



Bridge Builders' Times



The Newsletter of the 11th Biennial Convention of the Saskatchewan Synod of the ELCIC

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Attendance: 98 Lay 97 Clergy 49 Visitors as of 1p.m. on July 8th, 2006

July 9th, 2006



The Youth Delegates lead us in Worship

Ministries – For Us, With Us, In Us

Interested in fulfilling a New Testament commission? How about the Diaconal Ministry?

In New Testament times, diaconal ministers were set apart to help the marginalized. Through the ages, the diaconate has changed to meet changing needs in the church and the world but the focus is still to deliver God's love to those in need.

Diaconal ministers are educated in Lutheran theology and doctrine with one option for training being programmes offered at the Lutheran Seminary in Saskatoon.

They can be found in congregations, nursing homes, hospitals, daycare centres, schools, prisons, college and university campuses, inner cities and rural parishes.

In congregations, deacons and deaconesses can serve as pastoral assistants, worship assistants, youth directors, directors of Christian education, musicians and many other areas where help is needed.

Be a servant of the Servant who washed His disciples feet, who welcomed the children and had compassion on the sick and the hungry.

For more information, please contact the Synod Office at 306.244.2474 or visit www.elcic.ca

Bread to Share – The book, by Pastor Lois Knudson Munholland, chronicles the lives of 58 early Lutheran pastors and their wives and is still available, even though the Augsburg Fortress Convention book display has closed. The book is available for \$30.00 and is available at a number of Saskatchewan book stores or by calling Pr. Lois at 306.725.3333 or e-mail her at joglen@sasktel.net

Youth Assembly Report

"This is an experience we won't forget. And we actually learned that there's something worse than school." Any presentation that begins with those words has to be interesting. And so it was! The youth report on the convention involved skits, music and a lot of truth.

"Did you know there are 335 tiles on the ceiling?" asked one young delegate in a skit which re-enacted the experiences of the youth at the convention.

Trying to follow the discussion and to determine where the proceedings had progressed to was a challenge. This is the first time youth have had a vote and a voice at the synod convention. As a result, they came up with some recommendations to help youth delegates fit in and understand the procedures and the issues. The first suggestion is to have pastors of youth delegates debrief with the young people to help them understand the issues, keeping in mind that the young people have to form their own opinions. Or they suggest having a time on the first day of the convention, before proceedings begin, where people with the needed knowledge can explain the issues and run through the agenda and reports with the youth.

The youth delegates ended their presentation by encouraging adult delegates to share their passion for the church with the youth of today.

Same Sex Task Force to be Formed

What could have been another divisive discussion on the issue of blessing same-sex relationships became a respectful and thoughtful dialogue.

Delegates were faced with a motion to create a task force which would come up with a process to initiate a dialogue on the issue.

In a series of amendments, the motion was changed to read:

That the synod Council create a Task Force to carry out a dialogue on the issues of same sex blessing and the ordination of people of same-sex orientation in committed relationships.

This Task Force shall consist of no fewer than eight members representing a balance of views including no fewer than two self-identified gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans-gendered and two spirited people.

The Task Force should report its actions back to the next synod convention.

Delegates voted to approve the motion.

The motion opens the door to having synod-wide discussions prior to any action being taken at the synod level.

A second motion directing the synod to petition the national church council to defer any decision regarding same-sex blessings until its 2009 convention was defeated.

Meanwhile, at the Eastern Synod convention, delegates passed a motion that blessing same-gender couples is a matter of pastoral and congregation discretion. "Authorization to perform such blessings shall require the consent of the pastor and the consent of the congregation or calling agency and in consultation with the bishop." **The motion passed, 197 to 75.**



dance to the music



Building Bridges Panel



Women in Mission Discussion Group

In Mission for Others

Saturday afternoon's session began with some very entertaining and enlivening fiddle music followed by a brief time of prayer. We then settled into the business of the Convention. A motion was brought forward, by four congregations of the synod in reference to *same sex blessing and the ordination of people of same-sex orientation in committed relationships*. After some debate the motion was passed (*for greater detail on the motion see the column to the left*).

