

One People—Forgiven!

Wednesday, Day 5 in Houston

The day started early and those from the Northwest gathered for breakfast, devotions, and an engaging dialogue with Dr. Wil Sohns, retired District President of Wyoming who is now serving on the Committee for Constitutional Matters (CCM), and Rev. Jonathan Dinger, a Northwest Pastor serving on convention floor committee 5. Dr. Sohns reminded us that our first Synod President, C.F.W. Walther had some advice for delegates in his day: Focus on the saving of souls. Whatever decision delegates face, if it is helpful for the saving of souls, this should govern our decisions. Rev. Dinger shared with us some of the possible things to prepare for, including a resolution that deals with licensed Lay Deacons.

Today the high was 96 degrees with about 90% humidity outside, but inside many delegates needed a jacket or long sleeves to keep warm in the cool convention air. Rev. Wayne Knolhoff, Director of Stewardship Ministries of the LCMS, shared an opening message that the mark of the Christian Steward is love. Mick Onnen, President of the International LLL followed with a presentation of how ILLL is now proclaiming Christ in 31 countries and currently has more than 240,000 people participating in Bible Study courses.

Then it was on to business. What generated a little heat in the convention hall was Resolution 3-03 that dealt with how the LCMS works with other Christian agencies when we are not in agreement over doctrine or practice. Rev. John Nunes, President and CEO of Lutheran World Relief addressed the convention and pleaded passionately to retain working relations with the ELCA in the important work that we share together. After quite a bit of debate the matter was suspended due to other convention business.

Ted Kober led us in a study of the Bible dealing with forgiveness in the Church. He reminded us in Bonhoeffer's words that it is perilous for a Christian in community to lie down in sleep with an unreconciled heart. Dr. Johannes Mengsteab, National Director of New Mission Field Development, later shared his Eritrean practice of reconciliation in the village where the elders brought everything to bear to help brothers reconcile together. In this way, Christians were not able to hide behind a corporate confession but were required to deal with their relationship issues directly.

The resolution dealing with Lay Deacons was brought to the floor but after some discussion, was sent back to committee for further work. A special presentation was made to First Lutheran Church, El Cajon, CA, who has a goal to plant 20 new churches by 2017, and has already planted three churches. After the minutes of the previous day were approved, the new Vice Presidents of Synod were introduced, and thanks were given to those who were outgoing.

Synod elected Ray Hartwig for continued service as Synod's Secretary. Lay Representatives of the Synod Board of Directors were all elected on the first ballot: Warren Puck, James Carter, Ed Everts, and Keith Frndak. The two ordained

representatives of the Synod Board of Directors took four ballots to eventually elect Rev. Victor Belton and Rev. Michael Kumm. Movement was generated on the floor when nominations for other offices and positions in the Synod were opened to the floor. Some 26 nominations were brought to the floors attention, and 18 were added to the slate, though several more are still in question.

Other business adopted included:

Committee 1: Missions

- ❖ 1-01 To Celebrate Fan into Flame Blessings and Commit to its completion
- ❖ 1-04A To respond to opportunities for outreach to Muslims
- ❖ 1-05 To Affirm and Encourage our Military Chaplains (99%)
- ❖ 1-06 To Encourage participation in operation Barnabas (99%)

Committee 4:

- ❖ 4-04A To Study Higher Education System and Develop an Action Plan
- ❖ 4-09 Amend Bylaws Regarding Convention Committees
- ❖ 4-10 To Return an LCEF Bylaw to Pre-2004 Wording
- ❖ 4-11 Provide Definition for the term “Operating Board”
- ❖ 4-13 To Change Auxiliary Terminology
- ❖ 4-14 Amend Bylaw Regarding Agency Meeting
- ❖ 4-17 To Address Student indebtedness

Committee 5:

- ❖ 5-01A To recruit and retain full-time church workers
- ❖ 5-02A To celebrate and support “For the Sake of the Church”

Committee 7: Ecclesial Matters

- ❖ 7-01 Encourage a task force on Synodical Harmony
- ❖ 7-02 Affirmed Ecclesiastical Supervision

Please see www.lcms.org for all the details.