

NETWORK NEWS



Volume 3, Issue 4 SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2002

WordAlone theological conference set

A time for inspiration, education, friendship and the exchange of ideas with several members of WordAlone's (WA) theological advisory board begins at 1 p.m. Monday Nov. 18 and continues through noon Tuesday Nov. 19 at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Mahtomedi, Minn.

Several of the members from the theological board have agreed to take part in a public meeting in conjunction with their first board meeting the previous weekend.

The conference theme is "The Reformation at the Crossroads: Is it still worth being a Lutheran?" The focus will be on three questions: How did we get here?; What's at stake?; and Where do we go from here?

Members of the theological board planning to stay for the conference are Hans Schwarz of the University of Regensburg, Germany; Jack Dean Kingsbury of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.; George Forell of University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa; James Bangsund of Makumira University, Usa River, Tanzania; Martin Synnes of the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology, Oslo, Norway; and Gerhard Forde, Roy Harrisville, Jim Nestingen, Steve Paulson and Walter Sundberg of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

After a report from the theologians, Roy Har-

risville will focus on, "How did we get here?" There will be a panel session with the theologians for questions from the conferees. Several seminars are planned for the afternoon. Topics include issues relating to the ELCA sexuality study, how to start a WordAlone chapter and using short faith statements that express WordAlone's convictions.

Jim Nestingen will preach at the evening worship. Dan Shaw, first pastor to be ordained under the ELCA ordination exceptions by-law will tell his story. Steve Paulson will give the keynote address on "What's at stake for Lutherans?"

Tuesday morning Pastor Roger Gordon, Tempe, Arizona will address, "Where do we go from here?" George Forell also will address the question, "Is it still worth being a Lutheran?"

A resource fair is planned for Tuesday. That morning, space will be provided for individuals and congregations to display information and resources they are using to educate people about the Scriptures and Lutheran confessions, and to inform people about WordAlone and its work for renewal in the ELCA.

For more information call the WordAlone office, toll free: 888-551-7254 or local: 651-633-6004 or email wordalone@popp.net

Tips on using WordAlone information sources

The WordAlone Network (WA) wants to keep its members and friends up-to-date on news of the movement and about renewal, reformation and reflection efforts as well as reports of what others are saying and doing about vital issues in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

WA's two main methods of communicating are this newsletter and the WordAlone website, www.wordalone.org. WordAlone also offers WA-Announce, a one-way announcement-only e-mail list, and Clergy Connect, which is in the newsletter and on the website, for congregations calling ministers (ordained and lay) and for individuals seeking calls.

A prime goal in the newsletter's design was to make it easy for interested persons to copy and distribute articles. Generally, the articles are written and edited to fit on one side of the newsletter's pages. That way, a person can take one article at a time and

make a "half-page" (5^{1/2} x 8 inch) bulletin insert. By copying articles back-to-back a person easily can insert two articles in a bulletin.

The centerpiece articles are longer, usually two or four newsletter size pages. This is so a two-page centerpiece article can be copied back to back on a single 5^{1/2} x 8 inch half-sheet or onto both sides of a full 8^{1/2} x 11 inch sheet if it's longer.

The website offers a wealth of information about the WordAlone movement and the issues that initiated the movement. The site has a pop-up message that changes frequently and offers current news items and a new feature—semiweekly board members' posts. Pressing the "News" or "Archives" tabs on the home page takes visitors to current and past web news items, the board's posts as well as many more articles and academic papers.

WA-Announce, found through the "E-mail" Lists tab on the home page sends key announcements, news releases and website updates to keep subscribers up-to-date on the latest WordAlone happenings. Visitors can join the list by going through the E-mail tab.

The E-mail tab also allows web surfers to join several other e-mail discussion lists including regional WordAlone lists. There are links to other Lutheran sites as well as to organizations in other denominations.

Under the "Resources" tab are multimedia productions and many, many articles and papers written about Lutheran freedom and the full communion agreement with The Episcopal Church USA.

