



Pacifica Synod



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

22nd Annual Synod Assembly ♦ May 21-23 ♦ Riverside Convention Center

Our Hands at Work



Registration began at 8 a.m.

Hearings

Made available for the first time, hearings started the assembly agenda. Those in attendance were able to sit in on discussions of the proposed Social Statement, budget hearing and resolutions hearing. This was a time to listen to others views, get clarification or voice an opinion on these varied topics.

"I declare this twenty-second assembly of the Pacifica Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to be in session in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." With these words, Bishop Murray Finck opened the Pacifica Synod's 22nd Annual Assembly.



Bishop Finck responds to questions at hearings

Bible Study

The Rev. Susan Briehl led the afternoon Bible study, ably assisted by musicians Tom Witt, Mary Preus and Mary Shaima. Her scripture for the study was the story of Jesus healing a paralyzed man, as found in Luke 5:17-26. This passage says those who had witnessed the healing "were filled with awe, saying 'We have seen strange things today.'"

Briehl believes that we, like those early witnesses, "will leave this assembly and go back into our daily lives having seen and heard strange things." She said that the friends of the paralytic were so faithful that they looked for, and discovered, a new way of getting to Jesus. They deconstructed the present reality (the roof of the home), enabling their friend to get through the crowds gathered around Jesus. They needed to get their friend closer to the compassionate God in Jesus and used their own hands to accomplish it.

Briehl asked, "Where are those we know and love who are in need of Christ's love, healing and forgiveness? How can we help? Where are [today's] paralyzed in need of healing, compassion and justice?" We look up and those surrounding our mats are our friends with enough faith to make a way when there was none before.

Briehl concluded by noting that Jesus sent the healed man home, for that is where we are called to serve. At the close of this Assembly, we will be sent home, having seen strange things: life from death, wholeness from sickness, joy from sorrow.

Treasurer's Report

Synod Treasurer Loren Fry presented a treasurer's report that showed the synod ending the fiscal year in the black. More importantly, he reported on how many different ways the synod works throughout the region using the mission support from the congregations.

Bishop's Report

Bishop Murray Finck began his 2009 report to the Assembly with a humorous story of a wedding miscommunication that resulted in whispers amongst the congregation and the embarrassment of the clergyperson. He then said, "I want to be very clear with you about several matters before this synod and the church of which we are all a part... I want to do no whispering with you in this assembly. We want no communication break-downs, no surprises, hopefully nothing lost in translation."

Noting the recent media coverage of studies showing "that more and more Americans are no longer connected in any way whatsoever with the Christian Church," he cited a conver-

gence that is taking place to which we are all called to attend. Even as the population of the nation increases, so does the percentage of people not connected to a church. Bishop Finck said, "The mission field in our own back yards is greater than ever, but people are not waiting in line to get into our doors and into our ministries." Add to this

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Bishop Finck recognized the following for the anniversaries of their ordination:

50 years

David Babcock Larry Gardner Harvey Peters Jr.

25 years

Dianne Eller Gloria Espeseth David Kieffer
Randall Mundt Kay Reeb Thomas Chen
Kim Eifert Krogstad



Bishop Murray & Rhoda Finck

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the current state of our economy and we may be looking at “a perfect storm” scenario.

He further noted that our society and our church are engaged in deep-seated, deep-rooted questions of morality, ethics, the law and human rights, biblical teachings and tradition. This was clearly seen in a very public way in President Obama’s recent address at the University of Notre Dame. Bishop Finck said, “[Obama] said what has been true for many years, ‘No matter how much we want to fudge it... the fact is that at some level, the views of the two camps are irreconcilable,’ [and it’s time to stop] ‘reducing those with differing views to caricature.’” Obama finished by saying, “I do not suggest that the debate surrounding abortion can or should go away.” Responding to this, the Rev. John Jenkins, president of Notre Dame, gave thanks for a president who was not “someone who stopped talking to those who disagree with him.”

