

Ponderings by Pastor Ted Youngquist



From the resurrected, superannuated preacher... occasioned by numerous questions about my "take" on the ELCA, and Calvary's future.

FIRST, remember my perspective: 63 yrs. ordained – parish pastor, college pastor, Synod officer, Seminary Board member, Board of Publications member, and part time employee of both LCA and ELCA.

With that I have been able to observe the theological and administrative deterioration of our ELCA especially in the past 20 yrs.

Evangelism, stewardship, planting new congregations, church membership and world missions have all declined. From 700 overseas missionaries to 100 today is fact. Determining leadership and voting members by using quotas and gender has proved to be self-serving. The present agenda is more concerned about being a public church in relation to national budgets and poverty, than to evangelism, stewardship, and proclamation of the Gospel.

And the most recent decision of the ELCA to allow ordination of practicing gay and lesbian pastors is only one – albeit the final one – in a series that has eroded the Biblical, historical traditional, beliefs of the Lutheran Church **As examples:**

1. The decision to allow abortion *for any reason without question*, for members of the ELCA health plan.
2. The decision to encourage *giving of Holy Communion to infants*.
3. The decision to abide by the *doctrine of the Historic Episcopacy* in all ordinations without formal acceptance of that doctrine.
4. The decision to have Full Communion status with denominations *that do not accept the traditional Lutheran belief in the Sacrament*.
5. Finally, the decision *to ordain practicing gay and lesbian persons in spite of definite Biblical evidence to the contrary*.

(Please let me know if you need further elaboration or clarification on any of these.)

Basically these show an utter disregard for the Holy Scriptures as the norm and guide for our daily living which is, and has been, the foundation for all Lutheranism. (The ELCA has now said that the Bible is primarily a cultural book. Teachings are to be interpreted in light of the culture of the day.

Historically the Lutheran church has always taught that the Bible is a theological book - the Word of God – the story of God's gift of himself in Jesus. THEREFORE the ultimate question "What does it mean to be a 'Lutheran' church?" or "Is the ELCA truly a 'Lutheran' church?"

Now obviously Calvary has some fundamental decisions to make regarding its future as an ELCA congregation. My primary concern is that the congregation will not get caught up in the sexuality discussions about homosexuality – scientifically or culturally. Our focus must be about the Scriptures as the norm and standard for our daily life, and whether the ELCA with its twisted priorities is the 'Lutheran' denomination in which Calvary wants to continue membership.

Back to the beginning. I write from a perspective that is both broad and deep – maybe too deep and too traditional. Each of you can decide. Because of my age, you have more at stake with Calvary's future than I do. My great hope is that each of you will take the long look, and see the broad implications of Calvary's educational and preaching ministry in whatever decision is made about the ELCA.

What do you think?

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T.A. Youngquist". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized script.