

## Convention News

The 57<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Atlantic District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod convened on Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009, on the campus of Concordia College, Bronxville, NY. Following opening prayers, the District President, the Rev. Dr. David H. Benke, welcomed Immanuel Lutheran Church, Delhi, Rev. John Priest, Pastor, as a new congregation into the District.

A most important task was put before the delegates as resolutions were presented to realign the regions and circuits within the District. (See link below to LCMS Reporter for summary of resolutions.)

As these resolutions were carried unanimously, the elections committee took the floor. With a clear quorum of voting lay and pastoral delegates on hand, the elections and resolutions that were brought to the floor during the convention were presented, voted upon and passed with efficiency.

Throughout the proceedings, the District's long-standing ministerial vision and focus, to *Engage the World with the Gospel of Hope*, was held up in the prayers, sermons and appeals of preachers and guest speakers. Another central theme, *Transforming Congregations*, was highlighted through the passage of a resolution reaffirming congregational revitalization as the first priority of the District. (See LCMS Reporter for summary of resolutions.) Video presentations of *Outreach Moments* illustrated some of the revitalization initiatives, with their successes and challenges, which have already been undertaken by several of the congregations and ministries that received funding from the Atlantic District's 2008 Ablaze Grants program.

Honored guests included the Rev. Dr. William Diekelmann, First Vice President of the LCMS, who brought greetings to all assembled from Synod President, Rev. Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick, and reviewed the progress of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance.

## Highlights

The re-election of the Rev. Dr. David H. Benke to his seventh term as President of the Atlantic District was unopposed and passed by acclamation. Voting continued to elect the first vice president, a new non-geographic position resulting from the realignment plan. The Rev. Charles Froehlich, St. Luke's Ev. LC, Dix Hills, was elected. The Regional Caucuses formed under the provisions of the new district alignment were then charged with the election of their "geographic" vice presidents, circuit counselors and other delegates.

On Friday evening, Dr. Benke was installed as President of the Atlantic District at a ceremony in the Village Lutheran Church, Bronxville, by Rev. Diekelmann, who also called up the First Lady of the District, Mrs. Judy Benke, and citing Proverbs, the last chapter, gave praise to her as a "wife of noble character." He then offered "thanks to God for David and Judy."

The "Servant of Christ" award, the District's highest honor, was given to four lay leaders in grateful recognition of their outstanding service to Lord and Church. Awards were presented to Klara Erdt of Poughkeepsie, All Saints Lutheran Church, Lagrangeville; Richard Lomnitzer of Adirondack, NY, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Pottersville; Linda Ryan of Riverhead, NY, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Aquebogue; and Marilyn Heinrich of the Bronx, Trinity Lutheran Church, Bronx

Also honored for their faithful, tireless work and leadership on behalf of the District were four outgoing members of the Board of Directors, Lillian Biddle, Grace Lutheran Church, Queens Village; Kenneth Ko, Glory Korean Lutheran Church, Bayside; Rev. Dr. John Hannah, Trinity Lutheran Church, Bronx; and John Mesloh, Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Garden City. Each had served on the Board to the limit of twelve years. Special honor and thanks were given by Dr. Benke to the retiring treasurer, John Mesloh, who will be succeeded by Douglas Kurz, Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Garden City.

Towards the end of sessions, Dr. Benke installed those who had been elected, including the vice presidents, the secretary—the Rev. Paul Sauer, Pastor of the Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Bronx, was re-elected—the new circuit counselors, lay and pastoral delegates to the District Board of Directors, representatives to the Board of Regents of Concordia College, and Chaplains of Auxiliary Services.

At the close of the convention on Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, the number of servant missionaries in the Atlantic District was increased by seventeen as Dr. Benke, presiding over the graduation of the Class of 2009 Atlantic District Deacons, exhorted them to "Go and serve in the name of the Lord."