



# St. John's Lutheran Church, Waterloo

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## 2009 ELCIC NATIONAL CONVENTION DELEGATES' REPORT

THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2009

### Opening Worship

The twelfth biennial convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada began with a festive service of Holy Communion, using the African-American-inspired Setting Six from Evangelical Lutheran Worship. National Bishop Susan Johnson served both as presiding minister and preacher, and was joined by several unexpected appearances of "Philipp Melancthon", the sixteenth century reformer, who was both friend and associate to Martin Luther. Melancthon's appearance at the convention coincided with the commemoration of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession in 1530, a document penned by Melancthon. Melancthon's appearances in this worship service were made to quote various articles taken from the Augsburg Confession – the most significant document in defining the beliefs of the reformers.

As is expected when the ELCIC gathers in convention, worship reflected the diversity of the church's cultures and traditions, blended with an eye to put on display a touch of the convention's locale. Singing was robust, with a wide variety of hymn traditions and styles represented.

### First Session

Following worship, the first business session of the convention began. The Committee on Registration and Credentials reported 168 lay delegates and 158 clergy delegates, for a total of 326 voting delegates. Quorum was declared. 113 persons had also registered as visitors to the convention. Following this report, Bishop Johnson directed our attention to the proposed agenda for the meeting. A few minor oversights were corrected and the agenda was adopted as amended.

Johnson then provided both orientation for the practices of convention and explanations of the rather cumbersome Booklet of Reports ([www.elcic.ca/`](http://www.elcic.ca/)), using a combination of humour and warmth to draw delegates together.

Bishop Johnson's written report to the convention, contained in the section "Officers' Reports, was received as information, and she spent time telling us

about her experiences during her first two years in office. She stressed her appreciation for, and reliance on, the assistance of the five synodical bishops, as well as the Most Reverend Fred Hiltz (Anglican Church of Canada Primate), and Mark Hansen (Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America). She noted that she has monthly telephone conversations with both Hiltz and Hansen.

### Second Session

Following supper, the second business session began with a nominating ballot for Vice-President of the ELCIC. This ballot produced a slate of 120 names, although it was unclear whether the one ballot cast for Tim Horton was a real vote for a real person, or a touch of Canadian humour.

Following this ballot, Archbishop Hiltz led a group study based on Luke 4:16-21. Hiltz challenged each table of delegates to come up with a "bold step to take together" as part of the further development of the Waterloo Declaration of Full Communion signed between the ACC and the ELCIC. Written suggestions were delivered to Hiltz, and he promised to read, and consider seriously, each one.

Next on the agenda were several items from the National Church Council. Delegates were invited to provide nominations for a number of groups, including the Nominating Committee for the 2011 National Convention, the National Church Council, the ELCIC Group Services Inc. board (the group which administers the church's pension and benefits plan) and the ELCIC Court of Adjudication. These nominations were in addition to the nominations already placed before the convention by the National Church Council (NCC).

NCC secretary Don Storch also provided notice of several items which were slated to come to the floor of convention from the NCC. These items will be sprinkled throughout the remaining business sessions.

The Committee on Reference in Council provided its first written report to the convention. This report came in two parts: a multi-page document containing



petitions submitted to the ELCIC for consideration at this convention, and a two-sided page providing their recommendations. The first motion, dealing with the Administrative Bylaw regarding Nominations and Elections, was recommended for adoption, with an amendment. Eight further motions were then listed:

- Resolution Regarding ELCIC Conflict of Interest Policy;
- Resolution to Preserve and Protect a Congregation's Ownership and Control of its Assets;
- Resolution Regarding ELCIC Human and Financial Resources;
- Resolution Regarding Congregations Leaving the ELCIC;
- Resolution Regarding Availability and Transparency of ELCIC Pension Information;
- Amendment to Corporate By-law, Section 20b – Regarding Nomination of Delegates to ELCIC National Convention;
- Motion Regarding Registration Deadline for Conventions; and
- Resolutions to Maintain the ELCIC as an Independent Church.

