

ELCA 2011 Churchwide Assembly: "Freed in Christ to Serve"

Greetings! My name is Aleese Kenitzer, and I am a member of Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church in Rothschild, WI. First, thank you for the opportunity to serve as a voting member of the East Central Synod. Through my election to this assembly, God called me to serve the church by making decisions on behalf of the larger church. However, in serving, I was also blessed. During our Thursday worship service, we had the opportunity to have our hands anointed while being reminded that "we are blessed to be a blessing." Certainly, this church is blessed and continues to bless its members through its ministries. Through the work of the assembly, many motions, recommendations and memorials were brought before us for consideration in addition to hearing about many of the ministries of the ELCA. Throughout our plenary sessions, the assembly voted to accomplish many different things, some of which including (but not limited to): the approval of the ELCA Malaria Campaign, the LIFT report and implementing resolutions, the genetics social statement and implementing resolutions, election of Church Council and other Churchwide offices, and the 2012 and 2013 operating budget.

Many other memorials and nominations came before the assembly for vote as well. But more importantly, the assembly reinforced the mission of the church *as a whole*. Before attending the assembly, I did not know about Churchwide's structure and rationale for its actions much less the difference between implementing resolutions and memorials. At the beginning of the week, I felt like much of the Pre-Assembly Report was written in a foreign language because of the use of constitutional and legal lingo. But, throughout the week, I learned that the work that is accomplished at these assemblies is a stepping stone for the church to engage in further ministry as the greater church around the world. Without the whole church, we would never be able to combat issues like malaria. Without the greater church, we would not be able to offer relief to new immigrants. Without the greater church, we would not be able to support campus ministry programs, or new mission starts. Without the greater church, we would not be completely *free to serve*. Our theme for the Churchwide Assembly this year was "Freed in Christ to Serve." Truly, we are freed from sin and death by Christ's death and resurrection; but we are also freed to serve those in *this* kingdom. Although I will never completely understand how the greater church works or why it does what it does, I do understand the importance of the church as a whole. Therefore, while the work of the Churchwide Assembly is very important, that work merely allows the church to engage in an even greater mission throughout the whole church.

We have awesome opportunities to engage in mission right here in our communities of faith. But we also have the blessing to be able to join the whole church around the world and engage in the mission that God has called us to. Therefore, I encourage you within your congregations to consider your support of the greater church and to research the many ministries that the ELCA is a part of. The church is not perfect; though it strives to reflect Christ, it is still prone to human failure and sinfulness. However, by witnessing the many ministries that the ELCA is a part of, and even more that are supported by the church, *I am proud to be a part of the mission of the ELCA*. With that in mind, I make a motion for the ELCA to prepare itself for the power of the Spirit to move us within our communities of faith and also within the greater church.