



Perspective

The Time is Now

By The Rt. Rev. C. Christopher Epting
Bishop of Iowa

Some 30 years of ecumenical dialogue between the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, including major publications from Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogues I, II, and III demonstrating remarkable agreement in theology and ecclesiology, led to an historic Concordat of Agreement for full communion between our two churches. This document received nearly unanimous approval at our last General Convention meeting in Philadelphia in 1997.

The Lutheran Churchwide Assembly, meeting later that summer, narrowly failed to approve the proposal, but passed a strong resolution calling for further work on the Concordat, which might allow the ELCA to move forward. This was to be a Lutheran proposal for full communion, but drafted by a writing team of both Lutherans and Episcopalians. Professor Robert Wright of the General Theological Seminary in New York, Dr. William Norgren, retired ecumenical officer for the Episcopal Church, and I made up the Episcopal team.

Rather than starting from scratch and doing an entire rewrite of the Concordat (and effectively ignoring the 30 years of ecumenical dialogue which had led up to it), we decided to work on making the document shorter, clearer and to address those areas that had raised concerns within the ELCA. We began our work in December of 1997, and on Maundy Thursday 1998 sent forth a draft proposal, now titled *Called To Common Mission*. We received voluminous response from all across the ELCA (from bishops, pastors, seminary professors and others) both for and against various aspects of the document and we read every page, incorporating a number of those suggestions.

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By the Numbers

Call it “numerophobia” if you like. What it adds up to is this: The Episcopal Church is afraid of numbers. We need to get over it.

Whether it’s the membership rolls (low) or the average age of clergy (high), the Church is having trouble finding a number that doesn’t send some dire message about the future. Maybe that’s why the Evangelism Committee is still grappling with a newsworthy number that leaves some members cringing in the pews—20/20: the project to double the baptized membership of the church within 20 years.

For starters, it sounds wildly ambitious—that is, until you figure that it might only mean inviting one friend to church sometime over the next two decades. (Since many of us might not be here to celebrate the triumph of 20/20, better make that two friends.)

But there’s a more fundamental concern, as well. Should we be focusing on the number of warm bodies as the appropriate measure of our evangelistic work? Or, as one member of the Evangelism Committee put it yesterday, shouldn’t we be focusing on the work, not the goal?

Add all this up, and here’s the bottom line: We need to do both. We need to set a target (otherwise, we’re not likely to hit it), and we need to get on with the real work of evangelism. It’s not about herding warm bodies from the street. It’s about helping people to hear a message of grace and salvation.

The fullness of that effort can never be measured solely by numbers. But without some realistic way of gauging our work—yes, with a number—we’re not likely to focus our energies efficiently. Nor, if the truth be known, are we likely to claim those dollars-and-cents numbers from national and diocesan budgets that are pushed and pulled in all directions.

The alternative is to strip 20/20 of its numbers in favor of language like “missionary force.” That’s not the way to go. The Rev. John Guernsey, deputy from the Diocese of Virginia and chair of the House of Deputies Evangelism Committee, had it right. There have been too many “pious resolutions.” It’s time to get on with the serious, and joyful, work of evangelism. Let’s make numbers our friends. We can start by setting a goal.



10 Exhibits You Shouldn't Miss:

1. **Church Pension Group (94)**—Answer all your retirement questions, plus free chocolate.
2. **South American Missionary Society (163)**—Unique gifts for your honey.
3. **Sewanee (100)**—“Down with the heathens, up with the Church, yea, Sewanee’s right!”
4. **National Association of Episcopal Scouters (38)**—Ask Father Neal about his joy and pride.
5. **Office of the Bishop for the Armed Services, Healthcare and Prisons (109)**—Try on your jailbird uniform.
6. **The Church Center**—Moving swiftly into the 21st century.
7. **Boys’ Home Inc. (203)**—They got nuts.
8. **Gathering the Next Generation (97A)**—May the church live long and prosper.
9. **Beyond Inclusion (137)**—Hey man, free popcorn!
10. **Massage pillows (170)**—Ahhhhhhhhhhhh...



Center Aisle correspondents Grant Pullman, Sarah Broaddus, and Lizzie Thomas in the brig.

Hearing schedule for Thursday, July 6. Sites and subjects reflect information posted by the Secretariat of the General Convention as of 7:50 p.m. yesterday. For further information on meeting room assignments, call the General Convention staff office at 303/228-8520.

