

**Tenth
Biennial
Convention**

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

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Motion Defeated

Following a lengthy and emotional debate, ELCIC delegates at their biennial convention yesterday defeated a motion to allow blessings for same-sex relationships.

The motion, which would have given ELCIC pastors an option to perform same-sex blessings, failed to come close to the two-thirds majority required for approval.

Of the 408 ballots cast, 183 (45%) were in favour of the resolution and 220 (54%) were against it. There were five spoiled ballots. Voting was by secret ballot.

The margin of defeat was surprising, since a majority of delegates who spoke to the motion were in favour of it. An unofficial count showed over half of the 58 speakers at the microphones on the convention floor in support of the motion.

Normally, a simple majority vote would have been enough for the resolution to pass. But delegates agreed to raise the requirement to a two-thirds majority.

Yesterday's debate on the motion, while respectful, was emotionally draining for many, with strong opinions aired on both sides. The debate, which was supposed to have wrapped up by noon, stretched well into the afternoon as dozens of delegates lined up at the three floor microphones to express their views.

An attempt to table the motion for further study and a vote at the next biennial conference in 2007 was soundly defeated.

Supporters argued that same-sex blessings were necessary to make gays and lesbians feel fully included in the church. "We feel the rightness of this motion with every cell in our bodies," declared one delegate who said he was gay.



However, opponents warned of a possible exodus from the church if same-sex blessings were approved. "If this resolution passes, it will mark the end of this convention for many," another delegate said.

Both sides frequently used Bible passages and to support their views, leading one delegate to ask, "How can the same spirit lead us in such different directions?"

Defeating the resolution leaves the Lutheran church in the same position as before on the same-sex issue. ELCIC bishops issued a letter in 2003 stating that the church would not approve same-sex blessings.

The ELCIC takes direction from a 1970 statement by the former Lutheran Church of America, which affirmed marriage as a lifelong commitment of one man and one woman.

But the statement is vague on homosexual marriage, causing the ELCIC National Church Council in its resolution to call the 1970 statement inadequate.

ELCIC Bishop Ray Schultz said he accepted the outcome of the vote, although he

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New V-P



DR. ROGER KINGSLEY

National Church Council member, Dr. Roger Kingsley, was elected as the new Vice-President of the ELCIC for a four-year term. Kingsley, of Winnipeg, received 200 votes on the fourth ballot to defeat runner-up Rev. K. Glen Johnson, pastor of Ascension, Calgary (183).

Responding to the election results, Kingsley said, "I'm honoured and 'shattered,' and I accept this charge you've laid on me."

National Church Council members newly-elected included Robert Schmidt, Trish Schmermund ABT Synod; Judy Kochendorfer, BC Synod; Mark Koenker, MNO Synod; Heidi Hesselink, SK Synod; and Elizabeth Hachborn, Teddy Pope, Douglas Reble, Eastern Synod.

Dr. Kingsley's election to vice-president creates a vacancy on NCC which will be filled by appointment.

"Motion Defeated" continued from page 1

personally wished it had been different. He predicted the issue would surface at the national level again.

"The vote was almost a 50-50 split, which means that half of our church is not satisfied with the outcome," Schultz said in an interview. "I can't imagine this going on for very long without people in the church starting another initiative."

Bishop Schultz said the fact that Canada now has national legislation for same-sex marriage means churches will have to determine what marriage means for them as opposed to state marriage.

The convention later defeated a resolution to provide therapeutic information for gays and lesbians on converting to a straight life. Some speakers expressed doubt about whether such programs work. ■

Standing up for ELW



The room was filled with standing delegates and visitors as Betty St. Onge, President of the Evangelical Lutheran Women (ELW) asked those who had ELW groups in their church to rise. "Evangelical Lutheran Women are an active and driving force in our churches across Canada," says Betty, "there are approximately 400 congregations with ELW groups. Two groups of women with ELCIC roots have joined and there is potential for groups in locations such as universities or where a church has had to close."

Ruth Vince, ELW Executive Director addressed the assembly, noting the intentional partnering that ELW has begun with other Canadian and international organizations. They are also assisting Anglican women in organizing a national group. ELW has joined with Canadian Lutheran World Relief to facilitate HIV-AIDS education and other support projects in Chamanculo, Mozambique.