After noting several successes experienced in the Pacifica Synod in the past ten years, Bishop Finck said that “Pacifica is in a very different place than it was in 1999. There is more talk of survival these ten years later. There are those who have decided to let go of the oars and are no longer willing to pull and strain with us through these difficult waters. There are some who want to be the church, more alone and unto themselves, rather than in day-to-day connections of neighboring congregations, the conference, the Pacifica Synod and the ELCA.”

Bishop Finck concluded, “Whatever labels we bear – moderate, liberal, conservative, traditionalist, progressive, centrist, this is not the time for separate camps, but a time to be together in the church... When we read about the early church... when the church was not in agreement about a very important theological issue and practice, they came together... they worked it out... they loved God and they loved one another too much to pull apart or separate... from each other... I hope and pray that for the Pacifica Synod, and I hope and pray that that is also your hope and prayer. There is so much important work that we are needed to do together.

Keynote Speaker



The Rev. Dr. Frederick Niedner

After being introduced by his cousin Bishop Finck, the Rev. Dr. Frederick Niedner began his keynote address noting the “COMpassion is one of those COM- words in our language, like COMMunion or COMMunity or COMPanion.” Niedner noted that the Hebrew Testament word for “to have compassion for” is literally “to have a womb for.” To have compassion is to have a womb for someone – to

treat others as if you were their mother and they were once in your womb. The word may also mean to treat someone as coming from the same womb as you do – a “womb-mate” – your flesh and blood.

He noted several Hebrew Testament passages that refer to the compassion of God and substituted the “womb” language. In the instance of Psalm 51, King David’s hope is that God’s steadfast mercy is [literally] an “enormous womb,” with room for “the commander and sinner in chief.”

Niedner concluded that compassion, “at least as seen in this metaphor, ...is a mothering thing.” If we take the story of Hosea to heart, we see that for God, the question is never whether, but only when, love and faithfulness, mercy and compassion for God’s people, would cost God life itself. But that, too—the embrace of the ‘Holy One in our midst’—requires hands, flesh and blood hands, hands on which that love is engraved forever. God is the compassionate God. God is the God of the great womb.

Assembly Planning Team: Helen Riggs asked everyone to trace their hand and write inside the drawing what they wish to do in service to God after you leave this assembly. The drawings will be strung together as a colorful reminder of our hands at work.

Greetings were given by the Rev. Matthew Seargeant on behalf of Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, presiding bishop of the California-Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, and by Bishop Dean Nelson, bishop of Southwest California Synod - ELCA.

Opening Worship

The evening worship included an inspirational blend of new and familiar music led by Mary Preus, Tom Witt, Mary Shaima and Jason Klein.

The Rev. Susan Briehl offered the evening’s message on the theme of being “dressed in the Holy Spirit,” recalling for us the precious gift of our identity as children of God. Speaking to us through the story of “Abigail,” who suffered abuse in her household as a child and on the streets as a young woman, and who lost everything except her claim as a child of God, Briehl reminded us of the power of this identity. With seemingly nothing left of herself, Abigail could still remember and claim one thing: “Don’t forget. I am a child of God.”

With the words, “Don’t forget” echoing in our minds, Briehl spoke of these words as a prayer of supplication imploring God not to forget his child; as a declaration of



Installation of Assistant to the Bishop The Rev. Heidi Hester

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victory over darkness; as a charge to the community of faith not to forget that those who are “least”—the ruined, the forgotten—are in need of our compassion.

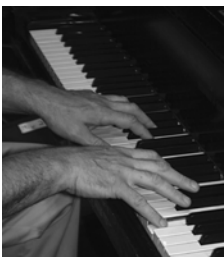
The Reverend Heidi Hester was installed as Assistant to the Bishop and welcomed into her

new role by the assembly in worship with a litany of support and affirmation and a festive communion was celebrated.

FRIDAY REVIEW

Bible Study

The Rev. Susan Briehl led the morning Bible study, reflecting on Luke 7:36-40. In this text, while Jesus attends a dinner party, a woman washes the feet of Jesus with her tears, dries them with her hair, and anoints them with oil from her alabaster jar.



