





The Changing ELCA

Timeline and Summary of Issues

Summary Prepared for Zion Lutheran Church
January 19, 2010

The Changing Church

The Big 3 Lutheran Synods

			
Founded	1988	1847	1850
Headquarters	Chicago	St. Louis	Milwaukee
Congregations	10,448	6,075	1,200
Members	4,709,956	2,383,084	400,000
Ordains Women	Yes	No	No
Supports Scouts	Yes	Yes	No
Support joint prayer with other Christians	Yes	Yes	No
Women permitted to vote at congregational meetings	Yes	Yes	No
Accepted the "Doctrine of Justification "with the Catholic Church	Yes	No	No

The Changing Church Timeline



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was formed from three separate and well-established North American Church bodies:

- Lutheran Church of America
- American Lutheran Church
- The Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches

1 The Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA adopts the CCM

More than 200 WordAlone members met and adopted the "Mahtomedi Resolution" which called for pulpit and altar fellowship with The Episcopal Church and the defeat of CCM

Conference on a "Call to Faithfulness" was set up by concerned ELCA members

- Traditional threefold ministry
- The mission of the church to preach Christ as the only way of salvation
- The church's responsibility to society

The agreement was rewritten with no substantial revisions in changes the ELCA would be required to make in its ordination practices, and was renamed Called to Common Missions (CCM)

The ELCA Churchwide assembly narrowly defeated the Concordat and called for a new agreement



WordAlone began as a "virtual renewal community," with about 40 ELCA members

- The group focused its efforts on defeating the Concordat of Agreement with The Episcopal Church
- Other issues the group was concerned about include the ELCA's ecumenical agreements, which they felt compromise on biblical and confessional truths, and the teaching and preaching of universalism

1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
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Called to Common Mission

The “Called to Common Mission” (CCM) is an agreement the ELCA and the Episcopal Church of the United States leading to full communion (alter and pulpit fellowship)

- Altar fellowship means allowing persons of other denominations to commune in/officiate at the Eucharist's of churches of one's denomination
- Pulpit fellowship means allowing pastors of other denominations to preach in churches of one's denomination

Historical Episcopate

The Episcopate is the collective body of all bishops of a church. In the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Eastern Orthodox, Eastern Rite Catholic, Oriental Orthodox, Old Catholic, Moravian Church, and Independent Catholic churches, it is held that only a person in Apostolic Succession, a line of succession of bishops dating back to the Apostles, can be a Bishop, and only such a person can validly ordain Christian clergy. The succession must be transmitted from each bishop to a successor by the rite of Holy Orders. Bishops in valid Apostolic Succession compose the historical episcopate.

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Called to Common Mission - Issues

Issue	Summary
Bishops have certain exclusive powers	<p>The Lutheran Church is based on the priesthood of all believers. Martin Luther, in his "Appeal To The Ruling Class", stated "the fact is that our baptism consecrates us all without exception, and makes us all priests." Only in recent years did the Lutheran Church change the title of its leaders from presidents to bishops. Luther warned that elevating priests and Bishops could lead to abuse of power.</p> <p>Today in the ELCA, bishops have six-year terms. The ELCA may need to revise its practices. As a part of the CCM, Bishops elected after January 1,2001 will have to be ordained within the HE. In time, this could lead to life long terms.</p>
Bishops required for ordination	<p>Neither the Scriptures nor Lutheran confessional writings state that the validity of a pastor's ministry is determined by who ordained him or her.</p> <p>The CCM contradicts our Confessions by giving bishops exclusive power to ordain. "The Book of Concord in The Treatise says that: "Since the distinction between bishop and pastor is not by divine right, it is manifest that ordination by a pastor in his own congregation is valid by divine right!"</p>

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Called to Common Mission - Issues

Issue	Summary
Threefold structure of the Ministry (Bishop, Pastors, Deacons)	Adopting the Episcopalian priesthood and hierarchical structure was contrary to the Lutheran concept of the Priesthood of all believers , which holds that all Christians stand on equal footing before God.
Only priest or Bishops ordained by the HE can preside at communion	Lutherans believe that it is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian Church that ceremonies instituted by men should be observed uniformly in all places. <i>“The church is the assembly of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly. And it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere”.</i> <i>Article 7, Augsburg Confession</i>

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ELCA and WordAlone developed the "Milwaukee Common Ground Resolution". The resolution called for the ELCA to make changes so that all who objected to CCM would be free to practice traditional Lutheran ordination practices

A number of synod assemblies supported the changes called for in the Milwaukee Common Ground Resolution

The ELCA Conference of Bishops and Church Council would not consider the Milwaukee Common Ground Resolution



The constitution of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) is adopted during the 2nd Annual Convention of WordAlone

LCMC holds its 2nd National Convention in conjunction with the WordAlone convention and a commitment is made to have the association become entirely autonomous from WordAlone and to establish its own office



Participants at WordAlone's fall theological conference formed the association, originally called Lutheran Churches of the Common Confession (LC3)

2



The Evangelical Lutheran Worship book published

3

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted the social statement on sexuality: "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust", and also allowed for practicing homosexuals in a monogamist relationships to serve as ordained pastors and lay ministers.



LC3 changed name to Lutheran CORE (Coalition for Renewal)



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Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust - Justification

Justification for the Human Sexuality Document include:

- Debate about the meaning of Bible passages dealing with Homosexuality
- Modern psychological understanding of homosexuals as persons whose orientation is fixed early in life
- Changes in the view of Society
 - Legislative protections including legislation of same couple marriages
 - Protections offered by Business including extended health care benefits

The issue of concern is not homosexuality, the issue is the authority of the Bible

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Summary of Concerns

- Attitude of some ELCA Members and Leadership
 - Quick to come to resolution
 - Did not consider the concerns of opposing voices
 - Decision do not really reflect ELCA membership
 - Level of Arrogance
- Not following the basic tenants of the Lutheran Faith
 - Particularly around the CCM and the power given to bishops
- Allowing the Bible to be interpreted by “how one feels”

Feminism Theology

Assert that personal experience can be an important component of insight into the divine

Gnosticism

The experiential God identical with what seems most authentic and real in each individual soul

Bound Conscience

It puts emphasis on how each believer is called to respect and protect other believers with whom they disagree when their positions are tied to their faith and a carefully reasoned thoughtful interpretation of Scriptures and tradition

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Summary

“Of course the church must change since it lives in history. Nothing remains exactly the same. **The church must change in order to remain the same. But some changes are good and some are not, and that is what the controversy in the church is all about.** We must discern the spirits. Not everything is up for grabs. We have sound criteria to tell what kinds of change are good for the gospel and what are not. We do have an agenda faithful to our confessional Lutheran tradition, a tradition that claims to be true to the classical teachings of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, standing firmly on the pillars of Holy Scripture and the orthodox Creeds. This is not an agenda of a right-wing coalition of conservatives trying to turn back the clock. Martin Luther was not a right-wing conservative in his day.”

From “Theological Issues Challenging the ELCA” by
Carl E. Braaten

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Key Web Sites

- Would encourage everyone to do their own investigation and review the issues outlined in this presentation for yourself
- There are many places to find information about the Lutheran Church and issues within the ELCA but would recommend you start at the following websites

WordAlone <http://www.wordalone.org/>

CORE <http://www.lutherancore.org/>

LCMC <http://lcmc.net/>

ELCA <http://www.elca.org/>

END

Interesting

