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New Lutheran Organization stands firm in Mahtomedi

Scott Johnson, M.Div. Junior
Associate Editor, *The Concord*

MAHTOMEDI, MN (March 29, 2000)—St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, which seats 1500, was packed March 26-29, 2000, by delegates from 30 states for the constituting convention of the WordAlone Network, a group organized to resist recent Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) decisions which members feel have abandoned key Lutheran teachings.

Last August's ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Denver narrowly passed an ecumenical document entitled "Called to Common Mission" (CCM) which requires acceptance of an historic episcopate for ELCA clergy and bishops. Despite growing resistance by Lutherans who hold to traditional Lutheran teachings, ELCA leaders have indicated that there will be no exceptions. According to WordAlone members, these changes affect Lutheran teachings on the church, ministry, salvation, and the role of laity. The ECUSA will vote to approve the pact this summer.

Former American Lutheran Church Presiding Bishop David Preus called CCM a "radical departure" from the Lutheran faith by ELCA leaders demanding a "narrow, legalistic imposition of rules and regulations" about matters that have always been considered non-essentials. Preus added that the historic episcopate goes against the teachings of the Reformation, especially the "priesthood of all believers," and sets up the church as a caste system.

Former Minnesota Governor Al Quie said

that Lutherans can't afford to lose freedom under a top-down imposition. "It is the same to us as a Confederate flag is to African Americans. We have to be historic episcopate free."

Professor James Nestingen of Luther Seminary said ELCA leaders have issued decrees directly opposed to Lutheran teachings, have been unwilling to accept diversity among ELCA members, have used "coercive" tactics, and have eliminated from leadership roles those who disagree. He said ELCA leaders have assumed authority without corresponding accountability to scriptures, confessions or people. Nestingen called Lutherans to preserve their freedom.

Seminary Dean Marc Kolden urged seminarians to resist. Professor Michael Rogness suggested that pastors ordained in other religious traditions now have an edge over ELCA seminarians, since the ELCA allows clergy from other Christian denominations that do not have the ECUSA historic episcopate to transfer into the ELCA. Despite reports that ELCA bishops will only get 38% of needed seminary graduates this year, ELCA presiding bishop H. George Anderson has said that seminarians who can't accept historic episcopacy should consider which church they wish to be part, according to WordAlone sources.

"I do fear for the future of the ELCA," concluded Rogness. "I believe that one's agreement to CCM will become the primary text for orthodoxy and loyalty among candidacy committees, search committees, nomi-

nating committees and such groups. Far from being a non-essential matter, it will become the most essential test of one's belonging in the ELCA. We have been assured that one does not have to believe in the historic episcopate or agree with CCM in order to stay in the ELCA, but in reality that tolerance will give way to an insistence on adherence to the constitution of the ELCA, once all these changes are enacted. We already had premonitions of that, and the Episcopal church hasn't even voted yet!"

St. Andrew's pastor and WordAlone chairperson, Roger Eigenfeld, said WordAlone's goal is to make ELCA leaders aware of the opposition and get them to rework CCM so that historic episcopacy is not mandatory. But the ELCA's refusal to compromise may lead to a schism. "We aren't going to leave," added Eigenfeld. "We want to stay. But we might get kicked out."

Delegates also approved a constitution, elected board members, considered options and made plans for the future, including opportunities for mutual support, education, youth conferences, and renewal of interest in Lutheran teachings.

WordAlone Network press releases contributed to this report. For more information, contact: The Rev. Dr. Christopher Hershman, CNHershman@aol.com

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Discord? There's no Discord here!!!

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"Land Day" remembered by Palestinian student

Notes from the Parish Nurse

Lydia Volz
Parish Nurse

In April, we observe National Immunization week. Immunizations are not just for kids! Our great God invites us to be good stewards of our health (I Thess. 4:4).

Staying up to date on immunizations is an easy way to protect your health from serious and even fatal illnesses such as hepatitis A and B, pneumonia, influenza and chickenpox. Viral diseases are difficult if not impossible to cure, which makes prevention the best way to treat a viral illness. One can reduce the likelihood of infection by knowing the risk factors and avoiding contact with carriers of the virus. When this is not possible, immunization can offer protection against a specific virus.

