

2015 ASSEMBLY REPORT

Bishop Steven L. Ullestad

Martin Luther was a teacher of the church so he followed the practice of the day.

[Slide] Luther with 95 Theses

At that time, when a professor sought a debate on theological issues, he would develop a number of theses and either post them or distribute them with the hope of engaging debate. So, Luther developed 95 theses for debate. Two-thirds of them were about repentance.

[Slide] First – 95 T

The first of the theses read, **“When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘repent,’ he willed the entire of believers to be one of repentance.”** And he went from there. He wanted a discussion—a debate testing his theses, seeking truth together as a church. He was not after a schism or division of the church—something that some people to this day do not understand. He simply wanted a debate that would focus the church on the essentials of the faith. He was not after power—not after removal of the Pope. He was after the fullness of the Gospel, repentance and forgiveness in the name of Jesus Christ crucified and raised, to be proclaimed with clarity, both law and gospel.

[Slide] Luther - 017

As we know, it went much further than that. Luther’s work is historic. He translated scripture into the language of the people. He composed some of the most inspiring hymns and writings of the faith. Luther’s witness transformed not only Germany but impacted the whole Christian church of his day. His focus on salvation by grace through faith for the sake of Jesus Christ reformed the church in ways that we celebrate 500 years later.

[Slide] Luther at door – Hus

Luther was served by the history of Hus. Luther wrote: “When I was a beginner at Erfurt, I found in the library of the convent a volume of The Sermons of John Hus. When I read the title I had a great curiosity to know what doctrines this heretic had propagated, since a volume like this in a public library had been saved from the fire. On reading I was

overwhelmed with astonishment. I could not understand for what cause they had burnt so great a man, who explained the Scriptures with so much gravity and skill. But as the very name of Hus was held in so great abomination that I imagined the sky would fall and the sun be darkened if I made honorable mention of him, I shut the book and went away with no little indignation. This, however, was my comfort, that perhaps Hus had written these things before he fell into heresy. For as yet I knew not what was done at the Council of Constance.”

“Some years later, in February 1529, after pondering the matter over with Melancthon, Luther was driven to write to Spalatin: ‘I have hitherto taught and held all the opinions of Hus without knowing it. With a like unconsciousness has Staupitz taught them. We are all of us Hussites without knowing it. I do not know what to think for amazement.’ In this letter Luther was referring to his reading of the controversial works of Hus, especially his *De Ecclesia* (The Church).”

[Slide] Luther at door – Fredrick

Frederick of Saxony knew the history of the capture of Hus following a theological debate with Rome. Hus was then burned at the stake. Knowing this, Frederick arranged to have Luther captured after his famous debate in Worms and taken to the Wartburg Castle in order to rescue Luther from **martyrdom**.

[Slide] Luther Movie cover

Bishop Adds (Short intro here of Luther 2003 Suggested kind or material...

The 2003 film Luther follows the life of Martin Luther from his becoming a monk in 1505 to the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. It was an independent film partially funded by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. In the clip you are about to see, Luther, at the Diet of Worms in 1521, stands before the most powerful men in the world as they demand he recant. His protector, Frederick the Wise, looks on as Luther stands defiant. After the Diet, on the way home, Luther is "abducted" and taken to the Wartburg Castle. As is so often the case in cinema, historicity of the event may be stretched to tell the story.

[Slide] VIDEO [Luther & Frederick movie clip]

[Slide] Pope Francis Bishop Eaton

We find ourselves in less dramatic times in our day. We still can find ourselves in disagreement with the Catholic Church. However, we are also finding places of agreement. Look at what agreements we have:

[Slide] [Slide of booklet] 2 slides to chose from

The Doctrine of Justification is at the core of the Reformation movement. *[Slide]*

[Slide of booklet] 2 slides to chose from

For decades we have engaged the Roman Catholic Church in study, discussion, prayer and debate. **???** **Bishop add a little more info? DATE? (does every Lutheran even know this exists?)** The result is the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. The structure of the document outlines where we agree with each other while offering particular denominational emphasis on each topic. This document is worth studying in adult forum.

The following video provides a summary on the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification and what it accomplishes.

[Slide]Joint Declaration cover

[Slide] VIDEO JOINT DECLARATION #1

[Slide]Joint Declaration cover

The next video clip will show the signing of Joint Declaration by our own H. George Anderson, former president of Luther College and former Presiding Bishop of the ELCA.

[Slide] VIDEO JOINT DECLARATION #2

[Slide] DECLARATION IN VIA

And this fall, a new agreement, Declaration in Via, will be released. Declaration on the Way. The content has not yet received final approval so we cannot distribute it. However, I received permission to read the headings of each section:

CLICK

- Agreements on the Church

The Church's Foundation in God's Saving Work
The Word, Scripture, and Means of Grace
Preservation of the Church and Union with the Saints
Eschatology and Mission

CLICK

- Agreements on Ministry
Divine origin of the ministry
One ministerial office.

CLICK

- Agreements on the Eucharist
Eucharist and Church
Eucharistic Presence
Trinitarian Dimension of Eucharist
Eschatological Dimension of Eucharist

So what? What difference does it make?