In each case, the Committee on Reference in Council recommended that “no action” be taken on the resolution, which, according to the Committee’s own terms of reference, means that **“the committee recommends the convention not deal with this matter.”** None of these resolutions were actually put before the convention for consideration or vote at this session, but it is rather disturbing that eight resolutions, submitted by numerous congregations and individuals, reflecting many hours of careful preparation, are, according to this committee, to be swept away as if they were never written. It makes one wonder why there is such a need to maintain such strict controls on matters such as a Conflict of Interest policy, or a policy requiring transparency in dealing with pension information.

The final act of business for the Second Business Session was the second ballot for Vice-Chair of the ELCIC. A report on this election will be provided in the Third Business Session.

### Evening Worship

The day ended with the service of Evening Prayer from Evangelical Lutheran Worship, with a sermon preached by Bishop Cindy Halmarson which seemed very clearly directed to those who are questioning some of the current trends in the ELCIC and, therefore, are “causing rumbles of discontent” and are being a “dis-grace” to the church.

## FRIDAY, JUNE 26, 2009

### Third Session

The third business session began with a report on the second ballot for vice-president of the ELCIC. There was no election on that ballot, and so five names were sent forward to appear on the third ballot. (Normally there would only have been four names, but there were two individuals tied for fourth place.) The third ballot contained the names Sheila Hamilton, Rev. Dan Haugen, Rev. Stephen Kristensen, Rev. David Saude, and Rev. Tim Posluzny.

A discussion was held regarding the right of the committee for Reference and Counsel to recommend that the convention take no action on a motion sent to it by a congregation. The constitution guarantees the right of congregations to bring motions to the convention. The question was whether Reference and Counsel should have the right to recommend that we not deal with these motions. Bishop Susan Johnson’s ruling was that yes, they have that right. The ruling was challenged. The vote was declared to affirm the chair’s ruling. A division of the house was called for. The resulting vote was 215 to 115 upholding the chair’s ruling.

Another discussion then centered on a motion to make nominations for membership on the nominating committee for the next national convention the responsibility of the convention. Reference and Counsel recommended that the motion be amended to allow the National Church Council to make nominations prior to the convention, and also open the floor to nominations. The vote on whether or not to approve this amendment will be held on Saturday.

At this point in the agenda, the convention received greetings from the Rev. Teresita Valeriano, Lutheran World Federation Regional Officer for North America. The next LWF convention will be held in 2010 under the theme “Give us this day our daily bread”.

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Munib A. Younan, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, addressed the convention. He used as a foundational text I Peter 1:3-12

He stated that signs of hope in the Middle East were seen “from womb to tomb” . A primary emphasis was providing education to children on how to live together with others of different faiths. He stressed that this was done while still teaching fundamental Lutheran beliefs. Another key teaching is respect for others. The emphasis on youth in Bishop Younan’s church is driven by the fact that fully 1/6 of his church is comprised of youth. With the rapid spread of cultural values and

ideas through modern technology, it can be a challenge to avoid the spread of consumerism and focus on education, but it is this focus which provides hope in a hopeless situation.

Younan stated that Christians formed 26% of the population of the area in 1946; today that is down to less than 2%. This large decrease in numbers, he said, makes it all the more important to strive for mutual recognition and ministry with Christians of other denominations. He pointed to the Waterloo Declaration between the ELCIC and the Anglican Church of Canada as a model of how that working together can be done. He referred to a ministry of accompaniment – that is, partners walking together, using the model of Jesus on the Emmaus road. It is our shared calling as Christians, he said, which makes the shared journey on the Emmaus road continue today.

He also emphasized his belief in the importance of an interfaith working ministry, bringing together Christians, Jews and Muslims. He said that extremism, both political and religious, makes the situation in his church very difficult. Extremists try to make religious differences become political differences. The only way to counter this culture is through education, via interfaith dialogues. These must be a central part of the church's ministry, not merely a hobby of the church. As an example of these dialogues, he noted that with the Jewish people there can be no holocaust agenda, and no guilt agenda, but only an agenda which asks, "How do we look forward to a way to live and work together?"

Younan reported that he had signed the Amman Declaration, which affirms the belief that holy places and symbols must be respected and accessible to all people. There is a delicate balance in achieving this goal, and that balance is not helped when people from North America or Europe interfere with, or interject themselves into, the process. He brought both laughter and understanding when he said, "When Europe or North America sneezes, we get the flu."

