

**[PLEASE NOTE: This is the summer edition of my E-message. You can expect the September E-message to arrive in your in-box by August 15<sup>th</sup>. Have a blessed and refreshing summer! +RBM]**

### **Bishop's July / August 2010 E- Message**

The ABT Synod Convention is completed; it's a done deal. A bishop was re-elected. A new assistant to the bishop (the Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer) was selected by the bishop and Synod Council concurred by issuing Pastor Kochendorfer a call to special service. Resolutions on pending water allocation in Alberta were passed by the Convention. National Bishop Susan Johnson articulated the case for restructuring the Church, and sought the feedback of Convention delegates to inform the work of the Task Force on Restructuring.

Of fundamental importance was the pervasive attention to morning and evening worship each day as part of the Convention Agenda itself. Worship and praise were the bookends of every session.

We inaugurated the Tommy Turtle Award for congregations that – like turtles – have stuck their necks out in order to move ahead. A half-dozen congregations were nominated for innovative and “risky” ministry initiatives, and the first Tommy Turtle Award went to St. Albert Lutheran Church's inner city mission work with sex workers. They will hold Tommy Turtle until our next biennial Convention. Well done!

A majority of delegates and attendees felt the Convention was uplifting; a distinct minority felt it was the worst convention ever. As we have heard and seen before, two people can attend the same event and have quite different reactions to it. The difference in the reactions is not found in what happened at the event, since they were the same for both people; but the difference is found within each person.

This much I know: our Synod requires an “extreme makeover” – a change of heart and mind. The time of navel-gazing, quibbling and clashing needs to give way to missional thinking and “possibility thinking”. We need to enjoy one another's presence under the Lordship of Jesus, rather than abhor one another because of obvious (and continuing) disagreements in theology and pastoral practice. The issues will not magically go away – only a disillusioned fool would hope for that at this juncture. But we have to put an end to the notion that being Church together is a “gladiator sport”. The culture of our Synod needs to change. Our June Convention was an effort to move us in that direction. Most delegates felt the difference.

Here's a prayer to reflect on from my devotions this morning: “God our Father, we rejoice in the faith that draws us together, aware that selfishness can drive us apart. Let your encouragement be our constant strength. Keep us one in the love that has sealed our lives; help us to live as one family the Gospel we profess. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.” (FOR ALL THE SAINTS: A Prayer Book For and By the Church, Volume IV, page 101. American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, 2005).

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