

Theologians admonish ELCA about ordination practices

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has been admonished to change controversial requirements for ordaining new pastors and installing new bishops.

A newly formed group of international Lutheran theologians issued a written statement November 18, 2002 suggesting that the ELCA may have contradicted its own Lutheran Confessions in adopting new ordination requirements in recent years. The admonition addressed primarily the

issue of requiring that new ministers and bishops be ordained into an "episcopal succession" as defined by The Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA). (See the full text at www.wordalone.org)

However, the theological paper suggested the ELCA could remain true to the Confessions by giving equal standing to ordinations done outside the new requirements. New rites were mandated by a full communion agreement (Continued on page 2)



Prof. Steven Paulson, standing in front of the theological board, reads the board's admonition.

Theologians admonish ELCA about ordination practices *(Continued from page 1)*

with the ECUSA, approved by the ELCA ruling body in 1999.

The theologians categorized the Episcopal requirements for ordination into "episcopal succession" as unnecessary or "indifferent (adiaphoron)" for justification of the sinner or for the church to be church. They wrote that by making "an adiaphoron into a theological necessity" the ELCA seemed to have contradicted its own confessional documents, which state that the church only is made manifest when it properly preaches the gospel and distributes the sacraments.

"Episcopal succession" is accomplished by having only bishops ordain new ministers and having new bishops installed by three bishops in historic succession, one who must be an Episcopal bishop. Formerly, other pastors often ordained Lutheran pastors; Episcopal bishops did not install Lutheran bishops nor were three bishops in historic succession required.

The group of theologians, formed by the WordAlone Network, met for the first time

Nov. 16-18, 2002 in Minnesota and in two and a half days wrote and signed the document.

The proclamation was presented Nov. 18 at a conference at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Mahtomedi, Minn., for laypersons and clergy, offered by WordAlone as a follow-up to the theologians' meeting.

The meeting, which was announced at the end of September, drew several hundred people from 21 states and five countries.

Conference participants began signing the admonition during the conference. Since then, WordAlone has received over 500 signatures at the conference, in the mail and from Internet responses. Call the WordAlone office or check the website for instructions to add your signature.

Participating theologians were:

Dr. James Bangsund, Usa River, Tanzania

Dr. James Burtness, St. Paul, Minn.

Dr. Gerhard Forde, St. Paul

Dr. George W. Forell, Iowa City, Iowa

Dr. Roy A. Harrisville, St. Paul

Dr. Jack Dean Kingsbury, Richmond, Va.

Dr. James Nestingen, St. Paul

Dr. Steven D. Paulson, St. Paul

Dr. Hans Schwarz, Germany

Dr. Walter Sundberg, St. Paul

Dr. Martin Synnes, Oslo, Norway

Dr. Dorothea Wendebourg, Berlin, Germany

Dr. Vitor Westhelle, Chicago, Ill.

The document also was signed by Dr. Mary Jane Haemig, St. Paul; Dr. Gerhard Krodel, Gettysburg, Pa. and Dr. Gottfried Krodel, Valparaiso, Ind. who were unable to attend the meeting.

Theological Conference

Cross of Christ is the center, participants told

Lutheran theology of the Cross of Christ is the real reason to remain Lutheran, Prof. Emeritus George Forrell told participants in a WordAlone Network theological conference held in November at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Mathomedi, Minn.

Forrell, who taught at the University of Iowa, was answering the question, "Is It Still Worth Being a Lutheran?" posed as part of the conference, which followed a two-day meeting by a group of international theologians, including Forrell, brought together by WordAlone. (See related story on page 1 on the theologians' admonition to the ELCA.)

He said Lutheran theology must be brought to the ecumenical church, not out of pride but because of what God "has done for us through it." He expressed a fear that the Cross of Christ as the center of the faith could be lost. The proclamation of the spoken word made flesh, the centrality of Christ, supplies the key to scripture and the distinction between law and Gospel, he added.

Law makes us aware of our "sickness unto death," and the Gospel offers the reality of the forgiveness of sins, which, he said, was most needed in the 20th and 21st centuries.

It is important to acquaint church members with Lutheran theology and essential to study Luther's Small Catechism, he exhorted his audience.

