

New and Notes

Concordat Leader to Join Episcopal Seminary

Walter Bouman, chief Lutheran author of the *Concordat*, upon retirement from Trinity Seminary will join the faculty of an Episcopal seminary — General Theological in New York.

Pocketbook Protests

Presbyterians across the country are cutting back their giving to their national office. In 1996 92 of the denomination's 172 presbyteries voted to maintain biblical sexual standards for ordained church leaders. But at the 1997 Assembly the denomination's national staff pushed through an amendment that if adopted by the presbyteries, would permit the ordination of noncelibate gays and lesbians. (Assembly motions have no effect unless they are adopted by a majority of presbyteries within one year.)

Rank and file Presbyterians, exasperated at continually fighting the national staff, have cited their moral obligation not to support those who contribute to the moral decay of society. Across the country ministers and congregations are beginning to cut their giving to the national office and redirect benevolence dollars to independent missions and renewal efforts (*The Presbyterian Layman*, 9/10/1997).



Concordat ¶3: Bishops "Safeguard" the Gospel

Misrepresenting Support for JDDJ

The Lutheran (10/97, p.12) reports: "The two largest LWF churches — the ELCA and the Church of Sweden — have now approved [the *Joint Declaration on Justification*] by overwhelming margins." Sound impressive? Think about it. The Church of Sweden has 7.4 million members if all Swedes are counted as Lutheran. But 40% of them profess to be atheists and 600,000 who attend church have never even been baptized. Visit Sweden on a Sunday morning and church after church is empty.

The ELCA (5 million) just adopted *JDDJ* against the advice of two seminaries and without studying it in congregations or synods. The Churchwide Assembly simply rubber-stamped it without debate.

The largest number of Lutherans is in Germany (14.2 million) which is divided into several regional churches. But on theological and ecumenical matters German Lutherans act as a unit, as one church, through the United Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD).

In 1994 and 1995 the VELKD sharply criticized the claim of ecumenical enthusiasts that Lutherans and Catholics have no more church-dividing differences on justification. Now again in 1997 they will likely be critical of the claimed consensus on justification. Perhaps ELCA leaders are not accurately listing the size of LWF member churches because they want to minimize the German voice and elevate the Swedish.

Ep Bishop & Diocese Spar Over Lutherans

Episcopal Bishop Creighton Robertson paid a visit on September 16, 1997 to Winner, South Dakota near the Rosebud Reservation and told the tiny yoked Lutheran/Episcopal congregation that since the ELCA was unwilling to adopt the Episcopal historic episcopate, there could be no more joint worship.

Bishop Robertson also terminated a ten year Lutheran/Episcopal mission on the Pine Ridge Reservation. (During this extended mission, Episcopal priests always presided over the Eucharist.)

But the convention of his diocese, which met the last week of September, instituted a cooling off period instead of complete moratorium on joint mission.