

Report of the Vice-President Indiana-Kentucky Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Judy Rehmel

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Greetings to all the saints of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod!

As I write my report this year, I can't help but recall all of the changes that have taken place since I first took office in November 1992. For one thing, there wasn't a vice president's report! I raised the question as to why the section entitled "Officers' Reports" only had the secretary, treasurer and, of course, the bishop's reports. The answer I got was, "Go write one!" So, every year at this time, I look back at the changes that have occurred during the previous year and note the highlights and places where we need some improvement. This year I decided to take the long look back over what I consider to be the best position in the church, that of a synodical vice president. There isn't much of a job description for the position in the constitution but there is no end to the things that can be assigned to the position.

In the beginning, all communication was done by snail-mail with an occasional phone call thrown in. Today we are using electronic media in all phases of the church. I have had the privilege of attending every Churchwide Assembly (except 1991), serving on three ELCA Boards, serving as the chair of the Region 6 Steering Committee, and doing some special assignments for the church. Seeing all of our congregations working together and seeing what can be accomplished as a whole is very gratifying. It has also shown me how much more there is to be done if we apply our time, talent and treasure to the work of the church.

We have seen the effectiveness of our ELCA Domestic Disaster Relief Fund and Lutheran World Relief closer to home with the flooding and tornadoes in our own synod and the unbelievable destruction to our sister church in Indonesia. Our world is shrinking but the need for our reaching out to those affected by such tragedies is growing.

The shifts in our society that began long before my tenure are affecting the way we operate and will continue to do so for a long time. We are no longer an agrarian society because of the population shift from a rural to an urban setting causing the demise of the country church which no longer has a population to support it. We have moved from a society where Sunday has gone from a day of rest to Sunday being just another day with business as usual. Regular church attendance no longer means going to church every Sunday and is often viewed as another form of entertainment. Our church membership is aging with many members now in subsistence living conditions with their health care and insurance costs exceeding their ability to live, let alone support the church. Personal debt, easy credit and no sense of fiscal responsibility among younger generations greatly affects the support for churches in general. Perhaps the most crucial change is in the attitude that has become common place in our society today of "What's in it for me?" All of these factors and more affect the way our congregations operate.

Our society is full of conflict which finds its way into the church in everything from what color to paint the social hall to calling a pastor. Many of these changes we can do little about but we as individuals can live up to the Christian ideals and principles while setting examples for those who follow us. To quote Mahatma Gandhi, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.”

My unending thanks go out to all of you who have remembered me with your prayers and cards over the past year. My chemo treatments continue with a steady progression of success but are not over. My mission of encouraging people to get tested for all types of cancer continues. New treatments and early detection are lifesavers. If you won't do it for yourself, do it for your family so that your care does not bankrupt them in the future.

I cannot end this report without thanking all of you for the opportunity of serving the church as your synodical vice president over the past years. It has been an incredible, fulfilling journey that I will cherish forever. May God grant you strength and guidance as your journey continues.

Judy Rehmel, Indiana Kentucky Synod Vice President



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God's work. Our hands.