

Miscellaneous Synod Assembly Highlights

The Assembly's Opening Worship featured a message from the **Rev. Wilma Rommel**, vice president of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Argentina and Uruguay (IELU). Pastor Rommel was present to help commemorate the **25th anniversary** of the relationship between the Nebraska Synod and the IELU.



Rev. Wilma Rommel

The Nebraska Synod Assembly gave an offering for the Campaign for the ELCA, to be designated for **Missionaries and Young Adults in Global Mission**. The final amount of the offering will be reported once all of the contributions have been received.

The assembly was treated to **Faith Stories** from three faces from around the Nebraska Synod: **Bill Davis, Erin Coleman Branchaud** and **Orrin Strand**.

After considering and rejecting three proposed amendments, the Assembly adopted a **preliminary Synod budget for 2016**.

The Assembly endorsed a five-year **Strategic Mission and Vision Plan**. Among other things, the plan outlines opportunities for study, improvements to the call process, emphasis on faith formation, and enhancements to Synod staffing.

The Assembly considered **two resolutions**:

- Resolution 2015:1, offered by the Parish Ministry Associate Steering Committee, encourages congregations to “to foster Christian vocation by encouraging and equipping people” as part of a Life of Faith Initiative. The resolution was adopted.
- Resolution 2015:2, offered by Mark Caspers of Auburn, would have directed pastors not to discourage participation in Freemasonry or other Masonic organizations. The resolution was filed after the 90-day deadline and the Assembly voted against bringing the resolution to the floor for consideration.

Other highlights included the **Partners in Ministry Banquet**, the **Synod 5K Run**, **Youth Convo '15**, **youth programming**, the **Night of the Arts** program and service projects at the **UNK Lutheran Student Center** and **Mosaic** in Axtell.

The **2016 Nebraska Synod Assembly** will be held June 2-4, 2016, at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney.

For more resources from the 2015 Nebraska Synod Assembly, including downloadable resources, go to:

<http://www.nebraskasynod.org/assembly/summary>

Contributors: Amanda White, Sara Kocher and Justin Perkins. Photography: Lyle Fodnes and Bob Oleson.

all things new

Stories from the 2015 Nebraska Synod Assembly

Bishop Brian Maas: “Hope. Connect. Go.”

Bishop introduces five-year strategic plan, emphasizes church's work together

Bishop Brian Maas addressed the Nebraska Synod Assembly with a concept quite familiar to Nebraskans: the pioneer spirit. According to Maas, the Nebraska Synod has it.

“Your forebearers saw needs and responded to them,” he said.

Pioneers, the bishop said, are those who make it possible for others to carry on in their wake.

Bishop Maas spoke to the Synod Assembly about the Synod's mission and vision, as well as to provide an update on progress the Synod has made toward fulfilling both. Some of this progress includes the ELCA's half-billion-dollar contribution of services in over a dozen states and six foreign countries as well as the addition of a Synod representative on the Midland University board beginning in July, he said.

“If you measure the church by what it is and what it does in the world, it has never stopped growing,” he said.

He also spoke about mission offerings. Of every dollar given to the Nebraska Synod in 2016, 54 cents will go to ELCA Churchwide, 23 cents will go to support Synod ministries and services to congregations, 17.5 cents will go to partner institutions and agencies, and the remaining 5.5 cents will cover the operating costs of the Nebraska Synod.

“[Mission offerings] are the way in which you and I together do way more ministry than we could ever do alone,” Maas said. “We squeeze every dollar of ministry we can out of the gifts you give us.”

In addition to telling the assembly what the Synod has done and is doing, the bishop presented a newly-developed mission and vision plan under the theme “Hope. Connect. Go.” The vision outlines a five-year approach to ministry in the Synod, including plans for ministry, study and staffing.



Bishop Brian Maas

John Roberto: "Faith formation for today"

Keynoter talks of new tools for sharing the faith, information to the future church

According to John Roberto, presentation is everything.

"The good news is very portable," Roberto said to the approximately 850 people gathered for the keynote address to the 2015 Nebraska Synod Assembly in Kearney. "It goes with us wherever we go."

Roberto said this portability is mirrored by the devices kept in pockets and backpacks: smartphones, tablets and laptops.

Roberto, a consultant to churches and editor of the journal *Lifelong Faith*, spoke to the assembly about the importance of embracing the digital revolution as a way to extend the relevancy of the church.

"Church is not about you," Roberto said. "Church is what you're leaving behind for the next generation."

For Roberto, this faith formation process took place at home in his Italian, Catholic household. Now, however, "there's less transmission happening at home because there is more diversity of religious practices at home," he said.

Online resources are what Roberto calls this generation's printing press. They are the enablers of a process whose information is already solid, but whose presentation can be expanded to reach those at risk of missing out on in-home family faith formation.

"We've never been blessed with more resources, tools and technology to share the Gospel," Roberto said.

According to Roberto, it's about meeting people where they already are. "And then, by the grace of God, they may be with us where we are: at our gatherings, at worship, at events," he said.

A way to do this is through what Roberto calls the flipped classroom model. According to this model, the Internet can do the presentation and explanation necessary for a precursory understanding of a meeting, and then the meeting itself can be focused on discussion, conversation, interaction and application.

In this way, online resources can "humanize the process."

"Information is now portable, it's personal, and it's participatory," Roberto said. And so, he added, is the Gospel.



John Roberto

Rozella White: "We walk the walk, but let's talk the talk!"

In her ELCA Churchwide update to the Nebraska Synod Assembly, ELCA Director for Young Adult Ministry Rozella White made it clear she believes the Lutheran church walks the walk. But according to White, ELCA members need to get a little better at talking the talk.

White previously served in family ministry positions in Texas, Pennsylvania and Georgia. She also worked with the ELCA coordinating the 2012 Multicultural Youth Leadership Event and attended seminary in Philadelphia.

"I believe that our church is being dismissed at large because we are not articulating... what a difference it makes in our lives," White said.

According to White, faith actions are present in the Nebraska Synod. She cited new congregations in the Synod, the 27 missionaries it is sponsoring, and the more than \$730,000 the Nebraska Synod has contributed to the Campaign for the ELCA.

For White, the next step is rectifying the gap between actions and words. Part of this meant asking for testimonies from assembly members about how their lives had been changed because of faith in God and connection with the church.

"I can't help but get excited when I hear people talk about their faith in God," White said. "I can't help it."

"We are church first and foremost. Before we do God's work in the world in the name of Jesus, we must first know that we belong to God."

Rev. Justin Eller: "Practical Interculturality"

"Interculturality: it's hard but it's real," Pastor Justin Eller told the audience at the 2015 Nebraska Synod Assembly.

Eller, the ELCA's global mission representative to Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Peru, spoke on "Practical Interculturality."

He shared how multiculturalism is about variety, about people who can live side by side without being in relationship. Interculturality, he said, is more about mutuality and being in the midst of difference and trying to be in relationship.

Eller posed the question, "How can interculturality be taught? We live in a multicultural world... Synod, state, churches. We need to learn about who we are before we can learn about others."



Rozella White



Rev. Justin Eller