- **Canons**, Westin, Horace Tabor, 1:30 p.m.: A031, A032, D016, D026.
- **Church Pension Fund**, Marriott, Salon C, 1:30 p.m.: A071, C024.
- **Ecumenical Relations**, Westin, Tabor Auditorium, Mezzanine, 1:30 p.m.: A040, A041, A042.
- **Education**, Westin, Lawrence B, 1:30 p.m.: A015, A074, A077, C032, C035, C038, D002, D014.
- **Evangelism**, Executive Tower, Douglas, 1:30 p.m.: A075.
- **National and International Concerns**, Marriott, Salon B, 1:30 p.m.: A078, A079, B013, D024, D028, D032.
- **Prayer Book, Liturgy & Music**, Executive Tower, Symphony Third Floor, 1:30 p.m.: A066.
- **Program, Budget and Finance**, Convention Center Room A108, 1:30 p.m.: Open hearing on funding.
- **Social and Urban Affairs**, Executive Tower, Brahms, 1:30 p.m.: A056, C026.
- **Structure**, Hyatt, Far East, 1:30 p.m.: B011, A124, B005, C007, C013.

20/20 Reclaims Evangelism

For too long, the mainstream of ECUSA has left evangelism to a relatively small movement in the Church, the evangelicals. The Diocese of Virginia has been a leader in bringing evangelism into the mainstream, for which I am thankful. But there is much more mainstreaming to be done all across ECUSA.

The goal of doubling ECUSA’s membership by 2020 has caught many people’s eye, evoking both excitement and rejection. The rejection, I think, is based on fear, fear of ECUSA’s dreaded “C” word: Change.

Our Lord calls us to change the world; see the Great Commission. It’s time to make a mainstream response to this mission He commissioned us to perform. Let’s build evangelism into a mainstream part of our branch of God’s Church.

Ted Mollegen
Deputy from Connecticut

The People Respond

Join us in the walk down the center aisle by writing us at Suite 322, Holtze Hotel, 818 Seventeenth St., Denver (just drop it by the front desk and they’ll get it to us, or give it to any member of the Diocese of Virginia deputation). Or you can send your letter to centeraisle@thediocese.net. As space permits, we will publish your letters and commentary. Please try to limit your letters to 150 words. Your letters may be edited for length and clarity. Please be sure to sign your correspondence and let us know how we can contact you.



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Real Life CCM

If you want to see what Called to Common Mission looks like on the ground, talk to the Rev. Barbara Cavin.

Cavin is not only vicar of Holy Cross Episcopal Church in Saline, Mich., she's also a licensed Lutheran pastor at Faith Lutheran Church—in the same building.

"I live this" joint ministry, Cavin said. "I've been living it every day for the last 12 years of my life."



Cavin

Or talk to the Rev. Jane Gould, Episcopal chaplain at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Mass., who works in a joint campus ministry with a Lutheran minister.

These women are just two concrete examples of how the Church can live into CCM, if it passes at this convention.

To make joint ministry work, Cavin said, it takes "having the bishop's support, having two clergy who can work together and ... congregations who buy it." Holy Cross and Faith Lutheran share the same building, with one entrance but two sanctuaries. The Lutherans are on the left; the Episcopalians are ahead on the right. Faith's pastor, William Steude, serves with Cavin. The congregations worship together at least once a month. This joint ministry gives the congregations "a whole different layer," Cavin said.

Cavin, who has spent 16 of her 20 years of ministry in joint ventures, was licensed as a Lutheran pastor "when the Lutheran congregation was so small that the synod was looking at closing it. ... It's wonderful for Episcopalians too, so that when I'm not there, they have a pastor they know.

"Some of these legalities are awfully narrow-minded," she said, referring to the debate over whether A041 is a first or second reading of the one-time suspension of the ordinal. "I think [some people] are living in their heads. They're not dealing with the realities of who's going to celebrate when I'm not there. We can talk about this all we want," she said, "but the reality is that we've got to do the ministry. Just let the Lutherans and the Episcopalians do ministry together, do mission together."

CCM, she said, "empowers us, enables us to understand that we are primarily Christian and secondarily Episcopalian. ...It's just so obvious that we are all one body of Christ ... we just have to work out the liturgy."

Gould echoed Cavin's thoughts. "It's my plea that we move our minds and hearts to the essence of it, which is mission, and that we have the opportunity through CCM to work in partnership to expand mission, to go places we haven't



Gould

had the resources to go."

Gould's joint ministry at MIT with a Lutheran pastor is the "kind of experience ... the church needs to grow into." She said she is frustrated about the CCM document's focus on bishops, when the focus needs to be on mission. CCM "still doesn't name how we're going to go about doing this. My concern," Gould cautioned, "is that instead of expanding mission, we'll use CCM as a way to cut our expenses. ... My hope is that CCM gives us better structures so we can facilitate ministry on a local level."

