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The Concord

Luther Seminary

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ELCA BISHOPS ENDORSE SUGGESTED BYLAW, GUIDELINES RELATED TO CCM

SAN ANTONIO (ELCA News Service) The Conference of Bishops of the ELCA endorsed language for a suggested bylaw that, if adopted, will allow for possible exceptions to current ordination procedures in the ELCA. The bishops also debated and suggested revisions to accompanying guidelines developed by the ELCA Division for Ministry.

Should the ELCA Church Council decide to transmit such a bylaw to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly, many bishops acknowledge there is work they must do for this exceptions proposal to be adopted. The conference met in San Antonio March 1-6.

The suggested bylaw and guidelines are related to "Called to Common Mission" (CCM), a full communion agreement of the ELCA and the Episcopal Church. The agreement enhances opportunities for shared ministries and projects, and, under certain circumstances, allows for exchange of clergy in congregations.

The proposed bylaw change and guidelines attempt to respond to some Lutherans who remain opposed to CCM. One concern is that, according to the agreement, a bishop must preside at all ordinations. Before CCM, Lutheran bishops could designate another pastor to perform an ordination, a practice which many opponents seem to prefer.

The bishops endorsed the language in the suggested bylaw with little debate. It would allow a synodical bishop "for pastoral

REV. PATRICIA LULL JOINS LUTHER SEMINARY AS DEAN OF STUDENTS

Luther Seminary Press Release

The Rev. Patricia Lull accepted a call from Luther Seminary to serve as dean of students, beginning March 1. She had served as director for campus ministry for the ELCA.

"Dr. Lull brings extensive experience as a pastor to help lead the seminary to equip its graduates for a new era of mission," said Luther Seminary President Dr. David Tiede. "Her network with campus ministers will also help the church identify and send out excellent candidates for a variety of ministries. Luther Seminary's mission will be blessed by her coming as dean of students."

As the new dean, Lull will supervise student enrollment and collaborate with the academic dean, faculty and the seminary pastor to design and develop discipleship programs for all students. She will also supervise the seminary's efforts to provide students with housing and tuition support, as well as resources for personal stewardship, marriage and family care and healthy living.

Ordained in 1979, Lull served as pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Alpena, Mich. (1979-1984), and Christ Lutheran Church in Athens, Ohio (1984-1999). Her other professional experiences include serving as a member of the ELCA-Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Discussion Panel (1999-present); adjunct faculty member of Trinity Lutheran Seminary (1999); and a member of the Discipline Committee of the Southern Ohio Synod (1996-present).

Lull received her bachelor of arts degree in religion from the College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio, graduating Phi Beta Kappa in 1974 with honors. In 1977, she received her master of divinity degree from Yale University Divinity School in New Haven, Conn., receiving the Rockefeller Brothers Fellowship.

Lull has written many articles and given numerous presentations. Some of her most recent include "Hope for Today: Young Adults and the Church," the keynote presentation and Bible study for the Upstate New York Synod Assembly, June 1998; "Confessing Together" (Lutheran Women Today, March 1994); and "Telling the Truth: Introducing Death and Resurrection to The Young" (World and World, Winter 1991).
Hart after my own Heart —

By Trudy Tannen
M.Div. Junior

It has been almost a year since my family has settled into our home in the Twin Cities. Over the past year, I've been trying to catch even a glimpse of the deer that roam the woods around the neighborhood. When we bought the house, the sellers told us we would see deer. But after almost a year, I had yet to see one.

To be sure, I believed the deer were about. This is the sort of area that deer inhabit; the warning signs on the open roads attest to that. Deer tracks are usually present whenever there is fresh snow. Last spring there were hoof marks in the soft moss along the tree line in our back yard. My neighbors told me about the deer they had seen. Late last fall, my husband saw one in the middle of the road not far from our house. But I had yet to see a single deer anywhere.

For me, the chance to see a deer in my very own backyard is but the icing on the cake of an already delightful house. I've seen deer pictures in magazines, seen films of deer in the wild, read marvelous descriptions of the beauty and grace of these creatures. But aside from the occasional zoo, I had never actually seen one. So for eleven months I have been longing to see the royalty of the forest in my own back yard.

Earlier this month, on a sunny afternoon, I walked into the dining room. Movement outside the patio door to our imaginary dock caught my eye. Something with grayish-brown fur was moving in our backyard. Taking a closer look, I realized it was a deer — right there, in my backyard. I was thrilled, and I knew my kids would be too.

Quickly, but quietly, I dashed downstairs as the deer moved along the side of the house. My daughter was taking a nap, but my son was still awake. Convincing him to be quiet, we headed back upstairs to the living room. The deer was right at the corner of the house, barely visible from the front window. However, the shadow of the deer was clearly in view. I explained to my son that by watching the shadow, we could see which was the deer would move and then we could look out the right window for a better view. My son, however, soon became bored watching the shadow of a deer on the snow. It took a lot of effort on my part to keep him quiet and watching. But presently, the deer walked along the front of our house, stopping to nibble a bit of a shrub. Then it walked into the driveway and down into the street. It was a magical moment, more than I had ever expected it to be.

