

In Mission for Others Evident at Opening Eucharist

Tenth Biennial Convention

Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in Canada
University of
Manitoba, Winnipeg,
Manitoba
July 21–24, 2005



Contents

Opening Worship	1 & 4
Treasurer	2
Light Show	2
FaithLife	2
Treasurer's Report	2
Listening Circles	3
Same Sex issue	3
Registration Info	4
Convention Tidbits	4
Newsletter Deadlines	4

Newsletter Staff

Editor
Annemarie Macintosh
Writers
Ron Friesen
David Chell
Viola Burkett
Photographer
Linda Irwin
Designer
Kristen Guy

A spirited group of approximately 600 convention delegates, worship participants and visitors gathered at historic downtown St. Mary's Cathedral for the opening worship service. By the 8 p.m. starting point of the service, begun at the majestic font located at the back of the sanctuary, the flowing talents of American Doctor of Music, Dr. Mark Mummert shone through as the last pew was filled to the closing notes of Simon Preston's "Allelujas."

Perched high atop the

sprawling baptismal font, ELCIC National Bishop Raymond Schultz welcomed the assembly as a group of local actors began filling the font full of water, dressed in various local "street attire"—"bag lady," "squeegee girl" and "boy in t-shirt". The impact of having entered into the downtown cathedral with a local "security guard" checking entrants and then witnessing what appeared to be a peaceful yet also at least somewhat aggressive appearance by the "street" actors, was lost on few worshippers. An unnamed worshipper proclaimed,

"this is real; life worship in downtown Winnipeg, I actually thought they (the actors) really just walked in off the street when they heard the wonderful organ music playing!"

A blending of the French language with English highlighted the liturgy. Prayers were offered in Chinese, Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, German—some of the languages of the ELCIC.

Greetings and welcome from the pulpit were made

continued on page 4



Youth, seat and voice only

A motion allowing the youth assembly participants the right to vote at this convention was defeated. Since such a decision involved bylaw changes, only a unanimous vote in favour would have carried the resolution. About a dozen dissenting votes kept youth participation to seat and voice only. ■



DR. DIETER KAYS,
PRESIDENT OF FAITHLIFE
FINANCIAL LTD.

FaithLife Greetings!

Greetings were given by Dr. Dieter Kays, President of FaithLife Financial Ltd. Previously known as Lutheran Life Financial, a new name and logo was created earlier this year.

FaithLife Financial has been revamped to help investors be good stewards. 2% of their investment is given to a charity of their choice, which many times ends up being a church. ■

Prayer

O God, your ears are open always to the prayers of your servants. Open our hearts and minds to you, that we may live in harmony with your will and receive the gifts of your Spirit; through your son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Benevolence shortfall hampers ELCIC

A huge drop in benevolence receipts from the ELCIC's five regional synods is severely hindering the National Church Council's ability to fund programs, according to financial statements released yesterday.

The national church today is receiving only 50 per cent of the benevolence it used to get from the synods when the ELCIC was formed in 1986, statistics show.

"We can't do all the programs we'd like to do," said ELCIC treasurer Norman Thompson.

In his report to the ELCIC convention, Thompson said total congregational giving throughout the ELCIC increased from nearly \$43.7 million in 1986 to \$65.6 million in 2003.

But the amount of benevolence money forwarded from congregations to synods increased only slightly during that time, from \$4.1 million to \$4.4 million.

Some congregations are having a tough time keeping their doors open and can't afford to increase their benevolence funding. Synods in turn are forced to cut their own benevolence to the national office, Thompson said.

The ELCIC national office received nearly \$4.5 million in general revenue during 2004. Synods were the second largest source of revenue with \$1.06 million. The largest revenue source was investment income (\$1.26 million).

Because of its on-going budget squeeze, the national office has been forced to offload some programs to the synods, Thompson said. It downloaded Canadian Missions to synods during the mid-1990s.

The ELCIC posted a small operating surplus in 2004, based on total revenue of \$4,492,486 and expenses of \$4,099,031. ■

Lutheran Light Show

Retiring vice-president Susan Johnson provided the assembly with a good laugh during the delegates orientation. One person came to the mic and asked whether there could be more light at the head table, because the speakers and those seated on the podium could not be seen very well. In response, Susan lit up the cross she'd been given as a parting gift—it's blinking and flashing lights made for a one-woman light show. ■



Same-sex issue debuts during delegates' orientation



National Bishop Raymond Schultz led the delegates' orientation session. He outlined various voting procedures, ins and outs of resolutions and motions and speaking to them from the floor, how rulings will be made, responsibilities of delegates, listing how stewards and other volunteers function as helpers.

During the session National Bishop Schultz informed the delegates of a ruling he was making related to the same-sex blessing resolution.

