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The Concord

Luther Seminary

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SEMINARY COMMUNITY DISCUSSES HOMOSEXUALITY

Students, faculty, and staff of Luther Seminary gathered on Monday, April 23 for the first of two discussions regarding homosexuality and current affairs in the ELCA as a whole and in the Saint Paul Area Synod in particular.

The second open forum on homosexuality will be held on Thursday, May 10 at 3:00 p.m. in Northwestern Hall, Room 100.

The April forum was moderated by Professor Roland Martinson and Luther Seminary Student Council President Michael Short. Five members of the community gave brief presentations and a moderated discussion period followed.

Presenters were Luther students Anne Strickert and Scott Johnson and faculty mem-

A Letter to Bishop H. George Anderson

In the interest of fostering discussion, The Concord here presents a letter from Bishop Paul W. Egerton to Bishop H. George Anderson regarding the April 28 ordination of Anita Hill at St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN. March 29, 2001

Dear Bishop Anderson,

With a heavy heart, I write to inform you that I have accepted an invitation from St. Paul/Reformation Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN, to participate with others in the ordination of Anita Hill. Since the invitation arrived several weeks ago, Shirley and I have talked, prayed and consulted with our children; a selection of Bishops and former bishops, beginning with Bishop Mark Hanson; my congregational Pastor and members of our congregation; my Synod staff; various Pastors in our Synod; our Conference Deans and Synod Council. While I requested and promised confidentiality in regard to the content of those consultations, I can report that responses ran the gamut from demands not to participate, to warnings of probable consequences, to acknowledgment of one's responsibility to protest policies perceived to be unjust, to expressions of hope that I would participate, to direct urgings to do so. Neverthe-

CAPITAL UNIVERSITY NAMES PAUL DOVRE INTERIM PRESIDENT

COLUMBUS, Ohio (ELCA News Service, Mark Cooper) Capital University has selected Dr. Paul J. Dovre to serve as interim president, said Robert J. Weiler, chair of Capital University's board of trustees. Capital University is a higher education institution of the ELCA.

Dovre's extensive experience and reputation as a strong and capable leader placed him at the top of the list of candidates who were considered for the university's interim post, Weiler said. Dovre will succeed Daniel A. Felicetti, who announced in April his intention to leave as president of Capital to pursue other career opportunities. Dovre will not be a candidate in the university's search for a permanent president, Weiler said. A search committee is expected to be announced soon.

"The executive committee of the board of trustees, led by Dorothy Brownley, put together a list of several qualified candidates, and it became apparent rather quickly that Dr. Dovre was ideally qualified to lead Capital during this important time in the life of the university," Weiler said. "The executive committee was unanimous in its support for Dr. Dovre, and he received strong recommenda-

inus of Capital's former presidents - Josiah Blackmore and Harvey Stegemoeller."

Dovre will assume his duties on Monday, May 21. The Capital community will look to Dovre to provide the same kind of leadership that marked his 24-year tenure at Concordia, Weiler said. "These are exciting times at Capital, and we are counting on Dr. Dovre to be more than just a gatekeeper during the search for a permanent president," he said. "There is a sense of momentum at Cap-

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future was Luther pressed Assembly devising member steady continued also by forum pose Republicans (2 - `...Dovre, Capital School'...Johnson (M.Div. Middler) had this to say about the group: "Chartering a chapter of College Republicans enables the students to receive the benefits of membership in a state and national organization. Many law schools also have chapters of College Republicans... We are a voice of encouragement that leaders in the church take their vocations as citizens seriously. Also, many of the skills learned in the political process are valuable for leading a church."

Johnson also said that a primary reason for the formation of a chapter was to establish contact between students and those in the political arena. "This benefits those in the political arena as they see Christian leaders in faithful service and witnessing to the love of Christ. People in the political arena have deep spiritual needs that often go overlooked. Our students can proclaim the love of Christ to them. This also helps our students as they see firsthand how difficult and demanding a political life can be. A mutual respect is established as we strive to attain the same ideals."

"College Republicans is a great opportunity for students to get involved in elections," said Minnesota College Republicans State Chairman Michael Krueger. "The emergence of College Republicans at Luther Seminary shows the political interest of the students and the quality of leadership on your campus."