In an earlier address, "Where Do We Go from Here," Pastor Roger Gordon of King of Glory Lutheran Church, Tempe, Ariz., said the present condition of the malnourished church is a treatable condition. He told WordAlone participants they should feed on love and grace and the word of

God, they should be "lovingly honest," they must continue to be a reform movement and they should help congregations to learn to do moral deliberations.

Prof. Emeritus Roy Harrisville of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., said in the opening speech of the conference, "How Did We Get Here?" that the church had been affected by "radical liturgical change" and a preoccupation with structure.

Harrisville asserted that events leading to the approval of "Called to Common Mission" (a full-communion agreement) reveal a history of misrepresentation, unilateral action by officialdom, broken promises and the suppression of dissent.

In the conference's closing worship, Prof. Gracia Grindal, Luther Seminary, said: "Who of us would have believed that the church that nursed us into faith, that gave us life, eternal life, when it gave us faith in Jesus Christ through our baptism. . . that this church would break our hearts."

And, she added, "All of us have suffered . . . but Jesus speaks sweet comfort to us here. He came to make us free, free to live without bitterness, without fear."

Then she urged the participants. "This is what our movement is called to do: preach the Gospel, in and out of season. If it doesn't preach, it's not worth much. WordAlone is called to tell the world about a Lord who understands our deepest woes, and who has conquered them with his own bitter death and resurrection.

"If the Son has made you free, you are free indeed!"

(Tapes are available from this conference, see page 14 of this newsletter.)

Index

- p. 1-2 Theologians admonish ELCA about ordination
- p. 3 Cross of Christ is the center, participants told
- p. 4 Diverse group discusses sexuality
- p. 5 New ecumenism is grounded in Jesus
- p. 6 Presbyterian group has worked since 1965
- p.7-10 Be Steadfast: A Letter to Confessing Christians
- p. 11 The American Anglican Council
- p. 12 Free to believe but not to practice
- p. 13 Who makes the call?
- p. 14 WordAlone's Annual Convention
- p. 15 Lutheran Clergy Connect

Network News is published 5 times yearly by the WordAlone Network.
Rev. Jaynan Clark Egland: President, Rev. Mark C. Chavez: Director,
Betsy Carlson: Editor

- Please photocopy & distribute -

Diverse group, yet united in the Spirit, discusses sexuality

by **Jaynan Clark Eglund**
President, WordAlone Network

I attended the Conference on Christian Sexuality Oct. 24-26 in Kansas City. I was reinvigorated, refreshed and renewed.

The conference was sponsored by the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau (ALPB) and carried specific endorsements from the Fellowship of Confessional Lutherans and the WordAlone Network. More than 250 participants from across the U.S. and Canada gathered to hear a number of very fine speakers address the issues of marriage and sexuality from a classical Biblical-Confessional position. All present seemed pleased with the quality and variety of the presentations.

This conference concluded by issuing a statement entitled, "A Pastoral Statement of Conviction and Concern." This statement is available at www.wordalone.org/archives/daily_posts/pastoral_statement for your consideration and possible action. I would encourage individuals and congregations alike to read it and consider what you might do to engage further in reform, renewal and theological reflection within the ELCA and wider Christian church.

As I joined with others at the conference, I was struck by our diversity. Yet, because the conference was sponsored by the ALPB, the majority of those in attendance identified themselves as "evangelical catholics." Evangelical catholics view themselves as Lutherans in the sense of focusing on the

Good News of Christ yet they see Lutheranism as a reform movement within the traditions of the early western church or the church catholic. This is reflected in their liturgy, which would be considered traditional in form.

Many of them disagree with the WordAlone Network on ecumenical matters and, especially, on the mandatory imposition of an historical episcopate by Anglican orders as required in the full communion agreement, Called to Common Mission. However, it was refreshing to observe that though we read the "Confessions" differently . . . we at least are reading them! Also, and more importantly, we read the scriptures differently, especially regarding Christian unity and specifically John 17 . . . but we all are reading them.

Gathered together with other people of the Word, I was relieved and I rejoiced in the fact that we never felt we needed to apologize for our interpretations and positions on the hard questions and big issues. There was a true unity of Spirit that Christ alone can create and that opens up conversation rather than closes down debate.

Let us read differently the Word if that is how God opens it to us, but let us all continue to read it, to hear it and to share it. For it is only the Word that will properly engage us in all the questions, concerns and issues looming ahead for Christ's church and His world.

Agreed?

