

Minutes of the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee
Luther Seminary at St. Paul, Minnesota
June 9-11, 2003

The following persons were present for all or part of the meeting:

Representatives of The Episcopal Church: the Very Rev. Donald Brown (co-chair) the Rev. Grant Abbott, the Rt. Rev. Leopold Frade, the Rev. Dr. Alfred Moss, Ms. Midge Roof, the Rt. Rev. Carolyn Tanner-Irish, the Rt. Rev. C. Christopher Epting (staff), Ms. Emily Perow, and Dr. Thomas Ferguson (staff).

Representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: the Rev. Dr. Duane Larson (co-chair), Ms. Terry Bowes, the Rev. Nancy Curtis, Bishop Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl, the Rev. Norman Wahl, the Rev. Gregory Villalon, Bishop Ronald B. Warren, the Rev. Dr. Randall R. Lee (staff), the Rev. Dennis Bushkofsky (staff).

Absent: The Rt. Rev. Leopold Frade.

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m. in the Board Room at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, and was begun by the Rev. Donald Brown, co-chair, who led the morning devotions based on Genesis 18:1-15.

The Rev. Grant Abbott, a member of the committee who serves a congregation nearby, welcomed the group to the area. The Rev. Dr. Randall Lee introduced the Rev. Dennis Bushkofsky, a staff member of the ELCA. By agreement of the committee, the Rev. Nancy Curtis was appointed to serve as secretary for this meeting.

Updates

Each person was called upon by the chair to provide updates on personal and professional happenings in their lives, as well as ecumenical endeavors in which they were involved. The impact of the recent death of the Rev. Dr. Timothy Lull was noted by several present.

Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of February 4-5, 2002, in Miami, Florida, were approved as presented.

The committee recessed for lunch and reconvened for the afternoon session.

Updates on Exceptional Ordinations in the ELCA

The Rev. Dr. Randall Lee reported that five such ordinations have occurred in the ELCA and a request for another was pending and likely to be granted. One of the exceptions was an “unplanned” exception due to a problem that the ELCA bishop could not arrive in time, and the local bishop was unavailable. Thus, the bishop authorized a pastor to ordain under the bishop’s authority. It was noted that four of the five exceptions had been granted by bishops newly elected since the bishops’ discussion in March 2001. The

matter was further discussed at length in executive session at the March 2003 meeting of the Conference of Bishops. Exceptions are less than one percent of all ELCA ordinations and the process is being implemented as carefully as was envisioned. The bylaw granting exceptional ordinations seems to have accomplished its purpose as a safety valve.

The Rt. Rev. C. Christopher Epting noted that in his position he was receiving resolutions from standing committees throughout the ECUSA regarding the ordination of Daniel Shaw (only mentioned specifically since his was the first exceptional ordination) and asking that the matter come before the General Convention in 2003 for discussion. In response to that our Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations is bringing the matter to the convention:

“That the House of Bishops establish a committee to monitor with the Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations (SCER) the ways and extent to which the ELCA bylaw (allowing planned exceptions to episcopal ordination) may cause additional limitations upon the full communion that has been jointly established; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the next General Convention (2006).”

The feeling was that taking this action would send a message to the ELCA and the ECUSA that the ECUSA would invoke the highest authorities; this committee would be formed; it would be in conversation with the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee and the bishops in the ELCA. Many in the ECUSA believe that the unilateral nature of the bylaw passed regarding exceptional ordinations in the ELCA changed the document, which is clearly not the case, according to the Rt. Rev. C. Christopher Epting. So this resolution will be reported out in 2006. It gives us three more years before legislative action might come up to be in real but imperfect communion, dissolution of full communion, etc., none of which have been proposed yet. In the ECUSA process all such matters go into a legislative committee which will be the source of any improved or amended resolution.

The Rev. Norman Wahl noted that there was a memorial coming to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in August to permit freedom for exceptional ordinations and also the freedom for bishops not to be installed into the historic episcopate. The Rev. Dr. Randall Lee noted that previous resolutions like that had been soundly defeated. Bishop DeGroot-Nesdahl noted that no resolutions allowing exceptions to bishops' installations into the historic episcopate had been passed to her knowledge.

