

Southeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly Recap

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod met in assembly May 2-3, 2003 at the Mayo Civic Center in Rochester, Minn. Bishop Harold Usgaard led the gathering as it approached the work of the church in Southeastern Minnesota. The theme was “Making Christ Known: For the Healing of the World.” Those gathered worked and worshipped, prayed and praised, studied and celebrated together as the body of Christ.

As keynote speaker, the Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, pastor of Evangelical Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, West Bank, said clergy and laypeople must work together to bring Christ’s message of peace and acceptance into regions dominated by war and intolerance.

Dr. Frederick Gaiser led the voting members through the healing story of the man lame from birth found in Acts 3. “Healing is an important biblical theme in both the Old and New Testaments,” said Dr. Gaiser.

A highlight of the assembly was the Congregational Fair Friday night, in which congregations could share ideas and “best practices” with each other via displays. Participants enjoyed viewing the displays while munching on a wide variety of finger foods for supper.

The assembly also featured a healing worship service on Saturday morning. The service, called “A Service of Health and Wholeness,” was open to voting members and the Rochester community. Participants were invited to come forward, if they wished, and have the healing hands of synod chaplains placed on their heads as they were prayed for individually. Rev. Ted Asta, assistant to the bishop in the New England Synod (the Southeastern Minnesota Synod’s sister synod), preached at the service.

Rev. Asta spoke of the recent tragedy in his synod involving poisoned coffee at Gustaf Adolph Lutheran Church in New Sweden, Maine. He asked for continued support from our synod through prayer.

Representing Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson, the Rev. Jim Childs presented a greeting and report from the Bishop on video, and then asked for the input of the assembly on the Churchwide proposed evangelism strategy. Participants were asked to talk about two questions about evangelism and then fill out a questionnaire on the proposed evangelism strategy, which will be passed along to the Churchwide office.

Ms. Shirley Gangstad was elected to serve a second term as vice president.

The assembly voted Saturday to oppose the pending “Racino” state legislation, which would allow thousands of slot machines to be operated by the Minnesota State Lottery at Canterbury Park in Shakopee. Members voted to oppose the pending legislation because “gambling is demonstrably destructive of families, persons and society,” and the institution of the state is charged with the welfare of its citizens. A press release regarding the assembly’s decision was sent to three major Minnesota newspapers following the assembly.

The assembly voted to pass a “Resolution Concerning the Freedom to Receive or Reject the Historic Episcopate.” Those who spoke in favor of this resolution said it would clarify the options to those seeking ordination or installation as pastors or bishops. The text of the resolution is available at www.semnsynod.org.

LOTS more information, as well as photos, are available at www.semnsynod.org.