



**BISHOP'S REPORT
TO
CONFERENCE CONVENTIONS
FALL 2011**

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

During October and November each of the *five Conferences will hold their Conventions*. In each report to the Conferences I remind you of the great value there is in this meeting together in regional groupings. It is the one time in the calendar year that we formally do this. I think it is especially crucial that we intentionally meet together this fall of 2011. The adoption of the Social Statement on Human Sexuality and the accompanying motions revising ministry policies at the National Convention in July have given us a couple of months to ponder the question “What does this mean?” My Pastoral Letter and the accompanying FAQ sheets were meant to begin to help you work toward the answers to that question. I think it is very important that we have the time together at Conference Conventions to speak about these things in a reasoned and non-anxious way. This is what Luther called the “mutual conversation and consolation of the brothers and sisters”. We have individuals and congregations quite concerned about the National Convention actions. We have individuals and congregations who have been waiting for the ELCIC to move on these issues for some time. We need to be in conversation with each other and seek a middle way forward if it is at all possible.

The 2010 Synod Convention added to and adopted *Mission Priorities of the Synod* for the biennium 2010-2012. These continue to be our Mission Priorities into the coming year. For your ease of reference, I re-print them for you here:

Our vision is “in mission with others, the congregations, rostered leaders and ministries of The Synod of Alberta and the Territories working together in the Spirit of Christ to bring the reconciling love of Jesus Christ to our homes and communities.”

1. Leaders in the Synod are:
 - a. continuously identified, equipped and empowered to serve with God-given gifts according to God's call;
 - b. empowered to practice the disciplines of biblical engagement and prayer;
 - c. equipped to facilitate conversations about living out baptismal vocation in daily life;
 - d. supported by caring conversations with their peers;
 - e. pastored by the Bishop and other Christian leaders

So that:

The leaders of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories may faithfully and joyfully preach the good news of God in Christ Jesus and rightly administer the sacraments.

2. Ministries are:
 - a. engaged in developing a deeper understanding of being a contributing, unique and vital part of the whole church of God;
 - b. developed to facilitate cooperative initiatives within the whole church as fellow workers in the Kingdom of God;
 - c. strengthened in order that there would be a faith presence in congregations, in homes, on campuses, in camps, in new mission starts and in all ministries which support the Synod's mission and vision;
 - d. encouraged to use available initiatives and resources, people and tools, to enhance Biblical engagement and faith formation (i.e. the Book of Faith initiative from the ELCA, Natural Church Development, transitional ministry, gift inventories...)

So that:

The saints of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories may be "equipped for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ." (Eph. 4)

3. Direction and Leadership are:
 - a. consistently communicating the vision and mission priorities of the Synod to all Synod congregations and ministries;
 - b. offered to increase Biblical engagement, sharing faith stories and conversations in congregations and faith communities in safe and respectful environments;
 - c. made available to help congregations develop effective governance process and leadership activities for the empowerment of the baptismal vocation of each person in the Synod;
 - d. successful in developing and expanding the bank of conflict resolution facilitators and resources;
 - e. engaged in respectful and holistic study and dialogue on the issues of marriage, family and human sexuality and modelling a process for safe space for study and dialogue on difficult issues.

So that:

Members of congregations of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories may experience the joy of being and making disciples in every aspect of their lives.

4. Linkages are initiated and maintained:
 - a. continuing to serve with and promote God's work through other church bodies (Synods, ELCIC, local, national and international agencies);
 - b. giving opportunities to continue financial support of LTS and CTEL approved synod students;
 - c. collaborating with the Anglican Church of Canada whenever possible and strengthening ties with our other ecumenical partners;
 - d. promoting the use of the Synod website to receive Synod communications, educational materials, notice of workshops for individuals and faith communities

So that:

Congregations within the Synod of Alberta and the Territories may experience the joy of being in mission with others as part of the whole people of God.

