

**Minutes of the Lutheran Episcopal Coordinating Committee (LECC)
January 28-30, 2008
Washington, D.C.**

Present for all or part of the sessions:

Representatives of The Episcopal Church (TEC): The Very Rev. Donald Brown (*co-chair*), (08) the Rev. Dr. Al Moss (08), the Rt. Rev. Nedi Rivera (12), Ms. Kay Beach (12), the Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe (13), Ms. Emily Perow (reappointed-14), the Rev. Jon Perez (14), and the Rt. Rev. C. Christopher Epting (*staff*)

Representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA): The Rev. Nancy Curtis (08), the Rev. Norman Wahl (08), the Rev. Sherman Hicks (12), and the Rev. Donald McCoid (*staff*).

Absent: Bishop Floyd Schoenhals (12) of the ELCA

Other attendees: The Rev. Peter Wall attended as an invited partner representative from the Joint Lutheran Anglican Commission of Canada

Opening Devotions, Agenda Adoption, Introductions and Personal Updates

Donald Brown opened with prayer 9 a.m., Monday, January 28, 2008 in the St. Paul's College of the Paulist Fathers in Washington, D.C. The Committee adopted the proposed agenda. Emily Perow shared that she had been reappointed for a new six year term by the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church after her eight years of service ended in 2007. It was shared that Bishop Schoenhals had resigned from the LECC due to health considerations. All present shared introductions and updates about lives and ministry.

Ecumenical Relationships of The Episcopal Church

Chris Epting shared that the *Moravians* are in dialogue and interim Eucharistic sharing has already begun. A document entitled "Finding Our Delight in the Lord" is being presented to the churches. Although there had been an argument that the Moravians had maintained historic succession, the proposal is for a service of reconciliation to take place with the small group of Moravian bishops. During that liturgy, there would be a joint recognition of ministries where the Episcopalian bishops would lay hands on the Moravian bishops and the "right hand of fellowship" would be extended by the Moravians to the Episcopalians. If the Moravians agree, it will come before the General Convention in 2009. Don McCoid shared that the Alaskan province of the Moravian church has not accepted the invitation to be in full communion with the ELCA because of the sexuality issues. Of further interest is that Moravians have never used the filioque in the Nicene Creed.

United Methodist discussions began bilaterally, rather than through COCU in 2000. In recent years the UMC produced two documents on baptism, "By Water and the Spirit" and "These Holy Mysteries" on the Eucharist which appear to be compatible with the Episcopal Church. The Methodist bilateral agreement came to the floor at the end of the last General Convention and was passed so that although there was very little celebration, there is interim Eucharistic sharing. Under study presently are the differences and similarities of the two episcopacies and both churches' three-fold ministries. Action may happen on full communion in 2012 or 2015. The reconciliation process mentioned above would also be proposed as possibly the way to proceed.

Chris Epting also outlined relationships between the Church of England and the British Methodists. Alan Scarfe raised that reading the Lutheran-Methodist agreement and the proposed Lutheran-Episcopal agreement materials could sound like two different conversations regarding the episcopate (and Al Moss added, sacramental theology) and both raised the issue of whether or not there is consistency in the Lutheran approach to both dialogues.

Don McCoid responded that the ELCA doesn't see church-dividing differences between the approaches of the Methodist document and CCM unless the ELCA were looking for full unity, rather than full communion. Other differences will appear. For instance, in early January 2008 Bishop Oden has approved to move toward full communion with the historic black Methodist churches. It is significant because the ELCA considers full communion a step toward unity. What the full communion agreement of the UMC with AME, CME and AME Zion would say explicitly is that they would not move toward structural unity. So now there are two definitions of full communion for the UMC.

Alan Scarfe shared very practical difficulties with a trilateral Eucharist attempted in Iowa. Provisions for shared bilateral Eucharists differed enough to engender difficulties in the worship service itself. Peter

Bilateral dialogue with the Presbyterian Church has been difficult due to their ordained elders (whom both Lutherans and Episcopalians would consider lay people) and their polity. They believe they have a three-fold ministry but the locus is the congregation. A pastor is the bishop or overseer of the local community, overseen by the body of elders. And they argue this has pre-Ignation foundation in the early church. Therefore, they don't have anything like bishops in succession. Without any common ground here, full communion will not be possible. Even so about half a dozen joint Episcopal-Presbyterian congregations exist, one is in Connecticut with about eight thousand members.