Walking by Faith as Leaders and Mentors is the theme for ELW programming during 2006. "We can really take concrete actions on



BETTY ST. ONGE, ELW PRESIDENT

issues," says Ruth, "let's not be afraid to do what needs to be done."

Later, ELW and the ELCIC Women's Desk personnel teamed up to host a special luncheon. The focus was on how, 10 years after the global Beijing Conference (United Nations) women's issues and concerns still need to be raised and addressed, both here and globally. Among the areas discussed in small groups at table were education, poverty, violence and abuse, girl-child, economic and leadership opportunity. It was agreed that though progress is made in some parts of the world, the issues around equality for *all* people has not yet been achieved. ■



Youth Assembly—humour & insight

On the heels of the announcement that the motion to approve the local option on same-sex blessings had been defeated, delegates and a packed gallery of visitors and observers were treated to a fresh presentation from the Youth Assembly.

A lively mock council meeting addressed Kelly Fryer's much-discussed 5 core values, whereupon the "council's" actual youth representative remarked, "Kelly Fryer, she's hot!" Council reps asked several 'invited' youth guests why more youth were not involved in the church, locally and at wider levels. Responses ranged from:

- gotta work,
- busy with hockey and football and fun with my friends,
- I am involved with national and synod youth stuff, but you adults wouldn't know it; we're so often segregated/separated from the main body of visible activity,



- I work at the local crisis shelter because I learned in church when I was younger to help others.

A video with the latest technological pizzazz, included a statement from youth leader Kelly Speak on her honest thoughts in upholding God in service as a youth. This was followed by an upbeat, "high octane" presentation from Jordan Smith and others on the status of *Mission Possible*, inviting the national and synodical bishops to the front for what has become a youth tradition at conventions: handing out t-shirts for them to wear to promote the upcoming National Youth Gathering (Winnipeg, 2006).

A spontaneous offering was taken as hard hats were passed around hall in support of the focus project next summer—a Habitat for Humanity build. National Bishop Ray Schultz pleasantly chided the gathering when he said he heard too much "clinking" in the hat, encouraging more paper money contributions. It was later reported that donations amounted to \$3897.12, plus a hearing aid battery, a Subway stamp, pocket lint and an IOU! ■

National revenues remain static

The ELCIC has opted for a stand-pat budget over the next three years with little change in revenues foreseen.

Delegates adopted budgets for 2005, 2006 and 2007 with total expected revenues stable at between \$3.2-3.4 million annually.

A freeze in expected benevolence income from the five synods is the main reason for static revenues. The ELCIC is budgeting for benevolence from the synods to remain unchanged at \$1.264 million between 2005 and 2007.

National church officials are planning for a balanced overall budget in 2005, but deficits are projected for 2006 and 2007 unless extra revenue is forthcoming.

The ELCIC recorded a surplus in 2004 of just under \$151,000 after originally budgeting for a \$28,000 deficit, according to audited statements circulated at the convention.

The meeting heard earlier in the week that a steady drop in benevolence receipts from synods over the years is a big reason for the ELCIC's financial squeeze.

National benevolence receipts totalled less than \$1.1 million in 2004, compared to over \$2 million in 1986, according to treasurer Norman Thompson.

The annual amount synods received from congregations has remained fairly steady at over \$4 million since 1986. Because synods have their own financial constraints, they are contributing less to the national office all the time.

ELCIC headquarters last year received just 24% of all the benevolence money donated by congregations to synods. In 1986, that figure was nearly 51%. ■

Convention Tidbits

The first reading of a constitutional ammendment which would allow youth assembly members to vote at national convention was heartily endorsed.



1) SPEAKING TO THE MOTION; 2) MUSIC DIRECTOR MARK MUMMERT; 3) GIFTS FROM THE SYNODS; 4) LUNCH LINE; 5) YOUTH ASSEMBLY; 6) PRESIDING BISHOP MARK HANSON, ELCA; 7) 2005 COMPANION OF THE WORSHIP ARTS RECIPIENT ELAINE NELSON; 8) ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL; 9) REBECCA ULRICH, YOUTH ASSEMBLY; 10) POURING OVER THE BULLETIN OF REPORTS; 11) BUILDING A CHURCH IN MISSION FOR OTHERS.



Registration Information

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

Saturday morning:

Delegates	
Lay	245
Ordained	169
Total Delegates	414

Visitors	198
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Total registered attendance	612
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