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dovre continued from page 1 devising a strategic plan to guide the university into the future. We want Dr. Dovre to help us maintain that momentum and provide the steady hand at the helm for which he is renowned," Weiler said.

Dovre, 66, retired in 1999, after 24 years as Concordia's president. After graduating from Concordia in 1958, Dovre earned a master's degree and doctorate in rhetoric and public address from Northwestern University, Chicago. He taught at Northwestern and attended Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., as a theological fellow before returning to Concordia and joining the faculty in 1963. Dovre served as the school's dean and academic vice president for five years before assuming its presidency. During his service at Concordia, Dovre was recognized for outstanding leadership. He has been active in the Lutheran Church, serving as vice chair of the Lutheran Council in the USA, a member of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church and a member of the ELCA delegation to the Lutheran World Federation Assembly in 1990. Dovre also served as interim Dean of Students at Luther Seminary during the 2000-2001 school year. "I've been impressed by the tradition of Capital University through the years, particularly with the faculty, staff and graduates I have known," Dovre said. "I am most excited about the capacity of Capital to embrace its future through the strengths of its academic offerings, its presence in the region, and most importantly, its people."

Capital University has nearly 4,000 students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs. Mark Cooper is associate director of media relations for Capital University. 

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In Our Mailbox

I hear that the Word Alone movement is being criticized on campus for being against the ordination of women. Nothing could be further from the truth. Of the women involved in the movement, many are pastors. There are two women pastors on our board, and a man whose wife is a Lutheran pastor. None has worked harder on the establishing of the network than Pastor Kathy Sukke, a 1977 graduate of Luther Seminary, called and ordained for service in an ALC congregation, and a former associate dean of students at Luther Seminary. Her chief reason for opposing CCM (and mine) is that it requires a hierarchical form of ministry in which clergy receive special grace in their ordination, grace that the laity do not receive in their baptisms, thus undercutting the priesthood of all believers. Another very important main reason for opposing CCM is a lack of...
Choosing Not to Choose

Looking at Lectures in a new light

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

I took my seat with a feeling of great anticipation: it was, by all predictions, going to be an excellent lecture. I mean, when the first fifteen minutes of any lecture include Creed and a rather lengthy clip from “The Matrix,” one would have to really work hard to screw it all up. But, amazingly enough, it was too good to be true, and my enchantment didn’t last.

Some of you know what I’m talking about. On April 24th, our own Dr. Rollie Martinson delivered a lecture entitled “Spiritual but not Religious: Reaching ‘Lost’ Generations,” the 2001 Hein-Fry Lecture. What an honor it was, to sit in the Chapel of the Incarnation and hear someone who has spent so much time studying and reading about my generation! The wisdom of years of research and conversation were about to be handed down, and then, unfortunately, the moment was over. After his introduction, after speaking about my generation as the one who is leaving the church and not coming back, I was instructed to leave. How wonderfully ironic. Moments before I had been lifted up as one who had bucked a trend, who had somehow clung to the faith – now I was being asked to leave before I could hear more about preaching the Gospel to my fellow Gen-Xers. I was outcast, unwelcome, persona non grata simply because I had a class scheduled for the following hour.

In this age of Internet, programmable VCR’s, and the idea that time is indeed relative, can we not do better than our rigidly scheduled lecture days? Must they always and without fail be delivered during Chapel time, thereby taking away our daily worship and shorting the rest of that day in their wake? Not only do I think we can; I think we must.

If this seminary exists to educate and challenge its students, then the days of highest challenge and ground-breaking education should be not only an option but an exhortation, a welcome and invigorating change of pace. By my calculation, there were six lecture days on the Luther Seminary schedule this academic year. I, for one, would welcome the opportunity to simply add those days into the schedule, dedicated to lecture and discussion, with the understanding that students are highly encouraged to attend. The days could be rotated so that no class which meets only once a week would be reduced to cutting 8% of its class time. This is only one possible solution: surely there must be a way we can ensure that all Luther Seminary students and staff who wish to gain from the presence of these highly respected speakers can do so with no threat of penalty or guilt!