I've thought about that afternoon ever since. Although I had believed, or I should say known, that there were deer in the area, I still wanted to see one nonetheless. Hearing about the experiences of others, seeing images in print and film, even the proof of deer tracks in the snow and moss failed to satisfy me. I wanted my own experience. I wanted to see these beautiful, graceful creatures with my own eyes in my own place.

Isn't a bit like that with God? We see signs of God's movement in our lives. We hear the experiences of others. But do we expect to see God, not just some sign of God but the very God Almighty, King of the Universe, present in our lives? Or are we, like my son, content to dash off after glimpsing a shadow — and by doing so, missing the actual thing itself?

I must confess that sometimes I am more like my ram-bunctious six-year-old than I care to admit. Perhaps too often in the course of my life I've been content to glimpse a shadow here and there, never staying long enough to see the real thing. But since that wonderful afternoon when I first saw a deer (and I'm hoping there will be more times to come), I've been thinking about this. I'm trying to look at everything a little closer a little longer these days. Only God knows what I may see.

The Concord

A journalistic ministry of Luther Seminary students

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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 subscriptions should be delivered to the mailbox in the Olson Campus Center (705) or at our office, Gullisson 10.

The Concord reserves the right to publish, edit, or disregard all submissions. "Letters to the Editor" submissions should be limited to 200 words or less while "Guest Columnist" submissions should not exceed 850 words.

Coming Soon:
The Discord

That’s right, it’s time once again to come together and do our best to lambast and satirize our beloved Luther Seminary, Minnesota, the ELCA, and other parts of our ridiculously funny world. The Concord, keeping a time-honored tradition, will publish The Discord as an insert in its April 1st edition, and student submissions are, as always, welcome and expected. Got a beef with your candidacy committee? Wondering about the value of a certain graduation requirement? Thinking "Region what?" This might be your chance to get your concerns off your chest and provide a laugh to your fellow community members.

Publication deadline is March 25th, so get cranking! FMI email concord@luthersem.edu
“Region What!?!?”

By Scott A. Johnson, M.Div. Middler
Managing Editor, The Concord

So it’s come and gone; seniors have heard the axe fall and are currently wandering around wondering when their bishop will call and when the interviews will start trickling in. I read the statistics that were posted in the campus center, how most of our graduating seniors got ‘first preference’ and only a few were sent to unknown or unwanted regions. It sounds like all is well, and for many it surely is. But at the same time I just have to wonder, are we as a denomination really doing the best for our graduating seminarians? Is the ‘draft’ as it exists really fair, or is it merely a way to ensure the status quo, the continuation of procedures that foster both an unfair burden on potential pastors and general recruiting ineptitude on the part of some synods? There is much to consider.

The average seminarian, according to data made public at a Luther Seminary-sponsored forum during J-term, graduates from seminary with $38,000 of total college debt. The average ELCA first-call salary hovered between $25,000 and $35,000 the last time I heard any statistics quoted. These figures are, of course, variable based on regional and financial fluctuations, but I think we can safely assume they are at least in the ballpark. There are tales of graduates from each seminary who are unable to find calls in their assigned synods because the churches that are seeking first-call pastors are unable to pay salaries which would account for massive loan payments. So the seminarians sit and take secular jobs to pay their debts, the synods clamor for more seminary students, and the churches go wanting for pastoral leadership. Is this really the church we want to be?

How ridiculous is this situation: the church which refuses to fund its seminaries, thereby requiring its prospective leaders to borrow significant amounts of money to attain a degree whereby they may assume pastoral roles, is the same church which believes it has the right to dictate to these students the regional and synodical terms of their employment. Again, is this really the church we want to be?

I submit that until the ELCA takes responsibility for the financial aspects of seminary education seminarians are under no real obligation to comply with the requirements of the ‘draft system.’ I can think of no other vocation in which such financial shackles are not only expected but welcomed by all the parties involved. Other vocations which require advanced degrees have the same kind of debt load, but the financial reward following completion of the education process is exponentially higher, allowing for fairly rapid repayment of high educational debt. Vocational calls which pay similar wages allow for free regional hiring practices in addition to not requiring similar debt loads. Yet here are some of our seminarians, burdened with a debt required by their church and yoked to synods which have no churches where they may work to pay off their debt. Once again, is this really the church we want to be?

