

## Summary of the Work of the Synod in Plenary

### Elected to Serve on WND Synod Council

Pamela Hartman, St. John, Killdeer; Rev. Jake DeBoer, Trinity Lutheran, Steele and Dawson Lutheran, Dawson (2<sup>nd</sup> Term); Rev. Christina Martin, First Lutheran, Mandan; Rev. Tim Johnson, Oak Valley Lutheran, Velva (2<sup>nd</sup> Term); Cameron McBeth, Zion Lutheran, Towner; Rod Gillund, Concordia Lutheran, Crosby (2<sup>nd</sup> Term); and Ty Farnsworth, Good Shepherd Lutheran, Bismarck

### Elected to Serve on Synod Discipline Committee

Jean Nygaard, Grace Lutheran, Wildrose and Rev. Roger Dieterle, Belfield Lutheran, Dalgum Lutheran, Medora Lutheran

### Elected to Serve on Board of Lutheran Social Services of ND

Murray Sagsveen, Lutheran Church of the Cross, Bismarck

### RESOLUTIONS:

To see the full text the resolutions visit [www.wndsynod.org/synod-assembly](http://www.wndsynod.org/synod-assembly).

### Western ND Fiscal Plan for 2016

Action: PASSED

The Assembly adopted the fiscal plan for the 2016 fiscal year as proposed by synod council.

### 2015 Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Leaders

Action: PASSED

The Assembly adopted the 2016 Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Leaders serving in the Western North Dakota Synod as proposed by synod council. The resolution included the following changes from past guidelines:

- 1) The base salary guideline was based on a 4% increase over the 2015 salary guidelines, rather than the federal Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment (SS COLA). This recommendation came out of concern that the SS COLA of approximately 2% does not adequately reflect the actual cost of living increases in our synod.
- 2) The schedule also recommends a range for the minimum base salary guidelines rather than a single minimum base salary for each year of service.
- 3) In addition, the resolution recommends that over a three year period, beginning in 2016 the base salary for Word and Sacrament Ministers (pastors) and Word and Service Ministers (associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses) be equalized. This prompted deep conversation around the clarification of the different calls of each roster and the formation process for each. Please note, pastors will continue to receive compensation for housing either in the form of a housing allowance or in the form of a parsonage with housing equity. Housing is not included in the compensation package for Word and Service Ministers.



**Western North Dakota Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

## Synod Assembly 2015: Brief Report of Actions

June 5-6, 2015

### Assembly Theme: Living in God's Abundance

Over 300 congregation members, pastors, diaconal ministers, and associates in ministry gathered in Minot for the 2015 Synod Assembly. At the center of this assembly were the questions, "How do we recognize the abundant gifts that God has provided us" and "How do we live in such a way that gives witness to God's Abundance in the world?"

Assembly participants witnessed God's abundance made visible in many ways, including engaging worship, conversation, Bible Study, displays, workshops, an art show featuring the talents of members of our congregations, gifts of music, a congregational ministry fair featuring the rich ways God is working through God's people in their communities, the ministry of this Synod's 4 Bible camps, stories of our ELCA Churchwide expression, Lutheran Social Services of ND, Lutheran World Relief and other ministry partners, and so much more.

Not only did the Assembly recognize and celebrate the abundance that God has placed among us, participants were sent out with resources and questions ready to engage their congregations in conversation about God's abundance - and wrestle with how we, who have been abundantly blessed, are also called to be stewards of all that we have been given... Stewards who use these gifts from God to serve our neighbors.

### ***Behold I Make All Things New* Liturgy**

Opening worship kicked off with the gifts of musicians from around the synod leading a new liturgy called *Behold I Make All Things New* which was written by Ben Splichal Larson. Ben, a student at Wartburg Seminary, was killed in the 2010 Haiti Earthquake when he was there with his wife Renee and his cousin Jon who now serve as pastors in our synod. This lively liturgy is available for use in congregations free of charge at [www.BenStillSings.com](http://www.BenStillSings.com)

### **Engaging Scripture**

A new 7-session Bible Study featuring video stories from folks around western North Dakota as they reflect on what it means to be "Living in God's Abundance" was introduced during Assembly. The Bible Study was written and produced by pastors and congregation members from across the synod.

The videos and session guides are all available in both DOC and PDF format for use in your congregation. Simply go to: <http://wndsynod.org/AbundanceBibleStudy> to access the materials or contact the synod office to request a DVD.

## "I was wondering . . ." Presentations

In three presentations, folks from our synod "wondered" with the assembly about living in God's abundance from their specific places and perspectives. These presentations will be edited and uploaded to the synod website. Watch the Synod E-news or check [wndsynod.org](http://wndsynod.org) for more information.