I should also say that my 3rd hour class that ironic day was informative, engaging, and important to my educational and theological development. I am not saying that I do not enjoy the academic schedule as it is at Luther Seminary. I am certainly not saying that I chose a lesser pursuit when I went off to class rather than staying for the lecture. I am saying that we can do better, because I think I shouldn’t have been required to choose at all.

A Letter from Abroad

Editor’s Note: This continues our series of letters from Francis Tsui, a Luther Student currently living with his wife May in Hong Kong.

Having returned from the Second Asian Lutheran International Conference at Bangkok for a few days, I am still reflecting on the theme and the topics we deliberated for more than three days while we were there. (The theme of the event was Asian Ministries: Challenges and Opportunities.) Indeed, since we relocated to Hong Kong we have been wrestling with the implication of Lutheranism in the Asian context. At the same time, we have also tried to appraise intellectually and experientially how our Asian American identity can contribute to cross-cultural mission and ministries. There is no doubt that although we have now returned to the place where we were born and raised, our decade-long residence in the States, our immersion in the American experience and the subsequent active decision of becoming naturalized citizens gradually transformed our worldview and henceforth make our stay here somewhat different from just simply a homecoming. The change of the external environment (Hong Kong has stopped being a British Colony in 1997 became a Special Administrative Region under the People's Republic of China) certainly plays a part in how we reconcile our memory of the place it used to be and the reality of the place it is now. The 10 to 15 years of life in the States certainly is as defining as the previous two decades when we grew up in Hong Kong in shaping us into whom we are now. From a broader perspective, Asian countries are now more connected to the global economy and China continues to widen its doors for foreign investments as well as ideas and values. Ethnocentrism persists notwithstanding, the question is how we can preach the gospel effectively amidst all these dynamics as Christianity is still a minority religion in Asia and by and large considered to be a “Western” faith throughout the region.

We had been going to churches here before we moved to the States in the early eighties, but our sojourn in the States afforded us a different perspective to assess the state of the churches here in Hong Kong. I became more sensitive to how much the first generation immigrant ethnic-specific congregations in the States could be emotionally and theologically connected to the local churches in this region, as well as in terms of
March Madness...Community Discussions
(Sponsored by Your Student Council)

Every Monday in March featured an opportunity to gather in community to discuss topics of interest and concern within the Luther Seminary community. Overall the discussions were well attended by students, staff, and faculty. We were intentional about inviting key folks from the community to participate in the discussions. If you have further questions or comments, please feel free to direct them to any of the "Key Participants". Following is a short summary of each discussion.

Worship and Spiritual Life on Campus (March 5)

Key Participants: Pr. Bob Brusic, Seminary Pastor; members of the Worship Committee (Paul Westermeyer, Craig Koester, Shirley Teske, Shawn Brandon, Jeanne Markquart, Heather Lampert)

Attendance: approximately 35
A sampling of the topics discussed and issues raised:
+ Praise for the variety of worship opportunities, but concern that folks do not attend in as great numbers as desired.
+ Questions about how chapel preachers are selected and interest in having more students preach.
+ Question and discussion around selection of assisting ministers. This is done differently depending on the tradition and that it is done primarily through the Time and Talent sheets distributed during First Week. A suggestion that Time and Talent sheets be done twice a year to give opportunity for new folks to campus and those who may have missed the first opportunity to still be involved.
+ Discussion and concern that chapel seems to be the only opportunity for the Luther Seminary Community to gather. There was discussion around the need for the community to have other opportunities to gather socially and spiritually. Some discussion took place around having prayer concerns and devotional materials available on-line to connect the off-campus commuter students to the on-campus population.
+ Some folks are looking for opportunities for small group spiritual guidance and or small group prayer opportunities. A desire was shared for community connectedness through prayer groups and for the discipleship track to have more substance. There was discussion around the possibility that these could in some way (required or not) be connected with the discipleship program, and there are models like this available through other seminaries outside the ELCA.
+ There is concern about communication of events and that current communication is not effective (using This Week and paper communication is not the best way...some concern that folks don’t read This Week now that it is via e-mail). There seemed to be some shared frustration about things being offered, but not being attended...this was not just a worship/spiritual life issue.
+ Discussion around the community gathering for worship and then separates with the faculty having a separate coffee time apart from the rest of the community. There was support of community coffee times that follow special events to encourage the community gathers as a whole.

