



Resolutions and Memorials

ADOPTED:

- Memorial for the ELCA to undertake a study for a Social Statement on Justice for Women
- Memorial for the ELCA to adopt the proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality and its implementing resolutions and to adopt the four parts of 'the proposed Recommendation on Ministry Policies
- Resolution that all rostered persons in this Synod and currently on leave from call for study purposes defined by the Synod Council, shall be voting members when in attendance at the Assembly. (Will require a constitutional change.)
- Resolution that congregations be encouraged to study immigration and the ELCA Message on Immigration. Congregations should also reach out to undocumented and immigrant people, be advocates for them, and make our communities safe and welcoming places for them and their families.
- Resolution that condemns brutal interrogations of the recent past as illegal and immoral and calls for a letter from our bishop be written to our congressional leaders.

FAILED:

- Memorial seeking 2/3 vote (instead of a simple majority) at the upcoming Churchwide Assembly in August regarding any changes in policy for the blessing of same sex committed relationships and the ordination and rostering of persons in same sex committed relationships.

2009 Budget Revised downward \$475,428

The assembly approved a revised budget for the current year, 2009, which was adjusted downward \$475,428 due to a reduction in commitments from congregations. Synod staffing will be reduced saving \$198,463. The new Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Household Ministry will be half-time rather than full time. And rather than replace Madelyn Busse, who is retiring, with a full-time replacement, she will continue to oversee the candidacy process and First Call Theological Education program 1/4 time. Other reductions include Campus Ministry (\$33,000), Administration (\$24,000), Mission Outreach (\$16,500), Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (\$5,000) and other programs (\$33,000). Support to the ELCA will be reduced \$175,500.

Other Assembly Actions

- Linda Bobbitt was elected to a second term as Rocky Mountain Synod Vice President. Bishop Bjornberg expressed thanks to her for her first term of service.
- Linda Staats was introduced as the new half-time Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Household Ministry. She will be present at the synod office about one week each month and in other areas of the synod an additional week. Her "home address" will remain in Phoenix, AZ.

Assembly encounters the *Miracle of the Border*

Three years ago, the eleven Rocky Mountain Synod congregations in the Border Conference extended an invitation to come and experience an assembly in El Paso, TX. Three years of visioning and planning resulted in an engaging and meaningful time together April 30 to May 2 at the El Paso Convention Center.



Bishop Allan Bjornberg presides at the closing eucharist worship, assisted by Madelyn Busse, diaconal minister.

Photo by Dale Horkey

About the assembly, one attendee wrote, "It is exciting to see the church continuing to step out into the world, in front of the world, crying out publicly for justice, truth, compassion, forgiveness, and—more than crying out for hope—working to make hope concrete."

From the start, the planning team envisioned this to be a "different kind of assembly." Less time would be scheduled in the meeting hall so that those in attendance could go out into the neighborhoods of El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Mexico, to encounter first hand the challenges of the Border and to experience the ministries that serve those in need.

To that end, twenty-two vans departed from the El Paso Convention Center for "mini immersions," eight of them destined for Juarez and the others for El Paso sites.

One who visited the El Buen Pastor Lutheran Church in Juarez was struck by their faithfulness in the midst of their challenges. "In learning about the amount of money that the people of Buen Pastor raised for their new church (building) and how committed they were to tithe out of their meager wages, there is a strong message that *our* congregations can, and must, do better than give God the "left-overs," even in tough economic times. They find strength in God, family and each other, although they have so little."

In his assembly address, Bishop Allan Bjornberg said, "The deepest, most profound hospitality I've experienced in my life has come from people who have nothing, but give everything. I wonder If we haven't used everything we can find to divert us from the real issues of discipleship, like sharing."

Acknowledging that the Church has spent many years on issues of sexuality, he said, "There are a handful of verses in scripture about sex, and over 2,000 references to caring for the poor. Our affluence is our greatest opportunity and our greatest threat."



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Crossing borders

How can we as the church move from charity to justice and bring down walls?

PASTOR KIM ERNO

Director, Lutheran Center, Mexico City



“All we have to do is cross the bridge to touch, smell, and feel the future. We cross the border and meet the future.”