5. Communities are created and maintained:
- a. Encouraging congregations to study and pray as the foundation of community;
 - b. Providing safe, open, accepting and respectful environments for all;
 - c. Offering opportunities for sharing the story of God's grace, active in daily living;
 - d. Supporting congregations in expressing the diversity of God's creation in the unity of Christ;
- So that:
All the world would know that Jesus Christ is Lord.

I will be prepared to give you an up-to-date report on *the Synod finances* when we meet. Likewise, the Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer, who holds the *call processes* portfolio, will be giving an update on congregations and rostered workers at those Conference Conventions he is able to attend this year.

New Clergy are being added to our ranks – Senior Seminarians the Rev. Aaron Schnell (First, Calgary), the Rev. Phil Penrod (Our Savior, Edmonton) and the (soon to be) Rev. Barbara Groote (Ascension, Edmonton). Welcome!

Sharon Villetard, Assistant to the Bishop for Coordinating Synod Programming, has provided the following *Program Highlights* for your interest, sharing and use:

Family Ministry

Check the synod's website (<http://www.albertasynod.ca>) for access to a number of great resources - worship ideas to involve young people, home devotions, books, videos, and links to other helpful sites that help in teaching faith to the next generation. (*Sponsored by the Partners in Faith Committee.*) Who will be hosting the five Resource Centres this year?

Worship

"Adoramus" a publication of the *Worship Committee*, features such items as articles on worship resources, book reviews, schedules of upcoming worship events, suggested seasonal music, and much more. The new hymnal, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, may be borrowed from the Synod Office for use in your congregation. We have about 75 copies.

Leadership Development

"Lay Pastoral Assistants' Program" equips people with skills and knowledge to serve in areas of pastoral care, preaching, teaching, liturgy, evangelism, visitation, and more. Call the synod office for more information or to register for the next courses.

The Church council workshop is held early each spring and offer resources to equip congregational councils. The Workshop will take place at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Red Deer on March 17, 2012. Register by calling the synod office at (780) 439-2636 or (toll free) 1-866-430-2636.

Evangelism

"Hospitality Is..." is a one-day workshop on the basic elements of hospitality or narthex ministry. Arrangements can be made to have this presented to your congregation - call the synod office or Ralph Jorgensen directly at 403, 226-0429. We will also host another Back to Church Sunday seminar this fall with Michael Harvey (co-sponsored by ABT Synod and the Anglican Diocese of Edmonton.) Watch for other seminars and workshops that will be sponsored in the course of the coming program year.

Camps

There are 3 full-time camps in the Synod that offer Christian programming - each in a very unique and beautiful outdoor setting. Some offer year 'round opportunities in the areas of canoeing, horseback riding and care, outdoor living skills and more. Brochures of the camps are available from the synod office for distribution in your congregation.

Youth

A Youth Gathering, held in each of the odd-numbered years, hosts more than 100 young people from congregations in this Synod. They meet to study, from a Christian perspective, discuss issues of concern; be inspired by special speakers; and to have fun and fellowship with each other. The next Gathering will be held again at Camp Caroline on the May long weekend, 2013.

Social Justice

Pastor Renita Falkenstern (northern Alberta) and Pastor Ryan Andersen (southern Alberta) are our social ministry co-ordinators. They have been in their positions for slightly more than a year, and are communicating social justice concerns to the Synod family very well. These are our "go to" people. Feel free to contact them.

Communications

A publication called "Focus on Ministry", offered annually to congregational councils, provides ideas for program planning in the areas of worship, learning, service, witness and support. The brief suggestions come from congregational newsletters (please send us yours) throughout the synod and from Christian publications such as the seminaries newsletters. The issues are produced annually. The next issue is due this fall.

Our synod website found at <http://www.albertasynod.ca/> has a good reputation for the information it has to offer. It gives information about the resources on these pages and much more - check it out. The website gets a facelift this fall. Look for the new and improved version.