I want to say that I believe that this insidious practice is not intentional, and I’m sure that in most cases it is not. I do believe that most bishops, student deans and called workers have the best interests of the students and the church in mind. In fact, it could be said that they are limited by the same system which holds seminarians captive. I do believe, however, that things as they are in the ELCA are unfairly biased toward the continuation of administrative practices that allow synods and regions the luxury of receiving pastors without requiring that they recruit from within their own ranks. Perhaps we could develop a system whereby synods would take on the financial responsibility for seminary education with the contracted understanding that seminarians return to that particular synod on completion of the degree program. Perhaps we should just junk the draft system and allow seminarians to find calls on their own, with the bishop entering the process only after the seminary graduate expresses interest. Perhaps you readers have other ideas, other processes, other ways of thinking about the issue that I haven’t covered here. Regardless of what might exist in possibility, what exists in actuality is unfair and unacceptable to anyone who looks at the whole picture, and it’s time to seriously consider how things could change for the better. We must consider how we as a denomination can change. For some seminarians right now, their essential call is not to a ministry of vocation but rather a ministry of indentured servitude, and the only way any Christian should be enslaved is in love for all humanity through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Upcoming Seminary Events

Luther Seminary Lectures: “The Book of Concord for the 21st Century”
Thursday, March 22, Chapel of the Incarnation

The new translation of The Book of Concord brings a new generation of scholarship and sensitivities to bear on the foundational texts of Lutheran identity. Four eminent Reformation scholars will address its relevance for the 21st century. The lectures are free and open to the public.

Lecturers: Dr. James Nestingen, Luther Seminary; Dr. Timothy Wengert, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia; Dr. Robert Kolb, Concordia Seminary - St. Louis; Dr. Irene Dingel, University of Mainz, Germany

Community Discussions

This is a series of opportunities for the Luther Seminary community to gather around issues and topics brought to the Student Council. We’ve invited members of the faculty and staff who are connected with each of these topics to participate in these discussions. Bring your lunch and join the discussion. All members of the community are welcome to attend; meetings are sponsored by the Student Council. FMI contact Erica Heath 659.9989.

All discussions are held from noon-lp.m.
+Monday, March 5th - Dining Room C; Worship and Spiritual Life on Campus
+Monday, March 12th - Dining Room C; Student Insurance Program
+Monday, March 19th - Dining Room C; Community On-Campus: Does your degree program matter?
+Monday, March 26th - Dining Room C; Dining Center and Food Service.

Systematic Theology Candidate

Prof. Alan Padgett, who is interviewing for Luther Seminary’s Faculty position in Systematic Theology with additional expertise in the area of theology and science, will give a public presentation on Thursday, March 29, beginning at 12:30 p.m., Campus Center Seminar Room #1. Dr. Padgett is Professor of Theology and the Philosophy of Science at Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA.

Luther Seminary students are also invited to a conversation with Dr. Padgett in the Auxiliary Dining Room on Friday, March 30, 7:00-8:00am. FMI, contact Steve Turnbull, st Turnbull@luthersem.edu.
ELCA DIVISION CONTINUES DISCUSSION OF GAY, LESBIAN ISSUES

CHICAGO (ELCA News Service)

The board of the ELCA Division for Church in Society (DCS) received a report from the church’s “work group on homosexuality” and asked for materials to help it continue its discussion of “justice issues for gay and lesbian persons in church and society.”


Last year, the ELCA Church Council asked various divisions and other units of the church to report annually on conversations about “human sexuality, including homosexuality, and the inclusion of gay and lesbian persons in our common life and mission.”

The DCS board received this year’s report and transmitted it to the council.

The Rev. James M. Childs Jr., DCS board chair, said the board took the council’s direction and committed itself to discuss issues related to human sexuality from the perspective of the division’s work.

The board asked “the executive director to implement a project, contingent on funding, whereby study material on justice issues for gay and lesbian persons in church and society will be developed for discussion by the DCS board at a future meeting.”

“This item engaged the board in a very helpful and broad ranging discussion,” said Childs. “The board clearly saw the need for taking some initiative, at the suggestion of our director, in developing some materials which would first of all engage us in moral deliberation regarding the issues of gay and lesbian people both in the church and in society.”

“This action reflects the commitment of DCS board members to engage in their own moral deliberation on the topic of homosexuality, just as others in this church are being invited to do,” said the Rev. Charles S. Miller, executive director of the ELCA Division for Church in Society. “We’ll draw on many of the resources currently in use in the ELCA, plus ask a few persons to develop some original material for our study.”


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reasons in unusual circumstances” to designate another pastor to preside at an ordination. Also, the synod bishop is to consult with the presiding bishop and seek the advice of the synod council before making a decision, the suggested bylaw says. Finally, the bylaw says the synod bishop’s decision shall be “informed” by guidelines adopted by the ELCA Church Council.

The wording suggested in the bylaw was originally proposed by the Church Council last November, and put out for discussion in the church. The council is expected to discuss the possible bylaw again at its April 6-8 meeting in Chicago, and may send it for action by the churchwide assembly.