The National Council of Churches gave birth to the ecumenical dialogues in lots of ways. It includes only the Orthodox and the Protestants. So the Episcopal Church also supports CCT, Christian Churches Together in the USA which includes in addition Roman Catholics, evangelical-pentecostals, and racial-ethnic churches. Domestic poverty joins evangelization as important matters of joint effort, while the CCT waits to see if the historic black churches will join. Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC) does not include Lutherans in membership but as observers. The three historic black churches

have absented themselves and if that does not change, The Episcopal Church will have less interest in this endeavor.

Ecumenical Relationships of the ELCA and News from the 2007 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Don McCoid reported regarding *conciliar ecumenism* that he has attended the NCC, CUIC and the CCT. The latter group doesn't have the heavy structure that NCC has and emphasizes spirituality more.

From the *ELCA's Churchwide Assembly* held since the last meeting of LECC, he reported that Bishop Hanson was reelected to a 6 year term as Presiding Bishop. At the CWA there was no change in the practice of ordination or action taken regarding same-gender blessings; these matters were referred to the sexuality task force because there will be a social statement in 2009. However, a vote to urge ELCA bishops to use restraint in disciplining congregations and rostered people when a leader is in a relationship not in compliance with current church policy on homosexual leaders passed by a fair margin.

The framing of the vote in 2009 will be a social statement, but it will not include these two matters of ordination or blessing of same-sex unions in that document. The task force will frame the theological and other background matters and then will make recommendations on the two issues separately to the churchwide assembly. "Differentiated consensus" on "differentiated practice" might be the result. The social statement itself needs to pass by a 2/3 vote. However, the recommendations on the other two matters can be framed so they need merely a simple majority to pass. Don McCoid has asked the task force to determine how they want the ecumenical dialogues to respond.

Roman Catholic dialogue with the ELCA addresses eternal life at the moment and they meet twice a year.

With the *United Methodist Church* dialogue comes an interesting question: With whom would the ELCA be in full communion? United Methodists in the United States or the whole world? The UMC is a global church, not an American church. Discussion has been heading toward an agreement that it would be territorial only, on geographical soil shared by both parties only.

The *American Methodist Episcopal Zion* dialogue does not resemble a traditional bilateral so much as improving common understandings. HIV-AIDS will be discussed. Several meetings have seriously focused on how to do ministry. These discussions have come about because of the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary being neighbor to the AME Zion group and continuation is agreed.

The *Mennonite* dialogue will meet in Elkhart, Indiana in February. "The Unbinding of Lazarus" will be the focus to free two former mutually condemning church bodies for mission together.

A Jewish Consultative Panel and Muslim Consultative Panel were brought together at the same table because of Peace Without Walls. Luther's "A Mighty Fortress" writing was actually included in the document formulated.

The Orthodox dialogue was completed in 1996 and is in suspension. Don McCoid has written to the Orthodox but there has been no response to request for dates for new round.

Coordinating Committee meetings with Reformed churches continue. Reception needs to be emphasized with the partners of the ELCA. How effective is the mission actually? This question is central for that group's agenda.

Lutheran Church Missouri Synod meetings with the ELCA are now scheduled once or twice a year. The two churches share ministry in the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and Lutheran Services in America, other social ministries and chaplaincy. October's meeting in Baltimore focused on biblical hermeneutics. Although historical matters presented sounded like common ground, the hermeneutics discussion clarified continuing divisions in addition to matters of human sexuality which have international implications as well. Don McCoid gave some examples of areas of misunderstanding and the need for coordination rather than competition.

The dialogue with the LCMS does not include Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod observers. Almost by accident in Arizona, leaders from the LCMS, WELS and ELCA were together under Thrivent Financial's umbrella. Three separate worship services had to be held as well as three separate graces at meals. These matters were presented for Episcopal understanding.

With Roman Catholics the ELCA is revisiting the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. A future symposium will include the UMC, since they have also signed this document.

Meeting with Local Bishops

Some members of the local Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee and local bishops from both denominations met with the LECC for discussion about the local development of relationships on Monday evening, January 28.