Why not keep out of politics and stick to the gospel?, he posited, and then replied, "When politics causes my people to lose faith, it becomes a religious issue. We should lead the politicians, and not allow them to lead us." Healing must begin with truth-telling. Truth is the nature of God. Truth liberates, it does not burden. Truth must be the basis for healing our broken societies. Only when the light of truth exposes the lies of oppression can hope begin. This leads to the question, "Whose truth?" Both Palestinians and Jews have their own memories. It cannot be all about our stories, and we cannot allow ourselves to be so rooted in own sto-

ries and our own pain and suffering that we cannot understand the pain and suffering of others. It is far easier to show respect for the history of others when they show respect for you. There is a need to lay a foundation for mutual respect. Said Younan, "You cannot imprison and punish the many for the sins of the few and call it justice." Reconciliation is always built on justice, and the fruit of justice is peace. He quoted the prophet Micah, who asked, "What does the Lord require of you, but to seek justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with your God." This is a prophetic call to his church today.

Younan concluded his remarks by quoting a Jewish proverb, "You know that the night is over and the dawn has come when you can see the eyes of your neighbour."

Next on the agenda, John Wolff presented a report from Group Services Inc. He noted the following:

1. Health Benefit Plan – 2009 saw an increase in premiums of 7.5%. This was due to ever-rising costs of providing health services. Fully 75% of cost of plan is drug benefits; the use of counseling services is also increasing, as are disability services. The GSI board doesn't see this trend reversing, so increases are necessary.
2. Active Members' Pension Plan 2008 was a tumultuous year; it is expected that 2009 will head into recovery thanks to stimulus plans and initiatives. Still, we will continue to face challenging times. GSI has invested in a balanced fund plan, which maximizes long-term growth within acceptable risks. 2008 saw a minus 16% return. A new plan option coming in January 2010 which will offer lower-risks of poor returns, but also lower returns overall. This plan is designed for those nearing retirement.
3. Retirement Pension Plan – In 2003 the unfunded liability in our pension plan was identified as \$16 million. The 2% supplemental amount that had been directed to active members was redirected to begin the work of correcting the underfunding. GSI also began to require an additional 4% of eligible salaries from employers to be paid to this fund. That plan would see the unfunded liability erased by 2018. The difficult economic conditions resulted in that plan not working. New strategy was adopted, to "immunize" the plan. All investment funds were moved into interest-bearing accounts, and this began to turn around the negative growth. Projections were

that the unfunded liability would be erased fully 3 years ahead of schedule [2015]. If this had not been done, with current markets, we would once again be facing a skyrocketing unfunded liability, up to \$18-22 Million. One month ago, 90% of pension annuity assets were sold to SunLife, and are guaranteed in perpetuity, means that by end of 2013 the unfunded liability will be gone. Overall, thanks to the work of the GSI board, the timeframe for erasing the unfunded liability has gone down to 10 years from 15. The overall implication of this is that the plan is now 90% funded (it had been only 78% funded) and the other 10% will be gone in 4 years. Further, 90% of the mortality risk has been removed to SunLife; this means that no letter of credit is required from the ELCIC to satisfy the pension fund regulators (this contentious letter of credit was put in place 2 years ago).

#### Fourth Session

The third ballot for Vice-President was held, as well as the first ballot for the National Church Council.

Robert Granke, Executive Director of Canadian Lutheran World Relief addressed the convention. He noted that the mandate of CLWR is to challenge the causes, and respond to the challenges, of human poverty. CLWR's mandate comes jointly through ELCIC and the Lutheran Church Canada. A joint program committee has already begun working. Every synod has a member on the CLWR board. Funding arrangements for poverty reduction in synods will be maintained at the levels of previous years, and may even increase.

Pam Radunsky, president of Evangelical Lutheran Women, and Ruth Vince, ELW Executive Director, were next to address the convention. In her remarks, Radunsky addressed one of the stereotypes that is prevalent, namely that ELW is group for grandmothers. She noted that much of what is offered is not linked to age or gender. A major component of the ELW's focus is what Radunsky termed "biblical literacy". Bible studies are a large component of ELW, and many groups across Canada have men attending. Radunsky promised that future events and plans will be changing. She announced the intent that new programs will be developed which are spirit-filled, Christ-centered, faith nurturing, and biblically sound. The goal is to grow, involving new people who have never before been part of ELW. One of the changes will be that ELW's publication *Esprit* will no longer contain the Bible Study – it will be published separately; *Esprit* will be

more focused on articles etc., break stereotype that only a bible study book.