Bible Study with Mary Preus, Tom Witt and The Rev. Susan Briehl

Who is this woman? Briehl describes her as an uninvited guest, one who was once condemned, an outcast, whose actions arise out of deep gratitude. She has heard Jesus’ message of

love and redemption, she has experienced his compassion and her tears flow. She breaks open her heart and pours out her gratitude just as she breaks open the flask and pours out the oil. God’s grace generates gratitude. Like lightning follows thunder, gratitude follows grace.

Her actions raise complaint from the host of the dinner, but Jesus speaks on her behalf through the story of two men who owed a sum to a moneylender—one a little, one a lot. Both debts were forgiven: who would love the moneylender more?

Briehl asks us, “does it take one with great sin to remind us of God’s great grace? Have we forgotten our own death sentence and our own release? What are the signs of our own great gratitude in response to God’s great grace?” She closed with the striking image of Jesus turning to the woman and saying, “Your sins are forgiven.”

“I see your gratitude; your faith has set you upright. Dancing in your ‘Holy Spirit dress’, go in peace—go back to city to proclaim the good news.”

BUSINESS SESSION 2

Memorials to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly

In the interest of clarity, the Synod Council, with approval of the authors, reformatted Resolution 09-5 into two parts, 09-5a and 09-5b, each speaking separately to the Proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality and the Recommendations for Ministry Policies.

In order to provide an opportunity for voting members to speak about these memorials, 12 minutes was allotted for small group conversation. Each of the four memorials regarding these topics (09-3, 09-4, 095a, 09-5b) were amended to state that the voting results would be included on memorials that were passed and transmitted to the Secretary of the ELCA. The debate included many heartfelt, thoughtful, and respectful comments reflecting deeply held, yet differing points of views. A paper vote was conducted for these memorials (see p. 2 for results). Bishop Finck thanked the Rev. Gloria Espeseth, chair of the Resolutions Committee, for her assistance in facilitating this portion of the assembly business.

Keynote Speaker

The Rev. Dr. Frederick Niedner again provided an enriching presentation, focusing on the ruined hands of the crucified Christ as the center point for reflection on our theme of compassion.

Niedner used the Gospel of Luke to show us how Jesus both acted on and taught about compassion. Jesus’ acts of healing and of ministering to and feeding the crowds were held up as ways for us to see the compassion of Jesus in action. Even as Jesus hung on the cross he expressed forgiving compassion for his executioners and for the repentant criminal who hung beside him.

Jesus taught about compassion in parables such as the “prodigal son” and “the good Samaritan,” which are centered on compassion. Niedner pointed out that this teaching of Jesus was followed by the command, “Go and do likewise,” and then connected this command with Jesus’ teaching to “take up your cross daily and follow me.”

In doing so Niedner asks, “Where do we get the strength to do this?” We do what Jesus did as he died, says Niedner, praying the words of Psalm 31:5, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” Niedner concluded, “That’s how you can ‘do’ a day of cross-bearing... in those hands. The hands of the one that held Jesus. The hands that will never, ever let go of you or me, or all of us together, as we hang here in a group, the community of the crucified. And that is our only hope.”

“Peace Without Walls”

During lunch voting members had the opportunity to hear Bishop and Rhoda share their experience of traveling to the Middle East with the Conference of Bishops earlier this year.



Director for Renewed Evangelizing Congregations

ELCA Report

The ELCA Representative to our assembly, the Rev. Neil Harrison, used the assembly theme of *Compassionate God, Use Our Hands* as a “call and response”

