



**Report to the Congregations of the Saskatchewan Synod
Regarding the 16th Biennial ELCIC National Convention
held in Winnipeg, July 6-8, 2017**

PREFACE

One hundred and fifty delegates of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada gathered in Winnipeg for the church's National Convention, July 6-8, 2017. This was the first convention with a new structure (covered under the Administrative By-laws of the ELCIC, Part VII Conventions), where the maximum number of voting delegates is 150; 80 lay, 10 youth and 60 rostered. Synods elect or appoint delegates for the convention and in the Saskatchewan Synod, both lay and rostered members of the ELCIC could apply to represent the Synod at the convention. The positions not filled by the delegate elections at the 2016 Synod convention were handled by people applying and the applications were then reviewed by the Synod Council and delegates appointed. This year applications did not exceed positions, so selection was easy.

This new system means that congregations do not send delegates to the convention, the Synod does. This also means that the cost for each delegate is paid by the Synod, through a levy to the congregations. The Saskatchewan Synod sent 29 delegates to the convention this year, 15 lay, 12 rostered and 2 youth. Of the 15 lay delegates, 11 were women and 4 men. Of the 12 rostered delegates, 6 were women, 6 men. The two youth delegates were a woman and a man.

The Synod held two meetings with the delegates before the convention, one with the delegates in the Southern Region and one in the Northern Region. Our Bishop, Sid Haugen, led the meetings. We discussed the convention's agenda and also our hopes and expectations for the gathering. Each delegate was assigned to cover and write a report about one or more items on the agenda. Rev. Zsófi Schmiege offered to put together a video that would be posted to the Synod's website in the fall, along with an edited version of the reports from delegates, edited by Rev. Íris Kristjánsdóttir.

This report is the abridged version of these reports. Another version with full reports from each delegate is also posted on the Synod website and everyone is welcome to read it. I recommend that you read that version also, it's more personal than this one and gives a fuller account of the whole convention experience.

Our hope is that each congregation chooses a way to introduce this report and video to their members to keep us all connected to the wider ELCIC across the country.

Respectfully submitted by Íris Kristjánsdóttir,
Rostered delegate from Prince Albert on behalf of the Sask Synod delegates.

Bishop Susan Johnson's Report

Lenore Ostlund, lay delegate from Melville.

Bishop Susan acknowledged in the beginning that we were meeting on Treaty One Territory and gave thanks for that privilege. She also mentioned that today was the anniversary of her baptism and showed a picture of herself with her parents.

Highlights of her report: The Bishop mentioned that the National Convention was being held in a new way, and that it was a sign of our church being responsive to the landscape in which we live and our willingness to be "flexible and adaptive". She spoke about the theme adopted for the 150 Anniversary Commemoration of Reformation "Liberated by God's Grace" with 3 sub themes; SALVATION, HUMAN BEINGS, CREATION – NOT FOR SALE. She welcomed Rev. Dr. Munib Younan, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and President of Lutheran World Federation, and she also introduced our partners in ministry from other denominations who were scheduled to participate in an ecumenical discussion panel about the significance of the 2017 Reformation Commemoration.

Delegates were encouraged to wear black on Thursday in support of peaceful protest against rape and violence, and out of concern for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW). Then the Bishop went through the agenda, mentioning various items on it, such as presentation from the National Centre on Truth and Reconciliation, a proposed statement to Muslims in Canada, a motion on Encountering People of Other Faiths – Interfaith Guidelines, and the presentation of the first ELCIC Mission for Others Leadership award. Bishop Susan looked forward to the times where we would gather together at the convention in worship, prayer, and study of scripture.

A quote from her closing words: "Through your faithfulness, witness, creativity, and hopefulness, I have learned that hope does not disappoint. We are Liberated by God's Grace and we are Blessed with a Hope in Jesus Christ that will not disappoint us."

Corporation Reports

Sean Bell, rostered delegate from Regina, and Al Scholz, lay delegate from Dundurn.