When queried about the background and process of interrelationship, members of the discussion emphasized a joint history in the region stretching back to colonial times; proximity of the judicatories to each other; almost equal presence locally of both denominations compared to the numerical discrepancies in the rest of the country; the need for shared ministries, for instance Latino and campus ministry work. One of the Episcopal bishops had served in the area where disaster relief was coordinated between the ELCA and TEC and thus was quite ready to cross denominational lines into shared ministry in the Washington, D.C. area.

As the discussion progressed, the Washington bishops began to share with each other as well as the committee possibilities of ongoing relationship with regard to joint Credo meetings regarding ongoing ministry and life focusing on health, financial assessments and style of ministry and priesthood. They discussed ways to provide joint meetings for new bishops through Credo, which was highly praised by the Episcopalians. This program is less well known among Lutherans.

Lutherans could offer the Episcopalians joint inclusion of priests in first call theological education, called "Fresh Start" with other programs included in TEC. Because ecumenical formation is less done in seminaries, it would help people to think ecumenically from the beginning of their ministries.

Immigrant ministries are needed and can be shared without overlap. Church starts can be coordinated by consultation, and the price of real estate almost demands that. The Leadership Program for Musicians started at Virginia Theological Seminary and is strong in the ELCA now. As they continued to talk, the bishops began to consider how the three Episcopal dioceses and the ELCA synod could work together in youth ministry. The Lutherans remembered the generosity of the Episcopalians in the use of the National Cathedral where much has been shared.

When asked how the relationship could be better, discussion turned to mission-driven, mission-centered work, especially since more federal money is coming to interfaith and ecumenical work. The bishops discovered regarding local involvement in Africa that both churches often were working in the same country close to one another and they were eking out synodical and diocesan money where they could have written a joint grant, for the malaria project, for example. Ecumenical work with other churches could serve as examples.

From the wider church involvement, some present applauded the concept of a booklet sponsored jointly with catchy titles such as "10 Things a Bishop Needs to Know about Bringing in a Pastor of the Other Denomination." These things are necessary because of the rate of bishop turnover and clergy needing to know.

Joint action with seminaries was wistfully mentioned. Another idea was a "think tank" working with how theological methodology relates to networking, getting laypeople, pew to pew, working together. This could be a "plum of a committee" said a participant, and it could be fun and be creative, rather than use constraints of rules. It would need to be a large group which would accommodate subgroups and working groups. And it would be something with connection to the offices of the bishops and ecumenical committees and they would meet twice a year. A think tank could be comprised of people from all over, coming up together with models of interface and they would go back to judicatories and seminaries. If studies were needed, seminaries could be approached.

From the idea of a national think tank, talk led back to local and regional models for such groups to work to "connect things not normally connected." As one bishop said, "The senior lay officers of the synods and dioceses wouldn't need much help, but just

permission to talk” as another avenue for engagement. Each region might have different goals. A local or national LECC could help set the agenda for think tanks.

In the Washington D.C. area, bishops themselves come to the table with ideas for the local LECC. At the same time, the committee holds the feet of the bishops to the fire to come through with action. Multicultural Ministry reorganization with in the ELCA was shared by Sherman Hicks and was of great interest to those present. How to do ministry with first and second generations of an ethnic community is being assessed. The consensus was that the “1.5 generation” is hard to serve, but the Lutheran church is already addressing areas in which the Episcopalians showed interest.

Enthusiasm for continued work together in the Washington, D. C. area was very evident as were the strong, open relationships between the judicatories.

Reception of “Called to Common Mission”

Don McCoid asked what would happen if an Episcopal diocese “leaves” The Episcopal Church, as is alleged in San Joaquin? Chris Epting explained that the “leaving” other bishop will be deposed when the House of Bishops meets; diocese will be declared vacant; then an interim will be set up before the vote. A diocese cannot leave the ECUSA any more than a synod can leave the ELCA. If a clergyperson should “lose their rostering, so to speak” then they cannot serve in the other church.

When asked what would happen with the LARC covenant in Pittsburgh, for example, if that Episcopal bishop should take the diocese with him? Obviously there would be no interchange of ministry. Chris Epting said it would be analogous to how Episcopalians deal with the ELCA as opposed to WELS or to LCMS.

