

August 25, 2008

Rhineland Circuit Ad Hoc discussion and recommendations: Section 7-9

Pastor Otto opened the discussion with a devotion on Jeremiah 15:15-21 (OT lesson from last Sunday) - God has saved us; though our voice may seem small in this sinful world, God promises to give us the strength to speak the pure Gospel.

Attendance

Rev. Nathan Wilke – Our Savior, Phillips

Mr. Larry Riehl – Lay member, St. Paul, Crandon

Mr. Don Helwig – Lay member, Trinity, Minocqua

Rev. Michael Spaude – Ascension Antigo

Rev. Neil Varnum – St. John, Enterprise

Rev. Joel Otto – Trinity, Minocqua

in abstentia – Mr. Peter Micheel, teacher, Trinity Minocqua, sent a print-out of his thoughts

Section 7

Discussion

Recommendation 7.1 and 7.2

Spaude – When there is a rotation, it's an encouragement to participate, rather than wait for the bigger congregations.

Helwig – Appreciates enthusiasm of lay people who go; who went because they were in the rotation, which may not have had reason otherwise.

Otto – Fears that grass roots is lost, when a rotation is abandoned. If this were to go through, there would be an election of a lay delegate from our circuit. Possible to have 3 delegates from one congregation. It's possible for one congregation to never have a delegate, simply because of the election process.

Final Analysis – Those present don't really like the idea of first 2 proposals because of loss of grass roots.

Recommendation 7.3 and 7.4

Otto – Wholeheartedly agrees. With technology today there's no reason why information can't be provided on a more timely basis. There is a need to have all of this vital information out and in one place in a timely fashion.

Final Analysis – in agreement for this recommendation

Recommendation 7.5

Helwig – Has never felt that they've been too long. There will be more criticism to change.

Varnum – If it is shorter, wouldn't that probably cause more committees to have to meet early.

Otto – Isn't district convention too short?

Spaude – Sometimes things at the end get forced for a vote just to finish on time.

Otto – Can't have early in summer, because of Sem & MLC summer quarter. Some districts use early June to have a full-blown conference, so they can prepare their delegates. To have an early convention would knock out preparation time for lay delegates.

Final Analysis – There will always be issues. Time and length are good as they are.

Recommendation 7.6

Otto – From experience not many people come for circuit level. The conference level didn't seem all that helpful. Joel appreciated how well the Michigan District prepares their delegates.

Helwig – You can't make a rule, but develop an attitude. Not rules but leadership will bring this about.

Otto – Our district leaves most of the work up to the delegates and their pastor to help them prepare. Michigan District's pre-convention conference is like a mini-synod convention in style – papers, floor committees. It is very well attended. Is a bigger commitment for lay delegates.

Varnum – Last year Enterprise had a delegate. At convention the member made plenty of calls to Neil.

Final Analysis – We endorse the Conference of Presidents to develop a comprehensive process of preparing delegates.

Recommendation 7.7

Spaude – Feels that it is well-done. The information is out there.

Helwig – Those who want to get a hold of it can get it easily.

Vertein – Last convention no one came to our congregation to give a report.

Wilke – No one came to his either.

Varnum – It also depends on the delegate. Some are better at presenting than others.

Otto – It also depends on the forum that the congregation provides. If they only have time after the service... it will have to be a short report.

Helwig – It's so important for pastors to keep the congregation informed.

Final Analysis – Encourage them to keep doing what they're doing; doing a good job.

Recommendation 7.8

Varnum – It still is ideal for the president to make face-to-face meetings as much as they are able.

Possibly rotate which ones have personal visit and some by video.

Otto – This last year, the president's flight schedule was might crazy. 2nd Vice-president could also take the president's place in his own district

Final Analysis –

Endorsement 8.1

Otto – They've been doing great. We make regular use of "Together."

Final Analysis – We definitely endorse it. Communication Director has been doing a great job.

Recommendation 8.2

Vertein – Web-site does need to be a bit more intuitive

Otto – It is complicated by the fact that is the face of the WELS and is a conduit for synod members looking for information.

Final Analysis – Yes, try to improve synod website as best as possible.

Recommendation 9.1 and 9.2

Otto – Feels that synod schools have gotten too expensive.

Helwig – This is an older problem. A big change took a decade ago, but was before that.

Varnum – A big shift took place in emphasis on synod level in the early 90s. In Neil's time, be an example by sending your children to the synod schools. Do that, and we will help you as a synod. And they did. But then one convention, leading up to the amalgamation, breaks given to teachers and pastors was removed, because many pastor's and teacher's spouses had jobs. The thinking started to change.

Helwig – There had been a philosophy to draw students to make the school more like others. But Don wanted there to be balance so the purpose isn't lost.

Otto – The curriculum has broadened – more electives, requiring more staff.

Varnum – Not much broader. Electives are simply in language. In English there are a couple electives.

Helwig – Actually there are electives in Math and Science also, but that requires more staff. There are good changes taking place. He felt that at the college level that sometimes were seeking a name for the school in academia.

Varnum – Has that been more because of a drive for accreditation.

Helwig – Yes, that would be part of it.

Varnum – Starting tuition of a student is \$6000.

Otto – Area Lutheran High School is more like \$4500. A good portion of prep students come from the families of our called workers. It is becoming prohibitive to pastors and teachers. Grade school enrollments are going down, so they won't be providing as many children. I endorse the recommendation, but where is the money going to come from? Kingdom balance is the question.

Varnum - There will be sacrifices. The parents and students are making them. But there is a line when the sacrifice becomes too much.

Helwig – Trusting in the means of grace must also speak from the pocketbook not just the mouth. The emphasis seems to have changed. Let us continue to encourage our children to love that word and use the gifts of God to proclaim God's name. The fear of the Lord is not just the beginning of wisdom, but the end, the whole of wisdom.

Final Analysis – We concur with the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Commission.

Recommendation 9.3

Final Analysis – We encourage the synod to make every effort to carry out both options. If option #1 is done well, option #2 might not be necessary.