The bishops devoted considerable time to debating and suggesting carefully worded revisions in the guidelines related to the bylaw. By consensus, they removed recommendations that candidates for ordination must have been given a positive entrance decision by the synod’s candidacy committee by Jan. 1, 2001, to be eligible for a possible ordination exception; that the bylaw expire following the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly; and that the presiding bishop “must” agree to an ordination under unusual circumstances before it could be authorized by the synod bishop.

The suggested revisions — reached after frank discussions — may address concerns expressed by both CCM supporters and critics. Many bishops said their ultimate concern now is whether a bylaw can achieve the required two-thirds majority for adoption at the 2001 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, assuming it is considered.

“This will be good news to those who are concerned, will be troubling news to those who are very much in support of CCM and will have to deal with some searching, and probably gives both sides of this issue some challenge to trust,” said the Rev. Theodore F. Schneider, bishop of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod during an interview. Schneider presented the suggested guidelines to the bishops on behalf of their committee that relates to the ELCA Division for Ministry.

Getting the necessary two-thirds majority for assembly approval of a bylaw will be an “uphill battle,” Schneider said, acknowledging the matter is “very delicate.” The bishops want the church to “live into the agreement,” he emphasized. Some work by the bishops will be needed to achieve approval of a bylaw. Schneider said, “The worst possible outcome is for the bylaw not to be adopted, and the church therefore have no guidelines for how it will handle those who feel they must dissent,” he concluded.

The Rev. Stephen P. Bouman, bishop of the ELCA Metropolitan New York Synod, called for the bishops to trust each other in dealing responsibly with possible exceptions. The Rev. Peter Rogness, bishop of the ELCA Greater Milwaukee Synod, echoed Bouman’s comment, adding that the bylaw should not be “a rear guard action to undo what the church has done” in adopting CCM. Early in the discussions, Rogness, who was appointed to a consultation team to discuss the exceptions issue with Episcopal representatives, said the Episcopalians were more comfortable with proposals that “narrowed” the number of exceptions that with those that expanded them.

The Rev. Stanley N. Olson, bishop of the ELCA Southwestern Minnesota Synod, Redwood Falls, Minn., serves a synod where many concerns about CCM have been raised. Should a candidate for ordination want a pastor to preside at an ordination instead of a bishop, Olson pledged to present positive reasons why a bishop should preside.

“I commit to you that I will work that positive argument with every fiber of my being,” he told the bishops.

Key provisions in the revised guidelines suggested by the bishops call for:

+ a candidate for ordination who seeks an exception to discuss the request with the synod bishop
+ the synod bishop to seek the advice of the synod council and consult with the presiding bishop
+ the synod bishop to exercise “pastoral judgment” in making a decision
+ no appeal of the synod bishop’s decision
+ periodic evaluation of the guidelines by the Division for Ministry and review by the Conference of Bishops and Church Council.

The bishops’ guideline suggestions will be returned to the Division for Ministry for further review, said the Rev. Joseph M. Wagner, executive director, ELCA Division for Ministry. Eventually the Church Council will make the decision to approve guidelines for possible exceptions.
In The House

By Robert Buck
M.Div. Junior

Lately I’ve begun to question my decision to pursue a theological education here at Luther Seminary. Naturally, as an “ecumenical” student, my doubt is largely centered in my struggle to reconcile Lutheran theology with that which I have learned over the years in the Pentecostal, Mennonite, and Baptist churches of which I have been a part. As we have now entered the season of Lent, perhaps you, dear reader, might bear with me, then, as I ruminate about these struggles I have been experiencing. Consider it a public confession of my sins.

Let me begin by expressing the deep sense of appreciation that I have developed for the benefits of belonging to a “congregational” church. In the Assembly of God church in which I was raised, there were no historic denominational statements of faith to which I could turn in periods of doubt or confusion. Consequently, the only “rule” for faith and life was the Bible itself. While this undoubtedly provided the advantage of encouraging individual Biblical study, it also provided for an impoverished collective theological understanding, and put simply, required a lot of hard work. How often I have longed for the security and clarity that a confessional statement would bring. Nonetheless, it only seems natural to assess all of this in light of what I have been learning about Martin Luther, and given Luther’s emphasis on the primacy of the word of God in its living, spoken, and written forms, I can’t help but wonder how Dr. Martin would respond to the plethora of codified theology which his reforms helped to create.

Alas, however, I have strayed from the point of confessing the sins I alluded to above. The primary issue that has been of increasing difficulty for me this semester is the fundamental Lutheran notion of “free grace” and the related issue, “passive righteousness”. I simply cannot reconcile myself to the idea that I have no part in accepting “my” own salvation. It seems illogical to assert that it is possible to reject the promise of the gospel on one hand, but impossible, conversely, to accept it. Furthermore, as the argument goes, if I do think I can accept the promise, this only points to my sin and is proof of my arrogance. How can this be? More importantly, doesn’t this make for an arbitrary and pernicious God?