Summary
The group was encouraged to continue discussing these matters and other matters in constructive ways and direct concerns, questions, issues, and praise to Pastor Brusic in the Seminary Pastor’s office or any member of the Worship Committee.

Student Insurance Program (March 12)

Key Participants: Jon Antilla and Laura Bystad, Business Office; Kay Asmand from the Luther Seminary Insurance Group; Rachael Dales, MA student.

Total Attendance: 20
+ Beginning next year the plan will be a Preferred Provider plan
+ Addressing the concern with presciptions there will be a drug card next year
+ The premium will be going up, a minimal increase; the largest part of the increase is added services
+ The administrator will be changing which should improve claims service
+ Why the fee waiver?: Voted on by student body a few years ago, it subsidizes student fee.
+ Are there other options? This question is being explored.
+ How can we improve communication?
+ Links from Luther web page (i.e. FAQ, Forms, etc.), we need better communication with intern, MA’s, etc.
+ The plan does not, and will not, provide good coverage for dependents
+ 20% of claims are for mental health
+ Separate dental and eye programs will be an option to purchase

Summary: In our discussion of the student insurance a few important things came to light. First we need to remember that this is student insurance and that is very much different from employer insurance that others may be more familiar with. Second, while the rates may seem expensive they are actually excellent and we would be very hard pressed to find a better deal on our own for equivalent coverage, with a few exceptions pending your family situation. Third, next year we will be covered under a Preferred Provider Overseer (PPO) plan that will improve the benefits and written communication among other things for us. Overall it was a positive gathering in which a good deal of hope for coverage beginning next year was shared, including new people working on claims so your claims should be relatively hassle free next year. There will be information about the new coverage coming out in April, so watch for that.

Community On Campus...Does your Degree Matter? (March 19)

Attendance: 22

Key Participants: Marc Kolden, Academic Dean; Paul Berge, MA director; Patricia Lull, Dean of Students; Tiger McLuen, Executive Director of Youth Leadership
+ Some MA students said at the beginning that they feel that they have been treated very well at Luther Seminary and have had no problems.
+ Some said they felt that the Seminary does not address MA students in language used or in assignments given. Classes are still very much geared towards MDiv students.
+ Not as much direction is given for MA students. i.e. Paul Berge was gone first semester and we had an interim Dean of Students. Students had no one to talk to about specifically MA concerns.
+ A possible root problem is that the church doesn’t know what to do with MA students and therefore neither does the seminary.
+ Some wanted more uniformity between MA and MDiv students (in program requirements such as Hebrew and Greek), while others felt that it was an asset for the MA’s to not have those requirements and to only have two years instead of four.
+ Some MA’s in the candidacy process (AIM, Diaconal, and Deaconess tracks) have had more difficulty because the process is...
“Discussions” continued from previous page

leadership resources. Throughout Asia, churches now seek to move beyond the phase of missionary enterprises and become more indigenous in both outlook and social posturing; some progressive-minded constituents take on responsibilities to send missionaries back to the West. At the very least, there is a general consensus that there should be increased collaboration among Asian Christians on both shores of the Pacific for acts of witness, justice and reconciliation.

There is, for Christians in Hong Kong, an additional dimension to ponder, which is how the unique and peculiar situation here can be used for the purpose of doing mission to serve China, a country that makes up a quarter of the world’s population; still officially atheist; and occasionally hostile to Christian activities out of political consideration. Hong Kong enjoys the highest degree of civil liberty in the entire PRC, which includes freedom of religious faith. For decades Hong Kong has served as the window to the West for China. Since the changeover to Chinese sovereignty, churches here continue to go about doing missions and ministries unimpeded for the most part. The challenge is on how to best capitalize on the current environment for the Kingdom’s purpose for all the Chinese people. The quest includes attempts to identify and to utilize different channels through which the gospel can be best served for evangelism to the Chinese.

Closer to home, my work with the Ho-sanna Foundation has started to pick up speed on two fronts lately. The Foundation’s ministry arm FuyinChina (Blessing Upon China or Gospel China) has started to offer network infrastructure support to local churches and ministries. The long-term goal of this ministry is to develop and to provide a global digital infrastructure to allow a coordinated and effective technology delivery system to reach the Chinese-speaking world with the gospel and to contribute to the building up of Chinese believers in the faith. We believe that Hong Kong can serve very well as the bridgehead for such venture.

