



Jump, Lutheran, Jump!

How to boil a frog: If a frog is dropped into a kettle of boiling water, he senses the danger and jumps out. But if he's put into cool water and the temperature is slowly raised to boiling, he's cooked.

ELCA Lutherans are like that slowly cooking frog. As a one layman said, "No matter what the ELCA does on a national level, our congregation will have worship services Sunday after Sunday."

He has not felt the temperature rising. He thinks his congregation is not affected by what happens at the national level of the church. He and his congregation are being cooked.

Not all Lutheran frogs are comfortably numb. As one pastor said: "I decided to leave the ELCA when it dawned on me that the chief impediment to my ministry was the denomination I was affiliated with." He switched from the ELCA to LCMC (*Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ*).

Another pastor: "When I retire, this congregation will be at the mercy of the bishop, and he will make sure that my successor is a company man. We are going to get out now."

LCMC is growing and is now **the fourth largest Lutheran body** in the USA with 192 congregations in the US and about 50 more abroad.

Thirty seven congregations have joined LCMC in the past year, twelve of those since August 2009.

Most LCMC congregations are from the ELCA, but some are from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

LCMC ordains women but not practicing homosexual, bisexual, and transgendered persons.

LCMC advantages for pastors

1. Pastors: Your pension is portable. Pastors may join LCMC and remain on the ELCA pension plan, or they can switch to the LCMC pension plan, which is invested with the highly esteemed *American Funds* and managed by The Edward Jones Group. The LCMC plan is not political; it is not subject to action by the church.

2. Pastors are free to speak and to work without fear of harm to their careers by higher-ups.

LCMC is a decentralized association. Members of the Board of Trustees are elected from regions. LCMC also has districts, which are groups gathered around shared theological commitments, geography, worship styles, or other matters. Districts do not have institutional power in LCMC, which frees them for the work that brings them together. Pastors, individual laity, and congregations can belong to as many districts as they wish, or none at all.

3. Pastors are free to network for calls, fellowship, education, and the like, independently and by affiliating with colleagues in

districts. Pastors are free from having to please a bishop and bureaucracy above them.

LCMC advantages for congregations

1. Money. Congregations can be directly involved in supporting missionaries and mission projects.

2. Property. Congregations own and control their property and ministry. Congregations can both join and leave LCMC without legal ties to LCMC.



(continued from page 1)

3. Representation. Already the fourth largest Lutheran body in the US, LCMC does not have a centralized bureaucracy and hierarchy.

LCMC has an annual convention to which every congregation is entitled to send delegates.

4. Calls. Congregations deal directly with pastoral candidates for calls. They are not limited by a mandatory grieving period when a pastor leaves. They are not limited by a synod staff's recommendations for candidates. They are not limited to interviewing only one candidate at a time.

5. Freedom. LCMC as a church body is not engaged in partisan politics, nor does it employ political lobbyists or a staff to draft social statements.

Lutherans in LCMC are free, as individuals, to decide for themselves in what ways they will serve their neighbors.

Who owns the steeple?

A congregation that wishes to leave the ELCA may do so following fairly simple procedures which are spelled out in parallel provisions of the ELCA constitution and the ELCA's model constitution for congregations. Here is how to get the ball rolling:

1. Inventory your property. Title documents for most churches identify the individual congregation

(not the ELCA) as the owner (see ELCA constitution ¶ 9.70-71).

In some instances, however, the question may be more difficult to determine than merely looking at the applicable title documents. To that end, collect a copy of the title documents for the church property, any mortgage documents, and other relevant documents regarding property (furnishings, bank accounts, trust funds, and other invested funds) and present these materials to a local lawyer for consideration.

2. Follow proper procedures. The ELCA Constitution ¶ 9.62 sets forth the procedures for leaving:

“a. A resolution to terminate ... must be adopted by a legally called and conducted meeting of the congregation [and] by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present.

“c. The bishop ... shall consult with the congregation during a period of at least 90 days.

“d. If the congregation, after consultation, still desires to terminate its relationship, such action may be taken at a special meeting by a two-thirds majority

“g. [Former LCA congregations must also] receive synodical approval before terminating their relationship....

“h. [Congregations established by the ELCA must also]

receive synodical approval before terminating their relationship....”

To read all the procedural details, google “ELCA Constitution” and then look up the relevant section ¶ 9.62 for starters.