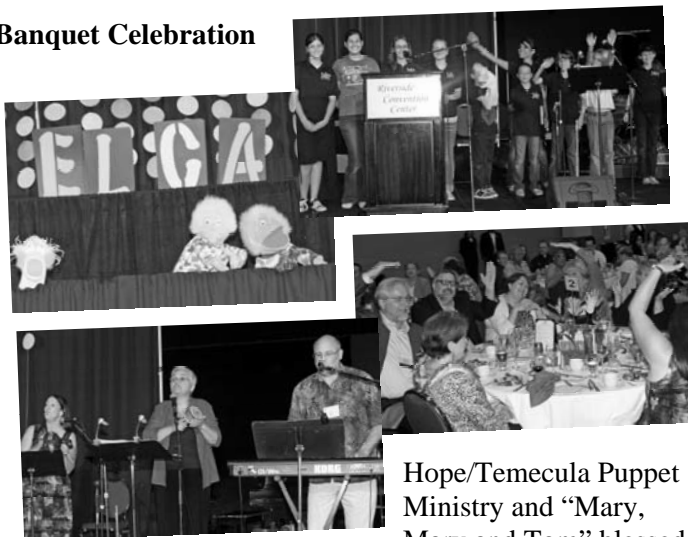
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throughout his presentation as he thanked the Pacifica Synod for our faithful ministry in this synod and our partnership in the ministry of the ELCA. Harrison also described plans for assisting congregations to revitalize their ministry of evangelism and brought greetings (via DVD) from ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson. Bishop Hanson spoke about the uncertainty of these times and of the hope of Easter, reminding us of the words the angel spoke to the women at the empty tomb, "Do not be afraid." These words are both an encouragement and a promise of hope in the face of fear. "We stand at the intersection of fear and hope as heirs of that promise," Hanson proclaimed, and asked the assembly to lay hands on one another as he offered a prayer of encouragement and blessing. *Note: Bishop Hanson's greeting is available on the ELCA website.*

Workshops

Voting members and guests were given the opportunity to choose from 13 general interest workshops on Friday afternoon. These included topics such as worship, social justice, prayer, immigration, Book of Faith, lay education (PALLMM) and more.

Banquet Celebration



Hope/Temecula Puppet Ministry and "Mary, Mary and Tom" blessed our time together!

2009 Lay Recognition

- #1 Sonshine - Marilyn Harper
- #2 W. San Diego - Don Snowden
- #3 Harvest - Vivian Johnson
- #4 Raincross - Susan Downer
- #5 Big Bear - Erwin Buschauer

- #6 Mariposa - Klaus Witte
- #7 Saddleback - Trisha Gebhardt
- #8 Son & Surf - Jim Huffman
- #9 Rejoice - Andrea Mathews
- #10 Hukilau - Juli Patten



Spiritborne records the assembly for use in the congregations.

SATURDAY REVIEW Bible Study

Opening scripture for the final of her three Bible studies, Pastor Susan Briehl shared with the assembly that she would be leaving "in haste" for New Haven, Connecticut, where she will celebrate her daughters graduation from Yale Divinity School and to "bless, say good-bye and give thanks to God, who will clothe

my daughter and son-in-law as they head off to a place I will never go." Her daughter's and her son-in-law's calling to Bolivia was compared to the call of the disciples who were sent the far corners of the earth.

Our study was based on Luke 9. As she shared scripture, Mary, Mary and Tom invited the assembly to join our voices as we sang "Be clothed with compassion and live the new life." We were reminded that the early church loved the story of the feeding of the multitude and how it is present in all four Gospels.

Framed by a "string of eating" stories, we were reminded of the four verbs that Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it. "Bread, the sign of all creation and the work of human hands." Briehl reminded us that "whenever Jesus takes bread and breaks it, it is a gift of himself . . . not only the crucified Lord, it is the risen Christ." Every time we take bread it is the "compassion of God on which we feast."

The two questions that we pondered with Briehl were the questions asked by the disciples and that is asked by Herod, Who is this person? It is somewhere between the two questions and Peter's answer to the question that we experience the answer. He is "the messiah, the Christ of God, the One who comes among us to serve to pour himself out."

Briehl left us with a final image of disciple as table steward. Sharing the story of her "papa's" early student days as a table server, who served all kinds of people from students to college presidents, friend and foe, elder and younger and how he learned to serve with open hands and with grace. The pastors in the assembly hall were reminded that we are called to be "waiters, table servers, the ones called by congregations to set before the people the food of Jesus." "It is the command of Jesus to set the food before the people and we are obedient... praying that the spirit is in fact present and our hearts are open wide and we indeed are glad to be praying thanking and praising God. So out of obedience, we say, Compassionate God use our hands. Take our hands that we might be table servers sharing with a hungry world the bread of life, the food of angels, a sandwich of health care, advocacy, shelter... take our hands for we will be obedient."