ELCIC treasurer Ken Hartviksen next presented the treasurer's report. Falling revenues have caused staff cutbacks, and a thorough review of every aspect of church's life has been carried out. A motion to adopt the audited financial statements to December 31, 2008, as presented, was carried. The Audit Committee's recommendation to appoint Ernst and Young as auditors for 2009 was carried. An "enabling motion" to empower NCC to appoint auditors for 2010 was carried. Finally, the budget motion to adopt the budgets for 2010 and 2011 as presented was carried.

Results of the third ballot for vice-president were announced: 332 valid ballots, 167 votes were needed to elect. Sheila Hamilton - 201; Dan Haugen - 43; Stephen Kristensen - 65; David Saude - 12; Tim Posluzny - 11. Sheila Hamilton was declared elected.

The first ballots for Group Services Inc. and the Court of Adjudication were the final items of business at this fourth business session.

#### Fifth Session

Registration numbers as of the beginning of the final business session of Friday showed Lay Delegates – 176, Clergy Delegates – 166, Total Voting Members – 342, and a total of 147 Visitors

The results from elections were announced. For National Church Council, Mark Koenker (MNO Ordained) was declared elected. The Second Ballot for NCC will contain the names:

- Alberta Lay – Barb Stolee, Keith Odegard;
- Alberta Ordained – Trish Schmermund, Phillip Gagnon;
- BC Lay – Jeanie Stann, Alvin Stedel;
- Eastern Ordained – Douglas Reble, Peeter Vanker;
- SK Lay – Heidi Hesselink, Karen Johansen.
- A redo of Ballot 1, Eastern Synod Lay 1 & 2 was necessitated because the first ballot had names incorrectly listed.

Elected to the Court of Adjudication were Stephen Kristenson, Roger Kingsley, and Martin Bergbusch

Elected to GSI were Doug Kramer, Jackie Dojack, George Sawatzky

The Report of the Committee on Minutes presented the minutes from both sessions one and two. The minutes of the first business session were adopted as amended. The revised minutes of session two were adopted as distributed.

The NCC Resolution on the Holy Land was presented. The statement, and background information, are found

on pages F59-68 of the bulletin of reports. The Rev. Dr. David Pfrimmer spoke on the resolution. Some of the points in the resolution are already ELCIC policy, and others call for actions by the Canadian government which have already been taken. Significant discussion ensued. An amendment was proposed to remove three points in the statement. This amendment was defeated. A second amendment proposed a minor change to two of the points. This motion was adopted. Numerous speakers then spoke to the amended motion, and numerous points of order were raised, after which the motion was passed and the resolution adopted.

The second report of the Committee of Reference and Counsel was presented:

- Motion 1.2 regarding Conflict of Interest Policy: R&C recommended it not be brought to the floor. Significant discussion ensued. The motion of R&C was carried, and the motion regarding a Conflict of Interest Policy was not allowed to come to the floor of convention.
- Motion 1.3 regarding Congregational Ownership of Property: R&C recommended it not be allowed to come to the floor. The motion of R&C was carried, and the motion regarding Congregational Ownership of Property was not allowed to come to the floor of the convention.
- Motion 1.4 regarding ELCIC Human and Financial Resources: R&C recommended that it not be brought to the floor. The motion of R&C was declared carried, and the motion regarding ELCIC Human and Financial resources was not allowed to come to the floor of the convention. The Bishop's ruling that the motion was carried was challenged, and a division of the house called for. The division revealed 204 voting for the R&C motion, and 114 voting against the R&C motion.

During the various discussions which took place, all dealing in general with the question of bringing the various motions to the floor for action rather than choosing not to discuss them, a very telling, and stinging, statement was made by a member of NCC: **"We can't be expected to spend time discussing every little motion brought forward by every little person."** On this happy note, the report on the fifth business section concludes.

## SATURDAY, JUNE 27, 2009

### Sixth Session

The third report of the Committee for Reference and Counsel was presented.

- Item 1.1 was brought back to the convention – amended from the form in which it was submitted

by mandating that nominations be provided from the NCC, and that nominations from the floor be allowed. The amended motion was adopted.