3. Jump now. One pastor has told her congregation all they need to do is amend their constitution, in effect, to adopt their own ministry standards.

This is a false solution: A congregation may decline to call any particular candidate, but **all congregations are bound to abide by ELCA standards**, which are now officially open to noncelibate GLBT candidates.

Moreover, all must accept the legitimacy of noncelibate gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered deacons, pastors, and bishops.

Your grandchildren

Is “avoiding conflict” the most important thing? Not when the great inheritance you were going to pass on is being frittered away.

Your grandchildren need you to prepare a future for them. Don't sit among the comfortably numb. Salvation is at stake.

Jump, Lutheran, jump!

“The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.”

- Archilochus, 7th Century BC



Our “one big thing” is to lift high the Cross.

CrossAlone Lutheran Churches are centrist Lutherans affiliated with Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC).

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SILVER BULLET DREAMS

WHY INTERNAL REFORM DOES NOT WORK

Is there a silver bullet that will solve the snowballing problems of the ELCA? There are no quick fixes. Consider the following:

1. Is it better to reform from within?

Luther was not able to reform from within. John Wesley did not want to break with the Church of England, but his followers saw that breaking was the only way.

Historically renewal and revival movements have not succeeded – not even in Norway, which has become secularized and where the church is an echo of the culture. Renewal movements are absorbed over time; they have to break to succeed.

2. Our bishop counsels patience and quotes Gamaliel in Acts 5:38: “If this plan is of men, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them.” What about this?

This text is a saying from Jewish wisdom material, not a divine law for all times and places.

Many harmful things last for decades, even centuries, and many lives are lost. Many people are misled about sin and salvation. The proper Christian concern is to reduce harm and fight evil for the sake of the neighbor.

Now is not the time for dithering. See “London” and “Alexandria” on page 6.

3. Our bishop says forgiveness is not optional. We must forgive and go on as before. What do we do?

If forgiveness is required, then harmful behavior is approved. What about repentance? Amending life? Rather, “shake off the dust from your feet as you leave” (Matt 10:14). You are not required to forgive where there is no repentance.

4. Our bishop says neither he nor his successor will force us to take a gay pastor. What about this?

This is a diversion from the main issue: The new norm in the ELCA is the moral equivalence between heterosexual and homosexual marriage and family.

If you are part of the ELCA, you accept noncelibate GLBT clergy and blessings, regardless of whether your congregation has a heterosexual or a gay pastor.

Finally, no bishop can guarantee what his successor will or will not do.

5. Our pastor says what the ELCA does doesn't affect us. Is this true?

Not true. ELCA Sunday school materials, hymnals, confirmation materials, youth programs, Bible studies, seminary training are all vehicles through which the ELCA promotes its many social agendas under the guise of “mission.”

6. Our pastor says we can solve the problem by just changing our congregational constitution to allow only the kind of clergy we want. Can we do this?

When a congregation amends its constitution **in any way**, such action triggers acceptance

of the model constitution for congregations:

¶ 9.52. “When a congregation wishes to amend any provision of its governing documents, the governing documents of that congregation shall be amended to conform to 9.25.b” [all provisions of the model constitution for congregations].

7. Our bishop says that we are a “big tent” church and that if you're not part of this “big tent,” you're a purist or homophobic.

Traditionally Lutherans have said no to noncelibate GLBT clergy for three reasons:

- 1) Such a life-style hinders the preaching of the gospel by implying the gospel is sloppy agape.
- 2) A noncelibate GLBT pastor in the pulpit misleads kids about the dangers of this behavior.
- 3) The mom-dad family has proven over centuries to be the best environment to raise children. The vast majority of Christians throughout the world continue to uphold mom-dad families as the time-tested norm best for church and society.

The church does not ordain active alcoholics. Does this mean the church is alcohol-phobic? No, it is common sense. To allow pastors who are unrepentant alcoholics in the pulpit detracts from the preaching of the gospel.

The church does not ordain active embezzlers. Does this mean that embezzlers cannot be saved? No, it means that this behavior undermines the gospel, church, and society.

“This is not a day in which to practice the politics of drift. There is little time left.”

Archbishop Peter Jensen, Sydney, Australia, see p. 6..

OVERLOOKED FUNERAL HYMNS

SINGABLE TUNES, GREAT WORDS

The problem: Overused hymns. When you're planning a funeral, do you worry about falling into the same-old, same-old?

