

**Minutes of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod  
25th Assembly**

Lakewood United Methodist Church, Houston, TX.

May 11-12, 2012

The 2011 Assembly of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod was held at the Lakewood United Methodist Church, Houston, TX., on May 11-12, 2012.

**Friday, May 11, 2012**

- SA.12.1.** Opening Worship in the Sanctuary, and Call to Order by Bishop Mike Rinehart at 9:00 AM.
- SA.12.2.** Opening of the Assembly at 9:45 AM in Asbury Hall at Lakewood UMC. Welcome and Introductions of synod staff. The Assembly is being held this year at Lakewood United Methodist Church, instead of a convention hotel, and Bishop thanked the church and Lakewood's staff for their generous Christian hospitality. Agenda review by Bishop Mike. Announcements by Mandy Faucett, including introductions of and thank you for the Assembly Planning Team.
- SA.12.3.** Elections Report by Chair, Linda Mosley, and introduction to voting card use and practice.
- SA.12.4.** Introduction to parliamentary procedure, and introductions of Synod Parliamentarian David Hollrah, Synod Vice President Evan Moilan, and Synod Secretary Arthur Murphy.
- SA.12.5.** Credentials Report by Chair Don Hodde. 237 voting members, 153 lay and 84 clergy, with 63 visitors, for a total of 300. Vote to adopt credentials report. Motion passed by voice vote.
- SA.12.6.** Organization of the Assembly (**Adoption of Standing Rules and Agenda, appointment of tellers and timekeeper, Nominating Committee report, nominations from the floor**). Request to silence all cell phones. A \$25 donation to the ELCA malaria campaign for any cell phone ringing during the sessions of the Assembly is strongly encouraged.
- SA.12.7.** Motion to adopt the Standing Rules for this SA as submitted. Voice vote taken. Motion passed unanimously.
- SA.12.8.** Motion to adopt the SA Agenda. Voice vote. Motion passed unanimously.
- SA.12.9.** Nominating Committee chair Kathy Haueisen presents the list of candidates for Synod Council (SC) and 2013 Churchwide Assembly Voting Members. There were no nominations from the floor of the SA. Nominations were declared closed by Bishop Mike as the names of the nominees were read by the Nominating Committee chair.

**SA.12.10.** Bishop Rinehart's State of the Synod Address.

Bishop Mike invites a table discussion of our individual favorite restaurants as a group exercise of the SA. He compares our enthusiasm for favorite restaurants with witnessing with enthusiasm for God. Witnessing involves inviting and enthusiastic talking about God. But no one wants to invite a friend to a bad restaurant. So, our worship must be a spiritually vibrant community. Prayer and worship are the food and drink of our worship lives.

Bishop Mike shares a review of the last year in the Synod in words and pictures. The first experience of a sense of call often happens at a church camp like Lutherhill, which had another record year. The Bishop reviewed the 2011 Churchwide Assembly, the drought in Texas, trips to our companion synods, the Central African Republic and Peru, the new president at TLU, new ordinations, marriages, memoriams, Bishop stories about visits to area synod congregations, new and continuing campus ministries in the synod, ELCA Youth Extravaganza hosted in our synod, all ELCA mission developers hosted in our synod, a new mission start in Cleveland, Texas, a new mission redevelopment at St. James, Houston, wildfires in Texas causing disaster in our synod, and a near disaster at Lutherhill Camp and Retreat Center. Bishop reports that 1400 homes in nearby Bastrop were destroyed.

Pastor Robert Sorensen was invited to share a story about the haylift for drought victims in Texas. Ron from Nebraska was honored for representing the Nebraska farmers who helped with the haylift from Nebraska to Texas to save cattle during the Texas drought.

"The facts are your friends" as Bishop Mike discusses synod worship attendance and financial difficulties. Congregations receive 30 million annually in our synod. But the synod only receives 1.4 million of that, which is way below the expected 10% for our congregations to give in mission support to our synod. Both trends are going down, and our synod's work is to raise both attendance and giving in all synod congregations. "You are now the mission interpreters for your home congregation to go back and talk about the synod's mission at your home congregations."

"Friends, this is about the Lutheran movement in our neck of the woods."

- As Bishop, I would make sure that our preaching is outstanding.
- Worship must be vibrant and made on behalf of those not yet here.
- Our strategic plan must streamline our synod office, ministries, and planning.
- Our plan must help congregations become better known in their communities.
- Our plan must partner the synod and congregations for ministry excellence.
- Our plan must start at least one new worshiping community every year.

Bishop Mike invites three speakers to talk about different aspects of the new synod strategic plan:

- Kathy Patrick addressed a new way of handling church conflict synod-wide with a peace-making training and formation of a synod conflict team that would assist the Bishop and free him up for positive ministries.

- Evan Moilan talked about the importance of streamlining the ministries of the synod that would not be the usual plan followed by no results, but a new synod plan that would actually report one-year results at next year's SA.
- Pastor Kerry Nelson discussed the plan's emphasis on behaving differently instead of just pushing paperwork, and holding the clergy accountable for leading as conferences and deans that would carry out the strategic plan of the synod in collaboration with the Bishop.

Lunch Recess 11:30—12:30

**SA.12.11.** Malaria Campaign Kickoff. Pastor Emmanuel Jackson, Living Word, Houston, presents the kickoff contribution to the ELCA Malaria Campaign in our synod at over \$51,000. Judy Biffle presents the campaign launch within the synod with a goal of \$150,000. Early kickoffs in many synod congregations have raised \$110,000 toward the goal already! "Only \$10 provides a malaria net to help eliminate malaria in our lifetime."

