

Report of the Secretary and Synod Council Indiana-Kentucky Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

C. Theodore Miller, Secretary

June 4 – 6, 2010

Looking back at the joys and challenges of my 11th (and probably penultimate) year as Indiana-Kentucky Synod Secretary, it goes without saying that many difficult decisions have been required in the aftermath of changes created by economic circumstances and by controversy concerning some of the decisions reached at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Minneapolis in August. Most important, though, is what has not changed—our gracious God, always providing all that is needed for the ministry in His name to which we are called.

The Indiana-Kentucky Synod Council this year has prayerfully utilized the gifts God has given us individually and collectively for our shared ministries in these two states. In a year of great transition, with seven new members on the 24-person Council chaired by our new Synod Vice-President Liz Michael as of September 1, spiritually uplifting but especially challenging work and positive attitudes have been the hallmark of the 2009-10 Council.

As this report is written in the first week of March, Synod Council has met three times since the Synod Assembly last June in Fort Wayne. Minutes of the September and November meetings may be found in the “Useful Resources” section of the synod Web site at www.iksynod.org. Minutes of the January meeting will be posted as soon as possible after approval at the meeting scheduled for April 17-18.

With the exception of the September 18-19 retreat at Lutheran Hills Camp, meetings all have been held at the synod office. As has become customary over the past decade, significant periods of each two-day meeting have been dedicated to Bible Study and Eucharistic worship. In addition to that focus in the camp setting in September, Synod Council spent many hours using an appreciative inquiry process (as compared to “problem solving”) as well as engaging in orientation to and brainstorming regarding Synod ministries. Reduction in benevolence receipts required much “homework” in prioritization of program, a process led by our talented and dedicated Synod Treasurer Kate Knoerzer. With exceptional assistance from both a hardworking Finance Committee and an already overburdened yet necessarily increasingly smaller synod staff, Synod Council in the fall tackled the difficult process of lining up the Indiana-Kentucky Synod budgetary realities with our Mission, Vision and Core Values.

The results of the ministry prioritization process and prayerful discernment were implemented during both the November 13-14 and January 22-23 meetings, during which respectively the 2010-11 budget as passed by the Synod Assembly was reduced first from

\$2.8 million to \$2.6 million and then from \$2.6 million to \$2.2 million. Another focus of the November meeting was the response to the seven fall forums led by Bishop Stuck across the synod with regard to the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. In addition to Bishop Stuck's pastoral letter in the November/December Epistle (which also may be found in the same section of the synod Web site), a task force chaired by Pastor Tim Knauff was created and drafted a letter considered by Synod Council and sent early in 2010 to all rostered leaders serving in congregations. Further reflecting the commitment of this year's Synod Council to our shared ministry, members currently are in the process of contacting all such rostered leaders to express prayerful support for their ministries and to ask how best we can pray for each of those leaders and ministries.

As we look forward to hosting the 2010 Synod Assembly in June in my home county in Covington, Kentucky, all of us are keenly aware that we in the Indiana-Kentucky Synod face another challenging year of transition, this year in the office of synod bishop to which a new leader will be called at the Synod Assembly. Part of Synod Council's preparation for that transition has included both creating a task force chaired by Vice-President Michael to lead the election/call process as well as meeting together with the deans of our ten conferences to hear presentations during the January Synod Council meeting (at no cost to the synod) from Dr. Richard Hamm, Executive Administrator of Christian Churches Together in the USA and a ten-year General Minister and President of a church judicatory similar in many ways to that of the ELCA, The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and author of Recreating the Church: Leadership for the Postmodern Age. No amount of preparation and understanding of the duties of an ELCA synod bishop, however, can begin to tell the tale of the ministry of Bishop Jim Stuck in our midst these past 12 years. On a personal note, I have been privileged to share in a small way in that ministry through 11 years of Synod Council meetings and Synod Assemblies, ELCA Regional gatherings and Churchwide Assemblies and so many more settings such as worship services and forums as well as Executive Committee meetings. Through it all, words cannot adequately convey how much this very special servant of God has inspired me and so many others with visionary missionary leadership as expressed in the Mission, Vision and Core Values to which he and we aspire to live out our shared ministry of service of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We have indeed been richly blessed in this Synod by the ministry of Bishop Jim Stuck, his wife Kris and their family.

Last but certainly not least, I thank God for the privilege of serving and for the incredible support system which sustains me. Especially I thank my wife of 33 years, Dr. Lisa Miller, whose love, goodness and Christian service at our Gloria Dei Lutheran Church and beyond inspires me daily. Our three children, although now spread over three states, remain active in ELCA ministries. It remains a joy to worship weekly also with my father (a retired ELCA pastor now in assisted living in Northern Kentucky) as well as our oldest daughter Emily, a first-grade teacher who this April celebrates her fifth wedding anniversary with her husband Mike Barker, a high school science teacher. Our son Tim, completing the second year of a PhD program in Medieval English at Notre Dame, looks forward to his August marriage to Elizabeth Gottschalk at their church home, Christ the King Lutheran Church in South Bend. Our youngest daughter Karen

looks forward to graduation in May from Miami University, after which she plans to pursue a master's degree in the field of her major, architecture. I thank God for the support and witness of our family and of so many in our church family at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Crestview Hills, Kentucky, especially those with whom I share ministries in committees and in the Chancel Choir, Men's Bible Study, couples' Bible Study, reading group and Boy Scouts. As we have reminded each other repeatedly in this synod for over a decade, every one of us indeed is called to missionary service.

Respectfully Submitted in His Service,

C. Theodore Miller, Secretary