CCM, she said, is "not about money, but expanding mission." The Church, she said, needs to pay attention to implementation, so that this agreement doesn't end up meaning nothing.

Why CCM Should Pass

Center Aisle talked to four key players in the ecumenical discussion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

"I'm in a diocese that is more space than churches. Day to day, (CCM) makes a huge difference!" —The Rt. Rev. Carolyn Tanner-Irish, bishop of Utah



Irish

"This is a chance for us to echo St.

Paul, to embrace the spirit of the law which gives life, rather than the letter of the law which kills. I respect those who feel

this is a first reading, but in my mind and my heart, this is a second reading." —The Rev. Donald Brown, deputy, Northern California, co-chair of Evangelical Relations



Brown and Lee

"CCM deals with the issue of ministry and the recognition and acceptance of the basis of union by two denominations. This is not a merger but a full communion, an interchange, a breakthrough on ministry."

—The Rt. Rev. Edward Lee Jr., bishop of Western Michigan, co-chair of Evangelical Relations

"The rocky road we've traveled over the past three years has provided a more solid document, particularly because I think we are more poised for mission. With all ... the dialogue, the priority is very clear that we need to be about mission for Christ and for the world. This is the most significant ecumenical threshold we've ever been on for mission." —The Rt. Rev. Rustin Kimsey, retired bishop of Eastern Oregon, chair of the Standing Commission on Evangelical Relations



Rally for Grace

Last night's candlelight vigil and march raised the profile of one of the most important issues facing General Convention: the plight of persecuted Christians. In Sudan, a 30-year civil war between the predominantly Arab and Muslim north and the predominantly animist and Christian south has involved bombing campaigns, genocide, and enslavement of women and children. The Church must express solidarity with our persecuted brothers and sisters.

Center Aisle endorses the following for election to the Board of Trustees of the Church Pension Fund. We encourage the election of the seven incumbent trustees because of the successful management of CPF and the expansion of its benefits during their terms. The new nominees, we believe, also represent the diversity of our church, involving bishops, priests and lay persons of proven leadership in the church and with sufficient technical expertise needed for the CPF.

Church Pension Fund Trustees (House of Deputies elect; Bishops confirm)

One to be elected for a three-year unexpired term:
James Bayne

Twelve to be elected to six-year terms:

John Biggs	Deborah H. Hines
Tom Blackman	Chilton Knudsen
Winthrop Conrad	Arthur Kusumoto
William Craddock	Peter J. Lee
Barbara Creed	Claud Payne
Amy Domini	Kathryn Tyler Scott

Perspective *continued from front*

In November 1998, we finalized Called to Common Mission. The ELCA Church Council voted, with one dissenting vote, to forward it to the Churchwide Assembly, which was to meet in Denver in the summer of 1999. The Conference of Bishops of the ELCA offered a commentary on how the bishops understood the proposal as it will be implemented in the ELCA. (Episcopal bishops did the same for our church in April of this year.) The Churchwide Assembly passed CCM with more than the necessary two-thirds vote and, despite some ongoing opposition in some parts of the ELCA, both the ELCA Church Council and the Conference of Bishops have, in recent weeks, encouraged this General Convention to act favorably on the proposal so that we can move on to the implementation stage and strengthen the mission and ministry of both churches.

This is an historic agreement (part of a worldwide development between Anglicans and Lutherans) that could have enormous ecumenical ramifications as two churches—one having retained the historic episcopate at the time of the Reformation, and one which had not, but is willing to regain it—come together into full communion without “unchurching” one another in the process. “Entering full communion and thus removing limitations through mutual recognition of faith, sacraments and ministries will bring new opportunities and levels of shared evangelism, witness and service.” (CCM, paragraph 29)

We have two basic decisions to make: whether or not to approve CCM itself as a process for full communion; and whether or not to reaffirm our decision to enact a temporary suspension of the 17th-century restriction in the Preface to the Ordination Rites (BCP 510) that no person be allowed to function as a bishop, priest or deacon in this church unless he or she has received the laying on of hands by bishops in the historic succession. This suspension is based on the enormous theological convergence we have discovered in more than 30 years of dialogue and will be implemented precisely to secure the future implementation of the Preface’s intention, namely the preservation and sharing of the historic episcopate. The suspension will be temporary because, in due course, all ELCA bishops will have entered the historic succession. Although some sections of CCM differ from the Concordat of Agreement, which formed the basis of our first vote on the constitutional matter, the theological principle permitting the temporary suspension remains unchanged.

Thus, the Episcopal Church’s Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations feels confident in proposing that the second vote be taken at this time. It is my firm hope and expectation that this General Convention will pass Called To Common Mission on its merits and for the sake of unity and mission of the whole church.

The time is now!