

# The Rite Question

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theology not from confessional documents but from ritual experience of the community. Episcopalians and Roman Catholics are right in claiming that "praying shapes believing." (See related article, "Litany raises concerns" on page 9 of this newsletter.)

Anglican-Episcopalians describe themselves as liturgical theologians. They read their theology from the *Book of Common Prayer* and the manner in which its liturgies are conducted. For that reason *Called to Common Mission* (CCM) bases Lutheran agreement on the unaltered *Augsburg Confession* and the *Small Catechism* but founds Episcopal agreement on the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Therefore, one would assume that Episcopalians would insist on getting the rite right before finalizing a document of theological and institutional principles. But that is not what happened. Little public attention was given to the significance and shape of the rite in the deliberations leading to *Called to Common Mission*. The actual change or creation of the Lutheran rite appeared as an appendix to the document. One wonders how and by whom this rite was created? And what does it say?

## Is it ordination or installation?

In the following paragraph, *Called to*

*Common Mission* compares Episcopal and Lutheran liturgical orders and references to "laying on of hands and prayer." CCM #10 *The New Testament describes a laying-on-of-hands to set persons apart for a variety of ministries. In the history of the church, many and various terms have been used to describe the rite by which a person becomes a bishop. In the English language these*

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*terms include: confecting, consecrating, constituting, installing, making, ordaining, ordering. Both our traditions have used the term "consecration of bishops" for this same rite at some times. Today the Evangelical Lutheran*

*Church in America uses the term "installation" while The Episcopal Church uses the word "ordination" for the rite by which a person becomes a bishop. What is involved in each case is the setting apart within the one ministry of Word and Sacrament of a person elected and called for the exercise of oversight (episcopope) wider than the local congregation in the service of the Gospel.*

The implication of this paragraph is that the terms are interchangeable glossing over the fact that these terms carry different meanings and were adopted or rejected in previous liturgical resources for sound theological reasons. This is not "just a matter of semantics." As a member of the task force that worked

for three years to produce the rites of ordination and installation in the 1982 *Occasional Services*, I can say from experience that the language chosen was very intentional.

Philip Pfatteicher in his 1983 Commentary on the *Occasional Services* confirms this analysis: *In general North American Lutheran understanding, bishop is regarded not as a rank but simply as an office that a pastor may hold. Therefore this service is not an ordination or consecration of the person elected bishop. The bishop does not kneel for the statement of bestowal of office, nor is there a laying on of hands during that action.*

As far back as the *Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* in 215 A.D., the laying on of hands and invocation of the Holy Spirit have been the key elements necessary for a rite of ordination. Episcopal scholar, Marian Hatchett in his *Commentary on the American Prayer Book* wrote "Martin Luther and other continental reformers, strongly influenced by their study of the Scriptures and of the early church fathers, concluded that the essentials of the ordination rite were prayer and the laying on of hands."

With CCM we no longer have an installation rite; we have an ordination rite with its attendant theology. How,

therefore, can CCM and its ELCA proponents imply that this is a Lutheran rite for the installation of a bishop when it includes the liturgical inclusion of the laying on of hands and prayer for the Holy Spirit? CCM spells a dramatic departure from the norm most of us have known. It is, therefore, very disturbing for CCM to suggest that the differences in language and in rite don't really matter; Lutherans and Episcopalians are encouraged to view the same liturgical experience according to their own traditions. That is liturgically and theologically dishonest and defies the logic of human experience in understanding an agreement or promise.

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Was it sloppy scholarship or was this ambivalence born of political necessity? Call it installation but make it an ordination rite to accommodate our Episcopal friends who take liturgy seriously even when we do not? Why not just call it ordination? Because in Lutheran circles, calling it an ordination rite would have raised troubling questions and cost votes in the passage of CCM.

