

I-K Lutheran

Where God is doing new things

July 2017

[Note: Bishop Gafkjen structured his verbal report to the 2017 Indiana-Kentucky Synod Assembly around the assembly's theme, "Formed in the image of God, Reformed in the cross of Christ, Transformed by the power of the Spirit." Each of the three sections of the report was introduced by Martin Luther's explanation of the applicable article of the Apostle's Creed, as found in the Small Catechism. The second section of that report is shared here. A copy of the entire report can be found at: www.iksynod.org/bishops-report]



We are reformed in the cross of Christ.

We believe that Jesus Christ...is our Lord. He has redeemed us...he has purchased and freed us from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil...with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. He has done all this in order that we may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.

These continue to be very difficult and challenging times for many of us, in the world and in our life together as church. We are still trying to figure out how to be God's people in this new day. We can't find solutions to the biggest challenges we face together.

We try to face our fears and embrace new and unfamiliar, even awkward, realities, but the temptation to retreat, to retrench, to resist is often too strong to overcome. We seek certainty and try to find refuge in "isms" of all kinds, political, theological, and churchy (or ecclesial) dogmas that we cling to and fling at each other, in the world and in our life together as church. And all too often we end up yelling at each other across great divides, questioning the motives and morals of others, blaming those who are different from us, as we insist on creating the world – or the church – in our own image.

When James and John, the sons of thunder, expressed something of this posture in requesting to sit on either side of Jesus when he came into power, Jesus said, in essence, "It might be like that among the power brokers in the world, but it shall not be so among you." We are, after all, re-formed in the cross of Christ.

As our deep Reformation anniversary dialogues with our Roman Catholic sisters and brothers have reminded us, this significant anniversary year of the Protestant Reformation is a time to move "from conflict to communion." This is a time to move beyond the shouting, and accusing, and foot-stomping and to refocus on the living gospel, the stunning, reconciling, resurrecting good news that in Christ God has reconciled the world to God's very self and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

This is a time to be recaptured by the good news, re-formed in the cross of Christ, and to share it – and look for it and welcome it – in unexpected places and through every person, especially those who differ or are different from us.

After all, sisters and brothers, our unity is in Christ the Lord, crucified and risen. It's not in any perspective or politics or theology or tradition.

It's no wonder that the ancient apostle Paul said in 1st Peter:

Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind... It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit [and be] a blessing.

We have lots of hard work, challenging conversations, difficult decisions ahead of us on this wilderness road we travel together. There are and will be times when the challenges will threaten to rip the fabric of our life together, in local faith communities or across this synod.

But, we are able to walk this way together because Jesus Christ is our Lord. We belong to him, every one of us and all of us, and all of those who are not currently among us. We live under Christ, crucified and risen. We abide in his reign (not ours or anyone else's). And, in the power of the Spirit we seek, together, to serve the crucified and risen Christ, as elder brother Martin put it, in righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, entrusting ourselves and others to the power of his resurrection.

+ Bishop Bill Gafkjen

The document "From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017," can be downloaded at <https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/From%20Conflict%20to%20Communion.pdf>

Know Your Numbers: Indiana-Kentucky Synod/Mission Territory

The Indiana-Kentucky mission territory includes people of God who live in Indiana and the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The territory covers a total of 76,826 square miles with a total population of more than 11 million people. 51,000 people are ELCA Lutherans attending worship in 182 congregations, and 2 congregations under development. This includes Bishop Bill and 130 active pastors, 12 pastors who are on leave from call, 135 retired pastors, 35 pastors serving in non-congregational ministries, 2 synodically authorized ministers, 15 active Deacons and 15 retired Deacons. There is one synodically authorized worship community, two congregations under development, three camps and five campus ministries. The mission territory is part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which includes about four million members in nearly 95,000 congregations organized in 65 synods.



Indiana-Kentucky Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Martin Luther and Assembly Information

Martin Luther has returned safely to the synod office. It was a joy to see how much fun everyone had taking selfies with Marty! Coming soon will be a bulletin insert with a summary of assembly news and information and you can also order assembly videos from Spiritborne Productions. Watch for this insert in the near future.



Indiana-Kentucky Synod – Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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