- Item 1.5, a resolution regarding congregations leaving the ELCIC and the requirement of the ELCIC that these congregations pay a portion of the remaining unfunded liability upon leaving the ELCIC. R&C recommended that no action be taken on this motion. After discussion, this motion was adopted, and the motion will not be debated on the floor of the convention.
- It was noted that item 1.6, a resolution regarding availability and transparency of ELCIC pension information, was withdrawn from consideration by the submitting congregation.

The Rev. Robert Bugbee, president of the Lutheran Church-Canada brought greetings to the convention.

The Rev. Mark Hansen, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, brought greetings and led a study on the theme "Living at the Intersection of Fear and Hope". He used many stories and analogies – both humorous and touching – to encourage the church to recognize the coexistence of unity and diversity.

A motion to replace a session of "Committee of the Whole" with a further session of the Committee for Reference and Counsel was declared out of order by Bishop Johnson. This ruling was challenged, and a vote upheld the Johnson's ruling.

At the Committee of the Whole, numerous comments were received:

- The chairperson of the building committee of St. Luke's Ridgeway Ontario, brought thanks to all who sent letters of encouragement and prayers of support following the fire which destroyed their building.
- Frustration was expressed that parliamentary procedures seemed to change during the course of the convention, making numerous matters unclear.
- Concern was expressed that motions submitted by congregations and individuals were not allowed to be published in the bulletin of reports, thus limiting delegates' ability to decide whether or not to deal with these motions. This put the Committee for Reference and Counsel in the position of advising action on motions which were unfamiliar to many delegates.
- Clarification was sought on an issue regarding whether the church has the right to make decisions regarding same-sex blessings and the ordination of practicing homosexual persons (an issue raised at the 2007 national convention, NC-07-34,

found on page F3 in the bulletin of reports). This question was sent to the Committee for Faith, Order and Doctrine. After this direction, the question was not brought back to the convention for action, but was decided by NCC. The chair ruled that NCC has the authority to make policy decisions for the church, which it did.

- A delegate reminded us that our peace does not come from the world, but from God.
- A delegate raised a strong objection to the fact that motions from delegates were not discussed, but merely referred to other committees and groups. He pointed out that we spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to gather together, only to refer virtually all the matters sent by congregations to other groups to decide, or to refuse to discuss these matters. He suggested that we could have dealt with the entire business through email.
- A delegate who serves on the Anglican-Lutheran Working Group insisted that there was no discussion to see a merger between Anglicans and Lutherans in Canada.
- Comments and a commendation for convention worship was expressed by one delegate. She also called for all delegates to remain together in the ELCIC, and not to “vote with their feet” or “vote with their pocketbook”.
- One delegate expressed his joy that the convention proceedings were being broadcast on the world wide web.

The final ballot for the two Eastern Synod lay members for National Church Council was held. This concluded the sixth business session of the convention.

### Seventh Session

The final report of the Committee for Registration and Credentials showed a total of 176 lay delegates and 167 ordained delegates for a total of 343 voting delegates. In addition, there were 153 registered visitors.

The convention then adjourned its business in order to form the Luther College Corporation Meeting. At that meeting, college president Bruce Perlson noted that last year the college had a total of 450 students enrolled in programs from grade 9 through graduate studies. Post-secondary studies were conducted in partnership with the University of Regina in the field of Liberal Arts and Science. The financial status of the college is both stable and sound. Perlson noted that in 2008 a former student of Luther College entered the facility and held many hostage with a gun for several hours. He noted that the staff of the college were instrumental in resolving the situation with no injuries or loss of life. The meeting was called to ratify the election

of Mr. Stacey Cattell, Mrs. Tamara Emsley, Pastor Lindsay Hognestad, Dr. Don Lee, and Mr. Richard Pedde as members of the Board, as shown on page G2 of the bulletin of reports. This motion was adopted.

The convention then reformed itself into the meeting of the Lutheran Collegiate Bible Institute. The report of the Board of Regents noted that 2009-10 will be the 99<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of operation for the college. The college is very much involved in youth ministry. Nominations to the Board of Regents were presented for Mr. Phil Johnson, Rev. Rick Johnson, and Ms Ruth Hermanson. This slate of nominees was ratified.