Adults can benefit from the following immunizations:

• *Tetanus and diphtheria* boosters should be given every ten years to all adults and to someone with a deep, dirty wound if it has been over five years.

• *Chickenpox* vaccine for anyone who hasn't had it.

• *Measles/ Mumps/ Rubella* for adults born after 1956 who haven't had the illness.

• *Hepatitis A* (a 2 shot series) for anyone living or traveling in areas with poor sanitary conditions, persons with chronic liver disease. Or those in contact with someone with hepatitis A.

• *Hepatitis B* (a 3 shot series) is indicated for persons with exposure to blood products, or who need kidney dialysis or blood transfusions.

• *Influenza* (1 shot in the fall) for adults over 65 years of age and persons with chronic health problems. Recent recommendations also include those of any age who are in contact with large numbers of people. (200 persons from the Luther community received flu shots last fall.)

• *Pneumococcal* (usually 1 shot) after the age of 65. A second dose may be needed after 5 years.

Hepatitis A, B and C

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver and can be caused by viruses, medicines, alcohol, or a variety of other toxic agents. Early symptoms include fatigue, tenderness in the

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— Semper Eritas: Whither the ELCA? —

Michael Matzek and Emily Jensen
M.Div. and MA Seniors, respectively

During the Civil War, a confederate soldier was captured by a number of Union soldiers. They looked at him with frank curiosity and asked why he was fighting. "I'm fighting because you're down here." He responded. "Why are you fighting?"

Right now, in the ELCA, there are a lot of people who feel like there are fighting because others are 'down here'. The liberals feel like they are fighting to free their homosexual brothers and sisters who are oppressed. The confessionalists are fighting because they feel their birthright is being sold out from under them. The worship wars continue their steady boil and the charismatics just feel stepped on.

The reality is that the ELCA will probably not continue in its present form beyond the next couple of years. Whether that split comes over CCM, homosexuality, or simply direction of the church, and whether that is a simple expulsion of some elements or a shattering of this denomination along the above lines, things will change.

So, if we believe that things are going to blow up, why don't we just disband the ELCA at the next church wide assembly and start over. Here is what we would like to propose:

1) Dissolve the ELCA, all congregational property remains in the hands of the local congregation. The custody of the seminaries, colleges, and other institutions all go to their governing boards. Property owned by the ELCA is sold off the highest bidder and the proceeds are donated to the Lutheran World Federation or something else similarly innocuous.

2) We form a new

organization, called the Confederation of Lutherans (CL). The only requirements are that any congregation/seminary/college holds the Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism as true and valid confessions of the faith.

3) The CL would have no governing board or hierarchy. If people wanted to opt in, they could, if they wanted to opt out, they could.

4) Within the CL, congregations could form their own associations. Eventually, we would wind up with something similar to the 12 tribes of Israel. Like-minded associations of congregations, colleges, and seminaries would coalesce where people see common need.

5) If a group feels that for good order they need some oversight, they can create their own bishop and assign that office power accordingly. Similarly, placement agencies would probably pop up, as they generally do in a free market economy.

The thrust of all this is that it gives people freedom to be faithful. If you feel God is calling you one way and think that others are being unfaithful, confront him as the Bible

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The Concord

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Readers are encouraged to submit articles and letters to the editors for publication. All submissions should include the author's name, telephone number and, if a student, class standing. In addition, all submissions to *The Concord* should be prepared in typed, hard copy form as well as on disk if the item is so prepared. It is preferable that documents be in PC format. All submissions should be delivered to our mailbox in the Olson Campus Center (703) or at our office, Gullixson 10.

