



Convention delegates select emphases for national witness

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Reaching out to Hmong and Hispanic communities, revitalizing LCMS congregations and starting Rosa J. Young academies are priorities of convention Floor Committee 1 on National Witness. (LCMS/Frank Kohn)

By *Tony Oliphant*

MILWAUKEE (July 14, 2016) — The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention on Thursday selected its emphases for continued work in reaching the lost.

Recognizing that approximately 78 percent of LCMS congregations are declining in worship attendance, the Office of National Mission (ONM) has developed the “re:Vitality” program to provide resources for these congregations, addressing revitalization needs from a distinctly Lutheran perspective. Delegates watched a video from the ONM describing the work re:Vitality has already begun and will continue to do to assist congregations.

The Office of National Mission has been charged by the convention to continue developing the re:Vitality program as resources are created and distributed through funds provided by synodwide offerings. Over the next triennium this program will be assessed by the ONM.

Work among immigrant and refugee populations was encouraged by convention resolution. The development of language-specific resources and programs was highlighted as a means of outreach. The Synod was directed to “work through districts to locate at least 12 locations over the next triennium to send national missionaries where there is a significant immigrant and refugee population” (Res. 1-04).

Of particular emphasis in outreach were the efforts among the Hmong and Hispanic populations. The LCMS has been involved in outreach and care of Hmong people since 1976. This work has grown into at least 20 Word and Sacrament ministries across the LCMS with 1,500 baptized members. The convention resolved to encourage and support districts and congregations to continue outreach among Hmong people and to promote the preparation of Hmong pastors, deaconesses and other church workers.

Realizing the great opportunity for mission work among the Hispanic population of 50.4 million in the United States, the convention directed the Office of National Mission to provide a renewed emphasis for LCMS districts and congregations in ongoing and new outreach among Hispanic people. This local work is complementary to the efforts of Concordia Publishing House (CPH) in producing the Spanish version of *The Lutheran Study Bible (La Biblia de la Reforma)* and the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Hispanic Ministry of providing leadership, assessment and resources.

“We are very grateful for the support we have received from this administration because we have seen some growth in Hispanic ministry across the country. Obviously, with this resolution being approved I expect Hispanic ministries to grow more and more,” said the Rev. Adolfo Borges, president of the LCMS National Hispanic Convention.

The convention also commended and supported development of the proposed Rosa J. Young International Academies as a model for reaching a new generation. These academies are named for Dr. Rosa J. Young, a woman influential in the founding of Alabama Lutheran Academy and College of Selma, Alabama, which is now Concordia College Alabama.

The film, “The First Rosa,” describing her life and work, was distributed to LCMS congregations in early 2016. The Rosa J. Young International Academies “will strive to build a network of creative, innovative and holistic lifelong learning communities for future leaders in all aspects of society” (Res. 1-06).

These will “seek to be a growing network of schools located in various regions of the U.S. to provide urban, inner-city, rural,

and ethnic communities with educational options and opportunities.”

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