**SA.12.12.** Keynote 1 – **The Body at Worship: Caught Up in God's Work**, The Rev. Jennifer Lord, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

**SA.12.13.** Mission Moments

- Mission Interpreters
- Texas Lutheran University
- Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest
- Mission Endowment Fund

**SA.12.14.** Resolution presented by Pastor David Hansen, chair of Reference and Counsel on Human Trafficking. Reference and Counsel recommends adoption. Motion to amend by Pastor Mike Button to include the Louisiana senators along with the named Texas senators in the resolution. Motion passes, and the resolution is amended. Discussion on lobbying concern. Pastor Gary Morgan-Gohlke offers some information on the difference between advocacy on behalf of others and lobbying for one's own benefit. Resolution vote passes unanimously.

**SA.12.15.** Elections—Ballot #1. See separate elections report. Two runoff elections will occur in Ballot #2 after the mid-afternoon break.

2:30 Break

**SA.12.16.** Credentials Report by Don Hodde. 252 voting members, with 158 lay and 94 clergy, with 69 visitors for a total of 321 present. Motion to adopt credentials report. Motion passes.

**SA.12.17.** Elections – Ballot #2. Runoff elections for Synod Council: Don Hodde v. Dr. David Neubauer, with Don Hodde elected. Churchwide Assembly voting member: Kurt Eric Koopman v. Carl John Turnquist, with John Turnquist elected.

**SA.12.18.** Synod Vice President Report by Evan Moilan, who tells the story of the wildfires and drought disasters in Texas this past year, and leading the Assembly in singing Bruce Springsteen's "Rise Up" for inspiration. He also gave thanks for Zion, Galveston's contributions to the life of the synod in continuing to shape faith in transforming their church into a synod retreat center.

**SA.12.19.** ELCA Churchwide Report by Peter Perella, ELCA Worship Director. He presents the idea that worship is mission and that mission is worship, saying "We can never take God somewhere that God has not already been."

Stretch Break

**SA.12.20.** Peggy Hahn reported on youth ministry and justice issues, including the companion synod needs of the Central African Republic, poverty and malaria, and the growth of the Lutheran church there. Lucia Morales also made a special presentation on her mission trip to the Central African Republic and the issues she encountered. Peggy discussed mission trips to Peru, using words and pictures of prior mission trips. Sara Witte discussed the Sembrando project in Peru for raising money with children in synod congregations. The Campus Ministry Pastors, Brad Fuerst and Mindy Roll, and the LSU campus ministry president, presented a report on their campuses and the lives that were being changed among their students across the synod. Judith Richey reported on the new launch of a Willing Witness campaign in the synod.

**SA.12.21.** The Rev. Don Carlson reports on the call process and the compensation guidelines. Motion to approve the 2013 Compensation Guidelines by Pastor Don Carlson. Motion passes.

**SA.12.22.** The Rev. Pedro Suarez reports on evangelism efforts as Director of Evangelical Mission in the synod. New mission starts at St. James, Houston with Aura Suarez, New Life, Pearland with Manuel Morales, and in Cleveland with Dennis Shaw. Imagine, pray, receive, give, and be blessed. Amen.

**SA.12.23.** Treasurer's Report by Paul Monroe and approval of 2012 budget. Mr. Monroe reports on the last fiscal year, this year's budget, and the proposed budget for the following year. Motion to approve the audit report of last year's budget and receipts. Motion by Paul Monroe. Motion passes.

**SA.12.24.** Proposed budget of 1.2 MM for 2013-14. Motion to adopt the proposed budget. Motion by Paul Monroe. Motion passes.

Recess for Worship in the Lakewood UMC Sanctuary.

### **Saturday, May 12, 2012**

8:00 Morning Prayer (Sanctuary)

**SA.12.25.** Call to order in Asbury Hall at 8:30 AM.

**SA.12.26.** Credentials report. Chair Don Hodde reported 250 voting members, with 157 lay, 93 clergy, and 73 visitors for a total of 323 in attendance. Motion passed.

**SA.12.27.** Recognition of anniversaries and welcoming of new seminary graduates by Pastor Don Carlson. Recognition of Jean Davis, retiring LFSW Executive Director, by Bishop Mike Rinehart. Leadership Program for Musicians Greetings by Marsha Seale. Mission Investment Fund Greetings by Paula Kitt. Recognition of Deans by Bishop Mike Rinehart. Bishop Mike recessed the SA for the Lutherhill Board Meeting.

**SA.12.28.** Lutherhill Board Meeting. Board Chair, Brett Carleton called the meeting to order. Remarks by several board members, remarks by Anthony

\_\_\_\_\_ of Zion Lutheran Church concerning its donation of Galveston property for a second retreat center, remarks by Matt Kindsvatter, and introduction of remaining board members. Slate of nominations reported, with none added from the floor of the SA. Nominees are Brett Carleton, Georgine Garbarini, Bill Mintz, and Phil Oestreich. All were elected by voice vote. Remarks by Laurence Bade, Interim Director of Lutherhill. Board meeting adjourned. Bishop Mike Rinehart calls the SA back to order.

**SA.12.29.** Keynote 2 – **Matters of Life and Death**, The Rev. Dr. Benjamin Stewart, followed by a Question and Answer session.

**SA.12.30.** Workshop #1 (Varied locations)

Noon Lunch (Asbury Hall)

**SA.12.31.** Amendments to synod constitution. Amendments approved by SA as recommended by SC.

**SA.12.32.** Dwelling in the Word devotional and discussion time.

**SA.12.33.** Workshop #2 (Varied locations)

3:00 Break

**SA.12.34.** Workshop #3 (Varied locations)

**SA.12.35.** Closing Eucharist (Sanctuary)

**SA.12.36.** Bishop Mike Rinehart adjourned the SA *sine die* at 6:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Arthur Murphy, Synod Secretary