Of course, here (I was reminded by a friend) I have ventured on to the problem of election. I have just asked if God is arbitrary and pernicious because God alone gives men and women the grace to accept the promise of the gospel, yet allows them the freedom to reject it. Naturally, behind this question lurks another one: how can a just yet gracious God allow some to perish, especially if it is God alone that grants mortals the power to receive the promise? I know that Luther would not endure this question which is, so he says, “God’s business” and not our own, yet I cannot leave it alone. I must know just what sort of God this promise-giver is, or, quite honestly, I cannot (will not?) trust “Him.”

Finally, then, I suspect we have arrived at the heart of the matter and the basis for my stated need for confession: I cannot trust God, or the “free” grace that God purportedly offers. I am too cynical, hardened, broken, independent, and capitalistic. If there’s no such thing as a free lunch, surely this must be axiomatic concerning salvation as well. After all, how can grace be “free,” and if it is free, how could anyone ever hope to contain or control it? And we must control it, right? I mean, if this ever really gets out, who knows what could happen; it could change the world! No, it is better to keep it under lock and key and retreat to the safe haven of the personal piety of my youth. Free grace is dangerous, risky, and reckless, leaving no place for religious regimentation and administration. Really, if Luther was right, then God help us ‘cause God alone would be able to make the rules and draw the lines.

God help us indeed.

Message From Abroad

Editor’s Note: The following is the latest in a series of letters from Luther Seminary student Frances Trzci. Frances has been communicating with several members of the Luther community during his time away from the United States; The Concord is pleased to offer his letters for the entire community to read, contemplate, and enjoy.

The joy of traveling back to Minnesota in January is more than just experiencing the wintry weather. In fact, for the two weeks or so when we were there, the weather was moderate with the temperature hovering around single digits to about the freezing point for most of the time. The true joy comes from the fact that when we are back on the scene where we took our baby steps ever so hesitantly and said that we were to give this a year’s time to try, we are back on the seminary campus to visit with professors, friends, and people that are so much a part of our lives since we became a part of that community slightly more than a year ago and to report that God is faithful in leading us on and accompanying us in this journey.

Back in the summer of 1999, we decided to leave our “worldly” careers and entered seminary for equipping to do God’s ministry. While I found it enriching and endeavoring to immerse in the Word and theological studies, I wrestled with the possible relevance of my professional background—from teaching college to the rough and tumble business world—to my sense of calling. An unplanned detour to serve as a short-term consultant in Hong Kong allowed me to examine whether my previous experiences in finance and the information technology industry may be relevant to my calling and my seminary studies can be germane to the business sector. I was led to trust that both would be relevant to each other in my future role in the ministry. I seek to resolve the dynamic tension between the Word and the world by creatively juxta-
Feedback
March 15, 2001

Letters to the Editor

Editor’s Note: This first letter was received in December and overlooked for publication in subsequent issues. The Concord apologizes for this oversight.

Dear students of “Teaching Scripture in the Congregation”

Thank you for some great papers! Those papers included some very exciting Bible studies, written by you, and also some critical and constructive reviews of curricular programs for Bible studies that are “out there” in congregations. I have learned from your projects and papers—obviously you have too, and it sure looks like you’ve got great ideas for what to do in your next chapter after seminary.

With appreciation,
Nancy Koester

Last semester you published your reaction to a “news” story broadcast on KSTP about sexual abuse by some monks at St. John’s Abbey. I followed up on the story with friends at the Abbey, and by browsing their web site. This is what I found.

The “news” is not news; it is history of an action that took place now almost 30 to 40 years ago. The monks involved are now in their late 70’s or mid 80’s. The cases were thoroughly investigated when they came to light. This resulted—among other things—in extensive counseling of the victims and compensation given them by the insurance of the Abbey. It also resulted in the establishment of the I.S.T.I. - Interfaith Sexual Trauma Institute—on the grounds of the Abbey. You (and I) do not want to see this focused on changing institutions, not treating individuals. That is best left to professional psychiatrists and psychologists on an individual basis. Also, on the main home page of St. John’s Abbey, you will find that SIA was one of the first monasteries in the world to publish a policy on sexual abuse. This policy is published at http://www.sja.osb.org/info/sexpolicy.html. Please feel free to browse their site and read it.

As with so many “TV news” stories these days, there is a grain of truth, but ONLY a grain, in what they broadcast. The “real story” seems to be to dig up any sensationalist item that looks like it might be interesting and put it on the air. Hopefully it will boost ratings. When I read the transcript of the broadcast it seemed to me to be very focused on sensationalism and tension. There are NO WINNERS in a case of sexual abuse. Everyone loses, and this TV “news” story seemed to focus only on that, and not much else. In short, the “news” wasn’t presented—only human pain with a glaring lack of any mention of any redeeming actions taken by any of the parties involved. Sad to say, that is what passes for “TV news” today.