How Great Thou Art is a beautiful hymn but one that is overused, especially for funerals. The same is true for *Amazing Grace*.

There are other singable hymns which proclaim the gospel clearly. Consider the following:

My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
No merit of my own I claim,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

When he shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in him be found,
Clothed in his righteousness alone,
Redeemed to stand before the throne.

* * *

"O Day Full of Grace" is listed as a Pentecost hymn, but just leave out verse 4 which mentions Pentecost and you have a profound funeral hymn.

O Day Full of Grace

Oh day full of grace that now we see
Appearing on earth's horizon,
Bring light from our God that we may be
Replete in his joy this season.
God, shine for us now in this dark place;
Your name on our hearts emblazon.

For Christ bore our sins, and not his own,
When he on the cross was hanging;
And then he arose and moved the stone,
That we, unto him belonging,
Might join with angelic hosts to raise
Our voices in endless singing.

When we on that final journey go
That Christ is for us preparing,
We'll gather in song, our hearts aglow,
All joy of the heavens sharing,
And walk in the light of God's own place,
With angels his name adoring.

* * *

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home:

A thousand ages in your sight
Are like an evening gone,
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

* * *

Another gem: The cadence of the tune captures the sadness and glory of a Christian funeral.

When Peace, like a River

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way;
When sorrows, like sea billows, roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

He lives – oh the bliss of this glorious thought,
My sin, not in part, but the whole,
Is nailed to his cross, and I bear it no more.
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

* * *

Rock of Ages

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling.
Naked, come to thee for dress;
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.

* * *

Abide with Me

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joy's grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O thou who changest not, abide with me.

Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
Heav'n's morning breaks, earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

Confirmation Hymns. If confirmands memorized the hymns above and then sang them on Confirmation Sunday, just think how these hymns could comfort and teach them through the years.

MONEY TALKS

GIVE DIRECTLY TO INTENDED BENEFICIARIES

Money. An August 25, 2009, letter from Pastor Bill Bohline to Bishop Peter Rogness and Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson:

“Finally, I need to tell you that we are going to suspend immediately all financial support to the Saint Paul Area Synod and the ELCA. Our giving beyond Hosanna! will remain strong, but we cannot give our benevolence dollars to a denomination that has moved in a direction so contrary to some of our core beliefs.”

When asked if Hosanna! is leaving the ELCA, Bohline answers, “They have left us.” Bohline and his congregation are considering their options for switching affiliation.

Most churchgoers have been raised to trust the church and in controversy be part of a loyal opposition. But what happens when you and your church no longer share the same faith and values? When the church is destroying what you cherish?

Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson: “You need to stay in the conversation with us because these questions did not all get tied up neatly in Minneapolis” (MPR, 9/25/09).

The bishop loves to keep dissenters in the conversation because he knows that they will 1) keep writing checks, 2) retire, and 3) die out. Let nature take its course. Again, Hanson:

“Will the people in that pew in Minnesota who vote to withhold money from the ELCA synods and churchwide at least consider that the end result of that may be employees in the churchwide organization that lose their job who are single parents, who are caring for three children and perhaps an elderly mother, who will now join the growing list of unemployed people in the United States” (MPR, 9/25/09).

To the contrary, job losses at ELCA headquarters are **not your fault.**

The ELCA Church Council ignored its own Constitution committee’s advice to require a 2/3 vote on the controversial gay sex resolutions.

The Council was determined to lower the vote percentage to 51%.

Some leaders even noted that losing members on controversial issues such as the historic episcopate and gay clergy is just the cost of doing business.

Direct giving. “Don’t forget about all the wonderful things the ELCA does in mission!” – some say.

One woman’s response: “The Mormons have many worthwhile projects, but I would not give one penny to the Mormon church.”

Benevolence is a good thing but in the present situation it needs to be directed “directly” to those who are supposed to make use of it.

If you send money to the ELCA, your gift will be regarded (and quite rightly so) as **an endorsement of ELCA actions.**

Therefore send your checks directly to intended beneficiaries.

Bookkeeping Gimmicks. Can I support my synod but not the ELCA? No, a certain percentage of all money sent to the synod must be sent on to the ELCA.