The Schools of the ELCIC (Luther College, Regina SK and Lutheran Collegiate Bible Institute, Outlook SK) both presented reports and rationale for making legal changes to their organizational structure. The convention approved both proposals. For LCBI, changes were made to the Bylaws and institutional mandate to broaden the stakeholder base from ELCIC congregations to include other Lutheran congregations to attract the required number of students to sustain the school into the future. For Luther College, changes (amendments) were made to the Saskatchewan provincial legislation that decrees Luther College as one of the five historic high schools in Saskatchewan. The college is now an independent entity operationally. Bishop Susan Johnson gave thanks for the diligent work of the boards of both of our schools.

Report on Elections

Karen Harilstad, lay delegate from Saskatoon and Doug Schmirler, rostered delegate from Melville.

Thursday afternoon saw the first ballot held for National Church Council Vice-Chairperson. By constitution it was to be an ecclesiastical ballot and conducted by paper ballot. For someone to be elected on the first ballot they would require 75% of ballots cast. Incumbent Vice-Chairperson Sheila Hamilton was re-elected, needing 102 votes to be elected and receiving 108. This was the only election of the convention that used paper ballots, for all other elections an electronic or “clicker” method was used.

These votes were held throughout Friday and the results were as follows:

Elected to NCC as a lay delegate for the BC synod – Mr. Curt Satre

Elected to NCC as a rostered delegate for Alberta/Territories synod – Rev. James Hendricksen (by acclamation)

Elected to NCC as a rostered delegate for Sask. synod – Rev. Iris Kristjansdottir

Elected to NCC as a rostered delegate for Manitoba/N.Ont synod – Rev. Chris Bishopp

Elected to NCC as a lay delegate for the Eastern synod – Mr. Bruce Cook

An election was also held for a lay representative to the National Church Court of Appeal and Mr. David Schulze was elected.

All members for the 2019 nominating committee were elected by acclamation and are, as follows: Cheryl Bauer-Hyde (SK), Marlys Moen (BC), Douglas Reble (East), Patricia Schermund (ABT), Jason Zinko (MNO).

Keynote address: Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

Henrik Cherland, rostered delegate from Yorkton, Joel Nostbakken, lay delegate from Saskatoon, and Victoria Mwamasika, rostered delegate from Neudorf.

Bishop Dr. Munib Younan was inspirational and empowering, and gave a clear and fervent message to all present at the Convention. He connected his address with the theme of Convention, ‘*Liberated by God’s Grace*’, a theme we share with the Lutheran World Federation. Bishop Younan highlighted the core biblical basis of our proclamation in this theme and its role during God’s historic call to the church in the Reformation by emphasizing that ***Salvation is not for sale, Human Beings are not for sale and Creation is not for sale.*** In no way are any of these basic gifts of God meant to be treated as commodities and put up ‘for sale’, as those individuals seeking to accumulate wealth and power are doing.

As people liberated by God’s Grace we are called to thrive for justice and peace of the world. We are responsible for our neighbours, we are defenders of human rights. Our relationship with God and our neighbours is not built on our merits, but on liberation by God’s grace through faith. Bishop Younan challenged us to live and work for the dignity of human beings. In that context the proclamation that all are ‘Liberated by God’s Grace’,

may strengthen us and all others to truly welcome the stranger, work for the freedom of our neighbour and be in loving relationship to God.

Quotes from his closing words: “Are you ready to be missionaries of God's love? Are you ready to do what God asks? Are we open to the challenge?”

ELCIC Statement to Muslims in Canada

Sean Bell, rostered delegate from Regina, Kris Olson, lay delegate from Assiniboia, and Adeline Steinley, lay delegate from Swift Current.

The statement mainly focuses on the fact that there's a growing Muslim community in Canada and with it comes a growing awareness of developing a respectful and meaningful relationships with Muslims. There has been a 60% jump in reported hate crimes against the Muslim community in the last few years. The ELCIC wants to state publically and unequivocally its rejection of theological justification or support for biased attitudes towards people of other faith communities. The background to this statement includes the 2015 ELCIC Endorsement of the document *Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations of Faith Leaders*, and a Memorandum of Understanding between the Lutheran World Federation and Islamic Relief Worldwide.

The statement was received with overwhelming support. Many stories of positive experiences with Muslim neighbors were told, no one spoke against this motion. The hope and unity of the room was felt as we pledged this church be in relationship with the growing diversity of all our neighbours.