[Slide] PROMOTING UNITY

Well it may have taken 500 years but families no longer can justify disowning a member of the family because they marry a Catholic. Our denominations no longer need to divide families. No other Lutheran church body has reached this level of reconciliation while maintaining our Lutheran identity. The Methodists have signed on to the document and Episcopalians soon will. Because of the work of the ELCA, families no longer need to be divided because of a 500 year old division in the church.

No other Lutheran church body in this country can say that! We give thanks to Jan Hus and Martin Luther for their bold leadership and for the diligent persistent leaders of our church who have brought us to this new day.

[Slide] NEIA SYNOD

What a remarkable synod we are. Together we have taken risks to reach out in new and exciting ways. Not only do we do what is expected of us:

- Call process *[Slide] [Letter of Call]*
- Candidacy *[Slide] [Picture of retreat]*
- First Call Theological Education *[Slide] [Picture of retreat]*
- Mission support *[Slide] [Picture of Stories of Faith]*
- Stewardship *[Slide] [Website]*

Youth and family ministry—

[Slide] [Homelife Network,

[Slide] Lock-In,

[Slide] WIYLDE]

I would venture an opinion that there is no synod in this church where the voice of youth and young adults is heard more clearly than this synod. We have a remarkably comprehensive youth and family ministry.

Social ministry and justice

Barnabas Uplift *[Slide] [Barnabas Uplift symbol]*

Hunger—Three of the top 100 congregations in dollar amounts in the whole church: *[Slide] [Hunger picture with Three congregations Trinity, Mason City; Nazareth, Cedar Falls; and Bethlehem, Cedar Falls.*

Malaria *[Slide] [Malaria Total amount] As of June 2, 2015 this Synod has given **\$ 474,660.22** This represents \$7.42 per member*

Safeguarding God's People *[Slide] [Slide of symbol]*

[Slide] Web Page First List

Here is a list of some of the “firsts” that we have accomplished together:

- First synod allowing each congregation to elect a youth voting member to the synod assembly in addition to their other voting members.
- First synod to have two youth on the boards and council.
- First synod to give Synodical Women's Organization president and Men in Mission president a vote on the synod council.

[Slide] [Bread Picture]

- The first synod to develop a daily devotional in partnership with Augsburg Fortress, "Bread for the Day," which is sent to all rostered persons, call committees and their councils.

[Slide] Web Page First List

- First to provide youth ministry resources on a CD Rom.
- First and only synod to have a staff person sent by our government to Brazil to share with their government the Barnabas Uplift project as a way of eliminating poverty.
- First and only synod to have a staff person on the Iowa Department of Human Services Board of Directors who is now the chairperson of that Board.

[Slide] [Hay Lift]

- First synod to initiate the Hay lift to Texas.

[Slide] Web Page First List

- First synod to have a flattened structure giving creative programmatic responsibilities to Conferences. This was included in a book outlining judicatory structures for the future. (1989)
- First synod to create a synod structure based on networks (2011) in response to the LIFT Task Force report.
- First synod to have Colleague Groups.
- Only synod whose staff person assisted the churches in Namibia in creating a historic covenant of relationship.

- First in the state to create an expanded campus ministry to become an area young adult ministry in partnership with local congregations.
- Pilot synod for the Malaria Campaign.

[Slide] [Picture of Genetics statement]

- Initiator of the social statement on genetics, the first social statement to pass without amendment and with the highest percentage of approval.

[Slide] [WTS Houses]

- Partnership this past year with Naz Builders, Wartburg Theological Seminary and our synod to remodel family student housing at Wartburg.

But we continue to explore new ministries

[Slide] [Abdelkader Picture]

- Abdelkader Project furthering greater understanding among Christians and Muslims.

[Slide] [God's Work Our BlogPicture]

- First to have DEM **Bishop (do folks know what a DEM is?)** use social ministry to introduce the nations to Jesus Christ.
- *[Slide] [List of Firsts]*

We don't say this very often about ourselves because, well, we are Northeastern Iowans. But we are pretty good.

Our ministry and mission is comprehensive, broad and deep. What is ahead? When you are already a leader, the first answer is, "More of the same."

[Slide] [NEIA SYNOD with More of the Same]

- More networks of mission-focused members;
- More hungry people fed;
- More young people deepening their faith as they grow in their leadership of the church.

What is ahead? More of what has been proven to be effective.

What is ahead? I would like to call on **Pastor Mark Anderson** to share with you about our next big emphasis.

[Slide] [Mark Anderson - Fund for Leaders]

[Slide] [ELCA page - Fund for Leaders]

[Slide] [Two Calls Cover Fund for Leaders]

*[Slide] [Two Calls **VIDEO** Fund for Leaders]*

[Slide] [Mark Anderson - Fund for Leaders]

[Slide] [NEIA SYNOD with What is Ahead?]

What else is ahead? I don't know. I don't know.

I do know that God has called us to a particular place and time to be witnesses.

I do know that God has given you gifts and partnerships to accomplish Christ's mission in your place and time and around the world. And I also know that I am one of your partners and I will do everything that I am able to do to:

- Support,
- Encourage,
- Bless,
- Connect.

[Slide] [NEIA Synod Mission Statement]

As we boldly lead together, we make Christ known by strengthening the witness and service of the whole church. That is our mission.

[Slide] [Bishop Report Cover]