I do not wish to dwell on this issue or the arguments for or against these actions but I do wish to remind us all of our call under the gospel. Our convention Chaplain, Rev. Kevin Ogilvie, in his sermon on Saturday morning, reminded us all that Jesus did not make distinctions about the love of God and how Paul emphasizes this in his letter to the Romans. When we were so ably fed by the word it gives me pause to think we should then devote so much time and so many resources to this thorny issue.

Once again the energies of delegates to our church convention were diverted by this topic. Earlier in the day the convention had adopted the statement on priorities of the synod, brought forward by Synod Council. Those priorities are to provide *Support to Congregations, Train and Nurture Rostered leaders, Participate in Relationships beyond the Synod and Foster Opportunities for Mission*.

This editor has a problem reconciling the motion passed in the afternoon with the motion on priorities passed earlier in the day. By which priority should this Task Force be guided and, when the communities of our synod are facing numerous social challenges how can we afford to waste our energies on such a situation. If only this much time and effort and resources could be put into the battle against AIDS, the problems of the homeless, or the poverty and desolation amongst groups of people in our province and the world we would by our actions spread the good news of the gospel like a wildfire. Isn't it first our priority to extend God's hospitality and **unconditional** love to all whom we encounter. To quote our convention chaplain "there is **no** distinction" for those who call on the name of the Lord. Why do we insist on making such distinctions in spite of the fact our Lord and Saviour did not.

REPORTS OF THE CORPORATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

Luther College of Regina

Luther College continues to maintain a strong focus on its core mission of providing an excellent education within a Christian context. High school enrolment has increased in each of the last four years, and the number of students taking liberal arts classes at Luther College at the U of R has increased as well. Also, in the early part of 2006, giving to the current high school campaign passed the \$3-million mark, and, in recent years, modest operating surpluses have been set aside for contingencies. Regina Campus Ministry has also had a successful and active year. Challenges do exist; but Luther College is blessed to be served by a group of volunteers and staff members who commit their time and talents to our mission.

Lutheran Collegiate Bible Institute

Residential high schools may no longer be as relevant as they once were, but LCBI continues to find ways to attract students by focusing on and developing the **whole** person – academic, social, and spiritual. Opportunities for personal Christian growth occur through daily worship, Christian Ethics courses, Bible studies, Praise and Worship services, prayer times and mentoring. LCBI's Board of Regents has begun the search process for a new President, and thanks President Doug Hopkins for his leadership over the past four years.

Lutheran Theological Seminary

Lutheran Theological Seminary now has 68 students enrolled in various study programs, after having welcomed the largest entering class (nine men and seven women) in quite some time. Without a doubt, though, the most exciting news coming from LTS this past year concerns the move of the College of Emmanuel and St. Chad into the premises of LTS. The result is pleasing, functional, and affordable, and both institutions are happy with the solution.

The Seminary ended the 2004/05 fiscal year with a small surplus, and indications are the 2005/06 fiscal year will end positively as well. However, maintaining a balanced budget is always a challenge, and prayerful financial

and moral support from Synod members continues to be essential.

Prairie Centre for Ecumenism

By God's grace, the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism was able to achieve every one of its 2005 goals, including developing better understandings and new partnerships with church communities who have been less active in ecumenism. Work with Lutheran partners, including Bishop Cindy Halmarson, continues with very positive results. The Centre finished the fiscal year with a small surplus, thanks to a successful Conference, a half-time directorship, and rigid financial discipline. However, expenses continue to rise, and continued support from the Saskatchewan Synod is requested.

Regina Lutheran Hospital Chaplaincy

Volunteers in the Regina Lutheran Hospital Chaplaincy carried out more than 700 visits at the two Regina hospitals and the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre in 2005. The chaplain, Rev. Dennis Fingas made more than 2500 hospital visits, two dozen hospital communions with patients and family members and several other services including a wedding for staff members in the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region.

