

I-K Lutheran

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A Newsletter of the Indiana-Kentucky Mission Territory

I will be your light and you
shall reign with Me forever.

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb...People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. [The Revelation to John 21:22-26]

I am writing this reflection in a quiet corner of the O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, South Africa. After a week with the 12th Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Windhoek, Namibia, about which I wrote in last month's newsletter, I am waiting for the next leg, the long 18 hour middle leg, of my journey home. As I sit here in South Africa, I cannot help but think about the troubled history of this country and the amazing ways in which it has risen through and beyond those troubles. Namibia, where I spent the last week, had its own terrible experience of apartheid and oppression until the country gained its independence in 1990. Both countries still face challenges, of course, but somehow knowing what they went through to get where they are inspires me, humbles me, especially in the afterglow of the LWF assembly.

For a week now I have been surrounded by, accompanied by, welcomed and inspired by, Lutheran Christians from more than 90 countries, north and south, east and west. We sang together, broke bread and sipped wine together, debated with and challenged one another. We shared stories from our contexts, some painfully heartrending, others healing and heart-stirring. We engaged deep Bible study and heard startling, disturbing, and inspiring keynotes about crucial challenges that we face globally. We stammered through conversations in the hallways and over meals, overcoming language and cultural barriers to laugh and cry and chat about things deep and shallow and everything in between.

In some ways, these seven days in Windhoek, have been a foretaste of the feast to come. Across cultures and languages and significant differences of perspective on important issues, the glory of God was our light, the Lamb our lamp. And the people, Lutherans from across the globe, brought into that bright light the glory and honor of the nations as we bowed together in worship and rose together in obedience to Christ crucified and risen for the life of the world.

I wonder how this vision might shape what we do across this synod and in each of our local communities. What if we let the light of the Lamb

shine into the shadows of our life together so we could see who is missing or who has been pushed to the edges? What if we then moved out in the power of the Spirit to meet these folks where they are, whoever they are? What if we found ways to make space in our life together for their particular (and often different) gifts, and invited them to bring the glory of their "nation" into our life together in the lamplight of Christ?

I suspect that we'd misunderstand one another, at least for a while, over our different languages, habits, and perspectives. We'd find our own perspectives, traditions, and habits challenged in uncomfortable ways. But, I do believe that, in the power of the Spirit, along the way we'd begin to discover the richness and depth and unanticipated joy that anticipates the unending joy of finally and fully living in the city that has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Thanks be to God!
+Bishop Bill Gafkjen

For reports and photos from the 12th Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Windhoek, Namibia, follow this link: <https://www.lwfassembly.org/en>