He stated that a letter by Alberta-based group Taking a Stand, sent to convention delegates urging them to vote against the proposal, and encouraging them to wear special red ribbons at the convention, had been distributed in violation of privacy legislation and had circumvented authorized channels.

Some delegates took exception when chair Bishop Schultz ruled the ribbons could not be worn on the convention floor. Schultz said "partisan paraphernalia" to indicate a voting preference was inappropriate and intimidating to some, in effect stating that you don't campaign at the voting polls. As a result, the ruling declared that red ribbons, rainbow logos, pink triangle insignias—any symbol showing a voting preference—would be disallowed during the business sessions and during worship.

Bishop Schultz stood by his ruling saying it was a way to provide a safe, non-threatening environment, and as fair a process as possible.

The same-sex blessing issue is a major focus of the four-day convention. The resolution by the

National Church Council would allow "local options" for ELCIC congregations to recognize and bless same-sex committed relationships. These would not be actual marriages. That would be a matter for civil authorities, the resolution states. Authorization for such blessings would require the consent of the pastor and a two-thirds approval vote by a congregation. A yet-to-be-authorized church rite would be used.

Canada earlier this week became the fourth country in the world to allow gay and lesbian couples to marry. However, the new law does not obligate churches to perform same-sex marriages.

The ELCIC national council forwarded its resolution to the national convention at the request of the Eastern Synod, following nearly a year's study and debate.

The convention will hold "listening circles" this afternoon for delegates to air their personal views on same-sex blessings.

Delegates will vote on the resolution Saturday morning. ■

Listening Circles/Talking Circles

Everyone gets a chance to speak about the same-sex blessing resolution. Friday afternoon all delegates and registered visitors will be assigned to listening circles and, in a setting away from convention floor debate, have the opportunity to speak from their points of view, and to hear the perspective of others. The person holding the talking stick talks, and the others listen. Facilitators will see that everyone who wants to speak will get a turn. The process will allow for sharing, for receiving, for reflection and for additional ways to prayerfully deliberate before the discussion and the vote take place on the convention floor the next day. ■



by host Fr. Michael Koryluk, rector of St. Mary's Cathedral, who told the gathering to "please be at home... tonight this is your place of worship... in reality it is all of ours."

Bishop Schultz's sermon called on (ELCIC) Lutherans to revisit their calling as a national church. "Twenty years ago when this church first gathered in Winnipeg to form itself," he remarked, "we wanted to express our Canadian identity... a "Made in Canada" church!" He suggested that "back then, we were in mission for ourselves. We had a blank canvas to work from... we come back to that canvas and it is now filled with graffiti."

Pointing to Scripture, the Bishop noted how Jesus "was crucified because He gave up power. Jesus did not see the world as dangerous, but as a place where suffering occurs and evil can take hold where the will to dominate is so strong, whether religious or secular.

Jesus chose the way of God... of obedience, not power or glory or control. Any other path... might not have led to the cross... and we (today) are going (along) with Him as individuals and as a country." Like Paul, who did not develop compassion for the world until he was transformed by Jesus, so we look to Jesus to teach us compassion. And so we are not in mission for ourselves any longer, but a church in mission for others.*

A wide range of gifts representing the diversity of the Canadian synods, from breads and wines, amethyst and canola oil, blueberries, maple syrup and sauerkraut, grains, potash and Saskatoon berry pie, tar sands oil, cow ear tags, gold and diamond and smoked salmon were processed in with the communion bread and wine.

The congregation was sent with a call to be witnesses to the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, as well as "Winnipeg,



Montreal, Vancouver, on farms in Saskatchewan, the ranches of Alberta... to the Rockies, Niagara Falls, the North, Gaspé, Vancouver Island, the Bay of Fundy, in Halifax... throughout this land... and even to the end of the earth." Sending songs, Mummert's own version of "Now, Lord, You Let" and "Rise, Shine, You People" followed by the postlude, drew a rousing ovation from those still remaining in the sanctuary. ■

* COMPLETE TEXT OF THE SERMON IS ON THE ELCIC WEBSITE: WWW.ELCIC.CA

Convention Tidbits



AMY MITCHELL, YOUTH ASSEMBLY PARTICIPANT, AND HER AUNT ISABEL FANCY, DELEGATE, WHO HAVE TRAVELLED FROM BRIDGEWATER, NB, SHARE A MOMENT DURING THE REFRESHMENT BREAK.

Registration Information

Total registration as of the report of the Committee on Registration and Credentials at the first business session, Thursday afternoon:

Delegates

Lay	231
Ordained	146
Visitors	125

Total registered attendance	502
-----------------------------	-----

Newsletter Deadlines: Items for the newsletter need to be submitted by 4:00 p.m. on Thursday and Friday for the next day's editions, and by 1:00 p.m. on Saturday for the Sunday morning edition. Drop them off at the Hospitality Desk.