



Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

November 6, 2009

Greetings Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Thank you for your ministry and your partnership in the Gospel of Jesus.

Soon your nominating committee will begin work to identify leadership for the coming year. As that group begins to work, I need to lift up an item from our Churchwide Assembly that you have probably not heard about. Our Credentials Committee has also advocated for me to send a note to encourage congregations as they seek voting members for our assembly. This year's gathering will be in Redwood Falls on Saturday, April 17 and Sunday, April 18.

At our Churchwide Assembly, a resolution passed asking congregations and synods to increase the percentage of youth and young adults who serve as voting members for our assemblies. I would like to share some ideas about how that might work and what I see as best practices in this area of synod assembly voting members.

People often imagine married couples for this role of serving as voting members from their congregation. A creative option that would create a rich family time and intergenerational family conversation and have the impact of increasing the number of young adult voting members would be to have your voting member be a mother and son or a father and daughter. Spouses may attend as observers if they are interested.

It is best to have voting members serve for two years and then have another pair of voting members go, to expand the number of people in your congregation who have this experience and share a better understanding of what the synod and churchwide organization is doing.

Some congregations have an expectation that the chair and vice-chair of the council will attend. If they cannot attend, then they ask other members of the Executive Committee or Congregational Council to attend. Their logic is that these key leaders need to have a deeper understanding of the larger church, but also that there will be leadership development opportunities at the assembly that will be helpful to their service on behalf of your congregation.

We would ask that you seek to balance male and female lay voting members as much as possible.

If the Nominating Committee does this work and identifies alternatives early, that helps us keep our gender balance at the meeting and reduces the stress of finding people at the last minute. It also allows people to pay more attention to the life of the synod (for example: signing up for the Synod's Email Update at www.swmnelca.org).

In Christ,

+ Pr. Jon V. Anderson
Bishop, Southwestern Minnesota Synod ELCA