Pastor Kim Erno challenged the assembly to

recognize the unspeakable violence wrought by drug trafficking, violence against women, violence against those who live in poverty as our future, brought about by guns and money that go South and drugs and goods made by exploited factory workers that go North. He recalled the Alamo, an unjust war in which Mexico lost one-half of their territory. The resulting border is a wound that does not heal. Mexicans say: “We did not cross the border; the border crossed us.”

Erno offered powerful, graphic descriptions of the suffering experienced daily by the people of Mexico: how a young woman, an ideal employee at a maquila (twin factory of a US corporation) was two minutes late for work, how she was turned away, sent alone into the pervasive danger of darkness in Juarez. She was murdered, her assailant never caught. Erno described how hundreds of young women never came home, but lie “buried in the sand, their voices crying in the desert.” This is only a single example of the suffering that straddles the border and welcomes us to the future.

When asked to describe concrete measures that the people of God can take to ease the suffering, Erno listed:

1. Revision of US immigration laws
2. Cancellation of Mexico's national debt
3. Renegotiation of trade agreements (NAFTA)
4. Raise awareness of the need for support of women's organizations in Mexico that seek educational opportunities and justice for their communities.

Hope lies in the story of Mary, the mother of God, who has a voice, who in the Magnificat, sings grace, not as a lullaby, but as a wake up call to God's people. She sings as she carries the hope of the world's future in her womb. She advocates for the poor; she is a counter force for the nameless women victims of stories told in the Hebrew Bible, such as the concubine in Judges 19 and 20, a counter force for the thousands of nameless women who perish in the cities and deserts of Mexico.

Erno concluded by calling the people of the assembly to international solidarity, to come to the border to stand with our Mexican brothers and sisters. When we come, trumpets are transformed into a brass band as Joshua's army brings down the walls that divide us.

—Pastor Dena Williams

DR. JAVIER ALANIS

Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest, Austin, TX



Dr. Javier Alanis, a cradle Lutheran, tells the story of how his father and grandparents crossed the border into South Texas during the Mexican Revolution in

1918. He shares the story of a family of German Lutheran immigrants who crossed borders—geographic, cultural, theological—to bring the Gospel to him and his boyhood community, how they established the first “Mexican Lutheran” congregation in the United States.

Alanis' mother tells the story of how a Norwegian pastor of that congregation crossed borders to introduce Hispanic Lutherans to the sound of a guitar in worship. He describes how when Germans and Mexicans come together in South Texas, they do so to dance the Mexican Polka. That is the nature of border crossings; all who cross borders are transformed and become a new creation.

As example of a border crossing of compassion and justice, Alanis lifted up the story of the Good Samaritan. He described how the Samaritan was able to cross over cultural and religious barriers because he knew first hand the experience of rejection. The Samaritan identified with

the suffering, injured man by the side of the road. He felt what the other felt and acted on his pity with kindness and healing for the stranger.

Alanis described how, in the community of his childhood, becoming Lutheran did not mean the people had to become German or Norwegian. He encouraged the Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly, as we consider the border between El Paso and Mexico, and other borders we encounter, to ask ourselves five questions:

1. What are the borders that divide us and hold us captive to ourselves or to our past, as a people of faith, as a culture, and as a church?
2. What is the cause of the fear and anxiety that is keeping the church from reaching out to those whose status or culture is different from our own?
3. What are the borders or the human constructs that prevent us from seeing the one who is different from us as created in the image and likeness of God?
4. How can we be the neighbors who serve others with compassion so as to serve God as agents of God's reconciling love in the world?
5. How can we as a church move from charity to justice?

Alanis concluded: “As Jesus Christ crossed the border that separates us from God and from each other, let's cross the border together to discover the amazing grace of God in the tenderness of our hearts.”

—Pastor Dena Williams

Assembly Offerings

Special offering for World Hunger totalled **\$3,371** with an additional **\$923** raised by Pastor Michael Mortvedt who biked to El Paso. Offerings totalled **\$10,830** for four border ministries:

- Iglesia Luterana Cristo Rey, El Paso
- Clínica Cristo Rey – Dr. Mendoza, Juarez
- Annunciation House, El Paso
- Centro Santa Catalina, Juarez