- **The Abundance I see** - Theresa Howie moved to Belfield, ND from Phoenix Arizona about a year ago. As one who comes from outside our context, Theresa named the abundant ways that she sees God has blessed the congregations of our area - an abundance of vision, an abundance of gifts and talents, an abundance of young people, an abundance of men willing to take on leadership, and abundance of mature and faithful givers, an abundance of opportunity for being Christ to the newcomers of the communities, an abundance of willing servants, and finally, we have God's abundance. An abundance without limits. She reminded us that we are called to do things beyond our own power. Things that can only be accomplished by the power and presence of the living God, utilizing all of the abundance that God has entrusted to us.
- **Pushing at Why** – With passion and humor, Rev. Alex Hoops of Bread of Life in Minot invited us to join him in pushing the "Why?" question. Asking "Why?" helps reveal our deepest intentions and our true commitments. Why do we do what we do? Why do we teach what we teach? Why do we come to church at all? Why do we follow this Jesus? The "Why?" question helps us remember who we are in the midst of whatever anxieties may befall us, keeps us from resting in a place of complacency, and helps maintain our vibrancy as a community of Christ that is focused on our mission together in Christ's name. Good questions can help us transform from people who simply invite people to church for the preaching and music, and into a life of discipleship, where we invite people into mission, challenging them to grow closer to God's hopes, and sending them to reflect it to the world - to be people of peace, hope, restoration, love, and grace. God knew in sending his son, the world could use people like that.
- **From "Yes . . .but" to "Yes . . . and"** - While a student at NDSU, Rev. Emily Nesdahl of Peace Lutheran Church in Burlington got involved with Improv comedy. Improv is actually less about trying to be funny, than it is about working together to tell an engaging story. There are rules in improv comedy to help build trust among the players, to create a better team, in order that a more compelling story might be told through them. The golden rule of Improv is the rule of, "Yes, and." "Yes" means "I'm listening, I'm suspending judgement. I hear what you're telling me." "And" means, I'm going to add to your idea. I'm going to bring my ideas and my energy to move the story forward." Emily asked "What would it look like for your church to have a "Yes, and" culture? What if your first response to a new Spirit-inspired idea was "Yes, and"? She shared examples from her context where she has seen God at work through the congregation's "Yes, and"s, and reminded us that our goal as the body of Christ is to tell the most compelling story - the good news of God's saving love which we see most clearly in Jesus Christ. How might "Yes, and" be a part of that for you?

## We are Church

What does being church mean to you? In this year's message from ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, she asks that question to congregation members from all around the ELCA, and receives some amazing answers. View the Message from ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton: ***We Are Church***  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4nwZg-Uy2Y>

## Daring to Live Abundantly

Rev. Margaret Payne, ELCA director for Mission Support helped the assembly think about how we might awaken to the abundant life that God promises. She reminded us that the key to waking up to God's abundance is found in Jesus and the things Jesus teaches us:

- 1) Living every single day with a sense of gratitude for everything in our lives and that all that we have comes from God.
- 2) Practice Forgiveness for unless we are leaning into a life of forgiveness toward others and toward ourselves, we cannot see the abundance around us. Forgiveness opens our hearts to God's grace so we might recognize God's abundance in our lives.
- 3) Take seriously the call to love our neighbor in word and deed. The call to love the neighbor shifts us from our own self-interest to the needs of others, so that all that we have can be used to benefit all God's people all over the world.

"Dare to be audaciously bold!" Payne invited us to turn to Jesus and let ourselves be abundantly loved into a new and transformed way of life. For as we fall more deeply in love with Jesus, we joyfully spend our time and money in different ways. We will want to share more for God's work in the world. And giving out of a growing love for Jesus is the only thing that can reorient our lives in such a transformative way.

## Celebration of 25 years of gifts to the Ministry Endowment Fund

The assembly heard of the impact of 25 years of gifts to our synod's Ministry Endowment Fund which provides scholarships to seminary students from our synod and debt relief to rostered leaders who serve in western ND. Over the past 25 years over \$400,000 in scholarships and grants have supported over 100 seminarians, including 30 pastors, associates in ministry, and diaconal ministers who returned and currently serve congregations in the synod. Rev. Kathi Nygaard and seminarian Dominique McFall shared the gratitude they hold to the people of the synod who have been a part of their ministry formation process and stories of how God is at work in their formation and current ministry.

### Assembly Offerings:

**Friday Worship:** \$4,257.66 the ELCA Campaign for New and Renewing Congregations

**Friday Banquet:** \$3,214 for our synod's Four Bible Camps

**Sweet Deal for C.A.R.:** \$18,610.85

**Mission Fest Silent Auction & Live Auction to benefit WND Synod Mission Fund and ELCA Mission Builders:** \$15,575