



What goes on at a District Convention?

This past week Bryson and I represented Living Word at the 20th convention of the Minnesota North District of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. Whenever I would mention that we were going to Brainerd for the district convention I would usually field a question like the one above. Maybe the best way to describe a district convention is to compare it to a congregational voters' meeting (like we will hold after worship on May 24). It is a gathering of pastoral and lay representatives (259 to be exact) from all of the congregations in the district. We meet to vote on positions that need to be filled, vote on resolutions, and hear reports from various ministries. We listen to speakers and have devotions. There are also times of fellowship and worship. In short it is a chance to be about the business of the district in a Christ-centered environment. Here are a few specifics:

- President Don Fondow of Park Rapids was re-elected to his third term as president of the district. The vote was an overwhelming 213-33
- We also elected vice presidents: Rev. Kirk Lee, Parkers Prairie; Rev. David Cloeter, Sauk Rapids, and Rev. Dan Abrahams, Detroit Lakes.
- We heard reports about various mission projects supported by the district Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) and Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM)
- Concordia St. Paul president Robert Holst gave us an update on Concordia University in St. Paul. He told us that there are only 1/4 as many 15-20 year olds in our churches now as compared with 1980. (Thus the university has needed a greater focus on attracting students from outside our churches. He told us of free tuition offered by CSP to any Iraqi war vets. He also offered to speak at any congregation that holds a Concordia Sunday celebrating the post-secondary education opportunities offered by synod's ten Concordia Universities.
- Representatives from Lutheran Island Camp presented their capital fund-raising campaign: *Make A World for Christ*. Through this campaign they have plans for a new kitchen (* and offered to donate some of their current equipment to Living Word if we are still in need of those items in 12-18 months). They also have plans to build a new retreat center geared more for adults and families. (i.e. not just bunk beds and bare walls)
- We heard a report from the director of LCMS World Missions and some of the amazing things God is doing through their efforts all over the globe.
- A representative of the seminaries told us about the need to be identifying and encouraging people who would be good candidates for the pastoral ministry.
- A pastor from Louisiana told about a special service project he leads that brings people to New Orleans to help with re-building from Hurricane Katrina

A representative from the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Governance and Structure reported the recommended changes in the structure of the Synod that they are proposing. We filled out surveys that gave our feedback on those proposals. A sample of those proposals (designed to reduce cost and enable more mission work)

- To reduce the number of districts from the current 36 to 15-25.
- Seek to find a name for synod that emphasizes our Bible-based nature and highlights the fact that we are a national church body (not some lost sheep who have strayed from Missouri).
- Switch district and national conventions from a 3-year to 4-year cycle. (and reduce the number of delegates from 1225 to 650)

- Allow churches with over 1000 members to have an additional voting representative at conventions.

We voted on close to fifty resolutions. Here's a sampling:

- Approved raising funds for helping pastors who have been displaced from their congregations.
- Removed term limits on district positions
- Established an emergency fund for district preschools and elementary schools
- Directed district to provide leadership to congregations in the area of Family Ministry
- Directed district to provide materials and education to congregations in the area of domestic violence and abuse

Most of the resolutions encouraged congregations to take some kind of action. A few examples:

Congregations are encouraged to...

- Consider having the Lord's Supper at each worship service.
- Make a "Mission plan" of ways to reach out with the Gospel
- To provide a service to our community (e.g. Host a household item giveaway, like we will be doing at the end of June).
- Hold a special Reformation Sunday offering to be used for a special mission project
- Participate in a circuit-wide Witness Workshop every 3 years.
- Utilize the services of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund
- Utilize the district's Gift Planning services

We heard a report on the District finances: As is the case in local congregations, District income is running behind amounts pledged. **One result is that mission-funded congregations, like Living Word, will be receiving 10-15% less than was allocated for them.*

Synod President Gerald Kieschnick spoke to the assembly and reminded us to stand firm on the truth of God's word - especially on issues such as abortion and homosexuality that are becoming accepted by many other church bodies.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net