Assembly Business

The 2018 Synod Assembly saw the re-election of Bishop Brian Maas with more than 80 percent of the votes. ELCA Vice President William Horne was on hand to run the election. Bishop Maas expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve the Synod for another 6 years. The Nebraska Synod would like to thank all the nominees for their time and willingness to participate as candidates in this year’s election.

Other elections included Churchwide Assembly positions, Synod Council positions, including the re-election of Vice President Dara Troutman, and several committee positions.

Treasurer Dan Friedlund and Rev. Robert Hayden, chair of the Budget and Finance Committee introduced the proposed balanced 2019 budget. The Assembly adopted the 2019 proposed budget. The Bishop thanked Dan and the Budget and Finance Committee for their work. The 2019 proposed budget and Treasurer’s report can be found on pages 29-41 of the Bulletin of Reports on the Nebraska Synod website. A link to the 2019 proposed budget webinar is available on the Synod website.

Other Business-
Three resolutions were approved during the Assembly, including two resolutions related to the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women. A third resolution was approved directing the Synod’s Justice/Hunger/Global Mission Team, to make recommendations to the 2019 Synod Assembly that will better equip pastors and others to address social, political, and ideological differences in society.

For more information on business from the 2018 Assembly or to find links to view the on-demand video from this year’s Assembly, visit the Nebraska Synod website- www.nebraskasynod.org.
Other Highlights

1) The Senior Lutherans in Ministry and the Young Adult Ministry groups collaborated on a presentation about the Generation: Together video resources that are available for use on the Nebraska Synod website. They also gave ideas on how individuals from different generations can talk about faith and work together. Training opportunities are being planned for several locations around the Synod. So far 45 congregations have already expressed interest in attending.

2) The We Are Lutheran Team discussed their work and experience, as well as the resources available from their efforts. Then they presented the We Are Church Together group, which discussed their plans for the coming strategic year. A Lenten devotional will be written and additional Lenten resources will be made available to “join” all congregations in exploring how we are church together.

3) Looking ahead: the 2019 Nebraska Synod Assembly will be held May 30-June 1 at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney.

Rev. Dr. Chris Alexander

At Festival Session 1, on Friday, Bishop Maas introduced Keynote speaker Rev. Dr. Chris Alexander, Associate Minister and Director for Center of Faith Studies at Countryside Community Church. Rev. Alexander spoke about working together across faiths and specifically about the work of the Tri-Faith Initiative in Omaha. She presented a video that featured interviews and testimonials from those working with and participating in the Tri-Faith community. She outlined the plans for the new Countryside Community Church that will be a part of the Tri-Faith Campus. And she discussed all the resources they have available to the public.

On Saturday afternoon Rev. Alexander gave a second keynote during the final Festival session of the Assembly. For her second keynote she discussed the process of discernment and how it can inform decision-making. She explained how discernment played a role in Countryside Community Church’s planning and decisions in their work with the Tri-Faith group. And she gave tips and recommendations for using the discernment process in both business and life decisions and for both individuals and organizations.

To watch Rev. Dr. Alexander’s presentations, please visit the Nebraska Synod YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/user/NebraskaSynod).

Bishop Brian Maas: The Bishop’s Report

This year Bishop Brian Maas took the stage on Saturday to deliver the Bishop’s report. The focus of his report was about how as a synod “We Walk Together” and how we work together to do ministry in the “Nebraska Together Way”.

With a theme of unity, the report highlighted several of the Nebraska Synod ministries and resources. These included: the work of the Racial Awareness Reconciliation and Education (RARE) group and the resources that were created for the movie “A Time for Burning”; Faith Formation and Seeking the Spirit Within and the work of spiritual direction; and Transformational Ministry and their work with congregations.

The report also touched on the current strategic vision and mission and the theme of Hope, Connect, Go. As part of this, the Bishop discussed how the efforts of the Synod Evangelists, Director of Stewardship, and Director of Development fit into the strategic vision and mission.

In addition to these important ministries and efforts, Bishop reported on specific issues facing the church. Issues such as difficulties in communicating across generations, addressing community needs, congregational vitality, and leadership. He talked about how the Nebraska Synod is working to address these issues. The Generation: Together resources address communication and collaboration across generations. The various Serving Arm ministries of the Synod address the needs of the community across the state of Nebraska. The Synod as a whole and the entire ELCA are creating resources and partnering to assist congregations in need and to address congregational vitality. The Synod has created the Sow the Seeds team to address the shortage in leadership and to help encourage individuals to pursue a call to ministry. Some of the ways the Synod is helping to raise up leaders in the church include the Parish Ministry Associate program, theological education in Nebraska, and partnerships with seminaries in Iowa and Chicago.

As part of the “Nebraska Togetherness Way”, the Bishop mentioned the importance of shared resources and mission share giving. Resources and congregational mission share gifts help to further the work and the ministries of the Synod.

Bishop Maas ended his presentation by thanking all who are involved in working with the Synod and its ministries. He also thanked the Nebraska Synod staff for their commitment to the organization and its mission.