Encountering People of Other faiths—Interfaith Guidelines.

Eldon Danielson, rostered delegate from Birch Hills, Carol Maurer, lay delegate from Neudorf, and Karen Harilstad, lay deligate from Saskatoon.

A proposed motion by the National Church Council, that the 2017 National Convention adopt the new resource *Encountering People of Other faiths—Interfaith Guidelines*.

These guidelines recognize that the Canadian landscape has changed. As a church in mission we need to live out the love of Christ. The motion is directed at more than faith leaders. Four workable suggestions were given as to how we might cultivate an inviting disposition within ourselves and a climate of welcome in our communities: *Learn, Connect, Pray, and Act*. *Learn*; know how to greet interfaith neighbors. *Connect*; introduce yourself to your new neighbour. *Pray*; ask them for what they pray for and tell them you and your community would love to join them in their concerns and prayer. *Act*; openly invite (sharing community involvement). All of these suggestions were created to offer a word of encouragement and some examples for congregations to follow. Two resources were identified as a helpful tool as well; The Welcoming The Stranger Guidelines and Interfaith Dialogue Resources on the Scarboro Missions website.

The motion was well received by the delegates and many spoke in favor of it. It was passed unanimously with the hope that congregations in the ELCIC will engage in this important ministry.

Opening and Closing Worship Report

Bryce Mc Ewen, youth delegate from Saskatoon, Patti Gatzke, lay delegate from Swift Current, Doug Schmirler, rostered delegate from Melville.

The times of worship at the National Convention were filled with spirit, joy, communion, and celebration. The music was vibrant, led by both choir and musicians, and powerfully supported by the voices from across Canada coming together in worship.

The services honored the theme "Liberated by God's Grace." Mr. Willard Metzger, Executive Director of Mennonite Church Canada, spoke in the opening worship about the relevance of the convention theme and the importance to share it. He also spoke of ecumenism and reconciliation, and how he valued his personal friendship with our Bishop Susan Johnson. He spoke with hope for our churches pursuing together our mission in spreading the good news of being liberated by grace through faith.

During the closing worship time on Saturday, Rev. Jordan Cantwell, Moderator of the United Church of Canada preached. She lifted up the truth that it is a gift from God that the church is being pushed to the margins of society, since it is those margins of society to which we are called to serve. Her passionate message of seeking liberation for others was both inspiring and challenging for those in attendance.

Celebration of Holy Communion was shared at both services and cemented the spirit of ecumenism we share with our partners in the faith. One could not help but leave the worship renewed and invigorated for the convention sessions that awaited us.

500th Anniversary Reformation Service

Donna Lovberg, lay delegate from Canwood, Carol Maurer, lay delegate from Neudorf, and Mark Hedlin, rostered delegate from Saskatoon.

The St. Gianna Beretta Molla Catholic Church provided the setting for the 500th Anniversary Reformation Service on Friday evening of the Convention. This beautiful church greeted its guests with warmth, openness and compassion and the service was for many the highlight of the convention. The music and singing was full and moving. National Bishop Susan Johnson preached and presided at the table with Synodical Bishops distributing the meal. Representatives of other denominations brought the readings and took part in leading various components of the worship as well. It made it clear that we truly are an "inclusive church".

After the worship, everyone gathered for a reception in the entrance area beside a beautiful baptismal pool. Delegates were also invited to visit the columbarium in the church basement.

Comments from delegates about the experience as a whole: “Words don’t do justice.” “If I had only three words to describe the 500th Anniversary Reformation service, they would be; “Oh My God!” “I was taken in complete “Awe” of this whole experience.”

National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

Arlene Tangjerd, lay delegate from Yorkton, Kim Sherwin, rostered delegate from Melville, Trinity Fusick, youth delegate from Shellbrook.

Kaila Johnston, research coordinator at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR), provided a detailed overview of the history and the legacy that was covered by the activities of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She began by reviewing the history of the residential school system, and identifying who was impacted by this form of cultural genocide. She explained the settlement agreement in 2006 that resulted in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the NCTR in addition to financial compensation. The NCTR was built to hold over 7,000 hours of collected audio video interview of survivors of residential school and their descendants. The NCTR’s collection is available on line and holds in addition to the interviews: historic records of the residential schools, some burial records and many of the collected pictures from the schools.

