

The Pink Link

Friday, June 9, 2006

2006 New England Synod Assembly

Dr. Almen lauds Payne, challenges our identity

By Pr. Rebecca Wegner
Good Shepherd, Brunswick, ME

The Rev. Lowell G. Almen, secretary of the ELCA, has two roles at this year's Synod Assembly: to preside at the election of a bishop and to bring greetings from the ELCA.

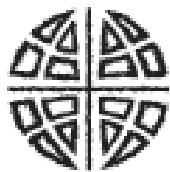
In his role as bearer of greetings, Dr. Almen noted yesterday that he was "grateful to hear results of the election" prior to his presentation, "as it gives me an opportunity to say nice things about your bishop."

Commenting on her wisdom and grace in many trying situations as chair of the ELCA Task Force on Sexuality, Dr. Almen described Bishop Margaret G. Payne as "a lightning rod in the middle of a thunderstorm." He said that few could have performed throughout that period with such wisdom and grace.

Not only Bishop Payne received words of gratitude on behalf of the larger church. Dr. Almen also said that "in your presence I wish to thank *the Rev. Michael Merkel* (pastor, Bethesda, New Haven, Conn.) who served a six-year term on our ELCA Church Council."

Using words of thanksgiving and appreciation as a springboard, Dr. Almen moved to questions of Lutheran identity. He echoed words from a previously-recorded greeting to the assembly from ELCA presid-

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Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America

Living in God's amazing grace

Synod overwhelmingly elects Payne to a second term



The Rev. Lowell G. Almen, secretary of the ELCA, congratulates Bishop Margaret G. Payne on her election to a second six-year term. Almen praised Payne for her wisdom and grace. More on page 2. (Photo by David Halmers)

Payne overwhelmingly elected to second term

The Rev. Margaret G. Payne was elected Thursday, June 8, to her second six-year term as bishop of the New England Synod by an overwhelming majority on the first (nominating) ballot at the 2006 Annual Assembly of the New England Synod. Payne received 365 votes out of 434 votes cast. The number of ballots required for election was 326. Her new term will begin Sept. 1.

There were 27 names on the nominating ballot.

Second was the Rev. Dennis Kohl, pastor of Pilgrim, Warwick, R.I., with 15 votes. Third was the Rev. John Marschhausen, pastor of Our Savior's, Newington, Conn., with 10 votes.

The following pastors received seven or less votes:

➤ The Rev. Frederick Reisz Jr., former pastor of University Lutheran, Cambridge, Mass., who recently retired as president of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC, 7;

- The Rev. William Carter, 6
- The Rev. G. Scott Cady, 4
- The Rev. John Corgan, 3
- The Rev. Peter Boehringer, 2
- The Rev. Susan Nachtigal, 2
- The Rev. Nathan Pipho, 2
- The Rev. Paul Sinnott, 2

The following pastors received one vote each:

The Rev. Marjo Anderson, the Rev. Thomas Chittick, the Rev. Gloria Connery, the Rev. Christopher Hoyer, the Rev. Paul Krampitz, the Rev. Andrew Krey, the Rev. Thomas Maehl, the Rev. Jane O'Hara Shields, the Rev. Henry Pawluk, the Rev. Kathleen Reed, the Rev. Richard Schulhaus, the Rev. Jeffrey Stalley, the Rev. John Stendahl, the Rev. David Thorp, the Rev. Edward Voosen and the Rev. Lawrence Wogman.

IDEAS THAT WORK:

DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO SHARE YOURS!

Starting this fall, the synod's Evangelism Team will be offering a series on *Ideas That Work*. They will draw on the talents and ministries of leaders from congregations all over the synod. Each briefing will focus on one specialized ministry such as children's ministry, social ministry to grow your church, and connecting and integrating new members. Look for the survey at the back of your assembly book of reports.

Palestinian Youth Dancers Coming to New England

CHICAGO (ELCA) — This summer 19 youth dancers from the Al Raja Palestinian Folkloric Dance Troupe, based in Ramallah, West Bank, will travel to the United States and perform throughout the country, making appearances in congregations of the ELCA, as well as at the ELCA Youth Gathering in San Antonio, Texas, and the **2006 Global Mission Event** July 27-30 at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

The purpose of the tour is for the young dancers to share the gifts of their culture, be messengers of peace, and help Americans understand who they are and how they live. The dancers are Christian and Muslim teens from the Evangelical Lutheran School of Hope, Ramallah. The school is a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), a companion synod of the New England Synod.