## Why promote the myth of historic succession?

Reflecting CCM the new Lutheran rite for the installation of a bishop contains this rubrical explanation: *Three bishops in historic succession* (Continued on page 8)

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join in the laying on of hands in conformity with the canons of the Council of Nicaea. (CCM November, 1998 "Liturgical Changes")

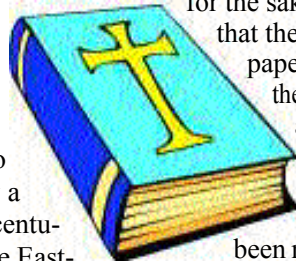
This rubric, like its CCM parent, seeks to legitimize episcopal succession by referring to the canons of the Council of Nicaea. Beyond adopting the Nicene Creed, Lutherans have rarely if ever spoken of being *in conformity* with the canons of Nicaea. Why be so selective in choosing this canon of Nicaea? We could dust off the canon from Nicaea that recognizes the primacy of the bishop of Rome in the West? We should also remember that the same canon requiring three bishops also requires confirmation by a *metropolitan!* (a fourth century provincial leader in the Eastern church)

Rather than appealing to Nicaea, we would do better to appeal to Worms where someone said: "...I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other...."

Liturgically, we have arrived at a decisive movement in the direction of becoming an hierarchical church. Here we touch on one of the primary objections to CCM. Some suggest that one can support historic episcopate and still reject its hierarchical interpretation? In

truth, an hierarchical interpretation has always haunted this ecclesiastical form. The problem is a significant one for a church tradition that places great emphasis on baptism as the signal rite of ordination for all Christians, the sign of our common calling in Christ. History plainly shows that hierarchy tends to accrue status and power, which, in turn, weakens the dignity and responsibility of the baptized.

I affirm efforts toward Christian unity but I do not believe that unity requires the acceptance of a governmental system for the sake of fellowship. I believe that the liturgical questions in this paper reveal serious flaws in the theology of CCM and raise a host of other concerns. A Trinity colleague, Michael Root, has written that "Lutherans have been notoriously weak in ecclesiology and ecclesiology has often not been very important to Lutherans." I agree by adding that Lutherans do not understand the ecclesiological dimensions of its liturgies. It is confounding, therefore, for a church body that does not do ecclesiology or liturgy very well to enter into an agreement in those very areas, an agreement that deeply affects its life and mission.



Professor Huffman's most recent publication is: "Liturgical Space for Mission." *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission.* Augsburg Fortress, 1999.

# Litany raises concerns

Four individuals recently walked out of an ordination at St. John's Lutheran Church, Northfield, Minn., after a litany to the saints was used in the service. As a result of letters to both the synod bishop and the ordinand have taken "full responsibility" and apologized for praying the litany in the form it was used.

Retired pastor, Steve Swanson said in an interview: "It's not our theology and not our practice. I simply couldn't believe what I was hearing. Martin Luther and other reformers tell us that there's no evidence in the scripture that the saints can either hear our prayers or intercede for us."

Swanson said he and three others walked out of the service.

He wrote to Southeastern Minnesota Synod Bishop Harold Usgaard and others: "For Lutherans to attend, watch, acquiesce, and even participate in such a liturgy in a Roman Catholic worship service would certainly be understandable and no doubt forgivable - maybe just Minnesota nice - but for pastors, theological students and bishops (overseers) to lead a Lutheran congregation assembled in such a liturgy seems to me more than misguided, more than venial sin - it smacks of blasphemy, heresy and deserves our collective anathema."

The ordinand, Keith

Homstad, pastor of Gol Lutheran, Kenyon, Minn., responded to Swanson's letter by writing that he apologized for giving "even the slightest impression" of a non-Lutheran understanding of the role of the saints. He added that he completely agreed with Martin Luther's strong objections to the cult of the saints.

Usgaard replied to Swanson: "I am wrong. I am the one who was responsible. The approval of this great litany of the saints showed lack of wisdom, and worse, wrong theology. Its inclusion was the result of confusion on my part. . . not intent. . . though that does not make it any less wrong. I continue to learn the importance of attentiveness in everything in which I am involved. I ask your forgiveness, and I'm asking the same of others."

Homstad wrote that he accepted "full responsibility" for using the words, "pray for us," after the mention of each saint's name. If he had it to do all over again, he continued, he would use the words, "thanks be to God."