Finally, Briehl reminded us that “it is in our baptism that we were clothed with Christ and we were set into a new way of life. Sometimes it’s what we want to do. Sometimes it is what we are called to do, but every time following the way in baptismal love. We have been clothed in a compassionate Christ.”

Keynote Speaker

The Rev. Dr. Frederick Niedner began his final address with some thoughts on what had taken place over the assembly’s first two days. He told the story of God making us “fishers of men” and said that what God does is make us the net. We, the church, are the net that God hauls through the world “gathering up everything God can.” If you ever looked at a net—any net—it is nothing more than a bunch of crosses and that is who we are—a bunch of crucified tied together forever. A second piece to “this slide show” that Dr. Niedner pointed us to is the story in John 21. The story of a great catch of fish. It is the story of the disciples going out on a mission and it doesn’t work without Jesus feeding and directing them.

In this story of the great catch there is a detail for us to consider and that is the detail that the disciples caught 153 fish. Niedner reminds us that there is a reason for the detail. Hundreds of scholars have proposed what this detail means and the one which resonates for Dr. Niedner is Jerome’s understanding. St. Jerome proposed that it was the tradition of the Palestinian fishermen, who fished the Galilee, that there were 153 different kinds of fish in the sea. What the text means is that the disciples caught every conceivable kind fish and the net did not tear.

The promise is that the net did not tear and in light of what we did on Thursday and Friday, we live with this promise and this image that “the net can hold all kinds.” This net of a “bunch of crucified people tied together giving thanks, serving God, will not tear.” There may be some breaks between us but the net will not break. The net will not fail but will continue to gather people in.

Next, Niedner used the words of a fortune cookie: — “Simplicity and clarity should be your theme.” Following upon Friday’s address, Niedner used the imagery of Jesus on the cross, asking what “Compassionate God, Use Our Hands” looks like. It begins with knowing the depths of God’s own compassion and the costs and suffering it entails, the life and death stakes involved in have a womb for another in the face of that one’s suffering or danger. We’ve seen how the compassion of God takes on flesh and blood in Christ, and the signs of compassion incarnate are nail-prints in the hands and feet of the one who walked about Galilee and Judea, touching the unclean, the hungry, the dead, and doing so out of compassion. And we’ve seen how consistently the life and teachings of this crucified one becomes to us a kind of command: Do this, in remembrance of me. Do this, and your members, your arms and legs and feet and hands and everything else will be my

members. And in you, I will walk the land again and touch the sick and dying. My compassion will twist your insides, and you will womb the world’s lost ones.

Then, shifting to the story of the ascension, Niedner said, “You have seen the Christ at work in your midst, the one who comes in the same way he was once ‘taken up,’ by means of the long, tortuous road to Golgatha, and all that happened along the way. You are seeing in your own skin, in the flesh and blood of your little community of crucified ones, the hands of the compassionate God at work in this world. You, and we, my friends, are being taken up. That’s what we’re witnessing. *Our* lives are being poured out, and *our* hearts and wombs wrung with all the world’s pain and sorrow.”

He concluded with the story of a man who was the grandson of slaves who had labored in Georgia, a young man who grew up among Christian people, but mostly left all that behind and became a piano player in Chicago night spots back in the 1920s and 30s. He founded the “Wild Cats Jazz Band,” and that was his life until one day in 1932, while touring in Michigan, he received a telegram saying his wife Nettie had died in childbirth, along with their son. That night, Thomas A. Dorsey wrote a song that broken-hearted travelers still sing.

*Precious Lord, take my hand
Lead me on, let me stand
I'm tired, I'm weak, I'm worn
Through the storm, through the night
Lead me on to the light
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home.
(ELW 773)*

That’s a compassionate Samaritan’s song, one of the many we, too, can sing and that will lift us, keep us together, as we travel toward home, a home that for now, we mostly find in the company of each other, a band of left-behind strangers who lie in the ditch, with holes in our hands, whacks to our heads, but together, singing, filled with compassion, ready to use these ruined hands in service.

Now, go, and do likewise.