New ecumenism is grounded in Jesus

by **Mark Chavez**
WordAlone Network Director

Nearly 700 people from at least a dozen Protestant denominations in North America gathered in Indianapolis, Ind., Oct. 24-26, for a conference, "Confessing the Faith: Reclaiming Historic Faith and Teaching for the 21st Century." The purpose of the conference was to encourage mainline Protestants to continue to work for renewal within their mainline churches - to center them in Jesus and to focus on making disciples for him.

The Association for Church Renewal (ACR), a group of leaders of renewing and confessing movements in many of the Protestant denominations, including the WordAlone Network, sponsored the conference.

The conference was an expression of true ecumenism. Believers from many different traditions - Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Congregational and others - came together in the unity given to the church in Jesus Christ. Their common concern was the decades long effort by many mainline denominational leaders to move the denominations away from the biblical and historic faith of the Church.

Prior to the conference, Dr. Thomas C. Oden, professor of theology and ethics at the Theological School, Drew University, Madison, N.J., convened the first meeting of the ACR's Confessing Theologians Commission Sept. 20-22 in Dallas, Texas. Theologians from seven North American churches, including Dr. Walter Sundberg and Pastor Russell Saltzman from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, drafted a statement, "Be Steadfast" (see pp. 7-10), in response to three questions from the ACR:

Why should we remain in our churches? Why do our churches need faithful confessors? Why does our society need faithful Christian confessors?

In remarks, read in conjunction with the presentation of the theologians' statement at Indianapolis, Oden wrote that he hoped the Indianapolis conference was the beginning of a new ecumenism unlike the old, failing ecumenism of the second half of the 20th century, which actually fosters division. (Oden was unable to attend the conference due to illness.) The old ecumenism was bureaucratic and hierarchical; it sought organic unity and was politics-driven, his remarks asserted.

The new ecumenism is based on truth, not negotiations, according to Oden. It is grounded in the unity in Christ Jesus and the historic faith of the Church. Instead of seeking common structure, it is spirit-led. It lets the Spirit create many structures. "Not every division is of the devil. Not every union is of the Holy Spirit," he wrote.

Oden's remarks added, "Ironically the new ecumenism is older than the old ecumenism." The old began in 1948 with the formation of the World Council of Churches, he explained. The new began in 46 A.D. in Jerusalem and from there went out to Samaria and the ends of the earth with the Gospel of Jesus.

The Indianapolis conference covered a wide variety of subjects, with many helpful workshops and seminars on renewal work in the churches. For detailed reports, see the Layman Online, www.layman.org. Information about ordering video and audio tapes of all the speakers and seminars can be found at the ACR's website at: www.ird-renew.org

Presbyterian group has worked since 1965 to return church to 'classical' roots

by Parker T. Williamson
 Chief Executive Officer
 The Presbyterian Lay Committee
 Editor in Chief
 The Presbyterian Layman

Since 1965, the Presbyterian Lay Committee, founded as an independent renewal ministry in the Presbyterian Church (USA), has sought to return the denomination's policies and programs to its classical Christian roots.

Having accommodated to postmodern culture, many Presbyterian leaders no longer speak with certainty on bedrock doctrines such as the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the authority of Scripture and God's call to a holy life. Truth has been relegated to opinion, and ethics has become a matter of preference.

The Lay Committee believes the key to reformation in the Presbyterian Church is an informed and motivated laity and so has invested resources into interactive communication with people in the pews.

The Presbyterian Layman, a bi-monthly news magazine, is mailed to 500,000 homes in the United States. The Layman Online (www.layman.org) provides a news service and interactive communication for more than 12,000 visitors each day. Targeted mailings bypass the denomination's administrative structure in order to alert the laity to issues that are being addressed by their elected representatives.

In 1996, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), responding to popular demand, adopted standards that deny ordination to persons who openly engage

in sexual relations outside of marriage. Enraged by this decision, pressure groups that enjoy the support of many national and regional Presbyterian Church staff persons sought to reverse those standards in 1997 and in 2000, losing by greater majorities each time.

Having failed legislatively, liberal activists are now working administratively. Using their positions of control in the church's administrative structure, they are blocking any enforcement of the 1996 ordination standards. Ministers and some local church governing bodies are openly defying the constitution. Over the past year, more than 20 cases have been brought before the denomination's presbyteries, but not a single charge has resulted in trial.

