

Convention - The Notes of a First-Timer

First of all, it was very warming to note how important Convention was to so many of us, especially as fellow pastors and laymen who need to travel from all across the USA. There was such a mutual atmosphere and feeling of encouragement as we came together to share and learn about our many and various avenues of ministry, both congregational and institutional.

What isn't quite said in the official report is just how apt the English District is itself at coming up with programs, putting presentations together and giving us such overwhelming support, where tools, stalls and networking is put in to place in just such a way as far as to be able to access, use and share what we have across the board. There are financial programs that have existed for decades that can help not only the congregations but individual members, such as the Lutheran Church Extension Fund (lcef.org) and the Lutheran Federal Credit Union (Lutheranfcu.org), let alone the very practical way in which we are simply encouraged to share our resources and ideas. Our district is very apt at encouraging Synod and has resolved, I believe, 26 resolutions. Please go to englishdistrict.org to review any and all of the above.

We're so big that when we typically have pastors' conferences we break off a little bit regionally, so there's more of a close knit grouping with which to discuss matters practically. So this Convention we just attended was the big one and is only every few years or so.

There was a ministry tent with all sorts of stalls, at which Concordia Publishing House stood prominent (cph.org). I got a couple good books. If you follow me on Facebook, there's a fun picture there of me holding them up. The seminaries we support were there, mission plants were displaying their good work, campus ministries were assuring us that our children aren't abandoned spiritually when they leave for university. We're much better at follow up support. The Synodical Bishop, Matt Harrison, turned up to give his support. Our very own bishop, who has worked so hard for us over the last two terms, has again been elected, by the grace of God, to continue to serve us once more.

There were times of jubilation, where, in a moment of awe, we all looked up at the big screen and applauded those who had served in the context of ministry for up to 60 years! When we came to 35 years, I saw my father's name, the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Naumann, and, as a surge of joy filled my heart. Not only was everyone in the room fully Lutheran, but as the proceedings continued with one mind and one heart, we were admonished to do so, by the grace of the Spirit, joyfully! I even met a long lost cousin of mine, William Naumann, with whom I got to sit down and have lunch and catch up. At our last dinner before we were shuttled to the airport, someone came up to me and said they knew my wife from their time at Concordia together, both training to be qualified deaconesses. What an opportunity to make new friends as well as reunite with old ones! It was just a time to absorb all the blessings we've been given this term and see how we are all God's stewards of His grace. We are but the clay. He is the Potter!

We all went away, yet again, renewed in our zeal, excited for mission, eager to read more; to learn more, to be part of a bigger picture and to bring this back to our congregations and institutions and let them know that we are confident in our district. We are walking together and we are very blessed to be a part of this church.

Humbly submitted,
Rev. Gordon Naumann
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