The WordAlone admonition to the ELCA was discussed, since it was sent to the ECUSA as information. It was noted by the Rev. Dr. Duane Larson that all but two of the signatories listed are fully retired so they cannot and do not represent the institution and no presidents of any ELCA institutions have signed it. Some of the signatories are not even American.

The Rev. Nancy Curtis pointed out the lack of communications tools such as the Lutheran Commentator and WordAlone which receive wide readership in the ELCA and provide information less than complete and sometimes wrong with regard to matters

affecting relations between our two churches. Discussion ensued about how best to communicate accurately the document itself and also what is happening with regard to exceptional ordinations and the response of the ECUSA as they occur.

Cooperative endeavors at the churchwide level

Ms. Emily Perow noted that there was interest expressed in national combined youth gatherings, but due to understaffing in the ECUSA Office of Youth Ministries there may be difficulties there. The Rev. Duane Larson noted that the communications folks were in dialogue.

The Rt. Rev. Tanner Irish noted that in the past cooperative congregations were “trials” but now they are a routine matter. The Rev. Gregory Villalon noted that in the area of ministry and first-call theological education, there is an ECUSA representative. The theological network in the Austin program is an area of cooperation, and the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary of the ELCA is looking at revitalizing the Los Angeles Lutheran-Episcopal Center.

Bishop Ronald Warren Ron emphasized that campus ministry is an important part of living into CCM at the present. Part of that is due to the fact that in campus ministries, the Lutheran Church-Missour Synod partners are often forming congregations where they will not allow women pastors to be involved. So in Kingsport, Johnson City, Chattanooga, Knoxville, etc., three dioceses and the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA are working to alter campus ministry in ways never been done before.

It was agreed to gather more of these stories if possible, as they were shared in committee and outside, and publicize them to show the effect of CCM.

Lay Presidency

After a short break, the Committee resumed with discussion about lay presidency. The Rev. Grant Abbott noted that the online meeting “Ecumenical Lutheranism” had this matter as a major focus. The (Anglican) Australian Diocese of Sidney is pursuing all-male lay presidency to keep away from ordaining women. In Minnesota, an ECUSA church is using Alpha to raise up and ordain their own people. He noted that since lay presidents would have no access into the ECUSA, the concerns seemed moot.

The Rev. Norman Wahl said the discussion is functional vs. ontological ordinations; “functional” folks say word and sacrament are only saved to clergy for the sake of good order. Lay presidency can thus provide that order. Ontology says those who preside are different from others. And there are many Lutherans who have the lower view of clergy status. The Rt. Rev. Christopher Epting noted that in the ECUSA, Canon 9 rather short-circuits the matter of lay presidency, although there are lay Eucharistic ministers taking the sacrament to hospitals. The Rev. Nancy Curtis shared the practice of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA and Bishop Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl shared the practice of lay licensure in the South Dakota Synod of the ELCA.

The Rev. Greg Villalon and the Rev. Dr. Randall Lee pointed out that the usage of lay presidency in the ELCA was increasing, particularly in rural congregations, due to the lack of clergy to serve these areas. The main problems are training and accountability and the matters are being addressed within the ELCA. The Rt. Rev. Christopher Epting pointed out that the ECUSA response was that CCM does not address the matter of lay presidency, and therefore the ECUSA does not feel an urgency to deal with it.

Bishop DeGroot-Nesdahl noted the cases of Hosanna! and others where local, unauthorized lay presidency occurs. The Rev. Grant Abbott said the original question raised was whether or not a visiting Episcopalian would commune if the presider had not been ordained in accordance with CCM.

Morning Devotions June 10

The Committee reconvened the next morning, June 10, 2003. Bishop Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl led morning devotions ending in Lutheran-Episcopal harmony in the hymn "Beautiful Savior." President of Luther Seminary David Tiede extended a welcome to the Committee on behalf of the seminary.

