



What makes our ELCA voice unique?

Bishop Gonia focused on our witness as a “both/and” church

“Gratitude” was Bishop Jim Gonia’s starting place as he addressed the Rocky Mountain Synod in assembly, May 28-30 in Loveland, Colorado.

“There’s gratitude here for joys and celebrations, as well as gratitude for the tough stuff of our life together, for the way the Holy Spirit uses our challenges and heartache as catalyst for new growth, raw material for the resurrecting work of Christ,” he said.

He challenged congregations in the Rocky Mountain Synod to reflect on and identify what it is that makes our ELCA voice unique and distinct. “If we can’t answer THAT question, nothing else really matters,” he said.

He identified a variety of ways that we are taking that question to heart. The Rocky Mountain Synod is in the midst of a strategic planning process in tandem with the ELCA’s planning and visioning. And as we approach the observance of the birth of the Reformation 500 years ago, congregations and conferences will reflect on our heritage, and our future.

Bishop Gonia focused on our voice as a “both/and” church. That means



Bishop Gonia, right, extends words of gratitude to Pastor Ron Roschke who is retiring from his ministry as an Assistant to the Bishop.

that we bear witness to the gospel in a way that is always including and never dividing since our ELCA way of living as church is filled with “both/ands.” We are a community gathered around **both** Word **and** Sacrament. We speak of the Scriptures as Christ’s living word proclaimed to us in **both** Law **and** Gospel. We acknowledge that in this life we live simultaneously as **both** sinner **and** saint. These are the paradoxes of our faith.

As a synod we share in gratitude, but we also face challenges, especially in terms of Mission Support, which are the offerings that congregations share with the Rocky Mountain Synod and ELCA

Churchwide ministries. For the first time in the life of the Rocky Mountain Synod, instead of a 50% share with Churchwide, 46% will be shared.

“We don’t do this lightly, but rather with a renewed commitment to intentional conversation about the purpose and power of mission support, and about the place of generosity in our life together,” said Bishop Gonia. The goal is to return our commitment to our Churchwide ministries to at least 50% as we continue to support the vital aspects of our work here in this synod.

“It’s not an either/or but a both/and,” he said. “I am convinced that our ELCA voice is needed today more than ever — that we are called to share that voice of the both/and of God’s grace boldly.”



Rocky Mountain Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God’s work. Our hands.

Assembly 2016: Many Voices, One Song



Under the theme, *Many Voices, One Song*, 414 voting members and 75 visitors joined in worship, business, fellowship, and learning together at the 2016 Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly, April 28-30 in Loveland, Colorado.



TOP: Bishop Jim Gonia expresses that the Rocky Mountain Synod is a place of welcome and invitation. **ABOVE:** Young adults, youth, and children lead the songs at worship in a style of our two outdoor ministries: Rainbow Trail and Sky Ranch. **RIGHT:** Voting members join together in prayer and song.

ASSEMBLY OFFERINGS totaled \$12,781. Betela Seminary in Madagascar will receive \$2,099, World Hunger \$5,940, the seminary scholarship fund \$1,729, and Aurora Area Strategy Ministries \$3,012.

PHOTOS BY DALE HORKEY



Creativity

The psalms and the trees proclaim the glory of God

The Rev. Shauna Hannan, professor of homiletics at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, anchored the assembly in texts from the Psalms. Reading from Psalm 19, she invited those present to listen for the characteristics of Creation's creative voice: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork."



Addressing the assembly she said, "Humans are not the only preachers in God's creation." She described her experience in North Carolina when the amazing scent of an Osmanthus tree surprised her one November day, since her experience of November has been only cold and dreary. "It was Easter in November," she said, recalling how pleasurable it was to sit by the open window and experience the Osmanthus, graciously urging her into gratitude.

"The tree has preached by, well, being a tree," she said. "I give thanks that humans are not the only ones called to preach."

Ultimately, Dr. Hannan invited the assembly to consider their own creativity in the context of God's own creation. Citing the discipline of creativity studies, she challenged the notion that a certain few are creative.

"Creativity can be tapped," she said. "It is cultivable in most everyone."

ELCA Mission

It is possible to end poverty and hunger in the world

Mikka McCracken, Director for Planning and Engagement for the ELCA World Hunger campaign, addressed the assembly on behalf of ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. She addressed the assembly on the theme: *We are Church for the Sake of the World.*

"Our church is a church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace," she said. "Our faith is based on the Good News of Jesus Christ who gives us the freedom and courage to wonder, discover, and boldly participate in what God is up to in the world."



She described the interconnectedness of the ELCA in its three expressions: congregations, synods, and churchwide ministries, expressing gratitude for the mission and ministry of the Rocky Mountain Synod, especially in commitment to ELCA World Hunger. She said the Rocky Mountain Synod is number six among the 65 synods in the total gifts given to ELCA World Hunger last year.

"It is possible to end poverty and hunger because every day we believe in something that everyone else thinks is nuts," she said. "We believe in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and because of that grace we are completely free to serve. No one else in the world is going to say that, if we don't."

Elections

SYNOD COUNCIL

Border Susan Mitchell
Boulder/Broomfield Janice Kibler
Metro West Jay Voth
Southeast Colorado Dianna Biggs
Wyoming Todd Herried
at Large Clergy Julie Brooks

Youth Magdalyne Claire Nieberger
Young Adult Melanie Ferraro
Ethnic Specific Ministry
Hendrik Dapot Samosir

CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRIES

BOARD
Jennifer Jesse
Tim Orlovski

COMMITTEE ON DISCIPLINE

Wendy Krull
Meg Spencer
Michael (Ray) Ferry
Larry Davis
Paul Rosin

CONSULTATION COMMITTEE

Brendon George
Keith Langford
Dave Cruson

Memorials

Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery

Calls upon the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to repudiate the European-derived "doctrine of discovery" with its continuing impact upon tribal governments and individual tribal members and to acknowledge and repent of its complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas. Also calls for a national ceremony of repentance to Native nations, and calls for a renewed strategy for ministry with Native people in the ELCA.

On US Aid to the State of Israel

Calls upon the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to call for Congressional action to make future U.S. aid to Israel contingent on Israel's halt to all settlement-building in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), and encourages ELCA members and congregations to study this issue and to contact their congress persons.

Resolutions

Official RMS Statement of Welcome

The assembly adopted this statement of welcome: "We as the Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA invite all into the fullness of God's love. This invitation is inclusive of people of every race, national origin, immigration status, sexual

orientation, gender identity or expression, age, physical or mental ability, sex, or station in life. We pledge to use our differences as gifts for our work together." Also calls for ongoing education and training on building an inclusive church and encourages congregations and other ministry sites to become Reconciling in Christ communities.

Encouraging Social Purpose Investments

Commends Portico for its environmentally responsible stewardship and encourages rostered persons in the Rocky Mountain Synod to consider allocating their pension investments to the Portico social purpose funds.

Creation Stewardship Reformation Observances

Urges the planning team for our observances of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation to incorporate the call to faithful stewardship of creation into the worship and educational materials and other resources prepared for this commemoration.

Financials

The 2015 fiscal year ended on January 31, 2016. The closing figures show total income of \$2,728,365 and expenses of \$2,780,032. Thus, for the year we showed a deficit of \$51,667. We are grateful for the generous partnership with our congregations, which provided 98% of expenses. Stronger Mission Support from each congregation would result in 100%.



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