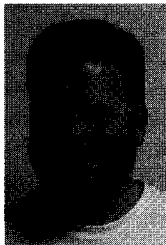
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Living in Unusual Circumstances

Scott A. Johnson, M.Div Junior

Associate Editor, *The Concord*

Touch means a lot to me, because of what I've learned about it over the past few years. I come from a family that does not, as a rule, touch a lot, although as time passes and distances grow we are improving. So it was a shock for me to discover at age 19 that church camp was a truly 'touching' place. We held hands in prayer with each other, squeezed shoulders to comfort and encourage, hugged to cement friendship and spiritual connections, and even rubbed backs just to show we cared. Our touch was always sensitive, always carefully appropriate, and always corrected if deemed unwelcome, uncomfortable, or out of place. And this emphasis on touch has carried over into other aspects of my life as well. But as I think back, the most important and most influential touch came on a summer night when a pastor gathered me under his wing and shook my very being.



As the sun set over the plains of southern Nebraska, our little group of worshipers at Camp Carol Joy Holling sang songs and ended our evening worship service. As the kids ran off to grab their toothbrushes and other things they needed to get ready for bed, I stayed behind to douse the fire, and then joined Pastor Roger Sasse walking up the hill toward the circle of tipis. He put his arm around my shoulders, which wasn't surprising; Roger was and continues to be a physically affectionate man. What he said to me, however, changed my entire life.

"Scott, did you ever think about entering the ministry?" Quite frankly, I hadn't, and I didn't want to do so. After having finished my second year of studies toward a degree in Music Education, I didn't want to even consider going in another direction. But once Roger planted the idea in my head, it struggled to grow no matter how little thought I gave to it. Finally, after another semester of convincing myself that I was happy spending all my time at the music building, I gave in, and started working toward ordination as a pastor in the ELCA.

I'm now a first year student at Luther Seminary, pursuing a Master of Divinity degree. Upon completion of the degree and a

call from a parish, I wish to be ordained as a pastor in the ELCA, and begin what I hope is a long lifetime of service to Christ in this world. In the past year, however, I've discovered that things are not entirely as simple as they would seem, and that touch can be a very divisive issue.

Recently, a "Common Ground Resolution" was sent to the ELCA Church Council and the Conference of Bishops whereby those who for theological reasons cannot accept the requirements of "Called to Common Mission" might be able to work a compromise and thereby remain full members of the ELCA. The ELCA Conference of Bishops drafted a "Pastoral Letter" in response to this resolution, a response which obliquely addressed the CGR as follows:

As we gradually live into a relationship of full communion, we invite the exploration of possible ways to allow a synodical bishop, in unusual circumstances and with appropriate consultation, to authorize another ELCA pastor to preside at an ordination. (Pastoral Letter on the Implementation of Called to Common Mission, Paragraph 6) (emphasis added)

No mention was made of the CGR's recommendation of either allowing bishops to remain free of an Anglican historic episcopate or establishing a non-geographic synod within the ELCA which would also remain free of an Anglican historic episcopate. Instead, the bishops' letter affirmed CCM, and recommended adoption of CCM by the ECUSA and full implementation to proceed as planned, basically cutting the legs out from under a gesture of compromise on the part of CCM opponents.

And so I find myself in an uncomfortable position, for I disagree vehemently with these ELCA leaders and I am enormously disappointed at the vacuous, inane "unity-speak" of my bishops, who respond with platitudes and politics when asked about beliefs and confessions. One might argue that the bishops have left a loophole regarding "unusual circumstances", but one might also argue that these "unusual circumstances" are exhibiting themselves in nearly every corner of our church.

It would seem that unusual circumstances have already arrived when qualified candidates for ordination must submit to the hand of a bishop before submitting to the

yoke of the Christ. It would seem that unusual circumstances exist when synodical bishops are read a resolution which addresses matters of faith and respond with little more than platitudes. It would seem that unusual circumstances exist, when these same bishops whose hands are now tied were so active in promoting "Called to Common Mission" in the first place. It would seem that unusual circumstances exist when the desire for unity with another church precludes substantial action on the part of the Conference of Bishops to retain unity within their own. It would seem that unusual circumstances exist when some of the ELCA's best and most honest theologians are characterized as "extremists" by their presiding bishop. It would seem that unusual circumstances exist when that same presiding bishop recommends that if seminarians cannot in good conscience accept a mandatory historic episcopate they might be better served by seeking another denomination.

