifying responsibilities and relationships, says Bishop Susan, will help us focus on becoming the church God is calling us to be.

## Spirited Discipleship

*"There is a huge mission field at our doorsteps, sometimes starting within our own families."*

We know we face challenges as a church and as a community, but we also know that we are filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit. We want to be able to show that to those around us.

Bishop Susan shared an important, personal faith story with the gathering, providing an example of talking to each other about our faith. She encouraged us by saying that this does not come easy – but we all need to practice! "We are being called to share the love of God, not only in action but also in words with a hurting world around us," says Bishop Susan.

"I'm really excited for the future of our church, because I know that in the end it is God's church."



*Bishop Susan Johnson*

*Thank you to Tim Lofstrom for capturing the convention in pictures. All the photos included in this newsletter and yesterday's newsletter are credited to him.*