Peace,
Keith E.O. Homstad
Oblate of St. Benedict

M.Div. Seminarian, Luther Seminary

Dear Editor:

At the meeting of February 1-3, the Board of Directors of WordAlone passed a resolution that reads: “representatives of the board will be meeting with seminarians at Luther Seminary on February 15 to discuss first-call options for seminarians through LCMC.” The minutes are available at www.wordalone.org. Apparently students from the seven other ELCA seminaries are not being targeted for such discussion.

Subsequently, student mailboxies have been stuffed with invitations, and The Concord carried a full-page ad (February 5), inviting students to a WA meeting on February 15 at Roseville Lutheran Church.

The issue that the invitations have put front and center, and which is to cause alarm, is “the mandatory imposition of the historic episcopate.” The attempt is being made to get students troubled by the possibility that they might have to be ordained by a bishop in historic succession.

How to respond? The tradition in which I was raised and educated should not be regarded as normative, but it is familiar to me. In the Augustana Lutheran Church all seminary graduates were transported to the site of the annual synod (“churchwide”) assembly, and they were ordained in one festive service of ordination. The President of the synod presided (as required by the Constitution), assisted by other clergy, including a sponsor for each candidate. At decisive moments in its history (such as various anniversaries known to me in 1910, 1948, and 1960, and no doubt others), bishops in historic succession from the Church of Sweden were present and participated in the prayers and laying on of hands. Those being ordained had no choice in the matter. I know of no case in the history of Augustana where anyone would ever have thought that being ordained by a bishop in historic succession could constitute a confessional crisis or a crisis of conscience. (The early Augustana pastors from Sweden were ordained by bishops in the cathedrals at Upsala, Lund, and Växjö; references available.) And the case is not limited to Augustana. Lutheran bishops in historic succession have ordained, or assisted in the ordination, of Lutheran pastors in other ELCA tributary traditions—who had no choice in the matter— as well.

Candidates for ordination have no right to select who is to ordain them. Ordination is a rite of the church. The church sets the standards (currently, an M.Div., CPF, internship, personal qualities, etc.) for ordination, approves the ordination, and conducts it according to its own procedures. Ordination is not simply a personal event, nor simply a congregational event (even though it is decided both of these), but an event of the wider church, in which one is publicly certified for call throughout the church, entrusted with a particular charge (Word and Sacrament ministry), asked to assent to particular vows, and sent on his or her way with prayers and blessings. As the word “ordination” implies, it is the way the church “orders” itself.

From the beginning of the ELCA, the Constitution has stated that the synod bishop shall “exercise solely this church’s power to ordain (or provide for the ordination of) approved candidates.” And while it is true that some bishops have provided for ordinations by other pastors, there are many who have exercised “solely [their] power to ordain.” In such cases, candidates who may well have wanted someone else to ordain them have had no recourse if and when the bishop’s answer has been, “No, I do all ordinations in this synod.” What is new now is that pattern has been regularized throughout the church. I think that is a good thing; others will disagree. But why there should be objection to it on the grounds of theology, the Lutheran confessions, or conscience has yet to be spelled out. In any case, the argument that the candidate should have a choice of ordinaters is not, in my judgment, sufficient. That one should object to being ordained by a Lutheran bishop in historic succession is hard to fathom. In the final analysis, it could

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be that the objection (or crisis of conscience) is not against the incumbent bishop, but against the ELCA itself. And that is another matter altogether.

Sincerely, Arland J. Hultgren Professor of New Testament

The Concord on February 5th carried a full-page invitation from WordAlone in which the assertion was made about "the confessional crisis within the ELCA."

This is a surprise to me after just having heard Prof. emeritus Krister Stendahl just a couple of weeks ago say that he knows of no Lutherans who have ever considered the way we order ourselves as Lutherans to be "essential to the faith." For him there is no confessional crisis. Rather, he could not figure out what the fuss from WordAlone is about. He couldn't understand the WordAlone people. For Lutherans it is Word and Sacrament. If one speaks about the "sola," it is sola scriptura, sola gratia, sola fidei, never Word alone.

Then I read "Why I am Not Leaving the ELCA" by Reformation scholar Prof. Timothy Wengert, a graduate of Luther Seminary and Professor at Lutheran School of Theology in Philadelphia, which is published in the "Lutheran Forum" (Winter, 2000). Originally an opponent to the Concordat, he does not see a confessional crisis. He suggests that WordAlone supporters have made an "error in interpretation" and in their understanding of the "significance of adiaphora."