The dancers and three chaperones are scheduled to arrive in Chicago June 12 and tour the United States through July 31. They are scheduled to return to the Middle East Aug. 1.

Four stops in New England

They will perform at three congregations in New England: July 23, **Concordia, Manchester, Conn.**; July 24, **Good Shepherd, Rutland, Vt.**, and July 26, **Trinity, Worcester, Mass.**, all at 7 p.m. Cost of tickets is \$10 for adults and teens; \$5 for children. On July 25, they will travel to **Christ the King, Nashua, N.H.**, and connect with the Muslim community in the Manchester and Nashua area.

Al Raja means "hope" in Arabic. Members of the dance troupe are eager to meet American youth and see how they live. They have much to share with Americans about their lives.

Palestinian teens express their culture through traditional dance, practicing for hours each week. Many Palestinian children learn the traditional debka dancing at an early age.

Most of the dancers speak Arabic, English and German. Many aspire to attend college in the United States.

This is not the first time the teen dancers have traveled to another country. In 2004 the troupe went to Norway. Because Palestinians are not allowed to fly from Israel's airport in Tel Aviv, they must travel to Amman, Jordan, and fly from there. Crossing the border into Jordan can take four to five hours.

In addition Palestinians cannot leave home without a permit. They must first get a permit before they can leave Ramallah, then travel to Jerusalem to apply for their visas.

In Norway the Palestinian students found a different world, and many said they were free to travel as they wished.

Recently the dancers took a journey to Jericho, also in the West Bank, and one of the few places the youth can go for a picnic outing without a special permit. Najwa Kreitem, an

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We celebrate anniversaries

ORDAINED

70 Years

Henry E. Horn 6/10

65 Years

Walter C. Martin 7/01

60 Years

Paul G. Alberti 2/26
Theodore R. Caspar 6/23
Paul A. Laurell 6/16
J. Robert Nordlander 6/16
Edward H. Wiediger 6/23

55 Years

Richard C. Hintz 8/01
Gordon S. Nelson 6/17
George M. Stadler 5/23

50 Years

Paul F. Goetting 1/07
Albert L. Haversat 5/30
Paul G. Johnson 6/17
Roger A. Rotvig 6/17

45 Years

Robert L. Isaksen 6/18
Ronald E. Jackson 6/18
Philip H. Kylander 6/18
Lyle E. Larson 6/18
Orville L. Lind 6/18
Robert F. Matthias 5/28
Robert E. Villani 6/18
Clifford J. Green 10/15

40 Years

Paul E. Henry 6/02
G. Raymond Mitchell 7/31
John H. Moretz 5/25

35 Years

Allen R. Barnes 6/27
William S. Carter 6/27
Edward W. Voosen 6/01
Blake H. Wamester 7/11
Lawrence N. Wogman 6/29

30 Years

Joseph B. Ekeber 7/18
Albert W. Harness 8/08
Andrew E.V. Krey 7/01
Phillip D.W. Krey 8/29
Donald E. Nanstad 9/12
L. Richard Schulhaus 4/25
Jane O'Hara Shields 8/28

25 Years

Cameron Coe 6/28
Ruth A. Drews 8/01
Martha Klein Larsen 12/13
C. Robert Stott 9/20
Nancy E. Thomas 7/31
Susan P. Thomas 8/09
Paul H. Wheeler 10/11

LAY ROSTER

15 Years

Susan Bryn-Kapec 9/01

613 attend opening day of Synod Assembly

A total of 613 people, including 540 voting members, attended the opening day of the 18th Annual Assembly of the New England Synod, ELCA, according to the Rev. Edward Voosen, synod secretary. Of the voting members, 228 were clergy and 312 were lay persons.

DANCERS, continued from page 2

advisor for the troupe, said they were stopped three times and had to stand outside the bus in the winter cold. It took more than two hours to make the 25-mile trip.

The ELCA advocates dignity and justice for all people and peace and reconciliation among the nations. The Al Raja dancers' tour is part of the church's Middle East strategy.

Voting members at the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Orlando urged congregations to participate in the campaign, *Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land*, to build awareness, and engage in accompaniment and advocacy for peace with justice in the Middle East.

More information about the Al Raja tour, including a detailed tour schedule, is at <http://www.ELCA.org/peacenotwalls/alraja/> on the ELCA Web site.



