

Grand Canyon Synod Assembly 2009



Bishop's Recap

June 2009

The Grand Canyon Synod Assembly gathered June 11-13 under the theme of “Reaching the Lost, the Last, the Least and the Little.” We assembled at the Phoenician Resort in Central Phoenix which was a real gift after our contracted site went into foreclosure in April.

This assembly had 328 voting members and 52 guests participate. Bishop Paul Stumme-Diers, Greater Milwaukee Synod and Pastor Mick Roschke did a dialog Bible study on Luke 4: 16-20 and Luke 10, “The parable of the Good Samaritan”. They did an excellent job of expounding the texts with real life examples and stories.

We offered a variety of workshops that provided a link to our theme. On Thursday night we offered a traditional service highlighting Latino music. I preached on the Luke 4 text using a question the Rev. Jim Wallis raised at the Bishop’s Briefing worship last September, “Is Jesus’ Mission Statement, Our Mission Statement?” We closed our assembly with our Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Outreach, the Rev. Charles Newman preaching within a praise service with the focus on Matthew 25: 31-46.

The Rev. Stephen Bouman provided the Churchwide report and did a great job of making connections with our theme and the importance of understanding the value of being the church together. He also provided a workshop on Immigration- “They are Us”. We also enjoyed a banquet with a hymn sing and some stories from those who have benefited from the ministry of Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest.

Recognizing the social statement on human sexuality and the task force’s recommendations would be a major focus for our plenary sessions, an hour time slot for small caucuses was intentionally created. Every voting member was assigned a caucus. Voting members were separated from their church in order to create a better chance for multiple viewpoints and more voices to be heard. Synod Conference Deans and some Synod Council members served as facilitators. Ground rules and a timekeeper were provided. All of the memorials and resolutions being presented were open for the caucus to discuss. Time allotted for each was determined by the group. There was positive feedback regarding this offering. I think it did carry over into the plenary sessions as the tone was quite subdued and comments were respectful toward different viewpoints.

Voting:

A memorial to reject the proposed social statement was defeated 97 Yes, 204 No

A memorial to accept the proposed social statement was passed by using voting cards-I estimate a 2 to 1 margin

A memorial requesting a Super Majority (2/3) vote on the implementing resolutions of the task force’s recommendation was defeated 134 Yes, 160 No

A memorial supporting the task force’s recommendations was passed 190 Yes, 99 No

A resolution in support for the ELCA’s “Peace Not Walls” Campaign was passed 3 to 1 with voting cards

Thanks and gratitude was expressed to all staff and volunteers who provided the support and leadership to carry-out this assembly. Next year’s assembly is planned for Loews Ventana Canyon Resort, Tucson, Arizona, June 17-19, 2010.

Blessings and Peace,
Bishop Steve Talmage