



Convention Moments

Friday

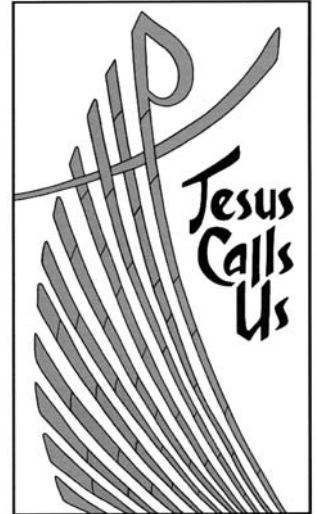
June 9, 2006

Jesus Calls Us!

Pastor Dawn Nelson led the gathering in opening worship under the convention theme *Jesus Calls Us*. She recounted the experience of a youth group that journeyed to a small village in Mexico to serve in that community. Arriving in a small community, they found a pastor and fourteen parishioners worshipping at the site where their church had recently burned to the ground. Wondering about the youth group's presence and purpose, the pastor asked "Que Pasa?". The group responded, "We have come to serve". The pastor then realized that they had been sent to help and was

grateful for their presence. A youth responded, "We are the answer to someone's prayer".

Pastor Nelson used this example to encourage us to remember that we are often given opportunity to be "an answer to someone's prayer" even though it may take us out of our comfort zone. She reminded us "in convention we seek to hear the call of God to serve. Let each of you lead the life to which you are called". We need to be open to the Spirit's call and it is our mission to proclaim God's Word to the world.



Bishop's Farewell

Bishop Kristenson confessed difficulty discerning his emotions in this, his last report to the convention. He spoke of his great joy in visiting the congregations to worship with them and experience the vibrant life evident there. He also expressed thankfulness for being upheld in prayer by people throughout the synod.

He stated that it is always a challenge to determine how a synod should act within the larger national church. He expressed satisfaction in the strategic directions that the Synod has set. They are:

1. To support leaders in the church

2. To support ministries throughout the Synod, the national church, and the world
3. To provide leadership and direction within the Synod
4. To design and maintain linkages.

Although his experiences have been primarily positive and powerful, the Bishop raised two concerns. He stated that we are becoming more polarized. While conflict and differences are normal in human discourse, there is inherent danger when we become reactionary in our response to differences in values. He stated that dialogue is healthy and helps us to grow. (continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

- **Keynote by Dr. Christian Bernhart**
- **Worship highlights**
- **New Congregation**

How many are we?

102 Rostered Delegates
126 Lay Delegates
51 Visitors

The Eleventh Biennial Convention

June 8-11, 2006, Red Deer, AB

Synod of Alberta and the Territories, E.L.C.I.C.

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Bishop's Farewell continued.



He suggested that to overcome polarization, we need to study and immerse ourselves in the Bible, so that we can be grounded in the Living Word, Jesus.

His second concern was related to the practice of individuals and congregations withholding money, in order to express dissatisfaction or displeasure. He stated that such action is nonproductive, and asked that those concerned bring their issues to the table

to be discussed and debated. He then added, “We need each other to work together in the spirit of Christ. God does not shortchange us. Everything we need is already provided.”

His hopes and dreams for the Synod are that we individually and collectively consider the gifts with which we have been provided, and to use these gifts for serving others. He stated that there is nothing we cannot do. “Dream big”, he urged, “for we have an infinite God, and Jesus calls us into mission for others”.

The Bishop graciously thanked the delegates for the opportunity to serve and stated that this has been the most challenging yet rewarding position he has held. He asked the delegates to mindfully pray for the new bishop as they have prayed for him. Finally, he thanked Synod Council, the district deans and the Synod office staff. In closing, he called his wife Jane to the podium. In a touching tribute, he publicly thanked her for her devotion and patience. The delegation rose to a standing ovation in appreciation of his years of service.

Keynote Presentation

Dr. Christian Eberhart intrigued the delegation with his keynote presentation on this year's convention theme *Jesus Calls Us – In Mission for Others*. He stated that the theme involves three primary parties: Jesus, us, and others. The theme points to two actions, namely a *call* and a *mission*. Mission, as he explained is derived from the Latin verb *mittere* meaning *to send out*. Examples of this sending action are seen in the early missions of Canadian Jesuit priests or recent government missions informing other governments or parties of a particular message. He stated that it is important to have a clear vision of what the message is to be. There can be many aspects to the message, however we do not go on behalf of ourselves; it is Jesus who calls and sends us. This point is illustrated in Luke 9:57-62 where would be followers are asking to be excused until their



own conditions are met. In this passage, no time extension is given to respond to that call. Those persons who would follow, only when other conditions were met, were not accepted. This passage, Dr. Eberhart stated, shows the unconditional nature of Jesus' call. He referred to passages in the Gospel of Mark where the call of the disciples is recorded, and the disciples responded without condition. The disciples were not identified as being from any of the religious groups existing in that day, but were ordinary folk going about their daily lives.

Dr. Eberhart described the primary existent groups of that day. They included the Sadducees and priests who recognized the authority of the written Torah. They did not believe in the resurrection. They typically cooperated with the Roman Empire, the authority of the day. They were members of the aristocracy. The Scribes, teachers of the Torah, were another religious group. They gathered, interpreted, and copied the texts of the day. Finally, there were the Pharisees who studied the oral and written Torah. They were deemed to be set apart as exemplary models of the holy life. In Mark, they are described as being ready to kill Jesus for healing on the Sabbath.

Jesus and his disciples were not a part of any of these religious groups, although Jesus is described as being conversant with the scriptures. In Mark 1:1 Jesus is revealed as the Christ, the Son of God. The whole book of Mark then explains how Jesus fulfills that proclamation. In Chapter 8, Peter is asked by Jesus, "Who do you think I am?" "You are the Son of God", Peter responded. Dr. Eberhart stated that the call is to be in relationship to this living word, Jesus. He then posed the question, "Is Christianity a religion of the book?" The convention then proceeded to discuss this question. He concluded this session stating that for Christianity, the book is not the priority. The book however, contains the historical evidence of our living relationship with the Word, Jesus.

New Congregation Welcomed

Welcome to the newest congregation in our synod, Glory Lutheran Church, Sherwood Park, Alberta. Organized one year ago by Pastor Marvin Krebs, it has a current membership of 283. Present pastor is Tom Peterson.





Family Together in Worship

Presiding minister Bishop Kristenson led the congregation in worship. Bishop Schultz delivered the sermon. He stated that we are called to be a new chosen people, full of life in which we find joy in circumstances where others may see despair. Jesus did not see himself as a sacrificial lamb. He died because nothing was more joyful to him than the love he experienced when baptized. Jesus calls us to this same life of joy, baptized in Him and giving our lives in service to others.



