

A Different Seminary

A Realistic Possibility. Years ago starting a seminary meant property: buildings and dormitories. It needn't mean all that today. With telecommunications, existing buildings, cars, existing libraries, etc. – starting a new seminary, or seminaries, is a doable project.

The Place: One place could be the Twin Cities. The seminary could rent space in an existing metro-area church, just as many day care centers do.

The Program: The seminary would focus on training Lutheran pastors for congregational ministry. The most important thing to learn is method: how to distinguish law and gospel. The core of the program would be a weekly seminar in which this method would be applied to all subjects: The use of the Bible, church history, youth ministry, worship, pastoral care, etc. This weekly seminar will tie everything together, yielding a crop of pastors who are skilled in Lutheran method and thus trained to discern the edges of the gospel in the modern marketplace of religious options.

The Faculty: Initially the seminary could be run by a single dean who would teach the core seminar with help from a cadre of retired professors, local pastors, as well as young centrist Lutheran scholars who choose not to accommodate to the left-wing Episcopal mindset that dominates the ELCA.

The new seminary could selectively use the whole consortium of seminaries in the Twin Cities for languages, Biblical archeology, communication skills, history, etc. They are all happy to take our money!

The Episcopalization of ELCA Seminaries. The new seminary could also selectively use Luther Seminary but not in critical areas such as worship and the Confessions. The Episcopalization of the ELCA worship is evident in its hymnal-in-progress, *Renewing Worship*. What's required? Communion done as the church's Eucharist in which the celebrant must **Offer** the words of institution to God in prayer. This practice reflects the Episcopal-Catholic agreement on the sacrifice of the Mass. Only the sacramental priest can **Offer** the sacrifice of the Mass.

ELCA seminary professors, of course, cannot teach **against** ELCA required rites and rules! They must support and teach them to the next generation of ELCA clergy who must function within the rules. The political reality is that the seminaries will increasingly neglect or

avoid Luther's reform of worship – the centrality of the Word, freedom for varied forms, freedom for authorized lay communion, and communion as the distribution of our Lord's last will and the testament.

So too for the Confessions. ELCA professors can no longer teach that the Lutheran Confessions reject a **required** historic episcopate. They cannot teach **against** the ELCA Constitution. They cannot teach that in the Confessions bishops=pastors. They must support the ELCA's **required** second **ordination** for bishops (CCM #18). ELCA professors cannot publicly criticize the incorrect ELCA view that CCM simply restores the church structures that the Reformers really wanted. In fact the Reformation rejected required, sacramental structures. But ELCA professors must avoid or neglect these issues if they value their careers.

Because ELCA seminaries are bound to promote ELCA rites and rules, a new centrist seminary will want to provide its own courses where the gospel's necessary implications for the institutional church – freedom from required structures – can be freely studied and promoted.

What About a Library? The Twin Cities is home to many fine institutional libraries. The new seminary could contract on a fee-per-student basis for library use at one of these institutions. In addition, the seminary could have its own basic theological library in the church from which it rents space.

What about Accreditation? On the one hand, with credible courses and requirements, the new seminary would quickly become accredited. On the other hand, because this seminary exists for the sake of the church and not for secular academic careers, accreditation is not a primary concern.

What's the Cost? Start-up costs may be \$10,000-\$20,000 for rent, computers, arrangements, etc. Initially the seminary would need to hire a full-time dean and a part-time secretary. All other courses could be arranged on a contract basis. The multi-year accreditation process would cost about \$50,000.

A Centrist Lutheran Future. With the ELCA on the left and Missouri on the right, there's a need for a centrist Lutheran association for the future. A different kind of seminary is needed – a place where the edges of the gospel can be studied and taught in order to purely preach the Gospel.