

NETWORK NEWS



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Can you put up youth convention posters?

The WordAlone Youth Conventions are coming soon, the Minnesota event is June 18-21 and the California one is June 25-28.

Youth event coordinator Josh Misner is asking WordAlone members to support the event by putting up promotional posters for the SONICFLOOD concerts in their churches. Members are asked to e-mail him (JNSMISNER@aol.com) with their names and with the mailing addresses of their churches. Requests can also be sent to the WordAlone office, 2299 Palmer Dr. NW, Suite 220, New Brighton, MN. 55112.

"This is one of the most effective ways we can advertise," he says.

The Minnesota event will be at Bethel College and Seminary, St. Paul, and the California one at Vanguard University in Costa Mesa.

The theme is "Student Leadership" and Dennis "Tiger" McLuen is the keynote speaker. SONICFLOOD will perform in concert on the final evening at both conventions.

Misner adds, "If you're just bursting with spring fever and feel like hanging posters in other churches in your area - just let me know how many you need!"

WordAlone intro pamphlet ready

A new pamphlet introducing the WordAlone Network and its "Renew, Reform, Reflect" vision is ready for distribution, according to Pastor Dan Baker, Bethlehem and Deer Creek Valley Lutheran churches, Glenville, Minn., who chaired the committee that wrote the brochure.

The info piece is a brochure, handy for

tucking in a purse or briefcase or for a congregation's literature rack. Copies can be ordered from the WordAlone office, 2299 Palmer Dr., Suite 220, New Brighton, MN 55112. There is no charge for the brochures although donations to help defray printing and shipping costs are appreciated.

'Go to original sources'

"Original sources" supplied the information that resulted in a recent vote by acclamation by Morningside Lutheran Church, Sioux City, Iowa, to join the WordAlone Network, redirect some benevolence funds and remain in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, according to Phil Osborne.

He was a member of a task force that for five months studied Called to Common Mission (CCM), the full communion agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American (ELCA) and the Episcopal Church USA.

He says the task force wanted to be thorough and accurate in its report because it was "such an important vote." The task force started by going to the ELCA website and the WordAlone website, which guided them to the original sources. These sources included the Bible, the Conference of Bishops 1999 Tucson Resolution on CCM and the "Concordat," an earlier full communion proposal rejected by the 1997 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. They got

reports from other congregations that had voted on CCM issues.

At a congregational meeting of 325 members, there was a "loud, resounding" aye to joining WordAlone, says Osborne. He called that number, "heavy attendance." The congregation has more than 2,800 Baptized members with average worship attendance of 1,083, according to ELCA website figures.

Osborne says the main thing to tell other congregations studying CCM is, "Be thorough and go to the original sources, so (they) can't say, 'That was a biased report and how can you back that up?'"

"CCM is basically not what confessional Christians want because it's power to the bishop and the constitution, rather than the confessions. If you get your facts together and you're really thorough, people are really going to vote for you."

Morningside Lutheran's task force started gathering facts last summer after an informational meeting on CCM called by a pastor and council member, says Osborne.

The purpose of the session wasn't to influence anybody, just to discuss what CCM stood for. From that, there were enough interested people that the matter went to the church council, which established the task force.

Osborne says that even though the task force was heavily pro-WordAlone, they wanted to be as objective as they could.

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By-law exception part of Luther Seminary discussion

(Although only a part of the discussion, this report will focus on comments relating to a 2001 by-law amendment allowing exceptions to the requirement for ordination of new pastors by bishops that came with the 1999 ELCA-Episcopal Church full-communion agreement, Called to Common Mission. -Editor)

Southwestern Minnesota Synod Bishop Stanley N. Olson said recently that exceptions from the requirement for ordination by a bishop should be a possibility in every synod under a by-law amendment passed by the 2001 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Churchwide Assembly.

Olson made his comments during an information session, "How to Build a Relationship with a Synod," for senior seminarians Feb. 24 at Luther Seminary, St.

Paul, Minn. In response to student questions about whether all bishops would give exceptions and if requesting and receiving an exception would affect future calls, Olson said granting exceptions needed to be a real possibility. He said the by-law provision for exceptions was constitutional and thus applied to the whole church.

Olson made it clear initially that he had been invited to talk primarily about relationship building between seniors and the synods to which they had been assigned but added that he had been asked to speak about the by-law changes. Some 60 persons attended the hour and 45 minute session, including 25 to 35 students.

