

European American Lutheran Association (EALA) Newsletter

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INTRODUCING OUR TWO NEW OFFICERS

At the General Assembly (EALA business meeting) of our October Biennial Conference with the American Indian and Alaskan Native Association (AIAN) at Prior Lake, MN, two new officers were elected. They were **Fred Thomas–Breitfeld** as president and **Beverly Dirkin** as secretary.



Fred had been secretary since the EALA was constituted as an association in 2008 but was Bylaw limited to two terms. Fred has been pastor of Jackson Park Lutheran Church in Milwaukee for 31 years. He is a graduate of Cornell University, Ithaca, NY and Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. He has been part of the Greater Milwaukee Synod Anti-Racism Team since its beginning in 2000.

In an introductory email to the EALA membership on December 4, Fred thanked Kathy Long for leading us through its “birthing” period and said, “I see us as a group that has a wonderful opportunity to work as an ally with other individuals and organizations within the structure of the ELCA to create an antiracist cross cultural church. We can be a support for those currently involved in this work across the church who are often isolated from each other, easily feeling alone, and unsupported in those efforts. I give thanks for the dedication of our other Board members, and pray that God will continue to guide us in the future.”



Beverly was not only elected as secretary at the October Biennial, but also to her first term on the Board of Directors. She has attended both the Constituting Conference in Chicago and the 2010 First Biennial in Milwaukee. Her background is in engineering, and she is retired from Parker Aerospace. Currently she works three days a week at her church, Prince of Peace, in Portage, Michigan, where she is involved in Worship Planning and other activities. She serves on the North/West Lower Michigan Synod Council, is Co-Chair of the Synod Witness/Evangelism Team and has been a member of the Synod Anti-Racism Team since 2000. She was one of the founding members ERAC/CE (Eliminating and Claiming/Celebrating Equality) in the Kalamazoo area. This organization has organized over 900 leaders in the community to better understand racism and to eliminate it.

***The Lutheran* Includes Mention of Biennial Conference in December Issue**

Entitled “Ethnic Associations Meet” (Page 11) the official ELCA magazine, *The Lutheran*, mentions the recent conference in its current issue. The article was based on a news release provided by the EALA which can be seen on our website. Missing in the article was this: Liz Gaskins, Bloomington, IN, president of the AIAN said, “Our combined meeting has been a meaningful time for sharing and learning about each other, plus telling of stories and laughing together. It was an experience that was important to the people in attendance and for the church.” EALA president Kathy Long, Seattle, WA said, “Liz is absolutely right, what an amazing event to laugh and learn as we build relationships in our two associations.”

Reflection on Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage Gathering

EALA Board Members are assigned as liaisons to the other ethnic associations. Cathy Crimi attended the early October Gathering of ALAMEH. About 50 attended. Here is her reflection:

It was a blessing to spend the weekend of October 4th-7th in Chicago with my brothers and sisters of Arab and Middle Eastern heritage. It was a great weekend of conversation, worship, learning, and building relationships.

It is always humbling to spend time with those of other cultures whose first language is not English, and to see a glimpse of what God's kingdom is meant to be.

It was also amazing to me that I was able to "get" the movie of the conversion of Saul in Arabic, with no English subtitles, a language I don't speak, read, or understand, reminding me that communication is much more than just language.

My hope is that we continue to work toward better understandings and authentic relationships across cultures within our church, so that the example that was set for us by Jesus is mirrored in our everyday living. Mostly, I look forward to our continued opportunities to build the relationships with my brothers and sisters of all cultures, and see where God will lead our church in the process.

Ethnic Associations' Leadership Summit in January

Leadership of the six ELCA Ethnic Associations has been invited to the first gathering of this type in the 25 year history of the ELCA. It will be held from Friday to Sunday, January 11 to 13 at the Lutheran Center in Chicago.

The announced objectives are to: Develop a joint working agenda for the associations; Clarify and strengthen the roles of the associations; Sharpen leadership skills; Develop multicultural competency; and experience multicultural worship

Over three-fourths of the EALA's 13 member Board of Directors plans to be in attendance. The content of two resolutions tabled at the October Biennial Conference General Assembly will potentially inform some of the discussion. In addition our new website portal will be available for use by any of the other associations with their websites. Your prayers are welcomed for this summit.

New Website Portal

www.crossculturalchurch.org is the new portal link to our website. As an address it is easier to remember and expresses what we as an association are about-to be cross-cultural and our hope for the ELCA and its congregations, to also be cross cultural.

White Privilege Conference

In 2013 this annual gathering will be held April 10-14 in Seattle, WA. Theme is "The Color of Money: Reclaiming Our Humanity." The website is whiteprivilegeconference.com

Cross-cultural Stories Welcomed

If you have had a good cross-cultural experience with an individual or group, please send it to prbauman@att.net for potential sharing.