The Presbyterian Lay Committee believes that the same approach that resulted in the adoption of church standards must be employed to achieve their enforcement. Thus its media outlets are alerting Presbyterians to the refusal of their elected leaders to uphold the constitution.

In the midst of this melee, a "Confessing Church Movement" has emerged within the denomination. Affirming salvation in Jesus Christ alone, that Scripture is God's holy word and that God's call to holy living includes upholding the sanctity of heterosexual marriage, the officers of 1,287 congregations, representing more than 435,000 Presbyterians, have stated that they would elect into leadership only persons who uphold these principles. This grassroots movement is a sign of hope for the beleaguered Presbyterian Church (USA).

Be Steadfast: A Letter to Confessing Christians



The Confessing Theologians Commission, a group of prominent theologians from all of the mainline Protestant denominations in North America, met in Dallas, Texas, Sept. 20-22. The commission gathered at the invitation of Dr. Thomas Oden of Drew University School of Theology, who called the group together under the auspices of the Association for Church Renewal (ACR). The ACR is an association representing the leadership of numerous confession and renewing movements that have come into existence in almost all of the mainline Protestant denominations in North America.

"This team represents what we think are the best qualified theologians at work in the mainline Protestant renewal movements," reports Oden.

The following document, "Be Steadfast: A Letter to Confessing Christians," was developed by the Confessing Theologians for the Confessing the Faith Conference. It is their response to three urgent questions put to them by the Association for Church Renewal.

"God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows those who are his, and, 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.'" 2 Timothy 2:19

Sisters and brothers in the Lord:

God alone renews and continues to bless his people. God has not abandoned his church, and calls us to keep faith with him and those dear to him. We are called to be obedient to the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

In thanksgiving for God's promises fulfilled

in Jesus Christ, we seek to humble ourselves before him, pray, seek his face, and turn from sin, that he may hear, forgive and heal. We all stand under divine judgment; we all are in need of divine grace.

We give thanks also for this, the first North American gathering of renewing and confessing movements. Your conveners have asked confessing theologians to address three urgent questions facing all mainline renewal movements.

Why should we remain in our churches?
 Why do our churches (Continued on page 8)

Be Steadfast: A Letter to Confessing Christians

(Continued from page 7)

need faithful confessors?

Why does our society need faithful Christian confessors?

1. Why should we remain in our churches?

The challenges facing our churches today are indeed immense. We have all seen declines in biblical and theological literacy, catechesis and spiritual formation. Our churches have experienced severe declines in numbers of congregations and in absolute numbers of members. We have also seen our churches rent by contentious argument, exhausted by never-ending conflict. Many grow weary, and wonder if they and their congregations should stay. Our own experience speaks to this question, too. We have all passed through long seasons of anguish and travail, and we anticipate more. We are still here. The Holy Spirit has not abandoned our churches, neither will we.

Resignation, quietism and despair do not serve the church catholic and the communion of saints. We urge our brothers and sisters not to withdraw, but mutually to encourage one another to a struggle in which there is good hope. Our Lord reminds us, "God removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit, he prunes to make it bear more fruit" (John 15:2). We pray God will give us courage, perseverance and mettle for the task.

Much work has been begun by the various renewal movements among our churches.

We note with thanksgiving the revival of Bible study, renewed interest in evangelization, fresh seasons of prayer, and renewed concern with the plight of the poor. We have committed ourselves to the ongoing life of the churches in which God has placed us, and we pledge our best efforts as theologians of the church to those who are engaged in this divine work of reform and renewal.

It is a beginning, and must continue, commending ourselves and our denominational leadership to God with fear and trembling.

But ultimately the reason we cannot and

"The Holy Spirit has not abandoned our churches, neither will we"

must not leave our denominations is that the Gospel can still be freely proclaimed in them and the sacraments administered without hin-

drance. However true it may be that "other gospels" are also heard in our midst, none of our churches have legislated against the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In such a situation, it is unnecessary for congregations to turn their backs on their churches.

2. Why do our churches need faithful confessors?

Churches need faithful confessors for one essential reason: a church that is unable to confess its faith is a lame and withered church. The church needs faithful witnesses in order to be the church of Jesus Christ.

We believe that God's call to be faithful witnesses within the churches requires not only truthful confession, but also a long-term effort to reform our institutions.

