

## Follow Up Report on the Congregational Meeting, May 23, 2010

Special thanks to all who were able to attend the special congregational meeting last Sunday, and faithfully participate in the process of voting a second time to disaffiliate with the ELCA. After the vote was taken, and ballots counted, it was announced that a 2/3 majority of voting members present had voted YES, and that the resolution passed.

Of the 349 voters present and voting, 4 abstained, (which, in effect, are counted as NO votes) 112 voted NO, 232 voted YES, and one who had marked their ballot, but neither on the YES or NO line provided on the ballot. Since it wasn't clear to the counters, it was decided that this ballot should not be counted in any way, leaving a total of 348 votes.

The council met Wednesday and reviewed all the ballots and the voting process. Since the constitution does not permit us to discard any ballot, the council needed to determine what kind of vote was on the ballot that was not counted. After thoroughly examining this ballot, and much discussion, the majority of council members agreed that the intent of the voter was, in fact, to cast a YES vote. This brought the total of YES votes to 233, which is 2/3 of the ballots counted as well as voting members present. Bishop Jon Anderson of the SW Minnesota Synod, ELCA, received a certified copy of the resolution and the voting results on May 27, and will be sharing this information with other church leaders and synod council by June 10.

It is important for everyone to know that the council went to great lengths to be especially sensitive to everyone on both sides of the issue. Our hearts go out to those who, in good faith, voted to remain affiliated with the ELCA, but did not succeed in defeating the resolution. For those who voted yes to the resolution, this is a lesson in humility, and a reminder that this is not our church, but Christ's Church, and as members of the body of Christ, we cannot take for granted not only the significance of a single vote, but the variety of unique gifts of the Spirit God gives to all of us for building up his body for mission and ministry in the world.

We know that many have struggled over this process, and feel great pain in the aftermath of the vote. If some of us feel only our own joy at winning the vote, and do not feel also the pain of those who feel they have lost, then we need to ask ourselves: "Are we truly discerning the body of Christ in love?" We are reminded of Paul's words to the Corinthians 12, that "when one member suffers, all suffer". And in Romans 5:1-5, Paul teaches that through suffering, it's possible to acquire endurance....and that through endurance, character can be produced, and so on. Ultimately, this leads us to hope...hope for the present and future life we have together as Christ's body, and a hope that will not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

May God direct us in all our words and deeds that his name be glorified, believing that his will is surely done without our prayer, but pray that his will may be done also among us.