The Synod of Alberta and the Territories pages in the Canada Lutheran are also managed by the *Communications Committee*. Our editor, Colleen McGinnis, does exceptionally fine work editing the ABT Synod insert in the Canada Lutheran. She has also done some great work with "Celebrations" – the on-line resource for congregations and individuals found linked to the Synod website.

Stewardship

Our stewardship consultant, Lorraine Kalis, has completed her work for the Synod after many years of faithful service. The stewardship resources she has prepared continue to be available to congregations through the Synod office. Thanks, Lorraine, for the good work you have done!

World Missions

Although there has been a shift of some ELCIC administrative responsibilities for world mission to the ELCA in Chicago, it is even more critical that our synodical World Mission Committee maintain and strengthen the support that currently exists for our Alberta Synod missionary - Pastor Brian Rude. The Committee is also eager to affirm and expand the varied expressions of cross-cultural service and support that is provided by members of this Synod. Call the office if you'd like to borrow the display board describing ELCIC missionaries; or assistance in organizing a visit to your congregation, by one of the missionaries. We continue our relationship with our Companion Synod – the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia. We encourage your support for para-church missionary societies – notably World Mission Prayer League – Canada.

Campus Ministry

Campus ministries that are partially funded by the Synod, serve students, staff and faculty at University of Alberta, (and University of Alberta, Augustana Campus), University of Calgary and University of Lethbridge with an ecumenical chaplaincy in the formation stages for Medicine Hat College. Each offers many programs including counselling, educational resources, and housing in some centres.

Other

- Synod website has a great number of helpful resources; check it out and feel free to print and copy any of the items you wish
- note that the video library offers a number of good videos (some even fairly recent productions), that you might want to borrow
- The next Synod Convention will take place May 24 - 27, 2012 at University of Alberta, Augustana Campus in Camrose.
- The next Study Conference will take place February 6-9, 2012. Watch for registration information later in the fall.

The Synod Office Staff: I offer my sincere gratitude to each of them for the role they play in conducting the business of the Synod. We remain committed to providing the most comprehensive service to the congregations and people of the Synod that we are able to provide. We stand ready to serve.

You – people of God! - are located where the ministry of this Synod really happens. How grateful we are for your partnership in ministry, and how privileged we feel to support you in extending the reign of God!

I wish you God's richest blessings as you do the work of your conference together!

+Ronald B. Mayan, Bishop

SENIOR ABT SYNOD STAFF
Distribution of Portfolios

- Sharon's Portfolios
 1. Stewardship
 2. Church in Society
 3. Leadership Development
 4. Communications
 5. Youth
 6. Partners in Faith
 7. Study Conference
 8. Lutheran Outdoor Ministry Alberta North (LOMAN)
 9. World Mission
 10. Synod Convention
 11. Congregation Constitution Review
 12. Properties

- Larry's Portfolios
 1. Call Processes
 2. Synod Campus Ministry Committee
 3. Canadian Missions / CECF
 4. World Mission – Colombia piece
 5. Worship
 6. Conference of Deans
 7. Church Governance – assist congregations
 8. Represent the Bishop and Synod Office as requested
 9. Serve as Bishop Backup

- +Ron's Portfolios
 1. CTEL
 2. Examining Committee (Western Regional and ABT Synod)
 3. Conference of Bishops / House of Bishops
 4. National Church Council
 5. Synod Council
 6. Lutheran Triune Educational and Benevolent Society of Calgary
 7. Edmonton Ecumenical Bishops
 8. Calgary Ecumenical Bishops
 9. Lutheran Theological Seminary Board
 10. Relating to Good Samaritan Society, Bethany Group, Bethany Care Centre
 11. First Call Program
 12. Possibility Thinkers' Group
 13. Biennial Rural Ministry Event (ABT Synod and Montana Synod)

- Portfolios Shared by Senior Synod Staff
 1. Synod Council Meetings
 2. Synod Council Executive Meetings
 3. Specialized Ministries Gathering
 4. Conference of Deans (+Ron, Larry)
 5. World Missions (Sharon, Larry)