The convention then resumed its identity as the convention of the ELCIC and received the report of the Elections Committee for the two Eastern Synod lay positions on NCC. Edward Pope and Marie-Laure Collet were declared elected.

The report of the NCC was again taken up. Motions 2 through 9 on pages F8 through F10 of the bulletin of reports (all second reading of constitutional amendments) were carried. Motions 10 through 20 beginning on page F11 of the bulletin of report (changes to the administrative bylaws) were all adopted.

The third report of the Committee for Reference and Counsel followed. A motion was proposed that we suspend our governance rules with respect to recommendations from this Committee that no action be taken: the proposal was that these recommendations be non-debatable. A two-thirds majority was required to adopt this motion. After the vote, Bishop Johnson declared the motion carried. A division of the house was called for, and by a vote of 211 to 94 the chair's ruling was upheld and the motion was carried. Specific R&C recommendations were as follows:

- Motions 1.7 and 1.8 regarding the timing of the selection of lay delegates from congregations (**Motion 1.7 was the motion submitted by St. John's**) – R&C recommended that no action be taken on these motions as NCC had already amended the administrative bylaws in the manner proposed by these two motions. This recommendation was adopted. This raises a question: if the NCC has the authority to amend the ELCIC's administrative bylaws by itself, as it apparently did in dealing with the timing of delegate selection, why was the convention asked to vote on NCC motions 10 through 20 (beginning on page F11 of the booklet of reports)?
- Motion 1.9, a resolution to maintain the ELCIC as an independent church – R&C recommended that no action be taken because, according to Mark Harris, there is no intent to merge the ELCIC with the Anglican Church of Canada, so no action was necessary. This recommendation was adopted.

- Motion 2.1 regarding Kyotoplus – R&C recommended adopting the motion. The motion was amended by removing specific requirements, making the motion more general in nature. The amended motion was adopted.
- Motion 2.2 regarding a resolution supporting LWF efforts to cancel illegitimate foreign debt – R&C recommended that this motion be adopted. It was adopted.
- Motion 2.3 regarding the establishment of a taskforce to study ways to increase enrollment at the ELCIC's two seminaries – R&C recommended that this motion be referred to the Program Committee for Leadership for Ministry. This recommendation was adopted.
- Motions 2.4 and 2.5 regarding restraint being shown in discipline meted out to congregations and individuals who acted in contravention of the ELCIC's policy on same-sex blessings and the ordination of practicing homosexuals – R&C recommended that no action be taken on these motions. The recommendation was adopted.
- Motion 2.6 regarding the eligibility of clergy serving in multi-staff and specialized ministries to be elected to attend national conventions – R&C recommended that this motion be referred to the Structural Renewal Task Force. This recommendation was adopted.
- Motion 2.7 regarding the priority of subsidized housing – R&C recommended that this motion be adopted. It was amended to add that congregations are encouraged to seek ways to undertake such initiatives as well. The amended motion was adopted.
- Motion 2.8 regarding ELCIC Delegate Election Timing – this motion asked synods to make changes to their bylaws to bring them in line with the national church bylaws. R&C recommended the adoption of this motion. It was adopted.
- Motion 3.1 regarding entrance to, and exit from, the ELCIC – R&C recommended that no action be taken on this motion. The recommendation was adopted.
- Motion 3.2 regarding the financial settlement with congregations which have chosen to leave the ELCIC – R&C recommended that no action be taken on this motion. The recommendation was adopted.
- Motion 3.3 regarding the prevention of human trafficking at the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games – R&C recommended the adoption of this motion. An amendment was carried adding that the ELCIC support Canadian Council of Churches and LWF initiatives regarding human trafficking. The amended motion was adopted.
- Motions 3.4 and 3.5 regarding support for First Lutheran Church, Vancouver's granting of sanctuary to an individual who was to be deported – R&C recommended that a motion combining the two motions be adopted. The recommendation, and resulting motion, were adopted.
- Motion 3.6 regarding the stewardship of creation during conventions – R&C recommended the adoption of this motion. The recommendation was adopted.
- Motion 3.7 regarding a vote of gratitude for faithful service by various individuals – R&C recommended that this motion be adopted. The recommendation was adopted.
- Motion 3.8 regarding the assignment of any unfinished business to the NCC for decision and, as appropriate, action – R&C recommended that this motion be adopted. The recommendation was adopted.