The Challenge remains how to articulate the gospel in compelling ways in the diverse cultures we experienced.

As we moved through the Lent season and anticipated the arrival of Easter, we looked ahead and planned for the summer. While I will take another independent study through distance learning, May is planning to go back to St. Paul for another intensive summer course. We continue to take one step at a time with a grateful heart and a prayerful attitude and trust that God will continue to lead us just as He has been.

Erica Heath, Joanne Ott, Brad Lindberg, Reggie Elkindworth

Tsui Letter continued from page 3

Column

The Concord • 5

May 10, 2001

Continued from previous page

not geared towards them. The essays for candidacy are virtually the same for MDiv and MA students even though the program, process and outcome are different.

+ Some Dialectal students were frustrated with requirements for fieldwork, but not having much guidance/help from the contextual education office. Because the contextual education office for the most part only has churches on file, most students end up finding field work/project placements on their own, which is difficult.

+ Should there be more intentional bonding between MA students?...During First Week, groups set up by the seminary?

+ Could discipleship be changed so that this could meet the need of “bonding?”

+ How do we create community with a diverse group of people...married/not married, on campus/off campus, MA/MDiv, Lutheran/non-Lutheran?

+ Could there be a form sent out by the Dean of Students for comments and concerns during the year or at the end of the year so that students voices are heard?

Luther Seminary Dining Services (March 26)

Key Participants: Deb Kuehle, Director of Dining Services

Attendance: Approximately 30 people, including seminary staff and students.

A sampling of the issues addressed during the discussion:

+ The high cost of the meal plan and cost of the specials; the meal plan is set up based on $8.00/day.

+ A desire to have more intentional menu planning regarding health conscious choices.

+ The availability of Dining Services during breaks...concern for those who stay on campus during breaks.

+ A concern that items are not charged consistently...interest in having a monitor that the customer can see at the register. Deb mentioned there is an additional piece that can easily be added to the register to allow this to happen.

+ A concern that Lunch Specials are gone before lunch is done being served.

+ The addition and beginning of the Dining Service Advisory Council. On behalf of the student council, we would like to say thank you to all those who were in attendance.
By Trudy Tannen
M.Div. Junior

I’ve been watching the melting snow over the past few weeks, kicking these thoughts around inside my mind. No, no – it’s not that I have so little to do, so little going on in my life that I’ve nothing else to do. In fact, I’ve had so much going on in and around my life the last few weeks that, well, I need a break. Watching the snow melt has been a way to get a different perspective on the situation.

A lot of things come out as the snow melts away from them. First, there’s the sand. It was applied little by little after each snowfall. It was never a lot at any one time. But with each snowfall, what was put down before was plowed to the side. Although it had been layered in the snow banks along the road, now there are miniature sand dunes along, and even in, the roads.

Then there’s the trash. Like the sand, that too built up little by little in the layers of each snow. But as the snow melts, the layers fall together into an unsightly pile of trash. Who put it there? Who knows! At the time, it was just a little, and it was quickly covered over with fresh clean snow. Now it’s just a pile of garbage.

As the last of the snow melts away, I can see the leaves from last fall that we weren’t able to rake before the cold and snow set in. Of course, that didn’t make much difference. The oaks by my house are only now starting to drop their leaves. Even if we had managed to finish the raking last fall, there would be more leaves to rake this spring.

In a way, this transition from winter to spring is a lot like transitions in life. Stuff builds up little by little. Loose ends aren’t quite finished off. But everything goes along well enough – until there’s a meltdown.

Take the sand, for example. I, for one, have never liked the sight of dirty sand on the fresh snow. But I know that it is necessary to improve driving — and we all know how essential driving is. Now, it’s just a dirty messy nuisance. In fact, as I see tires spinning in all the loose sand in the street, I am struck by the irony that what was once helpful is now actually a hindrance.

And I think about things that once worked that aren’t working so well: old behaviors, old ways of coping, old relationships. Some of these things may have been helpful once upon a time. Some of it wasn’t good even then, but it was tolerable because it did help in some way. Even so, it may not all be bad now. The sand on the roads could be re-collected, re-salted (or de-salted), and reused in the future. Maybe the same is true for these other old things.