The bishop advised the senior seminarians that if they were planning to request exceptions, they should call their bishops as soon as possible. He suggested that a delay in contacting a bishop might indicate a lack of trust. He assured them that a bishop is interested in 1) a good match and 2) building trust. He told them that a seminarian should be able to articulate the rationale for requesting an exception.

Regarding a seminarian's feeling of vulnerability in asking a bishop for an exception, Olson said bishops could live with ordinations both ways. He added the bishops needed the seminarians. He noted that he worked for the by-law's adoption and that it was a real option.

To read a longer version of this article use this web address direct link: [http://www.wordalone.org/archives/by-law_exception\(long\).htm](http://www.wordalone.org/archives/by-law_exception(long).htm)

Checks and balances at work

Presbyterians reject assembly

At press time, by a vote of 126 to 46, the local presbyteries rejected an action of the Presbyterian Church (USA) 2001 General Assembly, giving an example of checks and balances operating between a national assembly and local districts.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has 173 presbyteries or district governing offices. In the Presbyterian Church ratification by a majority of its presbyteries is required for adoption of constitutional changes made by a General Assembly.

The 2001 Presbyterian General Assembly voted 317-208 to drop a constitutional requirement that persons "called to office" must be in a heterosexual marriage or be chaste as a single person. In essence, the assembly voted to allow ordination of gay and lesbian persons involved in homosexual relationships. By their votes, the presbyteries have overruled the General Assembly. Ordination of gay and lesbian persons has been a matter of disagreement and various assembly votes for many years within the Presbyterian Church (USA).

More than 300 persons attend West Central Minn. WA meeting

More than 300 persons attended an April 14 West Central Minnesota WordAlone gathering in Starbuck. The session was titled: "Which Way ELCA?"

The keynote speaker was the Honorable Al Quie who spoke on, "How Can Congregations Renew and Reform the Church?" Breakout sessions were led by former bishop, retired Pastor John Beem, Pastor Larry

Wohlrabe who is assistant to the bishop in the Southwestern Minnesota Synod; Pastor Mark Chavez, director of the WordAlone Network; Pastor M. Luther Johnson of Kongsvinger and St. John congregations in Donnelly, Minn.; and Pastor David Grant of Immanuel and Indherred congregations, Starbuck.

Those in attendance represented 40 communities and 65 congregations.

Boost WordAlone identity

by Mark Chavez, WordAlone Director

Abiding Savior Lutheran Church, Mounds View, Minn, calls attention to their membership in the WordAlone Network in a very noticeable and effective way. On the masthead of the church's newsletter, at the top of their bulletins and wherever

their congregation's name is, they consistently print: "Abiding Savior Lutheran Church, a Congregation of the ELCA and the WordAlone Network."

It is a good idea for consideration by all WA congregations.

The Rite Question



by
Professor
Walter C.
Huffman

The statement below is an edited version of an oral presentation by Walter Huffman for a convocation on "Conscience and Faithful Dissent" at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, February 2002, Columbus, Ohio where he is dean of chapel and professor of worship. The complete presentation is at www.wordalone.org.



Prof. Walter Huffman

Some years ago I decided that my brothers and sisters are those who sit at the table with me proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians, the Augsburg Confession and the behavioral sciences agree on such criteria for fellowship. It is disturbing, therefore, that *Called to Common Mission*, a full communion agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American (ELCA) and The Episcopal Church USA, mandates acceptance of one ecclesial system as a prerequisite for altar and pulpit fellowship. It is enough that there be

faithful preaching of the Gospel and administration of the sacraments.

As part of the continuing debate on this issue, I raise the following questions from the perspective of my particular discipline - liturgical studies.

What is being said liturgically?

Lutherans have experienced the ecumenical impact of shared liturgies. Shortly after the publication of the *Service Book and Hymnal*, mergers produced the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church. The publication of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* led to the creation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Conclusion: shared rites imply shared theologies and often precipitate ecclesial union.

From the 16th Century, Lutherans have assumed that getting the theology right, meant that everything else, including liturgy, will follow. But, it never happened that way. To make the rite a product of the thinking process contradicts studies on human behavior. Most people most of the time learn their

ing process contradicts studies on human behavior. Most people most