It was noted that the next convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada would be held July 14 to 17, 2011, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

The agenda having been completed, the twelfth biennial convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada was adjourned.

Thanks be to God for guiding and supporting us throughout the convention. Amen

# REFLECTIONS

*From Rosalynn Tubbe*  
"Signs of Hope" was the theme of this year's nationwide ELCIC Convention.

*From Pastor Paul Hartig*  
Everywhere we looked — signs of hope. Or, at least, that was what we were told we were seeing. Personally, I have to say that I did not see these signs of hope with

From Rosalynn Tubbe (cont'd)

Throughout the proceedings there were times of discord and disconnect from the leadership and from many fellow delegates.

Many congregations and their delegates are feeling unheard and alienated from the larger church. The manner in which non-National Church Council resolutions were dispatched only exacerbated that situation. One meek lady, chairperson of her congregation, who told me she was upset about the way Reference and Council was treating her congregation's resolution as worthy of "no action", but could never speak to it in the assembly, was able to appeal, on behalf of her congregation, that the convention give due consideration to the resolution. It was a sign of hope that quiet, everyday folk will be given courage to speak up.

The spirit prevalent in the hall sparked an incident at our table. One participant's insensitive behaviour offended another person to the point that he got up, gathered his belongings and left. His congregation is hanging in by their fingernails. Through gracious intervention we were able to bring this gentleman back to the table the next day. That these two individuals were able to respectfully interact the duration of the convention was another sign of hope. Hope that the Lord of the Church will keep people listening, communicating, forgiving.

I heard hope shared in the address of the Rev. Robert Bugbee, President of the Lutheran Church-Canada. He shared that despite the challenges facing each of our church bodies, we need not be afraid. He reminded us that the church is not the ultimate hope. Rather that Jesus Christ was given to be our Lord and Saviour. In his death and resurrection we all have hope for the future; in part, that hope is that the Spirit will enable the Word to be lived out and passed on by the Lord's people.

Early on Saturday evening, I saw a beautiful, distinctly coloured, perfectly arched rainbow, which the church has traditionally celebrated as a sign of God's promise of faithfulness. This reminded me of Psalm 145:13b, "The Lord is faithful to all His promises and loving toward all He has made." In this we can find hope for the future.

*Signs of Hope*



From Pastor Paul Hartig (cont'd)

any particular clarity. The majority of the business conducted was routine — receiving reports, adopting amendments to administrative bylaws, voting for candidates for various positions in and around the ELCIC. Anybody who has ever attended a church convention will attest to the truth that this type of routine business is never exciting.

The interesting stuff comes in the form of motions — motions proposed by the National Church Council, and motions forwarded to the convention by congregations and individuals. Unfortunately, the interest shown in this year's crop of motions was not primarily found in the motions themselves, but in the manner in which the Committee for Reference and Council recommended that so many of them be kept off the floor and not debated — motions calling for consideration of very serious issues which could have very serious implications for the ELCIC. Frequently the rationale given for the recommendation was that the motion had an inherent weakness or vagueness that would make it difficult to adopt as it stood. Perhaps I'm being overly naïve, but it seems to me that we should have brought the motions to the floor, and then, perhaps with R&C's guidance, sought to improve them, rather than ignore them altogether. Even if the motions were defeated, at least they would have been discussed by the church in convention.

Instead, we were told not to deal with these issues, and in every case there was about the same vote — 215 to 115 for accepting R&C's recommendation. Each time this decision was made, the congregation or individual who took the time to draft and submit a motion was told that their church didn't care to listen to their voice. Far from being a sign of hope, this decision — made over and over again — was, for those congregations and 1/3 of the convention's delegates, a sign of despair, and notice from the 2/3 majority of convention that substantive, important, and potentially contentious questions will not be discussed. We will smile blandly, call the silencing of the voice of those who have concerns for the church "a sign of unity", and discover yet another "sign of hope" for the ELCIC.

I found it very sad because, for many of those congregations, this was their last attempt to beg their church at least to hear their voice, even if it would not act in agreement with that voice. By the time we gather in Saskatoon in 2011, many congregations who were represented by delegates in Vancouver will not be a part of the ELCIC. That makes me sad, for it is a profound loss.