So, what does a student at Luther Seminary do in response to the invitation to participate in an off-campus event with the purpose of hearing Luther Seminary faculty and others trying to convince them that there is a confessional crisis? Personally, I lament that we are not back in the 16th century. If this situation were to have happened back then, some other faculty member at Luther Seminary would clearly have demanded an on-campus debate. Is this likely to happen now? Do you suppose it is possible that students could actually force the faculty to have such a debate?

Dr. Merlyn E. Satrom, local ecumenist ELCA Pastor (ret.)

This letter has been on the tip of my fingers for quite a few weeks, after reading an article a while back regarding how one of our fellow students, coming from a fundamentalist background, occasionally felt marginalized by a minority of professors or classmates that would caricature the beliefs of fundamentalism. Well, I do empathize with him as I've been guilty, on a time or two, of making inaccurate, sweeping generalizations about fundamentalism in class as well. Conversely, I'm possibly at a contrasting end of the theological spectrum in that I infrequently find myself drawn to some contemporary theologians and historians that have somewhat drawn me away from being strictly bound by our venerable creeds and confessions. That has, on occasion, put me at odds with a select few of my professors and/or classmates. Now, do I feel like a victim? No, certainly not. Am I exaggerating for self-pity? Judge for yourself. But do I believe that something better could exist here at Luther? Yes.

This is my last semester at Luther and I want to thank these professors who were truly selfless in their approach to education. These incredible teachers were clearly more interested in witnessing the student's faith grow [even if such faith came initially from immense doubt, frustration and blatant skepticism] because inside, these teachers had enough integrity regarding their own faith that they never felt threatened by somebody else's warranted disbelief. Professor Sponheim has been such an asset to Luther. He is a walking library. If I said that I was interested in Science and Theology he would point me in multiple directions and eventually I'd find, for instance, Ian Barbour. If I said that I was interested in the purpose of suffering he would point me in a multitude of directions and eventually I'd find, for instance, Jurgen Moltmann. He never tried to make his theological world neat and tidy by insisting that a replica of his faith had to immediately be mine. Professor Hultgren has utilized his course in Romans to progressively discuss some of the contemporary debates that Paul deals with, and he offered a course on the Historical Jesus this semester [and so far he has not made a mockery of some of the Jesus Seminar theologians — albeit he will claim to not agree with all of their findings — which is fine by me]. Professor Ajmad-Ali, with all of his passion and energy can take on the most frustrated and doubtful skeptic only to redirect all of their passion to new avenues that they had not considered before. Professor Rollie Martinson is incredibly insightful and motivating regarding Youth and Family ministry. Professors Throntvet and Gaiser inspired me to read the OT again; while enjoying it this time. The list could go on and on. Luther has a wide variety of wonderful teachers and is usually a great place to learn.

Unfortunately, there are a select minority of professors who have tried their best to make faith seem intimidating, mundane, cut and dried, and unreasonable. For me, approaching these professors has been like President Clinton attempting to reconcile differences with Rush Limbaugh or Erasmus trying to reason with Luther. One professor caricatured my suggestion that all of humanity is permeated by the Spirit of God. He quipped that what a silly, contented little world we would have if Buddhists, Muslims, Christians etc. all had the spirit of God within them. Another time I was explaining in class that everyone eventually comes into some form of spiritual transformation or experiences grace by the great prompter, death. I admitted that when I was in the military, the threat of death during the Gulf War prompted me, for the first time, to reconsider my relationship with God. Upon hearing this the professor proudly asked me if I believed that God started the Gulf War so as to get me to enter into a relationship with God. Another professor, upon discovering that I didn't wholeheartedly agree with Martin Luther, demanded, "Why can't you like Luther more?" Unbelievably, one professor even began telling me, after class, how high his IQ was over most students, how many pages he could read per minute compared to me and listing off his credentials as if he were the after-class keynote speaker!?! On certain occasions, pluralistic theologians such as John Hick and Bishop Spong or Historical Jesus scholars such as Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg have been openly ridiculed in class, as if their findings are as beyond doctrine as that of the Branch Davidians. Unfortunately, young and old students alike take all of this back to their congregations believing that this is Lutheran; this is Christianity at its best. Aren't we snug and warm up here in Minnesota — having all of the answers...

There is so much about Luther Seminary to be a student's theological growth. But when a sincere student has doubts or proposals and is energetically wanting to encounter others with ideas it is so very stifling to their faith to be marginalized.

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posing one with the other. Conventional wisdom seems to counsel otherwise for fear that one would eventually crowd out the other, especially for fear of the secular world undermining the calling from above. I am deeply grateful for the encouragement I received and the broadmindedness I experienced from the seminary community for me to have the courage and the facilities to make my past year of adventure possible. By the grace of God, I cannot ask for more affirmation to ascertain that the world is surely relevant to my calling to ministry. When we were back on campus recently for the J-Term intensive course and had the opportunity to take inventory in our lives, we marveled at how God has led us in the year past and opened doors beyond imagination.

