

Wisconsin Federation of
Lutheran Altar Guilds
57th Annual Meeting – April 21, 2018
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Appleton, WI

The day began with registration, continental breakfast, tours of the church, and browsing a wide-ranging display of products provided by Northwestern Publishing House.

President Ben Seidler welcomed all attending, which included members from Beautiful Savior and Benediction in Milwaukee; Bethlehem and Our Savior in Sheboygan; Christ Lutheran in Gillett; Divine Savior in Hartford; Faith Lutheran in Merrill; Peace Lutheran in Neenah; St. John's in Glendale, Mayville, Portage, Pulaski, and Wausau; St. Martin's in Chilton; St. Paul's in Steven's Point; Trinity in Menasha and Wausau; and, of course, our host congregation, Good Shepherd in Appleton. Four pastors were in attendance – Pastor Martin Koeller from Good Shepherd; Pastor Thomas Schmitt from St. John's, Glendale; Pastor Ricky Schroeder from Peace, Neenah; and Pastor James Schulz from Our Savior, Sheboygan.

Good Shepherd and St. John's-Pulaski were recognized as new churches attending our convention, with Good Shepherd being much appreciated for jumping in with both feet – attending and hosting in the same year. We welcomed both congregations!

Pastor Koeller led us in worship, with President Seidler and Stephanie Raatz assisting with the readings, and Pastor Schmitt assisting with the distribution. Pastor Koeller's sermon theme of "They Prepared the Passover," led us back, back, back, in recognizing that the Passover -the plan of salvation - began in the heart and mind of God before the world began, and thus deserves reverence and gratitude each time we prepare for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, as well as when we participate in receiving the gift of Christ's Body and Blood. The hymns chosen for the service acknowledged Good Shepherd Sunday.

After the service, Pastor Schmitt presented "The Message behind the Image," investigating the role of images in worship and the worship space. He answered the questions:

What has the LORD said?

How has symbolism been used in the church (Old and New Testament times)?

What are the objections to the use of symbol?

Going forward, what ought to be our practice?

We were encouraged to see our parish with fresh eyes, to use the images to enhance the message, and to teach these things to future generations. During the discussion period, several churches spoke of means by which they inform members, particularly children, on how images in the church have meaning. (Sunday School lessons, booklets, bulletin inserts, etc.)

Pastor Schmitt's presentation was followed by a bountiful lunch provided by Fleck's Curbside Grill, with desserts from Good Shepherd's Altar Guild family. We also had some time to continue reviewing the gifts, cards, reading materials, etc, from Northwestern.

After lunch, we were able to hear a bit about Northwestern's history, both as a retail store and an online business. Their representative, Tonya Gerbing, drew names for two recipients of gift certificates from NPH.

Northwestern's information was followed by a slide presentation of worship images sent to Judy Weber from some of our member churches. These pictures can be seen on our website, www.wflag.org. With assistance from members who had sent the pictures, we were able to identify the significance of each symbol, whether it appeared in a stained glass window, a tapestry, a carving, or some other media. A discussion of gifts to the congregation included two thoughts: once an item is given, it is fine to acknowledge the giver, but the giver no longer has ownership. Occasionally, the latter thought is lost.

During the business meeting, the Minutes and Treasure's Report from 2017 were presented. In addition,

- a thank you letter from Chaplain Ministry was read.
- a laminated explanation of The Divine Service was distributed
- a decision was made to give this years' North and South District donations to French African groups worshipping at Benediction, Milwaukee, in the South Wisconsin District, and at Good Shepherd, Appleton, in the North.
- a recommendation was made that we change our normal springtime meeting to mid-September or early October in 2019. Discussion included the fact that Easter, Mother's Day, Confirmation, and weather often cause difficulties in time management for members who want to attend this convention, and that a suspension of Bylaw 3a, which states that we hold our annual convention in Spring, would be necessary if we change. A unanimous vote passed to suspend the bylaw in order to give a Fall date a trial in 2019.
- We do not have a host church for 2019 or 2020 at this time.
- Daryl Jaeger was elected Vice-president, and Susan Ladwig was elected Secretary –both were then installed into office by Pastor Ricky Schroeder.

During the 'Ask the Pastor' segment, questions dealing with Christmas trees, with when/if they are put up in the church, with when/if the lights should be lit, with how other decorations should be handled, etc –were raised. Pastor Schroeder used this as an example of what can develop into an emotional issue over a matter that has no precedent in Scripture. "Ask Your Pastor" is the answer for this type of issue. He spoke more about pastor and congregants having respect for one another as fellow human beings and, more importantly, as part of the Body of Christ. When we focus on that relationship, we will not cause divisions over things in the kingdom of this world.

Our meeting was closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith A. Weber
WFLAG Secretary