Reflections by the Rev. Dr. David Tiede, President of Luther Seminary

The matter of reception of CCM seemed to him to be a "problem in the family." He made three points regarding generalizations about Midwestern realities:

1. Midwestern Lutherans aren't as homogeneous as believed. Luther Seminary sent out faculty teams to give both sides of the argument always. It got to the point where each side could give the others' speeches. Even within WordAlone there is less solidarity than some people think. It seems like a big cartel, and some within the movement would like to be the case, but it isn't that solid and imposing. Until they have something to be in favor of, be for, which will be sustainable, that won't change. They are working on that. Midwestern Lutherans are not all peas in a pod.

2. This is second-wave immigration. Lutheranism in the Midwest is has been here less than 150 years, some under 100 years, from churches that were themselves divided on the issues of authority. People remember grandfathers and great-grandfathers who fled Europe, for various reasons. The stories are the hagiography of the churches. The stories are about the folk churches and free churches and state churches. From 1917, when the church was formed around here which included the Norwegian synod, the state church, aristocrats' group with the Haugeans. One can even say which colleges were associated with that. Two of his professors then were elderly, one lecturing with fists clenched saying election was God's work and who was opposed to the pietists. Then the Pietists were arguing for evangelism and conversion. There was a division through the faculties as heirs of the Preus-Moss debate. This debate between the state church and folk church runs deep, as if Methodists were incorporated into the ECUSA, for example. The tradition regarding the freedom of the spirit and the authority structures become poles. The mergers which have led to the ELCA still have these fault lines running through them. Some of them are carried in memory. For others it is more tacit; they

don't know why things upset them but they know that they are. The ECUSA was more thinly spread, but on the whole the problem is not Episcopalians but authority but as focused in the office of bishop. The old farmer says, "I don't mind calling our presidents bishops but I don't want to elect someone who wants to be one." There is a prairie populism; the Northern Lights movement and the populist movements in Wisconsin, all have to do with fairly recent immigration.

3. Theological concern has been addressed in the possibility of exceptions. The idea of the historic episcopate is attractive because of what it makes possible with the ECUSA. The problem is the Lutheran preoccupation with adiaphora, with what is essential and not essential. This comes from the Stoics and courses through medieval theology. Look at the differences with the Pythagoreans and the Cynics about what is important but what is necessary. The issue of necessity comes from a tradition that far back, a tradition which must be defended. The matter of exceptions was terribly important and needed to occur.

In response to questions, the Rev. Dr. Tiede pointed out that the LCMC pastors are trying to stay within the pension plan, and that the idea of a tricameral structure for the ELCA was being proposed by some, like former governor Al Quie. The problem with voting to be a Reconciling in Christ congregation or in any other movement is similar-such a vote forecloses future discussion.

When asked why so few exceptions have occurred, President Tiede said that the mere existence of exceptions diminished the need for asking for one, since the principle is intact.

President Tiede went on to discuss the need for both churches to be less Eurocentric and more focused on mission. He suggested that together the two churches can call the seminaries to account. In 1995 we had conversations around theological education within the ELCA and clearly there are different pieties. Luther is paired with Berkeley, and the cultures are very different. Luther just got a grant this last week which will be a project for the faculty, the seminary as Teaching Apostolate together with Catholic Theological Union, Princeton, and Fuller. CTU is very successful. Princeton is trying to find a taproot. He suggested the Lutherans and the Episcopalians ask about the "abbey" aspect, developing discipleship. We used to assume that people came with biblical knowledge and pieties intact to seminary. But now the forming of disciples is important. Wartburg is doing wonderful things to put the missiological aspect in the center of their curriculum. He asked for suggestions about which of the Episcopal schools should we talk to sooner, rather than later to hear what the teaching apostolate looks like. Then the transformation of the office of bishop, as apostolic leader, or leader in a time of apostolic mission, becomes important.

President Tiede challenged the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee to engage in active leadership in ecumenism, using the Lutheran strengths of service and the Episcopal strengths in reconciliation. He spoke of the challenge in the Middle East and the

analogous possibilities for our ecumenical relationship. He challenged the churches to push the seminary faculties and to think out of the box.

After a break, the Committee reflected among themselves about the presentation. The Rev. Dr. Al Moss summarized that the power of what he set us to thinking and talking about is that we have to be conscious we are dealing with institutions where what we are about together is filtered through clergy and structures. But the liberation from institutional concerns and clericalism is important. The new focus is to turn in a direction that is not obsessed with clergy-related issues or structural issues and to turn toward the future. We need to outline and lift up what it is toward which God calls us to move.

