

For me the Assembly was a mix of admiration for legislative efficiency (especially for the Bishop Mark's handling of the chair responsibilities), spiritual growth (worship) and frustration (lack of opportunity for sharing and education).

To my surprise Worship was the highlight of every day. It gave me a taste of how monks and nuns (of every persuasion) lead fulfilling lives.

The plenary sessions were long--especially on my back. However, they held my attention and I never read the book I brought along. Christian love, sense of responsibility and professional competence was obvious throughout--even in the debate about how to split financial resources between campus ministries and the seminaries.

I was frustrated at the end of the Assembly because there had been no opportunity to educate the Assembly about the genocide that is now occurring as an unintended consequence of US ethanol policy. Historians are likely to say that we should have known and should have stopped the policy once it had priced millions of people out of the ability to buy food.

In the same hour that we celebrated our World Hunger Program (with good reason), we voted not to discuss the relationship between ethanol and world hunger. I suspect that every rise of one dollar in the price of corn more than wipes out all the good that our World Hunger Program achieves. Not only are so many more people hungry, our dollars buy so much less food. In 2005, the price of corn was \$2.05. In April of this year, when almost 40% of our corn crop was burned as ethanol in our vehicles, the price of corn per bushel reached \$7.62. The math is stark: our dollars bought only 27% as much food this year as it did six years ago and the need has probably grown by a factor 3-4. Our members need to know about these relationships. The Assembly provided no such opportunity.

We might have had theme tables at meals where this and other issues could have been discussed. At noon the discussion could have continued into the Bible Study time for those who preferred to continuing discussions about public, religious, and private policies that damage or bless people in 2011.

We need to speak truth to power and I am proud that, with Bishop Hanson's leadership, ELCA has on a number of issues. However, we also need the space and the courage to speak truth to ourselves--early enough that all our members have the opportunity to become aware and can speak to power as they are moved by the love of Christ. We just missed such an opportunity.

UN agencies have been begging the US to change its ethanol mandate for years. International aid organizations have done the same. Environmental organizations have lamented the damage done by expanding corn onto land ill suited to row crops. The Heritage Foundation is opposed to US ethanol policy. Even the ultra-conservative Koch brothers came out against (at least parts of) the policy earlier this month. The reality of starvation is clear to those who have studied the impact of ethanol policy.

I have written OP-EDs for the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* (2) other papers. This week I am preparing one for the *Baltimore Sun*. It is attached. In that OP-ED I had hoped to refer to some action by the the ELCA Assembly as evidence of the broadening concern with the humanitarian consequences of US ethanol policy. My inability to do that is part of my frustration.

Please feel free to share this email or the attachment with anyone you choose. I can also provide copies or references for published OP-EDs.

Again, thanks for the opportunity to attend the Churchwide Assembly to learn more about our Church and experience the fellowship of so many loving people.

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