Can I fund parts of the ELCA but not the whole? No. Rather, all money sent to the ELCA goes to a unified budget.

If you send \$1,000 to the ELCA’s Division for Global Mission (DGM), the DGM budget will not increase by \$1,000. Each division receives a certain percentage of funds allowed to it by the unified budget. (There are a few exceptions for extra large gifts.)

Consider your options. There are unlimited needs in Christian witness and mission that deserve support far more than a bureaucracy which accommodates to every wind of doctrine that blows through the church. Some options:

- World Mission Prayer League. 232 Clifton Ave, Mpls, MN 55403-3497; www.wmpl.org; 612/871-6843.
- Lutheran World Relief, Box 17061 Baltimore, MD 21298; www.lwr.org; 410/230-7000.

Diverting benevolence means taking a public stand for all to see. This can be hard for some people.

For many years they are been pillars of the church who could be counted on through thick and thin.

Here Luther can be their guide. He didn’t set out to be controversial. But when push came to shove, he did not seek to be above it all; he took a stand.

Money talks. What do you think? Where do you stand? Follow the money. Your money.

WORLD WATCH

EDINBURGH

Hedgehog joke voted best joke

Comedian Dan Antopolski has won a prize for the funniest joke of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2009. Nine judges sat through 7,200 jokes to come up with a short list of 27. Those 27 were then put to a public vote and the one-liner: "Hedgehogs! Why can't they just share the hedge?" – won – yeah!

FISHERS, IND

CORE synod is not realistic

"CORE will function like an ELCA synod, providing pastoral care, global mission, theological education and the call process, and working, where possible, through supportive synod bishops" (*The Lutheran* (11/09, p. 10)

CORE chair and former ELCA bishop, Paull Spring, says "the ELCA churchwide structure has fallen into heresy" but "he plans to stay on the ELCA roster and in his ELCA congregation."

The problem is: A CORE synod within the ELCA is not possible:

"This church shall be divided into synods, the names and boundaries of which shall be determined by the Churchwide Assembly and included in the bylaws" (ELCA Constitution ¶10.01).

ROME

Home to Rome

Rome gets everything that counts in an overture to fast-track Anglicans converting to Roman Catholicism.

A new set of canon laws, know as an "Apostolic Constitution," will clear the way for Anglican congregations to operate under local Catholic dioceses and be led by former Anglican priests.

The Vatican is relaxing the rules for celibacy for this whole group of married Anglican priests but not for bishops. Moreover, no married Anglican bishop can retain the status of bishop in the Catholic Church.

Anglicans heading home to Rome in this dispensation may keep those liturgies which are not in conflict with Roman teaching and practice.

What is non-negotiable for Rome? The following: the authority of the Pope in faith and morals, purgatory, the dogmas that Mary was immaculately conceived (1854) and at the end of her life was taken into heaven (1950), required prayers to Mary at baptism and ordination, and reordination of Anglican priests in order to make them valid Catholic priests – and more. Stay tuned.

LONDON

The politics of drift

"In the British Isles, there is a laudable tendency not to panic, not to respond to overstatement, to seek balance and nuance, to see the other point of view, above all not to take decisive and irretrievable action. I know I am a foreigner, but I care deeply what happens here. Let me say this: **It is not a day in which to practice the politics of drift.** There is little time left. The younger generations are largely lost. Your great inheritance is about to pass into other, heedless hands. You can no longer treat the institutional church as though it is as unassailable as the temple of the Lord; you can no longer say 'peace, peace' where there is no peace. You need to unite with each other in a fellowship which will sustain and protect and do mission."

(Sydney Archbishop Peter Jensen speaking to 1,600 Anglicans attending the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, July 2009)

ALEXANDRIA

Consider your options

An Anglican archdeacon speaking at Virginia Theological Seminary to Episcopalians:

"You have no mandate to remain in The Episcopal Church and simply fade into the background, keeping your head down, avoiding controversy, and preaching a **scaled down gospel** for our very sick and resistant cultures."

(virtueonline, 9/14/09)

UPPSALA

Swedes go left; others stay the course

The Lutheran Church of Sweden has adopted a resolution to approve gay weddings (176-73). Individual pastors will be permitted to decline to perform such marriage ceremonies.

Church of England spokesman Steve Jenkins said his church may pull back from the Porvoo Agreement in order to signal its disapproval of the Swedish action to Roman Catholics and the Orthodox.