The piled up garbage is another example. I didn’t put it there, so it isn’t really my responsibility. But part of life with other people is that we dump garbage on each other. Perhaps identifying who dumped the garbage isn’t nearly as important as cleaning it up. In the end, it doesn’t really matter how it came to be here. The facts are: it is here, it’s ugly, and it has to go.

As for the leaves, well, they are mine – my trees, my yard, my responsibility. The melting snow is a gentle reminder to attend to the unfinished business. I am still a work in progress and I can see some neglected areas that are in sore need of attention.

But there is something else, underneath the snow that has been slowly melting away. Last fall, I planted a lot of bulbs under the ground that is under the snow. Somewhere in the midst of the mess and ugliness, there is beauty waiting to break forth. The dried dead lumps I buried are soaking up the moisture that trickles down through the thawing soil from the melting snow. Roots are reaching our. Shoots are stretching up. Soon all kinds of flowers in a rainbow of colors will explode around my house.

The snowdrops are already coming up. I didn’t believe what I had been told, but they really do pop up as if from nowhere. In their small, fragile-looking, but yet brave, beauty, I can see God is indeed good.

It’s time for some spring cleaning — and not just on the outside.

By Robert Buck
M.Div. Junior

My first year as an “ecumenical” student here at Luther Seminary is now coming to a close. This has been a wonderful, yet immensely difficult, year: a year of personal and family struggles as my father came to live with my wife and I and underwent two major, life-threatening surgeries in two months, a year of change and transition as my wife and I both started new educational programs, which I continue to maintain a full-time job, a year full of the joy of new-found, deep, and life-giving friendship, and a year of “wrestling with God” as my patchwork theological traditions and assumptions have been constantly challenged and re-modeled even as I have challenged the assumptions which I have encountered here. It has been a year for which I am deeply thankful.

To what end, however? I came here thinking of myself as “post-denominational”, which for me was a natural and logical (and somewhat easy) mindset to come to. The Assemblies of God, non-denominational, Mennonite, and Baptist churches and institutions of which I have been a part do not share the rich and normative confessional history that Lutherans take for granted. Being “ecumenical” all by myself, it was quite easy to conclude that God must abhor, as I do, the many divisions which separate His Church, thus the right posture, as Georg Calixtus articulated so well in the wake of Luther, was to distinguish between “essential” matters concerning salvation, and “secondary” matters which Christians might disagree about without being divided.

Now, one may rightly take issue with Calixtus’ use of the consensus (or lack thereof, as some argue) of the first five “Christian” centuries as the basis for what may be deemed “essential” regarding salvation; thus Calixtus, as I understand, is looked on as heretical by historical Lutheranism. Nonetheless, I can’t help but wonder if maybe he was on to something that the rest of us are too proud and stuck in our ways to acknowledge. Of course, the rub with Calixtus is that he did not find Luther’s emphasis on justification by faith alone in the “consensus” of those first five centuries, and here I must agree that Calixtus was wrong, because justification by faith alone isn’t simply Lutheran but plainly Biblical, and the first five centuries of Christian history must include the writing of the canon.

It must also be noted that Calixtus was also attacked by his fellow Lutherans for reintroducing tradition as an authority for the Church with his emphasis on the afore-mentioned “consensus”. Yet I still find myself unable to dismiss Calixtus so quickly. I can’t
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help but remember what Paul said in his first letter to the Corinthians (verses 1:10, and 12-13):

I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought... What I mean is this: One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Peter'; still another, 'I follow Christ.' (Can we add Luther to the list?) Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?

Paul goes on to conclude in chapter 4:

So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts... Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos and (Luther, maybe?) for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, 'Do not go beyond what is written.' Then you will not take pride in one man over against another.

I can't help but wonder if Luther had all this in mind in 1521 when he wrote:

I ask that men make no reference to my name; let them call themselves Christians, not Lutherans. What is Luther? After all, the teaching is not mine. Neither was I crucified for anyone... Then how should I poor stinking maggot-fodder that I am-come to have men call the children of Christ by my wretched name?