Our deliberative, legislative, administrative and educational structures in many instances do not faithfully serve the church's mission and pastoral obligations. The work and witness of faithful confessors helps to reclaim and redirect these institutions toward their proper ends. We, therefore, believe that confessing movements are necessary if the institutional forms of our churches are to be tied to God's purposes for his church.

We note with joy how renewal movements in many churches have led to the discovery of a common bond in the faith of the church catholic and mutual encouragement in the Gospel. Across the renewal movements, we rejoice in the recovery of sound doctrine, for example the doctrine of the Trinity, and the doctrine of the unique, saving significance of Christ's person and work. God has enabled many to recover their intellectual nerve.

God has also blessed our churches in other ways through the work of the renewal movements. In some quarters, we see fresh vitality in worship and in preaching. In other quarters, we witness new ventures in mission, the renewal of personal piety, and an increase in enthusiastic discipleship. In still other places we see increased reading of Holy Scripture, deepened petitionary prayer, and a more profound embrace of God's concern for the poor.

God has given us a spirit of repentance and

shed abroad his love afresh in our hearts. We expect further blessings in the years ahead, and we anticipate that God will continue to use renewal movements for the sustaining and furtherance of such blessings.

3. Why does our society need faithful Christian confessors?

Faithful Christian witness humanizes society and heals the nations. St. Paul teaches, echoing Isaiah, "The root of Jesse shall come, one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope" (Rom.15:12). Confessing Christ requires the discipline of

life, personal and corporate, private and public.

In the absence of faithful Christian witness, society establishes false idols. The twentieth century is littered with the victims of secular ideology. Nazi

and Marxist ideologies produced Auschwitz and the Gulag. The North American threat comes from a more benign form of atheism that banishes Christian witness from the public square. Consumerism, materialism, individualism and hedonism rush in to fill the void. Dogmatic atheism brutalizes and destroys the church. The more benign and civil atheism seduces and marginalizes the church. Disoriented by the ideology of moral relativism, some church leaders haphazardly champion fashionable causes. In each case, the savor of the church and the light of Christ are lost.

In the mercy and power of God, a renewed church will reform (Continued on page 10)

"But ultimately the reason we cannot and must not leave our denominations is that the Gospel can still be freely proclaimed in them and the sacraments administered without hinderance."

Be Steadfast: A Letter to Confessing Christians

(Continued from page 9)

public life. Christian witness reminds government of its accountability to God and empowers the faithful to fulfill their duties as citizens. In teaching us to render to Caesar that which is Caesar's, the Christian Church supports space for political disagreement and debate. It endorses finite patriotism - loyalty without idolatry, criticism without cynicism. The Gospel champions the sanctity of human life, urging us to protect the weak, the vulnerable and the innocent. A robust faith teaches us that the fruits of our labor are a gift from God, to be used for the common good. Spiritual renewal engenders a right ordering of sexuality and family life. A confident orthodoxy fosters care for creation for its own sake and for the sake of human flourishing. Most importantly, even in times of great social crisis, the Lordship of Christ inspires a hope that will not despair.

In our zeal for justice, we must not confuse specific policy proposals for prophetic proclamation, nor collapse the church into a chaplaincy for our favorite political party. Living in a powerful country, we must not exaggerate our ability to influence events for either good or ill. A renewed witness calls for appropriate humility, repentance, and self-criticism.

These are our prayerful and considered responses to the questions that have been posed to us.

Be steadfast in faith and humility

We thank God for the hunger that he has placed in the hearts of people for reform and renewal, for clarity concerning the things of faith, for godly instruction and holiness in life. We rejoice in our work together for

the faithfulness of Christ's church.

We know that along with God's great blessings in the work of the renewal movements come temptations to timidity, faithlessness, and presumption. Our work for renewal involves repentance and amendment of life as well as witness. The empowerment for our ministry comes from abiding in Christ the true vine, apart from whom we can do nothing.

