

Report on Southeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly – May 7, 2022

Our Southeastern Minnesota Synod celebrated its first in-person synod assembly in three years together in Mankato on Saturday, May 7. Mt. Olive was represented by Renee Schaefer, Pastor Glenn Monson, Pastor Lisa Janke, Pastor Luke Hollander, and Bob Thomsen. (Our youth representatives were not able to attend.) We could feel the joy of finally after two pandemic years of gathering again, seeing old and new friends, and praising God together for abundant blessings.

Over 380 people gathered from the fifteen counties of the synod (Le Sueur, Blue Earth, and Faribault Counties in the west to Winona and Houston Counties in the east) representing 149 congregations (117,000 baptized members).

The theme was “Imagine: Endless Possibilities in God’s Grace.” The day’s program was filled with worship, inspiration, information, and grace. Opening worship was led in part by our own Pastor Lisa. We were reminded in times such as this to “Speak words of grace to a weary world.” We heard greetings and report from Rev. Keith Fry representing the national ELCA. The active programs of our national church such as Lutheran World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response represent us actively and effectively. They have a reputation to be quick to respond to world’s needs, to use funds efficiently (very low administration expenses), and to remain in a situation for the long haul. The business meeting portion included reports from the many active ministries in the synod like New Shelter Church in Mankato and Synod groups such as the Global Mission Companion Synods Table (Lutheran Synods in Tanzania and Columbia, Faith Formation Table, Community Accompaniment Table, Synodical Leader Grant Team, and AMMPARO (a ministry responding to the immigration situations at our borders).

The inspirational speaker was a woman from Texas, Rozella Haydee White. She talked about five “Big Ideas”: #1 – Love makes all things possible, #2 – Creativity expands the limits of our imagination, #3 – Liberation is the embodiment of love, #4 Healing leads us back to self and each other, and #5 God’s grace leads us to endless possibilities.

The budget revealed that because of declining income from congregations the Synod has reduced its contribution to the national church from 48% to 43%. The primary point of discussion concerned a request from Good Earth Camp for more funding. They are suddenly facing a situation where they are having great difficulty recruiting summer staff because of the low pay they are able to offer. This shortfall was resolved and budget passed.

The only substantive resolution on the floor was made by us, Mt. Olive. The Assembly approved the resolution to appoint a three-year task force to consider ways for the synod to support the JRLC (Joint Religious Legislative Coalition) and its legislative agenda.

Synod assemblies are an inspiration to faith as it opens our eyes to the wider world of the Lutheran Church. We are not alone and do not function in isolation. We have so many more opportunities to serve our awesome God than we could imagine. If you have questions about the synod talk with any or the pastors or Renee or Bob.