Lutheran ecumenical arrangements are church to church, not synod to diocese. But joint worship and service on the local level would be okay most probably from the Lutheran point of view.

Sherman Hicks remarked on the positive effect of reception on the local level shown us in the conversation with the bishops. There have been no series of “best practices” put together, so far as anyone knows; clearly it might be something that LECC might be able to do? He laid the possibility before the committee.

Discussion about small membership congregational interaction ensued within the committee and it was suggested to put contents of videos about what Lutherans are, what Episcopalians are on the web itself. If we are in full communion, our reasons for coming together cannot be through failure. It should be, Jon Perez opined, as a result of asking, “Is what you can do together greater than what you can do now?”

Reception of full communion in Canada Peter Wall explained that one Lutheran bishop in Canada deals with as many as fourteen Anglican dioceses. Their letterheads and signs all state "in full communion with [the other church]" and they are talking about amalgamating the two national offices, to make it real, as in youth ministry and stewardship. Important is that the relationship really becomes part of the common parlance and the Canadian Lutherans and Anglicans *know* they are in full communion with each other. For instance, an Anglican sledding party can be held with the invitation "Come and Push a Lutheran Down the Hill."

Other suggestions were to honor both Lutheran and Episcopal worship traditions in intentional and newly discovered ways, not just in alternation in joint parishes. Provide materials for joint congregations so that those not either Lutheran or Episcopalian can gain an understanding of the discussions regarding their congregations. Have regional meetings so that the laity and clergy can come together to birth more "best practices" in forming joint congregations. Have LECC focus one upcoming meeting on congregational development.

Meeting with the Local Lutheran Episcopal Coordinating Committee

Guests included Dr. Mitzi Budde, The Rev. Dr. Scott Ickert; the Rev. Thomas Prinz, co-chair of the local LECC, and the Rev. Dr. Christopher Agnew, co-chair of local interfaith commission of Diocese of Virginia and Ecumenical coordinator for Province III.

A list of questions about a variety of issues was presented by the local group to LECC and a packet of information about the local Lutheran-Episcopal relationship during the last twelve years was provided LECC members. Most of the questions had few answers from the national LECC, which surprised the local group.

The group provided LECC with the history of the local group and ecumenical relationships of service and parish. Since full communion was proposed, the local group has studied it. The first questions were "border" issues regarding who does what and how it will be accomplished. Now they seldom ask those questions but have moved to a place to talk about common issues of ministry together. They are raising the issues of exegetical challenges, youth ministry, and addressing the ordinary working life of jurisdictions and congregations. Events into the future have been planned, and an archive is being maintained. If there is a 10th anniversary celebration of CCM, the local group would like it to be at the National Cathedral. As to current additional agreements, in the Commonwealth of Virginia there is a LARCUM agreement for the whole state but there also seems to be in some areas a need to have a state Lutheran-Episcopal committee and that is going to be tried.

There is a joint clergy retreat planned which, if it is successful, will be repeated on a regular basis. Joint training at day events has happened six or seven times, focusing on the documents which have been proposed in terms of full communion but shifting focus since the passage of the CCM to cover multiple topics, including boundary seminars, Reginald Fuller, etc. Interest is also keen in new missions, youth ministry, chaplaincy at

institutions, and poverty issues, all including multicultural aspects. The local LECC is so active because of long term relationships which have built up trust. This time factor the group sees as a strong part of life together.

Some courses on reception have been offered, but they are electives and often do not make, with regard to numbers. The CCM class in 2006 was taught in the January term with three Lutherans from Gettysburg and five Episcopalians. Two weeks ago, two local members guest-lectured at Gettysburg. A roomful of Lutherans heard her experience of ecumenical ministry. A relatively small percentage of the Episcopal seminary students take such courses, but all experience Services of the Word and Eucharistic Liturgies in the Lutheran tradition every year.

The group also discussed the participation of the Roman Catholics in ecumenical relations and spoke of the nuts and bolts aspect of how the joint clergy conference was engineered. The extent of local interchangeability of ministers was discussed. The need for joint materials was again reiterated. Nancy Curtis suggested that the Lutheran Occasional Service Book which is currently in development might be one place to have some joint materials included if the local LECC is interested.