Christ has told his disciples that persecutions will come, but as James reminds us we are to count it all joy when we meet various trials. In that joy, and confident of his great faithfulness, let us together proclaim the Gospel by which we have been saved.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

SIGNATORIES

Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)

Bruce McCormack, Mark Achetmeier, Andrew Purves, Roberta Hestenes, Diogenes Allen

United Methodist Church

Thomas C. Oden, William Abraham, Leicester Longden, James V. Heidinger II

Episcopal Church (ECUSA)

Bishop James Stanton, Philip Turner, Ephraim Radner, R.R. Reno

United Church of Christ:

Donald Bloesch

Lutheran Church (ELCA)

Russell Saltzman, Walter Sundberg

American Baptist Church

Donna Hailson

United Church of Canada

Victor Shepherd

Opinion

The American Anglican Council: A place to stand in the Episcopal Church

by **Bruce Mason**

AAC Media Officer

Born out of fasting and prayer, the American Anglican Council (AAC) was founded in 1996 as a network of Episcopal bishops, clergy, laypersons, affiliated parishes, ministries and dioceses devoted to proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and working for the renewal of the Episcopal Church. We are unified by our commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and we share a common statement of faith entitled: A Place to Stand ... A Call to Mission. (This statement can be found on our website at www.americananglican.org)

Like other mainline denominations in the United States, the Episcopal Church is locked in a painful struggle over issues of theology, doctrine and practice. Though much of the visible conflict centers on human sexuality, the heart of the struggle actually hinges on fundamentals of the Christian faith such as the authority of scripture and the nature of God. We believe that the Episcopal Church has stepped away from its Gospel foundation and that the current broken state of our denomination is a direct result of this error.

In prayerfully contemplating the renewal of our denomination, the AAC reached several conclusions that have shaped the direction of our ministry.

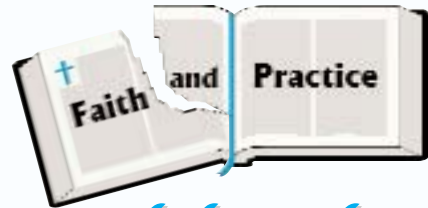
First, we are called to stay and engage in the life of the Episcopal Church. As a result, the AAC is committed to being a light and witness in every area of the Church, including the legislative process, which is primarily embodied in our tri-annual Gen-

eral Convention. Our next Convention will be held in the summer of 2003.

Second, the Episcopal Church is deeply broken and dysfunctional. This recognition has led us work with our affiliates to develop new programs and ministry offerings as alternatives to those currently offered by the Church. One of our most exciting programs is an ordination process designed to help biblically orthodox individuals reach seminary by bypassing unfriendly and even discriminatory diocesan bishops and ordination committees. We are also beginning to explore the creation of a deployment service for biblically orthodox clergy. These programs are part of a long-term strategy to transform the clergy leadership of the Episcopal Church.

Third, and most important, we strongly believe that prayer will be the catalyst that ultimately brings about healing and renewal in the Episcopal Church. For this reason, we have made a concerted effort to encourage Episcopalians to pray for our denomination. We recently launched a prayer initiative, called Now IS the Time to Pray, for this very purpose. (You can learn more about the initiative on our website.)

The AAC is convinced that God is showing us a way forward at the very moment when many Episcopalians are tempted to despair. We rejoice in the truth that our God is a transforming God and have great hope that His transforming love will ultimately bring healing and restoration to our wayward denomination. For more information on the AAC, contact our office at (800) 914-2000.



*lex orandi,
lex credendi
'praying
shapes believing'*

Free to believe, but not to practice

by Gracia Grindal

When President Bush visited China on Feb. 21, reporters at the joint press conference with the two leaders asked Chinese President Jiang about religious freedom in China, referring especially to the fact that the Vatican knew of at least 50 Catholic bishops that the regime had imprisoned. The President smiled and assured the reporters that his people are "free to worship as they choose," and said that Roman Catholics detained there "must have broken the law." Laws proscribing the free practice of religion are abundant in China, even if one can think whatever one wants to.

This exchange at the press conference haunts me every time I read another report of a Lutheran pastor serving an Episcopalian congregation, or some joint project between the two partners in Called to Common Mission (CCM), the full communion agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and The Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA).

I read a story some time ago about an ELCA pastor called to serve an Episcopalian parish. In the interview, the pastor describes how he deals with the two traditions and remarks that he's been surprised at how little difference there is, but that he has not been pressured by the Episcopalians to change his theology.

Here is where the two traditions are separated by a common language. The Episcopalians did not demand that we change what we believe, just how we practice what

we believe. Episcopalians love Lutheran theology and have promised to read the Augsburg Confession as part of the CCM agreement. All they wanted Lutherans to do was to change how we practice our theology. In other words, we are still free to think whatever we want to about the faith, but we are no longer free to practice what we believe about ministry: that the Word is what makes the sacrament, not the person, or priest.