Swedish Catholic and Orthodox church leaders have expressed their disapproval in a joint letter to Swedish Archbishop Anders Wejryd. They are "saddened" by the Swedish Lutheran Church's decision, saying the move departs from the Christian tradition and will widen the gap between the churches.

CYBERSPACE

False gospels laced in Lutheran lingo

ELCA programs such as *The Centered Life* and *Opening the Book of Faith* use Lutheran lingo but the content conforms to church fads such as *The Purpose Driven Life*.

Can you weed out the bad from ELCA materials and keep the good? Todd Wilken shows why this doesn't work:

Some advocates of church fads take the "Eat the meat, spit out the bones" approach to false teaching. They claim that practicing discernment means spitting the "bones" of error while eating the "meat" of truth. There are several problems with this approach.

First, this assumes that a church fad contains only isolated false teachings, like so many bones in a fish. But many church fads don't just contain false teaching; they are based on false teaching. *Promise Keepers* is based on the idea that sinners can keep promises and ultimately keep God's law. *The Prayer of Jabez* is based on the idea that God answers prayer because of the character of the one who prays. *Becoming a Contagious Christian* is based on the idea that conversion is an act of the human will. *The Purpose-Driven Life* is based on the idea that you can earn God's favor and heavenly rewards by your works. **These fads don't just contain false teaching; they are based on false teaching.**

Second, the "bone-spitting" approach assumes that the errors of the latest church fad will be obvious to everyone. Often they are not. In the 2nd century, Irenaeus battled the fad of Gnosticism. He observed:

"Error, indeed, is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest, being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced (ridiculous as the expression may seem) more true than the truth itself."

The "inexperienced" are still infants in the faith. Would you give an infant a fish to eat knowing that there were bones in it?

Finally, the "bone-spitting" approach fails to recognize that **a continuous stream of fads will erode the church's ability to discern truth from error.**

With every new fad, the fad-driven church grows less sensitive to error. With every new fad, the fad-driven church grows less able to recognize the

truth. In time, the fad-driven church is unable to discern the true Gospel from a false gospel. Paul found this to be the case among the Corinthians:

"If one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully" (2 Cor 11:4).

This is the bottom line. A church willing to tolerate some false teaching will eventually tolerate any false teaching — even a false gospel, a false spirit, and a false Jesus. For this reason, when it comes to false teaching, Scripture's command isn't to "bone-spit," but to avoid it altogether.

(Todd Wilken, "The Fad-Driven Church," www.issuesetcarchive.org)

BISMARCK

"Statements of declaration" accomplish nothing

Bishop Mark Narum (Western North Dakota) is misleading congregations by telling them: "An important piece of ... this change in policy allows any congregation to say, we disagree. Congregations may make **statements of declaration** as opposed" (*Bismarck Tribune*, 10/31/09; emphasis added).

"Statements of declaration" accomplish nothing. Your congregation may choose not to extend a call to a particular pastor, but every ELCA congregation is required to accept ELCA standards for ministry.

FISHERS, IND

Congregational amendments which conflict with the ELCA Constitution are not allowed

Lutheran CORE has posted sample constitutional amendments for ELCA congregations to adopt to establish their own ministry standards and the CORE statement of faith.

Amending your congregation's constitution accomplishes nothing because in time your synod will rule such amendments conflict with the ELCA Constitution and model constitution for congregations. (See ELCA Constitution 9.52 and 9.25b.)

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First they came for . . .

First they adopted quotas, but I did not speak out because it didn't affect me.

Then they adopted the Episcopal historic episcopate, but I did not speak out because it didn't affect me.

Then they denounced Israel, but I did not speak out because it didn't affect me.

Then they used hunger funds for political lobbying, but I did not speak out because it didn't affect me.

Then they said the Reformation is passé, but I didn't speak out because it didn't affect me.

Then they dropped using Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but I did not speak out because it didn't affect me.

Then they approved noncelibate GLBT pastors, but I did not speak out because it didn't affect me.

Then they cut off money for Bible camps, but I didn't speak out because it didn't affect me.

Then they turned "mission" into "social programs," but I didn't speak out because it didn't affect me.

Then they said I should just pay and pray, and no one is left to speak for me.



Steeple falls, sheep flee, the Shepherd speaks:
"My sheep hear my voice."

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