



A PASTORAL LETTER

Regarding The “Confessional Ministerium” And “We Believe in the Gospel”

1 April, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In recent weeks you may have become aware of two groupings of rostered professional church workers who have launched initiatives to speak to our Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada about theological and pastoral matters that are of pressing concern to them. Both groupings emanate from the ABT Synod. This pastoral letter is meant to inform you of these groupings, and to assure you that they are continuing a dialogue and debate that has been ongoing in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada for many years. While narrowly defined as the debate over same-sex blessings, the broader debate is about the authority of Scripture, the interpreting of Scripture for today’s context, and the theological and confessional integrity of our Church as defined in Article II of our Church Constitution – Confession of Faith.

The “Confessional Ministerium” is a grouping of traditionalist clergy who organized in the fall of 2008, with the blessing of this bishop. What drew them together was a shared concern that the ELCIC was setting a course which departs from the traditional teachings of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church --- the faith once handed down to us, and borne witness to, for two millennia. The Statement of the Confessional Ministerium can be found at their website: www.confessionalministerium.ca . The Confessional Ministerium is an open, public and transparent group raising their concerns to the Church in the way Lutherans have traditionally done that, namely, by preparing and signing a theological statement or paper. This is how Lutherans have always discussed and debated controverted matters.

“We Believe in the Gospel” is a public, open and transparent group of rostered workers originating in ABT Synod who are more liberal in their understanding but who nevertheless bind themselves to the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions. They are concerned that progressive Lutherans in the ELCIC not be portrayed as people abandoning the Gospel, and they wish not to be misrepresented in their beliefs. Their contribution to the debate is a theological paper entitled “We Believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ” which can be found at their website: <http://webelieveinthegospel.org> . This group also met with, and has the blessing of, this bishop, precisely because this is the way we discuss controversial issues.

Groups within our Church with different understandings express themselves to each other in the form of theological statements and papers, and in so doing invite theological response. This is meet and proper. Review the Book of Concord for the written evidence – especially the Formula of Concord.

The items in dispute are not easily resolved, as our recent church history confirms. The rise of the Confessional Ministerium as well as the We Believe in the Gospel group manifests the sincere and deeply-held convictions of our rostered workers and their commitment to the faith. In my view, that this discussion is now in the public forum is the proper process.

This pastoral letter is to provide information to the rostered workers and congregational leaders of the ABT Synod in order that, if so inclined, they can follow the above-noted links and engage in respectful discussion.

Meanwhile, I urge the Synod and its member congregations to keep the Main Thing the main thing: we are here to offer the Gospel of Christ to a hurting world and to tell the story of a God whose love for fallen humanity would not allow God to let us go, until reconciliation had been won with Good Friday’s Cross and Easter’s Empty Tomb. May we hold fast to the Truth, and may we be found faithful!

Blessings!

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and the initials 'R. Mayan', followed by a horizontal line.

+Ronald B. Mayan, Bishop
Synod of Alberta and the Territories