By using the theology of "aw shucks do it if they insist, it doesn't mean anything to us," some leaders of the ELCA have forced us to practice a rite they, oddly enough, think is meaningless, meanwhile disrespecting our Episcopalian brothers and sisters who do not think it is meaningless. Further, I am daily stunned by my fellow Lutherans who agree these are terrible times in the church, who shrug and remark there always have been such disagreements, so let's stop arguing and get on with mission.

The ELCA leadership seems confident this now required practice will eventually become our theology, even if we don't believe it. They know the old rule: *lex orandi lex credendi*—how you pray becomes the way you believe. They can wait until no one remembers the evangelical faith we have abandoned for a medieval practice with no biblical foundation.

It is our mission as WA to keep the church aware of what is at stake. Without the freedom to practice our theology, it is just idle speculation.

Who makes the call?

An expert on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) constitution and development thinks the day is coming when ELCA bishops will appoint pastors to congregations.

Pastor Jeffray Greene, who did his Ph.D. dissertation on the ELCA constitution, says there has been a tension in the calling of pastors in American Lutheran congregations. The congregations have the right to call their own pastors, he said in an interview, but since the 19th century, out of respect for the authority of a synod, congregations have accepted oversight from the synod.

Greene is pastor of Emanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, La Habra, Cal. He is on the WordAlone Network's constitutional committee.

"Synods have always been for mutual support in ministry in the Lutheran polity (governmental organization)," he said. "The idea was that the gospel be preserved and preached in its purity. That is the positive part. The negative is that it has become a control issue: Is it the congregation's responsibility or the synod's to determine who is preaching right?"

"Actually, it's both."

He said that with the various mergers of the 20th century there has been a shift from small synodical bodies to ever larger bodies. "In the old systems, everybody knew everybody, so you didn't have all the evaluations. In the mergers, nothing has compensated for the lack of personal and intimate connection."

"So the synods step in. We've gone from warm, intimate and charitable organizations to, in some cases, a cold bureaucratic organization. You have a control vacuum. There are good people and good bishops.

This is not to castigate all synods and bishops. But it all comes back to the right of the congregation to issue the call."

He continued: "With the merger documents of the ELCA, it was established in the constitution that synods would recommend pastoral candidates to congregations—that was the practice. But, since I was ordained in 1989 I've watched it become tighter and tighter in small steps shifting the 'control' of the process from the congregation to the synod.

"It's how the documents are interpreted. It's up to the congregation to decide whom they will call. After all, they are the actual 'employer' of the pastor. They (the documents) were written so that the bishop could be the helper. He or she has the names of those eligible. Of course, if the bishop wants to prevent or punish an otherwise eligible pastor, the possibility of this kind of abuse of power becomes increasingly possible.

"It depends how it is spun. It goes from being a help to being in control. The interpretation is being shifted as the memory of older traditions are forgotten."

How do congregations exercise their right to call their pastors?

Greene said they do it by rejecting candidates offered to them who don't fit the congregation's needs. And they keep rejecting them until they are given the names of candidates who will fit.

"They must stand firm on the congregation's right and duty to meet its own need. In healthy circumstances, the congregation knows its needs better," he stated.

Greene concluded, "Pay attention folks. How long will it be before, bishops appoint pastors? By all appearances, it's coming!"

WordAlone's annual convention set for April 25 -26, 2003

Christ's Church: With the Flow or Against the Current? is the theme for WordAlone's annual convention on April 25 and 26, 2003, at Roseville Lutheran Church, 1215 W. Roselawn Ave., Roseville, Minn.

Confirmed speakers are Dr. Leonard Sweet and Pastor Johan Hinderlie. Dr. Sweet is a historian, futurist and E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelism at Drew University, Madison, NJ. (www.leonardsweet.com). His books include *FaithQuakes* (1994), *The Tides of Change* (1995), *A Cup of Coffee at the SoulCafe* (1998), and *SoulTsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture*

(1999). Len and his wife, Karen Elizabeth Rennie, launched, in partnership with Group Publishing, the web-based preaching resource PreachingPlus.com. For nine years, Len and Elizabeth co-wrote *Homiletics*, a preaching resource.

