

Dear friends in Christ,

Annette Kramer and I were the official delegates to the 2022 Synod Assembly of the Southeast Michigan Synod held on Saturday, April 14, 2022 at Zion Lutheran Church in Ann Arbor, MI.

Also in attendance from Trinity, were the Reverends Lori Carey and Roger Harms (retired) and Deacon Helen Harms, (retired Evangelical Lutheran Church in America regional staff).

Highlights of the Assembly

Spirited Worship

Closing Eucharistic Celebration led by Bishop Kriess, was accompanied by spirited musicians. The sermon by Bishop Kriess, focused on John 13: 31-35 focusing on 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." The Bishop reminded us that we can't go where Jesus went, not yet anyway, and in the meantime, we are to love one another....

Reports from some of our Partners in Mission

Lutheran Campus Ministry

Pastor Elizabeth Friedman and Pastor Ben Adams reported on the rise in attendance and participation among young adults among their two sites

For the Lutheran Campus Ministry in Ann Arbor, the majority of the council is composed of students, and Pastor Elizabeth reports a significant increase of attendance and participation. Pastor Elizabeth also spoke in support of Lutheran Campus Ministries in their journey to be recognized as a reconciling in Christ organization. We heard Pastor Ben Adams speak enthusiastically of his ministry on the campuses of Wayne State University, University of Michigan Dearborn (and maybe one other) which has just started this year. Through his presentation the work of the Holy Spirit is already evident, and the church was becoming increasingly diverse as well. Pastor Ben's ministry is being supported in part by our Episcopal brothers and sisters.

Samaritas. We heard of Samaritas' continuing courageous works in resettling refugees from war torn countries, specifically Afghanistan. They stated they expected to be soon challenged with the resettlement of refugees from the Ukraine, noting the large Ukrainian population in SE Michigan.

Pastor Dana Runestad reported on good efforts in helping congregations become healthy organizations, an organization in which communication flows, differences are respected and love is expected.

We were very well fed with healthy food throughout the day by Fed Up Ministries. Lori and I got to see the Fed Up Truck in action, and they made it their mission to provide healthy and good food throughout the day.

The national church, the ELCA, sends a representative to each synod assembly (did you know the ELCA has 65 synods?) and we were blessed to have with us Dr. Ryan Cumming, Program Director. ELCA World Hunger all the way from Chelsea, Michigan! (Dr. Cumming is a member of Zion Lutheran church in Chelsea). His presentations throughout were inspiring and challenging. We as a church, along with partners in our communities did make a difference in decreasing world hunger, but unfortunately the rates of hunger are increasing, partly due to the strife in today's world.

The rate of undernourishment globally has remained pretty stable since 2014. **Before then, the world made some good progress, bringing the rate of undernourishment down from over 12% in 2005 to less than 9% in 2014. But in the last 5 years, the rate has crept up from 8.6% to 8.9%, or about 687.8 million people.** (from <https://blogs.elca.org/worldhunger/2020data/>)

Economic justice in a very direct way was raised by members of our synod. Local church members raise issues for consideration in synod assembly through a process called memorials. Several of our sisters and brothers raised the issue of inequities of wages for persons in our synod doing similar work. A similar issue was raised in the lack of staff raises for synod staff. The assembly voted overwhelmingly to direct the synod council through the budgetary process to remedy the pay inequities. Pastor Carey suggested that assembly members take back to the local congregations the challenge of the need to increase support to the synod so these financial inequities may be addressed.

The assembly overwhelmingly supported our beloved Lutheran Camping Ministries (Living Waters) in their process to become a reconciling in Christ organization, making it a place for all persons, regardless of gender status to be welcomed and affirmed. Revered Elizabeth Friedman, Campus Minister, Lord of Light at University of Michigan Ann Arbor spoke of the great need to support young adults as Church in this manner.

Bishop Don Kriess addressed us several times. In his sermon he reminded us to be the church, as Jesus instructed us to "love one another" and "where I am going, you can't go" - the Bishop emphasized not yet. It called to me that we are the church here on earth, that we have work to do.

Respectfully submitted,
John Carey