

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH)

Elects New President

On January 30, 2011, the Evangelical Lutheran Church In Chile (IELCH)'s church-wide assembly elected Pastor Luis Alvarez as IELCH president for a four-year term. The IELCH is the ELCA's companion church in Chile and has a companion synod relationship with the ELCA's Indiana-Kentucky synod.

Pastor Alvarez began his address to the Assembly recalling the charge that the apostles in Jerusalem gave to Paul, "They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor..." (Galatians 2:10). These words have also guided Pastor Alvarez's ministry since he was ordained in 1981 in Argentina, where he lived as an exile after personally experiencing state violence at the hands of the military dictatorship in Chile. Pastor Alvarez shared his testimony of coming to know the Gospel during those years of exile. "The Gospel is the answer to humanity's problems. It calls us to struggle for justice, equality, and the rights of all. In the Gospel I found what I had been searching for."

In laying out his vision for the church, Pastor Alvarez emphasized responding with prophetic voice and action in the face of injustice, working through democratic and participatory processes, playing an active role in the global church, training lay leaders, engaging in ecumenical relations, and working toward a process of reconciliation with the Lutheran Church of Chile (ILCH), a sister Lutheran church from which the IELCH separated in 1975.

The Bishop's cross was placed on Pastor Alvarez by his predecessor Pastor Gloria Rojas, marking the end of her two consecutive terms as IELCH president. As the first woman in the IELCH to study theology, be ordained as a pastor and be elected president, Pastor Rojas has been a pioneer for women in the church. She is currently the Lutheran World Federation's Vice President for Latin America and the Caribbean and will serve as the IELCH's pastor in Punta Arenas, at the southern tip of Chile.



Pastor Gloria Rojas places cross on newly elected Pastor President Luis Alvarez.



Pastor President Luis Alvarez addresses the IELCH Assembly.