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- Please photocopy & distribute-

Synod bishop grants second ELCA exception

(Editor's note: This report is based on an edited version of a news release sent out by the ELCA Communications office.)

CHICAGO (ELCA)—A candidate for ordination in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was ordained in September by a pastor other than a bishop—the second time an ELCA seminary graduate was granted an exception to rules governing the ELCA's full communion relationship with the Episcopal Church, Called to Common Mission (CCM).

The Rev. Matthew Kuempel's ordination occurred Sept. 14, after the Rev. Gerald L. Mansholt, bishop of the ELCA Central States Synod, Kansas City, Mo., granted Kuempel's request that someone other than a bishop preside at his ordination.

Mansholt's decision to allow Kuempel's request resulted in the resignation of the Rev. William J. Sappenfield, who quit as one of Mansholt's three ecumenical representatives in the synod. Sappenfield is pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Olathe, Kan. Sappenfield said granting the exception amounted to allowing a first-year graduate to determine ecumenical policy.

"This is damaging for our relationships with the Episcopal Church," he said.

Kuempel was ordained by the Rev. Tom E. Kesselring, pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Pflugerville, Texas. Though Kesselring presided, Mansholt was present and at one point in the ordination rite laid hands on Kuempel's head.

Kuempel was called to a two-point parish, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and Zion Lutheran Church, Washington, Kan. He

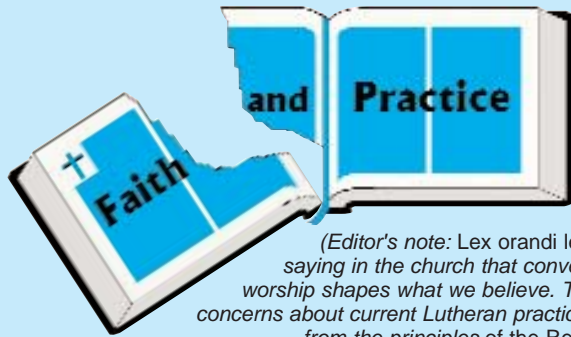
will start Sept. 29. His wife, the Rev. Kristen Kuempel, was ordained by Mansholt Sept. 8 at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Richland, Wash., under the terms of CCM. She was called to serve a three-point parish in Kansas.

The Kuempels graduated from Luther Seminary, an ELCA seminary in St. Paul, Minn., and were assigned to the Central States Synod in March. Matthew Kuempel said he asked Mansholt for the exception in April and it was officially granted in August, after a call had been extended. Kuempel, 29, entered the seminary in 1998, before CCM was adopted by the ELCA and the Episcopal Church.

Sappenfield served as Mansholt's ecumenical representative in the Kansas City area. Sappenfield said he met with Mansholt in May 2002 and expressed concern then about the possibility of exceptions. Sappenfield was not informed of Kuempel's request for an exception until after it was granted, he said.

Sappenfield said he should have been consulted before Mansholt reached his decision on Kuempel's request. However, Sappenfield said even if he had input, he knew if an exception was granted he couldn't continue as the bishop's ecumenical representative, "because I don't agree." Sappenfield resigned as a synod ecumenical representative shortly after he met with Mansholt in late August about the Kuempel exception.

"The ELCA unilaterally changed a bilateral agreement," Sappenfield said of the adoption of the bylaw. "I don't agree with this. I think it lacks integrity, it's bad for relations with our existing ecumenical partners and its bad for our ability to maintain policy within our own denomination.



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

(Editor's note: Lex orandi lex credendi is an ancient saying in the church that conveys the idea that how we worship shapes what we believe. This new column will raise concerns about current Lutheran practices that may lead us away from the principles of the Reformation.)

Whither goest Reformation Day?

A column in the September-October issue of the "Seeds for the Parish" resource newsletter suggests, "it may be a good time to shift away from a focus on the 16th century Reformation and its readings" when celebrating Reformation Day on the last Sunday of October because of "our church's commitment to ecumenical relations."

