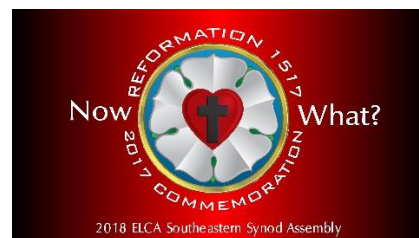




Southeastern Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



Report to the 2018 ELCA Southeastern Synod Assembly

Doris P. Underwood
Synod Vice President

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as Vice President of the Southeastern Synod for the past eight years. Eight years ago, I stood before you and stated that I felt called to serve in this capacity and you overwhelmingly affirmed that call then and four years ago when I stood for reelection. I want to thank you for your support and prayers as I carried out the duties of the office.

I was recently asked by someone who aspires to this office if I could name my greatest accomplishment as vice president. It was a question I could not answer because ***we are church together*** and anything accomplished during my tenure as vice president was certainly the results of a collaborative effort. The primary duty of the vice president, as outlined in the constitution, is to serve as chair at synod council meetings. The vice president also presides at meetings of the executive committee and serves as President of the Southeastern Synod Holding Corporation.

It has been my honor to be a voting member from our synod at the last three churchwide assemblies, as well as to take part in the gatherings of the ELCA Vice Presidents for the past eight years. These gatherings have been great learning experiences as my colleagues and I shared the joys and sorrows associated with our responsibilities as vice presidents. Each synod is different, and the duties of vice president vary slightly across the spectrum but the common thread in our duties is our work with the synod councils.

One of my sorrows is that we, as a synod, have not been more successful in providing resources and or opportunities for the development of our congregational lay leaders. There are many reasons for this—geography, scarcity of human resources in the synod office and financial constraints. At last year's assembly, I had the pleasure of meeting with congregational lay leaders over lunch. There was an expressed desire by those present to have a means of connecting with other lay leaders in the synod to share ideas and discuss common concerns. By constitutional mandate, lay people make up approximately sixty percent of the voting members at our assemblies. It is unfortunate that at the time when we have the greatest percentage of lay people gathered in one venue, there is not more time that can be devoted to the development of their leadership capabilities. I will be meeting with lay leaders again at this assembly. Maybe this can be the beginning of an evolving initiative.

At a recent special meeting of the synod council, the synod profile was reviewed. Many of the facts contained in the profile I already knew but this meeting gave me a greater appreciation of the work we do together as synod. I want to share just a few facts contained in that profile with you and I want to tell you that I am proud of the work that we do in the 202,417 square miles that make up our synod. Our 157 congregations and 40,233 baptized members join together to do God's work with our hands. Despite the many challenges that we face, we continue our support of domestic mission by designating 3% of mission support receipts for planting new congregations. We provide institutional support to Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, of which I am honored to serve on the Advisory Board, Lutheran Theological Center Atlanta, NovusWay Ministries and six campus ministries. We have one of the largest number of candidates preparing for rostered ministry in the ELCA. While none of these facts can be attributed to me, I share them because they are attributed to you and I wanted you to understand why I am honored to be one of you.

I cannot conclude my report without thanking Bishop Gordy and the synod staff for their support during the past eight years. It has truly been a pleasure to work with such a dedicated group of leaders. We are indeed blessed to have them at the helm of our ship. Please keep them in your prayers for continued success in their important work.

Thank you and may God bless each of you.

Doris P. Underwood