In this light, then, I find it puzzling that at least some Lutherans are so quick to decry any use of trade as an authority for the Church, unless it's Lutheran tradition, of course.

Believe me, I understand the desire to hang on to a hard-fought and well-earned confessional identity, and to let that identity serve as the basis for truth-claims in a relativistic culture. But here the question of ends must again be confronted. Will there be Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Catholics, Evangelicals, Fundamentalists, and Charismatics in heaven, or just Lutherans (substitute your own group here)?

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particular class of people, namely, gay or lesbian persons who are in or open to committed relationships. One of our sons is a member of that class. In response to an inner call first experienced as a teenager, he fully prepared himself for ordination by completing all requirements set forth by the ELCA. But he is nevertheless precluded. So we know now the hand of injustice of a policy that excludes persons like him from ordained service. His experience has led us into personal relationships with several others who have suffered the same exclusion. This is not merely about our son. It is about all the sons and daughters of faithful Lutheran parents throughout this country who have been made outcasts in their own church, by the very church they sense a calling from God to serve.

The realization of this injustice led me to participate with forty other ELCA pastors in the irregular ordinations of Jeff Johnson, Phyllis Zillhart and Ruth Frost in 1990. That realization then led me to accept a part time call to serve as Pastor of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in North Hollywood, a Reconciling in Christ congregation composed of mostly gay and lesbian Lutherans. Among the members there were former Lutheran pastors whose lives and ministries had been hurt by this exclusion. One of those was Joel Workin, one of three seminarians at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary whose certification for ordination was rescinded in 1988 because they told the church honestly who they were as gay men. It was their courageous act that led to the current policy in the ELCA.

A few years later I provided Joel with the pastoral care he needed while his life-partner was slowly dying of AIDS and then as he himself died in that plague the following year.

The realization of this injustice led me to accept speaking opportunities first within our Synod and then outside our Synod, advocating for the full acceptance of gay and lesbian people in the life and ministry of this church. By any measure, "full acceptance" includes the blessing of committed relationships and the ordination of those, otherwise qualified, who are living in such relationships. Because St. Matthew's had adopted an intentional policy of conducting "holy union" ceremonies for gay and lesbian Christians, I presided over three such unions while serving there.

In spite of this public advocacy that was fully known by the voting members, I was inexplicably elected Bishop of this Synod in 1994 and installed in 1995. I have never been able to escape the conviction that this office was put upon me as a place from which to bear witness on behalf of those I have come to know as the outcasts of our day, among whom Jesus can surely be found. At the same time, I knew this office would require more than a single interest, so I made and have fulfilled a promise to give this issue no more emphasis than it proportionately deserves among the many concerns facing this church. I have addressed it only but always when asked or when others raised it.

While in this office, Shirley and I have joined others in supporting with dollars and advocacy the production of Call to Witness (Pam Walton Productions), a documentary film which tells the story of this policy's impact on the lives of several ELCA-related pastors and their congregations. The Lutheran published a sidebar on it and several bishops have requested copies for their synod resource centers. Since it has been shown and is still being shown on PBS stations in major markets all over this country, I have pleaded for its showing to the ELCA Church Council and the Conference of Bishops, but, so far as I know, to no avail. Maybe in April?

During my term in this office, our Synod has become a Reconciling in Christ Synod, has called for study materials for congrega-
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When in this office, I have continued to publicly advocate for “full participation” as a keynote speaker at the Here I Stand Conference, Minneapolis, MN, 1998; at Texas Lutheran University, 1998; at Chasis, Concordia College, Moorhead, MN, 1999; at the Building an Inclusive Church Conference, Minneapolis, MN, 1999; at Jubilee 2000, Lutherans Concerned National Assembly, Ohio State University, 2000; at the Professional Leaders Conference, Fargo, ND, 2000; and at the Bridge Builders Conference, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, 2001. Also during this time, the sermon I delivered at a Eucharist sponsored by Lutherans Concerned/Twin Cities, amidst the 1995 Churchwide Assembly, was published in Open Hands magazine; the keynote sermon given at the Inclusive Church Conference was published by the Reconciling Congregation Program in Shaping Sanctuary; an autobiographical account of our family’s journey was published as a chapter in the Fortress book, Homosexuality and Christian Faith, edited by Walter Wink, and again by the Alliance of Baptists and Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America in Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth; and I was asked by the Division for Church in Society to write the section favoring the ordination of gay and lesbian persons in Talking Together as Christians About Homosexuality.