The item about Reformation Day appears in a column titled, "Consider This." The newsletter has been posted on www.elca.org/co/seeds/ and readers will need Adobe Reader 4.0 or higher to access it.

The newsletter item suggests Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations have an ecumenical celebration of reconciliation and of the "on-going reformation of the church." It offers two concessions to Reformation Day observation: keeping the liturgical color red and

singing "A Mighty Fortress." The article goes on to say congregations might wish to invite a pastor from one of the ELCA's full communion partner churches to preside.

A central reason for not using Reformation Day readings from the "Lutheran Book of Worship," according to the "Seeds" newsletter column, is that congregations will miss the same scripture readings from the "Revised Common Lectionary" every three years by using the Reformation Day scriptures. The lectionary is a list with a three-year cycle that suggests which scripture readings should be read each Sunday. The lectionary is used by most ELCA congregations and several other North American denominations.

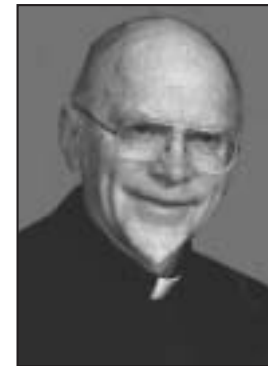
"Seeds of the Parish," an ELCA publication, is distributed six times a year to professional staff and lay leaders in the ELCA.

What will be our call to mission?



by
Ronald Nelson
Retired
missionary
pastor

As the WordAlone Network develops, what is going to be its position with regard to making disciples for Jesus around the world? The problems of Called to Common Mission, the historic episcopate, sexuality and organizational questions are the pressing issues on which WordAlone spends a great deal of its time and energy. But within its "Reflect" and "Renew" emphases, is the WordAlone Network developing a real "call to mission" as our Lord has charged us? I pray that this is the case.



Rev. Ronald Nelson

Jesus' strong words of warning to the church at Ephesus in Rev. 2:4-5 that they abandoned their first love weigh heavily as we look at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Amer-

ica's (ELCA) withdrawal throughout the world from reaching out to those who are not yet disciples of Jesus. In 1966 there were 632 missionaries sent by the American Lutheran Church and around 400 sent by the Lutheran Church in America giving a total of somewhat more than 1,000 (exact figures are difficult to obtain). By 1980 the number had dropped to 516. Now it is below 300 and the majority of them are short-term missionaries serving in roles for maintaining the functioning of a national church, especially in its institutions, administration, finance and education. By contrast, the number of people who are not disciples of Jesus is increasing exponentially.

To be sure, we have partner churches throughout the globe and they are shouldering more responsibility, but is there progress in reaching unreached peoples? Let us take the Evan-

gelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon (ELCC) as an example. In the 1990s assigned for outreach to Muslims, there were two couples and a single mission-

"...is the WordAlone Network developing a real "call to mission" as our Lord has charged us?"

(Continued on page 6)

What will be our call to mission?

(Continued from page 5) ary from the ELCA; (all long-term) plus a couple and a single missionary from Norway working with the ELCC. As of 2002, the ELCA had withdrawn all personnel from that ministry and there was only one Norwegian couple. A Cameroonian pastor who had studied Islam at the Pontifical Institute in Rome had been named coordinator of work among Muslims. In 2001, however, he was voted president of one of the regions of the ELCC and turned his concentration to church administration.

In the past months, there has been a major financial crisis in the ELCC, huge amounts of money having "disappeared." This, together with other crises, is

occupying the attention of the administration, with the result that they have little energy to focus on reaching unreached peoples.

Since the ELCA has not received a specific request from the ELCC for missionaries for work among Muslims, current ELCA Division for Global Mission policy seems to dictate that this means the job is being done. So, in following this policy, the ELCA apparently feels it is absolved of all responsibility before the Lord for those unreached people in Cameroon.