Saskatoon Lutheran Care Society

The Lutheran Care Society celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2005. The Chaplain and volunteers provide pastoral care to patients and family members in Saskatoon hospitals. Last year, more than 4800 patients were visited by the chaplain Rev. Howard Ulmer and volunteers.

St. Michael's Retreat Centre

The first year of a formal lease agreement between St. Michael's Retreat Centre, Lumsden and the Saskatchewan Synod has proved to be a good one, according to Rev. Kevin Lynch, the Chair of St. Michael's board. An anonymous donor will make it possible for St. Michael's to replace all the old windows in the building and to refurbish the roof.

The Newsletter Staff



Kerilyn Ian Rosine Bruce Doug



Three wise newsletter monkeys
Rosine Gerhardt, Kerilyn Voigt, Doug



'Building Bridges'

Differences begin to disappear when you know each other's name.

And so the 'Building Bridges' panel began with each of the panelists introducing themselves and sharing some of their personal background. Moderated by Kathy Magnus of Lutheran World Federation, the hour-long panel discussion deftly illustrated the unifying power of faith.

Vanessa Rhodes is a recent high school graduate who is heading to Augustana University in the fall. She was born and raised in the Lutheran faith and looks forward to continuing her faith journey away from home. She says that her faith in God is her base and foundation, and it means everlasting life.

Ruben Bignell, the vice-president of Saskatoon Native Ministry, has had a decidedly different relationship with God. He didn't start going to church until he was 16 or 17 and has spent the past 10 years discovering and learning about his faith. However, he too says his faith is a base. "Security, safety... someplace I can go to where I know whenever the world has got me down, my faith keeps me standing," he says, when asked what his faith means to him.

Jeremy Chan and Stanley Livingstone have both come to Canada from different parts of the world, Chan from Taiwan and Livingstone from Liberia. But they have traveled vastly different roads to get here. Chan was introduced to the Lord in his second-year at a Baptist university. From there, he has delved into theological education that has brought him to Saskatchewan. As a pastor, he now leads the Chinese ministry at Zion Lutheran in Saskatoon.

Stanley Livingstone's faith has been with him his whole life, especially during the war that devastated his home

country in the 1990s. Now living in Prince Albert, he is an active member of his church.

Regardless of their differences, when asked how their faith relates to their every day lives, Livingstone and Chen answer very similarly. "My every day life is not separated from my faith," said Livingstone. "Everything I do is for the glory of the Lord," added Chen.

Other questions posed during the discussion – 'do you find it easy or difficult to talk about your faith?' and 'how has your faith changed since you were a child?' – filled the hour with meaningful fodder for examining our differences, yet exposing comforting similarities in the light of God's love.

Delegates were hopefully reminded that building bridges is easier when you know each other's names.

Bishop Tony Burton

Anglican Bishop Anthon Burton spoke in a compelling and humorous way about the differences between Anglicans and Lutherans throughout history. Even though the two denominations have grown separately, Bishop Burton said "We now realize that we were not walking apart, separate yes, but parallel in our journeys."

"The fact that you are struggling with the same disagreements at the same time, reminds us again how much our churches have in common," he said.

In his reflection, Bishop Burton concluded, "What a joy it would be if we as a result of working together would find an even more effective way to remain united in Christ... if we might further the vision of our Lord Jesus Christ when he prayed in the upper room that we might be as one."



Nutrition break volunteers

Take a Break

Coffee breaks are not what they used to be, thanks to the committee looking after food at the convention. The local committee has taken care to make sure our nutrition breaks are indeed nutritious! While cookies and coffee are still part of the break, fruit, juice, cheese and crackers are front and centre at this convention...and occasionally...birthday cake (only highly nutritious ones of course)!



The Birthday cake



a tired volunteer