



LERNing

January 2005

A newsletter of the Lutheran Ecumenical Representatives Network

Theme of This Issue

For the first issue of *Lerning* this year the theme will be ecumenical formation. Future issues will expand on this theme; this issue has two personal stories and comments by participants in the National Workshop on Christian Unity.

It's New Orleans for the NWCU

The enclosed [brochure](#) gives all the details so examine it carefully. Have you attended in recent years? One LERN rep., who has been a regular, has told us that he attends regularly and thinks, "this is the best theological conference I attend."

Sometimes the cost of travel and accommodations seem to break the ecumenical line item in our sparse budgets. Some bishops, in recognizing this, consider the travel of their LERN representative a cost that should come from the line item on "Bishop's Travel." Other LERN reps combine funds from their continuing education. Either way, the Workshop will enrich you and your ministry. Find ways to attend.

Local Focus

Lutherans and Catholics in Upper Michigan held a second Lutheran-Anglican-Roman Catholic (LARC) Retreat at a Catholic retreat house in Petoskey October 27-29. Twenty-six participants included four LARC bishops; eleven Episcopalians; four Roman Catholics; six Lutheran ordained and five lay ministers representing the three traditions. Eighteen men and eight women participated.

The theme was Oremus: "What will the Lord do with us at prayer?" Eucharist was celebrated daily; each day with a different tradition. Together we prayed the liturgy of the hours, walked and talked, and had three general sessions.

At eucharist, those who cannot receive the sacrament from the other came forward to receive a blessing with the laying on of hands. The Catholic bishop has always been the first to come forward for the blessing.

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One Pastor's Ecumenical Formation

By C. Pierson Shaw, Jr.

As an ordained ELCA Pastor, whose mother was reared as a Methodist and whose father was reared as an Episcopalian, I can relate well to the variety of ways one can speak theologically to a given reality. From a father who was shaped by the *Book of Common Prayer* I have inherited a deep love for liturgy, done well, and the rich poetic language of prayer. At the same time I recognize my indebtedness to mother's Methodist movement that saw the power in the Word and that tried not to separate faith from works.

The influences, however, do not stop there. I have been left with an appreciation for the rich diversity of gifts found among the Moravians, Orthodox, Roman Catholics, the Reformed traditions, Baptists and Charismatic Christians. One could say my ecumenical development has been a lifelong process of formation.

On November 27, 1964, I was baptized into the Body of Christ at St. Timothy Episcopal Church, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. In 1967 the state highway department transferred my father to Greenville, North Carolina. By the age of 10 our family had left the Episcopal Church and joined Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Greenville, NC. It was there that I was received as a Confirmed Member in 1978.

As a student at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC, I was involved in the Lutheran Student Movement. In my senior year I was president of the group that regularly put me in contact with leaders of student groups from other denominations. My voice teacher, trained as a Jesuit, frequently discussed the teachings of Thomas Aquinas with me.

My ecumenical interests continued to develop while I was in military service as I frequently worshiped with those of other traditions in General Protestant Services or attended Catholic Mass.

After being ordained, in December of 1994 I married the former Lois Paulette Stavley. Lois, whose sister is

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Where it Began for Me

By Merlyn Satrom, ELCA Ret.

My ecumenical/inter-faith education and formation has taken place in the context of ministry, teaching, and doctoral studies. Over the course of nine years of campus ministry at two locations, teaching at five institutions of higher education and with nearly two dozen ministers and priests, two rabbis, and hundreds of students as dialogue and discussion partners and planners, I have become a committed ecumenist.

When I was called to serve as the Lutheran Campus Minister at Portland State University in Oregon, the Disciples of Christ, Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans had campus ministers. At the time I joined the staff, we operated out of the second floor of a deli/sandwich shop, but plans were underway to build a campus Christian center.

It would have been possible, but certainly neither the most desirable nor the most productive to “go it alone” as Lutherans. Not every event that we sponsored was done with other Christians on campus, but the rule was “If you can, do it ecumenically.” Five years in that setting convinced me: Lutherans do not have all “the answers,” and we can learn so much from others when we work together. Some suggested that we needed to remain separate from others out of fear that we would lose our identity as Lutherans. On the other hand, I was staff coordinator when we talked to the Archbishop of Portland convincing him to place a priest on our staff. The “Dominican presence” was a blessing for our cooperative ministry.

In 1969 I was back in Germany in search of another dissertation topic and hopes of completing my doctorate. In 1972, with doctorate in hand, I returned to the States and accepted a call in another ecumenical campus ministry with broader representation because a Baptist campus minister had his office in our campus center and we had the Hillel (Jewish) and Newman (Catholic) campus ministries neighboring our site. Some ministry events involved one or both of these faith groups as well.

My call from the Lutheran World Federation in 1976 was to teach theology at Oxford University, England. Although I taught Lutherans, I also taught Anglicans, Baptists, Catholics, and members of the “United Reform” tradition in the UK. In addition to my academic work, I represented Lutherans on the Faith and Order Commission of the British Council of Churches. At the time, there were “ecumenical Parishes” in Britain using a single worship site for three or four denominations. In turn, my presence resulted in being sent to former East Germany to interpret ecumenical work

there. Since I spoke German and could act as a translator, I accompanied three clergy — Anglican, Reformed and Methodist — who explained how they worked together, where possible, and separately if necessary.

As a result of working in the ecumenical settings I have been invited to preach at the Lutheran Cathedral in Saale, East Zone, near Berlin; the Anglican Cathedral at Christ Church in Oxford; and in the very large Presbyterian church in Dublin on the occasion of the 450th Anniversary of the Augsburg Confession.

I can only think of ministry ecumenically.

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Roman Catholic, had been a classmate in seminary and after her ordination we regularly participated in local and regional ecumenical events.

In December 2000 Lois died after a year of battle with metastasized breast cancer. Ecumenical colleagues from several traditions participated in her funeral. She is interred in the columbarium at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Glendale Springs, NC.

Through some of these events, ecumenical conversation, and through formative process, I have been shaped as an ecumenist. I am an ELCA pastor of Miller’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Hickory, NC and serve as the NC Synod’s Ecumenical Representative, the Facilitator of the NC Lutheran / Roman Catholic Covenant, Facilitator of the Episcopal, Lutheran, Moravian Committee and member of the NC Synod’s Ecumenical Affairs Committee. I am intensely interested in the work of ecumenism and in ecumenical formation as it relates to “making disciples.”

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Some said the presence of more women this year seemed to make the whole retreat more “welcoming.” Some of the bishops present have commented that this has been the most significant event that has happened since they had been bound together in covenants.

The bishops thought it was important enough to agree on dates for the retreat next year. While they had eighteen registrants last year, this year there were twenty-six, and they are aiming for forty next year.

LERNing Editors

Dr. Jerry Folk, jfolk@tds.net

Diane Lowe, dianelowe@sbcglobal.net

Rev. Dr. Merlyn Satrom, amsatrom@citilink.com