The point in listing these efforts is to demonstrate the lengths to which I have gone to fulfill the obligation I inwardly feel and my commitment to work within appropriate bounds when doing so. Yet, while having their rightful place and some salutary effects, all these efforts have been only words in search of responsive action. A time comes when words cry out to become deeds. I find it self-evident that movements of change in both church and society do not arise as voluntary actions from within our organizations. Progress on the inside is most often stimulated by pressures from the outside that make delay or avoidance no longer possible inside.

That point was made so memorably by Martin Luther King, Jr., in “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” that it needs no repetition here.

I believe those who continue to work faithfully for change within an organization, as I have so far done, should be commended for every effort they make. But I also believe that engagement in that way is relatively safe for the participants. As necessary and valiant as that service may be, they nevertheless risk nothing more than the frowns of those they seek to change. The real risks are taken by those who put themselves and not just their words on the line. At this point in my ministry, I can no longer advocate this cause with credibility from a position of personal safety. I am called to join in solidarity with those who are willing to be hurt as well as be heard, walking the way of the cross.

St. Paul/Reformation Lutheran Church has voted to move forward outside the bounds of constitutional partnership in the ELCA. They do so only after one of the longest periods of intentional ministry with and to gay and lesbian people of any congregation in this church. They do so with a candidate as qualified by spiritual gifts, academic preparation and experience in ministry as any ordained in this church. They do so after exhausting every reasonable avenue of recourse available within the polity of this church. This is no act of defiant congregationalism, but an act of conscience-driven faithfulness to their ministry of the gospel. I cannot stand by in safety and cheer them on. I need to stand with them.

By doing so, I know that I am crossing an implicit and explicit boundary line of trust within this church. That is what makes my heart heavy. But that is also the point. I do this consciously and conscientiously in protest of a church law I perceive as unjust. I do so in both fear and faith. My fear is that this action may stimulate forces of resistance to new levels of reaction and move the cause backward rather than forward. My faith is that, in the long run, this action will help our church more fully become the inclusive fellowship we intend it to be. Until gay and lesbian people in committed relationships are fully accepted in our pews and pulpits, that outcome will never be realized.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Gracious for your faithful leadership of this church.
Pope W. Egerton, Bishop
Southern California West Synod

Mailbox

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posing CCM, however, is the ELCA’s ecumenical strategy: reunion with Rome under the authority of the Pope. (See Carl Braaten’s Mother Church and Robert Jenson’s The Unbaptized God.) It is no secret that certain proponents of these ecumenical dialogues oppose the ordination of women and would love to use the ecumenical dialogues to get rid of women pastors. While not every proponent of CCM agrees with Braaten and Jenson on the ultimate goal of the ecumenical movement, or opposes the ordination of women, it is quite a bit easier to say that the current state of the ecumenical dialogues are a greater threat to women’s ordination than Word Alone. It may be that someone associated with Word Alone has spoken disparagingly of women’s ordination. There is not a shred of evidence in our official papers to suggest this opinion has any status in Word Alone. There is, however, a bit more evidence to show that some people supporting CCM oppose the ordination of women: The Anglican church is conflicted on this issue. Anglican bishops, known as flying bishops, have been deputized to fly around England to ordain priests opposed to the ordination of women. (See Act of Synod, 1992) There are Episcopal bishops, priests, and laity very much opposed to the ordination of women. And it is no secret that some proponents of further ecumenical agreements with Rome, for example, oppose the ordination of women. (See Exploring the Faith We Share: A Discussion Guide for Lutherans and Roman Catholics, eds. Glenn C. Stone and Charles LaFontaine, S. A. [Paramus, NJ.: Paulist Press, 1980], p. 83.) While I am not suggesting CCM will lead directly to the proscription of women pastors, there are some worries here. Accusing Word Alone of being against the ordination of women is an easy way to avoid thinking about the issue. I would suggest those people spreading these rumors look more closely at the entire situation. Then, perhaps, they would be puzzled, as I have been, why woman clergy would favor a movement that might, just possibly, put their own call at risk.

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