Pastor Hinderlie will preach at the convention. He is executive director of Mount Carmel Ministries, Alexandria, Minn. (www.dailytext.com)

WordAlone's Theological Advisory Board will offer on April 27-28, 2003 a continuing education conference following the convention at Roseville Lutheran Church.

Audio & Video Tapes available

Audio and Video tapes are available from WordAlone's Theological Conference, **The Reformation at the Crossroads: Is it still worth being a Lutheran?**

November 18 -19, 2002

Audio tapes - \$5 each Video tapes - \$10 each

TAPE #1 - Roy Harrisville/Theological Advisory Board
TAPE #2 - Merton Strommen/ Roger Gordon
TAPE #3 - James Nestingen/Daniel Shaw/Steven Paulson
TAPE #4 - George Forell/ Gracia Grindal

To order contact the WordAlone Office at: 651-633-6004 or toll free: 888-551-7254.

Order forms are also available on our website at www.wordalone.org

Lutheran Clergy Connect

Lutheran Clergy Connect is one way for congregations seeking a pastor to connect with potential candidates who believe that Christ alone is sufficient for the unity of the Church and that the Word of God is the authority for the Church. Below are the most recent listings. A full list, which includes 18 additional listings, is posted on the WordAlone website. (www.wordalone.org).

If you would like your congregation listed on Clergy Connect, please mail or fax your request on church letterhead, signed by an officer or call committee chair, to WordAlone Network, 2299 Palmer Dr. Suite 220, New Brighton, MN 55112 Fax: 651-633-5994.

Give the following information:
Pastoral position
Congregation
Address
Contact person
Phone number
E-mail address

Calls are listed starting with the most recently received.

First Lutheran Church
Hector, MN
Terry A. Pederson
1303 W. Bayberry Ave. Apt. 6
Olivia, MN 56277
320-523-5292 home
320-523-2040 work
taphtb@tds.net
Position: Pastor

Shepherd of the Valley
Afton, MN
Contact: Pastor Steve Kramer
14107 Hudson Road South
Afton, MN 55001
651-436-8248
skramer@shepherd-lutheran.org
Position: Associate Pastor

Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran
Cedar Falls, IA
Contact: Wayne Jacobson
91 River Ridge Rd
Cedar Falls, IA 50613
319-266-6320 home
800-316-2445 work
jake@cfu.net
Position: Senior Pastor

Morningside Lutheran Church
Sioux City, IA
Contact: Rev. Kevin Lee
700 S Martha St.
Sioux City, IA 51106
712-276-2511
Kevlee@cableone.net
Positions: 2 Full time Associate Pastors

Peace Lutheran Church
Plymouth, MN
Contact: Mike Mostrom
183 Cascade Court
Chanhassen, MN 55317
952-949-5730
mikemostrom@mindspring.com
Position: Associate Pastor

Central Lutheran Church
Elk River, IA
Contact: Pastor Paul Johansson
1103 School Street
Elk River, MN 55330
763-441-2363
Position: Two Associate Pastors: one for Evangelism & Discipleship & one for Youth & Family Ministry

Immanuel Lutheran Church
Swea City, IA
Contact: Craig A. Deim
P.O. Box 159
Swea City, IA 50590
515-272-4371 home
515-272-4670 work
deim@trvnet.net
Position: Full-time Pastor for a small Midwestern communi-

ty with rural American values.
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Brentwood, NY
Contact: Jane Cummings
8 W. Oak Street
Islip, NY 11717
631-277-9650
mamajane1931@webtv.net
Position: Pastor for a congregation in a 60% Hispanic area. Helpful for the pastor to be bilingual, but not a prerequisite. Split-level 3-bedroom parsonage, large church facility and a successful pre-school.

Christ & Faith Lutheran Churches
Big Sandy & Box Elder, MT
Contact: Linda Kidd
2958 Winchester Road
Big Sandy, MT 59520
dtkidd@3rivers.net
406-378-3129
Position: Full-time 2 point Pastor.

Christ Lutheran, Stately
New Hope Lutheran
Comfrey, MN
Contact: Jean Schiller, adm. ass't
204 Court St. So.
P.O. Box 8
Comfrey, MN 56019-0008
507-877-2316
Tues-Fri 8:30 am -1:30 pm
Position: Solo Pastor of a 2 pt. parish of approximately 500. An LCMC/ELCA congregation