Many members reflected on the change in the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee since its inception. The Rev. Dr. Duane Larson, co-chair, reflected that the LECC reinvented itself so that the churches are not using the rearview mirror to drive the car. We are recognizing the challenge to become a strategic voice for our churches. We are being excited by a strategic task but we have limitations in getting that communicated. How could we better systemically resourced to embrace our strategic vocation as LECC? This challenge he laid before the group.

Discussion of a celebration of the anniversary of CCM resulted in thoughts about format being less clergy-centered and more focused on vision but resulted in no conclusion.

The minutes from the last meeting were passed out and discussed. The committee then recessed.

Minutes of the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee

After reconvening in the afternoon of June 10, 2003, the Rev. Grant Abbott moved the following resolution which was seconded and passed:

“The official handouts and items presented to the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee which are officially received shall be a part of the minutes of each meeting. The minutes of the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee shall be housed within the archives of the respective churches.”

Visitors from the Ecumenical Committee of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Synods introduced Dr. Arland Hultgren, Sister Sara Heinrichs, Lynne Lorenzen and Gordon Braatz were meeting nearby and were introduced to the group. They shared with the LECC perspectives regarding their synod's reception of CCM. There is no equivalent Episcopal counterpart committee.

Appointment of Dennis Bushkofsky as minute taker for future meetings of LECC

It was moved and seconded that Dennis Bushkofsky take future minutes for the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee in his position as staff person. Agreed by acclamation.

Discussion on comments of Committee members

General consensus was reached that individual members may comment on the business of the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee with final referral to the co-chairs, but there was no change in policy on the presence of news reporters.

Sexuality matters

The Rt. Rev. Christopher Epting shared that General Assembly may consider approving a process for the development of rites for same-sex blessings, to be considered as part of Occasional Services book of the ECUSA. The ECUSA has not taken a position against the ordination of gays and lesbians in the canons themselves. Such a canon has been defeated every time; so the local diocese makes that decision regarding ordination. The ECUSA has not consulted broadly ecumenically or even within the Anglican Communion on the issue of ordination of partnered homosexuals. This was similar to procedure of ordination of women; some consultation occurred but then the church moved forward without much more.

The Rev. Randall Lee pointed out that the ELCA could not allow the exception of the election of a partnered homosexual bishop to happen before the possibility of a mechanism for it. It's an example of the how the ethos of the two churches is different and will have to be considered.

Brainstorming session

Possible areas of emphasis include:

1. Joint youth events, camping, youth mission projects, campus ministry.
2. Education of laity and *leadership development*, apostolate, finding the five persons needed to initiate any change, baptized into mission-the task of collaborative catechesis
3. Communication: Invite communicators to help think about how we might be better about this task and to consult with us on it.
4. Continue to ask local leaders to teach us. We also might worry about concerns about sheepstealing, which keep us from common mission and multicultural elements.

The committee recessed

Sharing of the Eucharist the morning of June 11, 2003

The Rev. Grant Abbott led the Committee in worship at his church and gave a sermon about the history of the Book of Common Prayer.

When the Committee reconvened, the Rev. Randall Lee observed that as far as a committee:

1. We have claimed a Eucharistic identity.
2. We want to be a community of deliberation.

3. We want to be a community of reflection. This is “board development.” Going to the Martin Luther King site will be an example. We want to think more deeply about the tasks given to us.
4. We want to be a community of fellowship.
5. We want to be a community of care. It took two hours on the first day of the meeting to catch up with one another. We take the time in order to be invested.

Invited guests addressed the Committee

Dan Raaen, a Lutheran pastor serving in an Episcopal congregation and Bishop James Jelinek from the ECUSA joined us and presented remarks regarding the difficulties and joys of joint ministry. The matter of differences in polity regarding the authority of the bishop and the effect of joint ministries was discussed and questions were answered. The presentation was received with interest and thanks.

The Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee adjourned until 9 a.m. on February 2, 2004 in Atlanta, Georgia.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Nancy Curtis