It was great to learn what reconciliation really is, not just a destination but a process. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission made 94 recommendations for action to the people of Canada following the hearings in 2008. Kaila gave specific suggestions on actions we can take to work towards the achievement of the calls to action. These included learning about the issues and understanding them, teaching others about them and choosing a particular call to action to focus on.

Panel for the Significance of the 2017 Reformation Commemoration

Mark Hedlin, rostered delegate from Saskatoon, Lynn Cavanagh, lay delegate from Regina, and Janet Kostyna, rostered delegate from Inglis.

Delegates at the Convention were treated to a panel of ecumenical partners and friends who brought their perspectives on what is the current significance of the 2017 Commemoration and what implications might there be for the future of the church.

The participants were: The Most Rev. Richard Gagnon, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg (RC); The Right Rev. Jordan Cantwell, Moderator of the United Church of Canada (UCC); The Rev. Canon Allyson Barnett-Cowan, President of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC); Dr. Katherine Johnson, Director of Ecumenical Relations for the ELCA (ELCA); The Rev. Dr. Peter Busch, Moderator of Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC); The Rev. Dr. Willard Metzger, Executive Director of Mennonite Church Canada (MCC); The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz, Primate of Anglican Church of Canada (ACC).

The speakers gave insightful thoughts on such themes as the context of 16th century reformation; the enduring importance of the *5 Solas*, *the priesthood of all believers*, *that the church must always be reforming* and *to proclaim the Gospel in all its fullness*.

There was a lifting up and celebration of ecumenical work and movements that have brought fruitful relationships between many denominations in many different ways. Humility, listening, repentance and prayer have been essential to “successes”. There is a recognition that, as the church moves to the future, there are many groups and peoples that have not been well included or invited to the conversations. We must maintain the same spiritual postures listed above so that we can all be open to sisters and brothers through whom the Spirit desires to lead us all in faith. Indigenous populations from previously colonial lands bring forward and will continue to bring forward new forms and expressions of the Christian faith. Conversations with Evangelical denominations encourage us to be open to the differences between us and to find ways to learn from each other.

The panel forum was a wonderful and engaging expression of the work of the Holy Spirit, courage, vision and hope for all who took it in.

Reference And Counsel

Deb Roberts, lay delegate from Regina, Bev Tastad, lay delegate from Regina, and Ron Belke, lay delegate from Saskatoon

The Reference and Counsel Committee managed the first day of convention well, with only one resolution submitted. It is the Committee’s responsibility to first help the people submitting the resolution to ensure it means what they want it to mean, and can’t be misinterpreted by the Convention assembly. Once that it determined it is up to the Committee to make recommendations to the assembly as to the best way to handle the resolution. Reference and Counsel Committee can recommend adoption, where the assembly votes on the motion; a substitute motion, which then gets voted on; defeat, where the assembly also votes on the motion, but must have delegates move and second it; referral to a particular group or committee for further research or deliberation; or recommend that the motion is out of order (meaning against the parliamentary rules that we follow), so the Chair rules on the motion.

Following Bishop Susan Johnson’s announcement that the deadline for resolutions submitted to Reference and Counsel was upcoming on the second day, we fielded seven more resolutions. In total eight items were submitted to the Reference & Counsel Committee. Of these, five were referred to National Church Council (NCC). Topics included here related to the development of a learning plan to help local congregations explore materials contained in *Welcoming the Stranger* and *Encountering People of Other Faiths*; suggestions for national convention preparation and planning; as well as for changes to the nomination processes for NCC. It was also approved that any unfinished business from the convention be referred to NCC, however there was no unfinished business.

The three submissions adopted included:

- To support the Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) through letter writing;
- To review & update the model constitution Article VI Section 7 given the approvals of motions – Statement to Muslims and Guidelines for Interfaith Relationships;
- To formally seek lessons learned from ELCJHL related to interactions with Muslims and other faith groups.

The Reference and Counsel Committee submitted a final resolution themselves, that the many people involved in the Convention be thanked, which the assembly did with resounding applause.