We see that same kind of mentality reflected on campuses of our ELCA colleges. On pages 18-29 in the March-

April issue of "Lutheran Partners" are a series of articles on "Taking Our Faith into the Cultural Mix" by American college students. Having spent 35 years in West Africa as an ELCA missionary, most of which were among Muslims, I am appalled by the apparent total misunderstanding in those articles of what we are about as disciples of Jesus who are charged to make disciples for Him of all peoples. It is interesting to note that in the six mini-articles, not once is the name "Jesus" mentioned. The name "Christ"

is mentioned once in Latin in a sort of formula. The articles are about "religion," not about being disciples of Jesus.

St. Olaf students who made a trip to Turkey came to the conclusion, "they could not and would not support evangelistic groups from the United States that go to Turkey in order to convert Muslims to conservative Protestantism." (p.28) Clearly, they are talking about a straw man. In my years in Africa I got to know many conservative Christian missionaries. They were definitely not there to "convert Muslims to conservative Protestantism." They were there to witness to Jesus Christ in the hope that some of the people to whom they witnessed would become disciples of Jesus. Furthermore, none of us can convert anyone to anything or anyone. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. We

can only tell the story and be examples of the love of Jesus.

But the consequences of their line of faulty thinking are evident: mission activity that seeks to make disciples for Jesus of people of other faiths is clearly pictured as a nefarious activity. The only acceptable "mission" activities, evidently, are striving for justice, feeding the hungry, advocating for women and children and tackling other social issues.

I agree these ways of "doing the Gospel" are fine. But according to these students' thinking, beware if there is an evangelistic thrust of announcing, of proclaiming the Gospel!

That this kind of faulty thinking has infiltrated the ELCA's concept of global mission is evident from the way we deploy personnel and spend mission dollars. Consider this: The ELCA Division for Global Mission lists 22 positions open in Tanzania as of Aug. 1, 2002. The church in Tanzania has dozens of Christians with doctorates and at least five mission groups working there. However, the ELCA has only one missionary position (accountant/administrator) open for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic, a relatively young church with no one with a doctorate and only one

other mission group represented there. Both churches have large Muslim communities to which they need to minister.

But there seems to be a blurring of vision with regard to those who practice other faiths. There is a strong emphasis on "respecting adherents of other faiths." That in itself is fine, but unwittingly perhaps, there is a tendency to understand this as "respecting other faiths." Is it important for people who are Muslims to

come to believe in Jesus Christ? Our answer to that question will prove whether we have really heard our Lord and if we are willing to be obedient to him; or whether we have "abandoned

the love we had at first." Rev. 2:4-5

Unfortunately, in recent years, our words and especially our actions have manifested a blurring in our perception of just how our Lord wants us to relate to Islam and Muslims.

After working among Muslims for more than 30 years, I have many good friends who are Muslims and I respect them a great deal. But even though Islam teaches many good things such as worship of one God, honesty and fidelity, I do not respect Islam. There (Continued on page 8)

"They were there to witness to Jesus Christ in the hope that some of the people to whom they witnessed would become disciples of Jesus."

"Our answer to that question will prove whether we have really heard our Lord and if we are willing to be obedient to him; or whether we have 'abandoned the love we had at first.' Rev. 2:4-5"

What will be our call to mission?

(Continued from page 7) is an urgent need for clarity here: not only in the language we use, but in the attitudes we foster with that language. Is it possible to respect a Muslim without respecting Islam? It is. I know because that is what I do.

Why is it impossible for me to respect Islam? Let's go right to the heart of the matter: What does Islam do with Jesus?

Islam teaches that it is impossible for Jesus to be the Son of God since God has no son. (Qur'an 4:171,5:19,19:35,112:3, etc.)