Are we so arrogant that we can say that a historically questionable line of succession is a sign of anything but our own pride at maintaining such succession? If we are a church which believes Christ is truly present in the body and blood during Communion, how can we not believe that true apostolic succession comes not only from the laying of the hands but also by the working of the Spirit? In my life, I have been touched and strengthened in my faith by literally hundreds of people, and not one of them insists that they be the one to lay hands on me when I take my vows to serve Christ in public ministry. How is it then that a bishop, no matter how great a servant of Christ he/she may be, can dare insist that they be the one to preside at an ordination? Yet that is what I am told to believe by my own church that for the sake of good order the person to preside at my ordination may a complete and total stranger to me.

Do I believe that bishops are bad, evil, or corrupt? No, not in the least. There is a genuine need for leadership and administration within the church as a worldly institution. But the elevation of the office of bishop as laid out by Called to Common Mission is, in my opinion, idolatrous at worst and foolish at best. Called to Common Mission states that "All the people of God have a true equality,

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Parish Nurse

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abdomen, low-grade fever, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

The Hepatitis A virus is found in the stool of infected persons and is spread by ingesting anything that has been contaminated with the virus. It can also be spread by sexual contact and receiving contaminated blood transfusions. Hepatitis A usually does not cause long-term liver damage or death and gives lifelong immunity to HAV infection. Good personal hygiene is essential to prevent contamination. Always wash hands before eating, and after using the bathroom or changing diapers.

The Hepatitis B virus is found in the blood and serum and is spread by exposure to the infected person's blood, saliva, semen or vaginal secretions. HBV is transmitted the same way as HIV but is much more contagious. Symptoms appear more gradually, but the virus can stay in the body as long as a lifetime and cause serious chronic liver disease. To prevent infection with HBV, avoid risk behaviors such as unsafe sex and sharing needles. Health workers who are in frequent contact with blood and bodily fluids should be vaccinated.

The Hepatitis C virus is found in the blood of the infected person and is spread by contact with infected blood. Most persons carry the virus for the rest of their lives and will suffer some liver damage, though many do not feel sick. Early diagnosis is important. You may want to ask your doctor for a blood test if you ever injected street drugs, were treated for clotting problems, had a blood transfusion before July 1992 or were on long-term kidney dialysis.

If you would like more information on viral hepatitis you may access the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/> or call the Hepatitis Hotline at 1-888-443-7232



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Unusual Circumstances

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dignity, and authority for building up the body of Christ." (Called to Common Mission Official Text, Paragraph 20) If this is so, then why require the touch of a bishop for an ordination?

In my life, apostolic succession has not come from the office of bishop but from my fellow servants of Christ: the program director who gave me a camp job in the first place; the campus pastor who helped me through some disastrous times in college; the inmates who worshiped with me at the church in the Nebraska State Penitentiary; my wife, who still prays with me for guidance; my family, who has been so supportive of what I'm doing now; my professors, who seek not only to

grade my work but to help me become a good minister of Word and Sacrament; these are the members of the apostolic community who are present *now* in my life, and by unusual circumstance, not one of them happens to be a bishop. These are the ones who know me best, who are taking many of the steps of my journey with me, and who lift me up in their prayers as I lift them up in mine. It appears to me that unusual circumstances are now preventing these apostles from being asked to preside at my future (although now questionable) ordination, and to me that is just plain wrong. Unusual circumstances are now in place in the ELCA, and unfortunately, it would seem they might be here to stay.

Semper Eritas

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instructs, and if they remain in sin, have nothing further to do with them. This association would not allow people into being coerced into or out of sin, as some have charged the ELCA with doing.

Let us propose this question, *is the kingdom being furthered by the current state of the ELCA?* Would there be a loss to Christianity if the lamp stand were removed from its place? Has the price of unity become our mission?

We are tired of fighting. Nobody wants to give up on what they think is right and this fighting is using up energy that could be spent advancing the kingdom. So instead of trying to kill each other, why don't we just disband the ELCA and form something that will let us remain in fellowship and not have to fight?

