

On the District Convention circuit

Vancouver • Regina • Windsor

by Ian Adnams

Only a handful of people have the opportunity to interact with every pastor and a representative from every congregation over in a six-week time frame. For those of us who work at the national office, it happens every three years at district conventions. Admittedly, we don't personally interact with every delegate, guest or visitor, but from the issues discussed, the presentations, reports, and fellowship, we form an impression of how the Lord is working through His people in Lutheran Church-Canada.

Inspiration

At a convention you have the opportunity to worship with hundreds of other Lutherans, singing hymns of praise, hearing God's Word and sharing the Lord's Supper. The result is always inspiration, encouragement and strengthening of faith. The conventions in Vancouver, Regina and Windsor began with such an event highlighted by an inspiring sermon from LCC president, Rev. Robert Bugbee. (If your city hosts a convention, you need to be part of the opening worship. There are so few times in our lives when we can gather as confessional Lutherans in such large numbers.)

Once the plenary session began with delegates seated and ready for action, it was exciting to see is the growing cultural diversity across LCC. As the church engages an increasing number of new Canadians our church body change. I made a note while at the East District convention "the future LCC will not look like us." Canada is changing demographically. Our European-immigrant lineage has a declining birthrate and most of Canada's population growth is from people around the world deciding that Canada is a great place to live! As a reflection of the country, LCC is also changing.

Mission reports reinforced this reality and demonstrated the power of the Gospel. From outreach to African communities in Hamilton, Winnipeg and Edmonton, to interaction with native Canadians in Saskatchewan, Thunder Bay and the B.C. Coast, Lutheran Church-Canada is touching lives with the Gospel.

Representation

I noted in two of the three districts a large age difference between the pastoral delegates and lay delegates. The pastors generally were younger. While this may be symptomatic of an aging church (a subject often mentioned), I believe this has more to do with the timing of conventions. A weekday convention will only be accessible to lay people who are either retired or can afford to take vacation. This is unfortunate because it

immediately excludes a good number of younger members. One district tried to address this with a resolution to move the convention to a weekend, but it was defeated. I've attended the triennial district conventions since 1997, and this cycle had the fewest women delegates. This could also be a function of timing.

Another troubling trend surfaced during elections. Nominating committees are finding it increasingly difficult to fill the slates. Some positions were left vacant after the conventions requiring appointments from the district's Board of Directors. The national convention ran into the same difficulty when searching for nominees who would let their names stand for election. We need to find ways to give younger people the opportunity to serve the larger church by perhaps changing our expectations for involvement and adapting to new ways of conducting meetings.

A move in this direction was evident as, for the first time in LCC's history, the conventions were available for anyone to watch online. A number of key segments, including essayists from the events are available at www.lutheranchurch.ca/videonet

Debate and information

In any convention a few resolutions spur intense debate. However, despite disagreement, delegates carry out these discussions with great respect and Christian love. For the most part the convention resolutions dealt with issues that did not draw debate: evangelism, restructuring, and welcoming congregations. As expected any resolution dealing with money drew speakers to microphones. There were also unresolved discussions on theological issues that set the agenda for future events.

Three diverse convention essayists address the convention themes. Dr. Gene Veith (Central District) spoke about the Lutheran doctrine of vocation; Dr. James Lamb (East District) brought life issues to the fore and Dr. Carl Fickenscher II (ABC District) encouraged 'the priesthood of all believers' and the practical application of theology.

Two of the three districts schedule workshops in the convention time. These included topics such as using new technology; financial management; outreach and planned giving. With two representatives from most LCC congregations, this is a valuable opportunity to focus on specific areas of ministry.

Presentations from district departments, Synod staff, institutions and affiliated agencies gave delegates a lot of information to share with their congregations.

Conclusions

At the end of May, after three district conventions I looked back and wondered what these events accomplished. The list was easy to make: delegates elected those who would serve their district for the next three years; issues were brought to light and debated; essayists challenged delegates' hearts and minds; devotional times and worship ensured the gatherings kept focused on Christ; and the fellowship and networking strengthened the ties across each district.

All this could likely be accomplished in a shorter time frame, but the face-to-face contact and interaction is important. Despite my predisposition toward online engagement, I also appreciate the reality that as a Synod, enjoying fellowship and sharing Word and Sacrament ministry strengthens the ties that make us the Body of Christ.

For detailed reports from each district, see the District News sections, pages 22-33.

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District Convention election results

District	Alberta-British Columbia Vancouver, B.C.	Central Regina, Saskatchewan	East Windsor, Ontario
Theme	Give Jesus Glory His calling...to Faith...for Life	Give Jesus Glory Tell Everyone What He Has Done	Give Jesus Glory Our Body. His Temple
Theme verse	<i>To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:7 ESV)</i>	<i>Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! (Psalm 105:1 -2)</i>	<i>Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body (1 Cor. 6:19-20)</i>
President	Rev. Don Schiemann	Rev. Thomas Prachar	Rev Paul Zabel
Vice-Presidents	Rev. Mark Ruf (First Vice-president) Rev. Harry Haberstock (Second Vice-president) Rev. David Dressler (Third Vice-president)	Rev. Michael Keith (Regina Region) Rev. Rudy Pastucha (Saskatoon Region) Rev. David Haberstock (Thunder Bay Region) Rev. Rod Buck (Winnipeg Region) Rev. Arron Gust (Yorkton Region)	Rev. David Bode (First Vice-president) Rev. Ron Mohr (Second Vice-president)
Board of Directors	Judith Burns Rev. Keith Haberstock Greg Geise Deacon Michael Gillingham Jim Kentel Melanie Kuhn Harold Schmidt Rev. Philip Washeim	Wayne Gust (Regina Region) Derek Clark (Saskatoon Region) Michael Maunula (Thunder Bay Region) Board appointment (Winnipeg Region) Board appointment (Yorkton Region) Don Fry (member-at-large)	Rev. Warren Hamp Lois Griffin Dr. Naomi Klages Paul Otterman Paul Schultz Ray Taylor (appointed treasurer)
Secretary	Rev. Wayne Lunderby	elected from board	Reg Tieg
CUCA Board of Regents	Al Gerdung Joel Haberstock Deacon Don Hindle	Norma Wynn	
District Nominations Committee	Deacon Tara Barnes Lynn Gergens Sylvia Klarenbach Rev. Ron Towriss (chair) Rev. Roland Kubke Rev. Neil Stern	Rev Alvin Borchardt	Rev. Richard Juritsch Stephen Klinck
LCC Nominations Committee	Rev. Cliff Haberstock Karen Nerbas	Rev. Harold Borchardt Walter Heinemann	Rev. Marvin Bublitz Anna Fierling