Islam teaches that Jesus did not die on the cross nor was he raised from death. (Qur'an 4:157)

Islam teaches that Jesus does not know what is in the heart of God. (Qur'an 5:119)

Islam teaches that it is blasphemy against God to say that Jesus is God. (Qur'an 5:19)

Islam teaches that it is blasphemy to talk about God as Triune. (Qur'an 4:171)

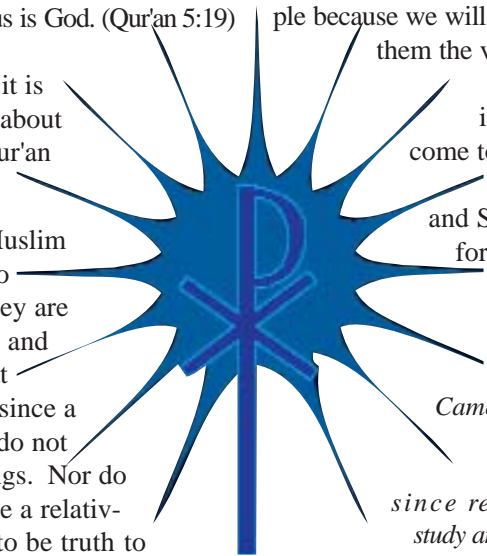
Again, I respect Muslim people who hold to these teachings: they are honest and sincere and are faithful to what they have learned since a young age. But I do not respect the teachings. Nor do we want to espouse a relativistic "what seems to be truth to

each individual is truth for that person." That position is totally unfaithful to the witness of the Bible besides being illogical and ultimately impossible. Someone has to be right and someone has to be wrong in these contentions about Jesus. Wrong teaching, no matter how sincerely it is believed, is still wrong teaching.

Does our respect for Muslim people preclude an honest and open examination and exposition of Islamic teaching? If it does, we are—of all people—most to be pitied. We will have abandoned the source of true peace for a counterfeit tolerance. We also will have betrayed the trust that the Lord has placed in His people when He commissioned us to go and make disciples for Him of all peoples.

Ultimately we will be demonstrating that we do not have respect for Muslim people because we will be withholding from them the very best. We will be acting as if it is not important for them to come to the point of knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior and to receive forgiveness and eternal life in Him.

(Nelson served from 1959 to 1995 in Cameroon, Africa. He has been back to West Africa five times since retirement for various study and teaching projects.)



Board approves sample resolutions

The WordAlone Network (WA) Board approved sample resolutions for synod assemblies and called for consequent drafting of others at its July 25-26 meeting in Roseville, Minn.

While expressing a desire that it be slight-

ly rewritten, the board approved a sample resolution to change the designation of churchwide voting members to delegates who then would be expected to represent their synods. This will require changes to the constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Sample resolutions available

Sample resolutions will be posted on the WordAlone website www.wordalone.org as soon as they are in final form. Access them under the "Resources" button. In addition, resolutions that have been submitted or voted on at various synod assemblies may be found by accessing the "Synod Assemblies" section.

'Sexuality' resources noted

by **Pastor Ray F. Kibler III**, Claremont, Cal., for the Marriage and Family Group

www.churchmoraldebate.com

I write to you all on behalf of the Marriage and Family Group, which consists of six lay persons and pastors engaged in conversation about our biblical and confessional understanding of God's gifts of marriage and the family.

The documents you will find on this new site only are our initial offerings made to you at this time. Over the coming weeks, we will post many additional documents.

Established last year by the WordAlone Network, the Marriage and Family Group seeks to work with individuals and groups within and beyond the ELCA.

One of our primary tasks is to accumulate solid, even-handed, Biblical, sociological and scientific studies of marriage and family. We are studying, especially, items related to homosexuality, divorce and living together outside of marriage so that Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) members and congregations can be well-informed and knowledgeable in the ELCA's discussion, study and deliberation on these issues.

It serves to be a help and resource to everyone throughout the ELCA who is concerned about the current mandated studies on sexuality that are to lead to decisions to be made during the 2005 Churchwide Assembly. We, the Group members, hope that the resources we make available on our new website will be a help as you participate in the hearings that are components of the ELCA discussion process, particularly in the hearings being held within your respective synods.