In reflecting on the meeting the next day, it was noted that some of the local members were surprised that LECC has little knowledge and power. They valued the time but were shocked LECC could not take action. Al Moss found it most discouraging to hear the local group ask LECC about its role--think tank, sounding board, or publicity group?

Defining the role of the coordinating committee to others became seen by LECC as much more important than LECC had heretofore considered. Possibly revisiting the charter, understanding that LECC has no funds and is not programmatic and the pressure not to interpret LECC's role as activist when LECC was constituted would help others understand the role.

LECC's Responses to Concerns Raised by the Local Full Communion Group (also known as LECC)

In response to the matters raised by the local group regarding liturgy, Nedi Rivera

MOVED:

LECC requests our respective liturgical officers and committees develop and promote liturgical resources and bibliographies to enable greater cooperative work between the two churches.

The motion was seconded and passed

In response to the local groups question regarding ministry, Don Brown

MOVED:

LECC recommends both Presiding Bishops give serious consideration to invite representative bishops to each other's meetings and encourage bishops to meet with each other at the provincial and regional level, always leading to the hope of another joint meeting of the two houses of bishops.

The motion was seconded and passed.

In response to the question about the status of Lutheran exceptions, Don McCoid stated that from the last seminary class there were some but not many. What has been found is not only do some people not want to be ordained by a bishop in the historic episcopate; there are some who don't want to be ordained by a bishop, period. These are not spread across the country. They are only in one section. It's 1-2%.

In response to the question about the status of the diaconate in both churches, the matter is under advisement by the ministry committees referred from LECC and the national group has given a lot of time to that matter.

In response to questions of joint social service projects and parish development, there is a 2006 workbook on Millennial Development Goals, joint gulf coast relief

Don Brown

MOVED:

LECC shall invite Episcopal Relief and Development and Lutheran Social Services (LSA) and Lutheran Disaster Response invite to share what they are doing together. LECC would like to know the ongoing work between the two churches regarding social services to report for its meeting in October 2008.

The motion was seconded and passed.

Regarding joint campus ministries, the two churches are already working together with it. With regard to joint multicultural ministries, the next meeting of LECC should explore this more fully with member Sherman Hicks as interface. It should be an agenda item for an upcoming meeting.

Regarding joint theological education, Nancy Curtis

MOVED

LECC encourages the mutual invitations of Lutherans and Episcopalians in first calls to foster priestly/pastoral formation.

The motion was seconded and passed. This resolution will be presented to all bishops in TEC; the Executive Director of Fresh Start and the Commission on Ministry; and to the

coordinators of First call theological education in regions, to the Rev. Dr. Stan Olson informed and the ELCA Conference of Bishops.

Regarding questioning about the interface of the ecumenical officers, it's already happening.

Regarding the joint production of parish-based materials, it was suggested that could be agenda item for the next LECC meeting.

The matter of reception of members from the full communion partners continues to be under discussion. The local groups have much to offer regarding that matter. The Episcopal bishops have to make it happen.

Regarding the advice from the national group to the local, the best advice was the consensus motto "Just Do It" and in so doing, remember the sibling-cousin. For example, the local organization should contact the Lutheran and Episcopal Life feature writer regarding their local work.

Housekeeping Matters.

For continuity, Nancy Curtis will remain on LECC through the October meeting. The ELCA Presiding Bishop will appoint Elizabeth Eaton (NE Ohio Synod) to replace Floyd Schoenhals. She is married to Episcopal priest. New co-chairs are needed. The Presiding Bishops of the churches appoint members of LECC for six year terms and as other vacancies occur.

It was agreed by consensus that Nancy Curtis will represent LECC at the Canadian joint commission meeting in Toronto this coming June and will provide a report to the committee. Emily Perow attended the previous two Canadian meetings and will provide a report on those two meetings.

The next LECC meeting will be two full days, Tuesday and Wednesday, October 14-15, 2008 with Monday and Thursday as travel days in Des Moines, Iowa.

It was noted that LECC members shared daily Eucharist together at this meeting for the first time.

The meeting was adjourned with thanks to those who have finished their terms as of this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Nancy M. Curtis, ELCA