When I stepped away from my "worldly career," I craved for vocational ministry yet I found myself discerning my call to parish ministry. Looking back, the discernment exercise is one of seeking and waiting, responding and following. Life is like a puzzle to be pieced together with child-like anticipation and diligent stewardship. Recently a pastor friend of mine remarked that "though you will hear a lot of questions and comments on your decision to enter seminary, you will entertain more second-guessing and challenges when it appears that you are being lured from the seminary!" Nonetheless, unknown to me, God has plenty in store for me as I respond.

When I started this journey I was exploring the opportunity of being part of a ministry that seeks to harness the digital media for mission purposes. I had but a vague idea of some sort of a Christian ICP or ASP when I first engaged some like-minded Christians to brainstorm on this. Twelve months later I am involved knee-deep in a newly-found Foundation with a mandate to empower and enable ministries on the media frontier – from Internet applications and e-publishing to e-learning for discipleship training for the laity and theological education, and potentially delivery of multimedia content over broadband. One thing I know for sure is that I did not come up with all these ideas. All I did was seek, respond, and follow.

To have work and ministry so intertwined is both exciting and challenging. My work revolves around the information revolution, the Internet, the new economy, project incubation and Greater China. Although I am not sure where all these will lead, I can see how much the world is relevant to the ministry and the ministry is relevant to the world and that I am called and led to be part of both at this time. The world is where we are commissioned to be – "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." The Great Commission proclaimed in Jesus' time was relevant from the age of oral tradition, through the invention of the printing press at Gutenberg which set the stage for the liberation of the human mind and ushered in the Reformation, and it is as valid in our post-modern world as we are confronting this digital age now.

The world is a reality for us to reckon with and a crucible which reveals how we make our life count. It is where the action is, and that is where the opportunities lie. Indeed, the world is the mission field. As far as I am concerned, it is not up to me; it is a calling that God initiated and commissioned. It helps us to live out the notion of universal priesthood for every Christian. As such, I continue to fathom this as I continue to seek, to wait on the Lord, to respond and to follow. It is really a most humbling, yet rewarding and faith-building adventure.

A year ago when I was pondering on responding to this opportunity in Hong Kong, I received an email message from a missionary couple, Craig and Mary Charnley, in Spain who knew me over ten years ago, back in my Hawaii days. When I re-read their email in the context of reflecting on the year past, it adds to the poignancy;

I am sure I don't have much to offer to your thinking question but I will share one idea that has been very meaningful to me this last year. It is the idea of incarnation. After his work on the cross, the one truth Christ exemplified was that of incarnating the reality of God. This is a great idea for me in terms of living life in a secular world. Back in Hawaii I communicated to you numerous times how I felt there were few people who could incarnate the reality of Christ in the academic world due to its demands of being both an intellectual and spiritual person in a secular environment. Perhaps now the setting has changed but the same question remains: where can you uniquely incarnate the reality of Christ? There are many who can incarnate inside the Christian world with a focus particularly to Christians with periodic advances along the edges of the jungle controlled by the devil. Few, however, are willing to penetrate the jungle, set up their lives there to incarnate Jesus in a dark place. It is risky and not very comfortable to our spiritual lives. It is on the other hand, very much following what Jesus did in our world.

The question then for me comes down to where could you best incarnate what Christ has done in you and May. Though the ministry is always appealing to those who want to follow and serve Christ, it limits one to a certain world, predominantly a Christian one. (Not in all cases but usually it is the case.)

Mary and I feel called to enter the jungle of secular Spain, not attracting people out of the jungle into a safe world, but learning to meet and live with Christ within the jungle so as to be in contact with countless others who will never leave the jungle for other ways of life. In considering what it means to minister in a secular world, incarnation has become a very precious truth to us.

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or "put in one's place" just so that one particular person's delicate faith can go unchallenged. All I want to know is what are any of us so afraid of that we would do this to a peer, a student, a parishioner? It seems to me that Jesus was not one to hold onto the status quo of his time but rather he pushed the envelop — to reconsider just what the Kingdom of God was really all about. On the other hand, I realize how tempting and soothing it can be for many of us, on occasion, to put our professors on a pedestal; expecting them to be the ideal Christian. And maybe we, as students, cannot demand so much but instead come to consider that these learned men and women are only lugging that heavy cross around each day, just like the rest of us.

I have learned much at Luther Seminary and I hope that I will always convey the good. But it seems to me that there will always be some new idea or understanding or paradigm on the horizon to help us on this faith journey, as has been revealed to us Christians, through Jesus Christ. Yet, on occasion, I wonder if a select few professors haven't antiquitically found that it has been revealed instead restrictively through only Martin Luther or worse yet, only themselves.

Rick H. Wacholtz, M.A. Junior

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