He said in an interview that the litany came from the Lutheran book "Sundays and Seasons," but that the response he used was the ancient one, "ora pro nobis," "pray for us." He added that the litany dates back to the Nicene Council.



# Conferences of Interest

## Lutheran Confessions Free Conference

June 17-19 at Augsburg College

Confessionally minded scholars and pastors will examine the Roman Catholic-Lutheran Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) at a Free Conference, June 17-19 at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minn. The keynote speakers are Dr. Joseph Burgess, pastor at Regent, N.D., and former executive director of the division of theological studies of the Lutheran Council USA; Dr. Steven Paulson, associate professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.; and Dr. Mark Menacher, pastor at St. Paul Lutheran, Au Gres, Mich.

The conference also includes working seminars in which participants will discuss the JDDJ especially in light of the recent rejection of JDDJ by the Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands (Evangelical Church of Germany). The seminars will report their findings at a final plenary session. Participants also will hear about on-line methods of getting continuing education.

For registration information, send your name and mailing address to Julie Smith at [jsmith@mvtvwireless.com](mailto:jsmith@mvtvwireless.com) or call 320-669-7378.

## Christian Sexuality October 24-26 Kansas City, MO

The American Lutheran Publicity Bureau is sponsoring a Conference on Christian Sexuality Oct. 24-26 in Kansas City, MO.

Among the many speakers are James Nestingen, professor of church history at Luther Seminar in St. Paul, MN; Amy Schiffrin, campus pastor at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, CA; and Merton Strommen, founder of the Youth and Family Institute, Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN. The Word-Alone Network has endorsed the conference.

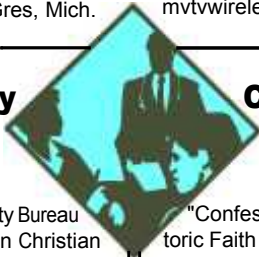
To register send a note and a check for \$25 until Oct. 1 (or \$35 after) to Ruskin Heights Lutheran Church, 10801 Ruskin Way, Kansas City, MO 64134 (816-761-6815). Include your name, address and phone number. You will receive confirmation, directions, plus a list of nearby discounted room accommodations (\$20 to \$30 per night with four roommates). Seminarians are free and a limited number of room accommodations can be provided on a first-registered basis. Planners say the meeting is to serve as a platform for a theological examination of gay theology from an exclusively classical Christian perspective. They hope it will produce a "courageous apologetic for the Christian sexual ethic."

## Confessing the Faith October 24-26 Indianapolis, IN

"Confessing the Faith-Reclaiming Historic Faith and Teaching for the 21st Century," a national convocation of mainline Christians in North America, is scheduled Oct. 24-26 at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Indianapolis, IN. It is sponsored by The Association for Church Renewal, which includes the WordAlone Network.

The registration fee for the conference is \$98 a person in advance and \$125 a person within 30 days of the conference. For registration information or forms, contact Debbie Thompson, Confessing Movement headquarters 7995 E. 21st St., Indianapolis, IN 46219 or call 317-356-9729. Hotel reservations are separate and can be made by calling the hotel at 800-444-2326.

Dr. Maxie D. Dunnam, president of Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky, is keynote speaker the first evening. Some of the break-out sessions throughout the conference include: "Reforming Theological Education," "Raising Christ-Centered Kids in a Church that Isn't," "Confronting Denominational Structures: What to Do?," "Confessing Movements in the Mainline" and Recruiting Gen Xers for Church Reform."



# Lutheran Clergy Connect

Lutheran Clergy Connect is one way for congregations seeking a pastor to connect with potential candidates. Congregations can connect with pastors who believe that Christ alone is sufficient for the unity of the Church, and the Word of God is the authority for the Church. Lutheran Clergy Connect is also posted on the WordAlone website. ([www.wordalone.org](http://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 and E-mail address.

The listing on this page in our printed newsletter was a partial listing of the most recent pastoral positions at that time.  
For an up-to-date listing click on Clergy Connect on our home page.