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Prayers for a just, peaceful Jerusalem

Reem S. Said

M.A. Junior

I am a Palestinian Christian who writes in commemoration of "Land Day" March 30, 1976. I come to you from a land called holy and I remember a forgotten community. On Land Day, in response to Israeli intentions of expropriating 1.5 million dunums (350,000 acres) of Arab land in the Galilee and the Negev, the whole Arab population of Israel went on strike. The day ended with many killed. Ever since that day every Arab in the Holy Land remembers, on Land Day, displacements which have occurred and continue to occur daily. Many of those driven out of their homes were not Christian, however, a large Christian population was uprooted in Christian towns such as 'Ailaboun, Al-Jish, Ikrit and many others.

Uprooted we may be, but Bishop Munib Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan feels "that those Christians who live within Jerusalem ha[ve] a special responsibility to carry the living torch of the faith that is handed to us by the Apostles and the early Church." (Washington Report on Middle East Affairs WRMEA "The Significance of Jerusalem to the Christians Churches" Dec. 1999, p. 86).

The current political situation is drastically changing the demographics of the City of Jerusalem. Bishop Younan describes the importance of Jerusalem to all Christians of the world in a hopeful speech he made on October 4, 1999:

Jerusalem is significant for the Church because it is the place of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the place where the Christian Church had its origin. It is for the Church throughout the world no mere relic of a bygone age, but a community that functions with vitality in the present day. It is the center of the Church's life, the place to which it returns again and again to reaffirm its heritage and find strength for its renewal. It is for Christians throughout the world a place of pilgrimage, study and meditation. It is in the shadow of the Holy places that the Church finds inspiration for its witness and service to the world. (WRMEA "The Significance of Jerusalem to the Christians Churches" Dec. 1999, p. 85-86)

The living church in Jerusalem continues its witness to Christ, despite the fact that it is a minority church. From a Christian population of 25.5% of the Holy Land, in the mid-twentieth century, the number of Christians has been reduced to a mere 1.8% of the population in recent years. The threat of extinction is more than real. Younan expresses strong concern for the decreasing numbers of the members of the Christian community especially in Jerusalem by stating the facts plainly:

Due to the unstable political situation, the Israeli closures of Jerusalem . . . the Christian population of Jerusalem has been drastically reduced. Out of a population of 27,000 in 1967, there are now only approximately 8,000 Christians in the city. If this trend continues, our Churches will become museums. The very city that witnessed the birth of Christianity will have become a place devoid of a viable Christian presence. (WRMEA "The Significance of Jerusalem to the Christians Churches" Dec. 1999, p. 86)

We are the forgotten faithful in the place where Christian faith began. In the minds of many people, who do not know our history or understand our current situation, we are "heathens," "Saracens" and "converts." But Palestinian Christians are descendants of the early Christians; we are not new to the faith. We have faced persecutions, Muslims, Crusaders, Turks and colonialism. We have guarded the Mother Church and kept our place.

I, along with Younan, request prayers for Jerusalem and its peace:

It is time . . . that the city of Jerusalem, the "City of Peace," be not exclusivistic, but pluralistic in nature. It is my dream that Jerusalem will become a shared city of equal rights and responsibilities corresponding to the aspirations of . . . the three monotheistic faiths, namely Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. There will be no peace in the Middle East without a just peace of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the symbol and promise of God's reconciliation to all humankind. It can be-

come a living paradigm of coexistence and reconciliation between two nations and three faiths. I ask you to help us realize this dream of a shared Jerusalem. As a Palestinian Christian Bishop, I urge you to work and pray for the just peace of Jerusalem. (WRMEA "The Significance of Jerusalem to the Christians Churches" Dec. 1999, p. 86)

Lest it be forgotten that there are Arab Christians who live, have lived and will live in the land(s) of Christ, I urge you to see my face, an exiled, displaced Arab Christian. Until recently my home was thriving with Arab Christians who were not nomads, simply passing through a "land with no people for a people with no land," as proposed by some myths

An Arab, I have come to you from a land made unholy by oppression. A Christian Palestinian, not a convert, I carry 2000 years of faith. Please pray for us who have no home, that perhaps we may be accepted as legitimate and welcomed into your home, too.



THEY WILL KNOW WE ARE
CHRISTIANS BY OUR ACCESSORIES