Closing Business Session



Going green with water bottles from the Mission Investment Fund

On Saturday morning Bishop Finck spoke to the Assembly about the “chapters” in the life of Pacifica Synod and invited us to think about what the next chapter of our life together in ministry could look like. He gave us a page on which to write down what “subtitles” we thought might be included in this next chapter and asked us to place these in the offering basket at closing worship.

An hour was spent in conference meetings. Led by the deans, the congregations talked about ways they might work

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together to accomplish together what they might not be able to as individual congregations or other opportunities to support one another's ministries.

Closing Worship

The closing worship service mirrored the diversity of our synod. Our guest musicians led us in songs with an international flavor and two of the lessons were read in languages other than English. The Rev. Karin Boye presided and was assisted by intern Scott Egbers. Bishop Finck's sermon reflected on the ways in which God has and will continue to use our hands to do God's work in our synod and in our world. Although, as a synod, we are diverse in our thinking on many matters, we are one in Christ, who uses our hands in joint ministry. His sermon was followed by an anointing ceremony in which participants offered their hands to be anointed with baptismal oil, commissioning us to continue in the ministries God gives to us. After communing together, the assembly was closed and we were sent on our way to to do God's work with our hands.



The offering at worship was for our Ethiopian companion synod.

**FINAL ASSEMBLY RESULTS
Memorials, Resolutions and Actions**

- **Reception of Resurrection L. C. in Coronado.** Vice President Sheila Wenzel made the motion to receive Resurrection L. C. in Coronado into the ELCA and the Pacifica Synod. The resolution **Passed** with great enthusiasm and applause.
- **Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Leaders of the Pacifica Synod** - The recommendation **Passed**.
- **09-1 Memorial to Develop Social Statement on Human Disability:** The memorial was **Adopted**
- **09-2 Memorial for Super Majority in 2009 Churchwide Assembly's Rules of Procedure** The memorial was **Adopted**
- **09-3 Memorial to Reject Proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality and Affirm Current Teaching Documents on Sexuality:** The memorial **Failed**
- **09-4 Memorial to Reject Report and Recommendations for Ministry Policies:** The memorial **Failed**
- **09-5a Memorial to Adopt Proposed ELCA Social Statement on Human Sexuality:** The memorial was **Adopted as amended**
- **09-5b Memorial to Adopt Report and Recommendations on Ministry Policies:** The memorial was **Adopted as amended**

	<u>09-3</u>	<u>09-4</u>	<u>09-5a</u>	<u>09-5b</u>
Total	362	355	362	355
Yes	137	144	210	188
No	201	189	137	151
Blank	24	22	15	16

**FINAL ASSEMBLY RESULTS
ELECTIONS**

Treasurer	Fred Luhman
Youth Representative	Laura Szabados
Lay at Large	Lyle Roberts
Clergy at Large	The Rev. Steve Bieghler
Clergy at Large	The Rev. Karin Boye
#2 W. San Diego Conference	The Rev. Karen Marohn
#4 Raincross Conference	The Rev. Charles Aden
#5 Big Bear Conference	The Rev. Tim Edmondson
#7 Saddleback Conference	The Rev. Kim Eifert Krogstad
#8 Son & Surf Conference	Georgina Califf

- SA09.05.09 It was moved, seconded, debated, and approved that seminary interns would be allowed to sit with the voting members and have voice.
- **09-6 Immigrant Detention Practices:** The resolution **Passed**
- **09-7 Book of Faith Initiative:** The resolution **Passed**
- **09-8 BODY WORLDS and Respect for the Bodies of the Dead:** The resolution **Failed**
- **09-9 Rostering of Lutheran World Federation Partner Church Clergy in the ELCA:** The resolution **Passed**
- A motion to bring new business before the assembly: The motion **Failed**



Please use this resource to help you report back to your congregations on the business of the Pacifica Synod. Special thanks to AiM Marcelle Schaefer, ATTB the Rev. Gordon Peterson, Rachel Line, Bill Aanestad and the Rev. Matt Seargeant for their help in reporting for the assembly. For questions, feedback or more information, contact Lori Seargeant, Administrative Assistant for Communications at LoriSeargeant@pacificasynod.org.