Now, we are pleased to offer to others, the resources that we post on our website:

Oregon man offers plan for individual's involvement

"The person in the pew, the faithful Lutheran, is the one whose freedoms were lost under Called to Common Mission (CCM), so why should that faithful person expect someone else to restore them?" Tom Cowling, Portland, Ore., asked himself this several months ago. Now he has come up with a letter writing campaign for individuals to undertake.

By the end of August, Cowling had enlisted more than 100 persons in "Luther's Legion."

Cowling, who describes himself as a "What can we do about it kind of a guy," says he came back from the April WordAlone Network convention with the conviction that he, "wasn't taking the right track."

He said in a phone interview that he probably was like a lot of others who were waiting for someone else to take care of the problem of CCM. (CCM is the full communion agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and The Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) that went into effect in 2001.)

"My conclusion was that if it was to get done, then I shouldn't look beyond me for getting it done," he said.

Out of that determination, came Luther's Legion, and a booklet called, "Lessons from Luther. . . . How You Can Reform a Church." In it, Cowling lays out a plan for individuals to personally write to the

presiding bishops in the two denominations and to enlist others to write letters too. He lists six items he said he took from Luther's life. For example, "Use God's Word as the foundation for your protest," and "Document your position."

He lists modern day applications for each of the six points. Of documenting your position, he wrote, "Luther wrote 95 theses, numerous books and sermons!" Then Cowling goes on to call Luther's Legion to write to a presiding bishop on the 31st of each month for the next year and to send copies to the other presiding bishop as well as to their own synodical bishops.

"The 31st is a key date, it's just a reminder," he said. "It was Luther's nailing day, so it is my mailing day."

In "Lessons from Luther," Cowling has a sample letter, outlines for letters, an activity log, a WordAlone application blank, sample resolutions for church boards and articles about CCM. In the letter outlines, he lists resources in another manual that he compiled last winter as an information piece for his congregation, St. Matthew's in Beaverton, Ore.

Interested persons can join Luther's Legion and order the two manuals. The "Lessons" manual is \$3 plus \$2 shipping and handling. The information manual, "Our Church at the Crossroad!" is \$7 plus \$3 shipping and handling. Cowling's address is 3140 SW 97th Ave., Portland, OR 97225.

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 19 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.

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| <p>Give the following information:</p> <p>Pastoral position</p> <p>Congregation</p> <p>Address</p> <p>Contact person</p> <p>Phone number</p> <p>E-mail address</p> <p>Calls are listed starting with the most recently received.</p> | <p><i>age, large church facility and a successful pre-school.</i></p> <p>+</p> <p>St. Michael Lutheran Church
Ottawa Lake, MI
Contact: Fred Krumm & Don Sahloff
5790 W. Temperance Road
Ottawa Lake, MI 49267
734-856-2944
<i>Position: Seeking a full-time Pastor for this solid, vibrant LCMC congregation that recently left the ELCA.</i></p> <p>+</p> <p>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
<i>Position: Full-time 2 point Pastor.</i></p> <p>+</p> <p>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
<i>Position: Solo Pastor of a 2 pt. parish of approximately 500.</i></p> | <p><i>An LCMC/ELCA congregation</i></p> <p>+</p> <p>First Lutheran Church
Little Falls, MN
Contact: Rev. David Steffenson
320-632-6667 or
dsteffen@upstel.net
<i>Position: Full-time Associate Pastor with desired areas of giftedness: teacher (adults), intentional prayer life, building small group ministry opportunities, preaching, crisis visitation, mission (global) focus.</i></p> <p>+</p> <p>Lutheran Church of the Master
Omaha, NE
Contact: Rev. Kip Tyler
2617 South 114th Street
Omaha, NE 68144
Tyler@churchofthemaster.com
402-333-4444
<i>Position: Full-time Pastor of Youth Ministries</i></p> <p>+</p> <p>Faith Lutheran Church
Redmond, WA
Contact: Pr. David Lund
9041 166th Avenue NE
Redmond, WA 98052
DJLund@bigfoot.com
425-885-1810
<i>Position: Youth & Family minister</i></p> |
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