When our assembly guests – the Rev. Dr. Barbara Rossing, the Rev. Lowell Almen and Mark Mummert – checked into their hotel rooms at the Crowne Plaza, they each discovered a lovely gift basket from Bishop Margaret G. Payne welcoming them to New England. It contained a toy stuffed lobster, a bottle of Vermont maple syrup (the real stuff), chocolates, a scallop shell from Maine, a handcarved wooden cross and (maybe the best of all) “trinity cookies,” trifold cookies filled with raspberry and apple made by the receptionist at the Synod House, Katherine Duffy. Above, Cathy LaChance (left), assistant to the synod treasurer, gets some help from Shannon LaFountain, synod bookkeeper, to make a bow. Cathy became skilled at creating gift baskets while making her children baskets for Easter.

ing Bishop Mark Hanson played at the beginning of his presentation: *Who are you? Who am I? How do we identify ourselves?*

“Our registration papers for synod assembly ask for many identifying marks, yet we are more than a citizen of a particular state, a member of a particular congregation, an individual with a particular occupation,” Almen said. “We are also baptized members of the ELCA, working together in our joint mission of being *Claimed, gathered and sent for the sake of the world.*”

“Part of the shared work that we participate in through our mission support giving to the ELCA supports the spread of the gospel worldwide. Almost one-fourth of our giving goes to global mission. Combined with the support dollars for domestic mission and planting of new churches, approximately 48 cents of every dollar goes to mission,” he said. Adding in support for theological education, 60 percent of our giving in the ELCA goes toward mission.

Dr. Almen also brought thanksgiving in the form of sharing what was “a pleasant surprise, an amazing surprise” at the generosity of the members of the ELCA working together as the baptized people of God. At the end of 2005, a year with a host of natural disasters domestically and worldwide, giving to the ELCA World Hunger Fund was \$17.7 million, a record high amount. Not only that, the ELCA Disaster Response received \$36.8 million.

“I bring you heartfelt words of thanks for your generosity,” he said.

In closing, Dr. Almen added a postscript about “an ongoing concern of mine. I hope that you will now and then remember in your prayers the ministry of our ELCA Chaplains. They are the extended arms of our church.” Sharing his experiences visiting a military hospital in Germany and working alongside ELCA chaplains, Dr. Almen movingly spoke of the hope and healing that these dedicated servants offer on behalf on our wider church.

Our identity is to help restore the lost sheep to the fold, says Hoffmeyer

“It’s not about you; it’s about God, but for God, it’s all about you,” said the Rev. Dr. John Hoffmeyer, yesterday in the opening service of word and thanksgiving.

Dr. Hoffmeyer, associate professor of systematic theology at the Lutheran Seminary at Philadelphia, is a former member of St. John, Sudbury, Mass.

In his sermon based on Luke 15:1-10, Dr. Hoffmeyer said, “We have these stories about these eccentric characters (a shepherd and a housewife who passionately search for a lost sheep and a lost coin) because we have an *eccentric* God.

“The word *eccentric* means to be out of center. Kind of like off your rocker. Kind of spun out there. And God is eccentric precisely in the sense that in being the center of the universe God’s focus is out there where the wandering and the needy and the lost – you, me and they – are. This is a basic message over and over again in the Bible, and in Christian witness we center that message on the story of God’s eccentric love going out there, out where the deniers, and the abandoners and the betrayers and the misusers of political

and religious power are, out beyond the city gates, out to the place of the skull, out to where the lostness is so thick that even Jesus, the child of God, can say, ‘My God, why have you abandoned me.’”

“It’s not about you, it’s about God, but for God it’s about you. God is the center, but for God, you are infinitely important. You are priceless valuable.”

Dr. Hoffmeyer tweaked the theme for this synod assembly to “living in God’s eccentric grace.”

God’s eccentric grace welcomes into the center, into the table of fellowship, those people who don’t belong in the center,” Dr. Hoffmeyer said.

“God welcomes them and makes of God’s table an edgy place. ...

“The church’s life, the church’s identity, our calling, including in the business that we do in these next two days, is to be a part of God’s coming to the places of wandering and lostness – however far they might seem to be from any familiar center. The church’s life, including in this time and place and what we are doing at this assembly, is to be part of God’s coming to those who are deemed unwelcomable and unacceptable by all those who twist our ideas of theological propriety in ways that obstruct the path of those wanderers who are searching for a way home. The church’s life and identity, including the New England Synod gathered in assembly here in Worcester on June 8, 2006, is to be part of God’s coming to those whose worth in their own eyes may be very small, but whose restoration to God’s fold is cause for no less than the angels in heaven to whoop for joy. Thank God.”



The Rev. Dr. John Hoffmeyer at the opening assembly worship