

WordAlone Convention speakers look to future

Speaking to delegates at the recent WordAlone Network Convention in Arden Hills, Minn., the first keynote speaker, Pastor Mike Foss of Prince of Peace in Burnsville, Minn., challenged the WordAlone convention not to just think outside the box, but to redraw the box to be as big as the promises of God. He told them that renewal is an invitation to spiritual growth - grow deep to grow out.

Foss cautioned them to "Know who we are." "This is Christ's church, not yours or mine," he reminded them. The Word is the only authority we have, he added. He said that in a renewed church, ministry belongs to all; what counts are gifts, not credentials and everyone is gifted; discipleship not membership prevails; it's effective, not efficient; and it's organic not mechanistic.

The renewed church is relational--about Jesus Christ, about God's love for the world and about a church in mission.

Later, Prof. James Nestingen, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., talked about WordAlone accomplishments and about issues demanding attention.

To begin with, most importantly, he said, WordAlone opened up a forum on "a critically important confessional issue, freedom in ministry." WordAlone has been moving from protest to profession, "from playing scold to looking toward the future."

In addition, the professor said, WordAlone is emerging as a positive force for renewal of the church. Behind the objection to CCM, he said, there has always been another vision of the church, one in which the Gospel really is the center defining all else.

The issues for the future are how to be the church, how to serve Christ Jesus and our communities in the changing culture; and for the ELCA, the issue of accountability -checks and balances.

President David Tiede of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., the final keynote speaker, told the convention: "My witness to WordAlone is not, 'Cheer up, get on board.' It is, 'Repent, turn toward God's apostolic calling for our church in a world of many cultures and religions.'"

Tiede said more than once: "The reform of the church is not another agenda, not a restoration of the past; it is a repentance, a turning toward the future to which God is calling us."

He added, "But what matters is that the Gospel is unbound!"

Earlier Tiede said he did not fear or favor the historic episcopate as a symbolic office but added that when symbols become requirements, "the answer is no." After the 1999 assembly he said he feared that "this legislated necessity" would be destructive to the unity of the church and dangerous to Lutheran convictions of the liberating power of the Gospel.

Tiede spent the balance of his keynote address looking to the future and describing ways God is calling the church to mission. He said he was thankful for Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson's fourfold call to the ELCA to mission, leadership, ecumenism and deliberation of such serious matters as homosexuality.

Three new members elected to WordAlone board

Pastor Paul Andell; associate professor and pastor Dennis Bielfeldt; and associate professor Cynthia Jurisson were elected to the WordAlone board at its recent convention. Al Quie of Minnetonka, Minn. was elected for a second term.

Andell is senior pastor of St. James Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, Penn., an urban



Paul Andell

congregation of 1,300 baptized persons, including 700 communing adults and the only growing Protestant church in the area. He has served at St. James since 1975. He earned his master of

divinity degree at Gettysburg Seminary, Gettysburg, Penn.

Bielfeldt is associate professor of philosophy and religion at South Dakota State University, Brookings, S.D., and pastor of Pioneer Lutheran Church, White, S.D. He has a master of arts in philosophy from the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, and holds a Ph.D. in philosophical theology

from Iowa. He was ordained through an approval process of Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa. He previously taught at Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kan., and at Grand View College, Des Moines, Iowa.



Dennis Bielfeldt

Jurisson is associate professor of American church history at the Lutheran School of



Cynthia Jurisson

Theology at Chicago, a position she has held since 1989. She received a master of divinity degree from Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., and a doctor of philosophy from Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N.J.

Finishing terms on the board, and not seeking reelection, were John Chatelain, Meg Madson and Dale Wolf.

WordAlone convention audio and video tapes available

Audio and video tapes from this year's 3rd Annual WordAlone National Convention are available. For an order form and more information about the latest tapes, contact the office at 888-551-7254 or visit our website at www.wordalone.org

Complete audio tape sets (five tapes) are available for \$20. Single audio tapes are \$5. Sets of three videos are \$25 and single videos are \$10.

A limited number of WordAlone t-shirts (\$13) and polo shirts (\$31.75) are also available. Prices include shipping and handling. The shirts are royal blue in color, with the WordAlone Network logo. Contact the office if you are interested.

Synod assemblies discuss representation and CCM

At press time, several (ELCA) Evangelical Lutheran Church in America synods had voted in 2002 assemblies on the issues of grassroots representation or exceptions from an ordination-by-a-bishop requirement.

The Southeast Michigan synod defeated a resolution to rescind Called to Common Mission (CCM), the full communion agreement between the ELCA and The Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) that calls for ELCA bishops to be ordained into the "historic episcopacy" and also for bishops to ordain all new pastors.

Grassroots representation came up in a number of synods. The Montana Synod stated its desire that voting members in individual synods ratify church policy changes approved at churchwide assemblies.

On the other hand, a move was defeated in the Pacifica Synod to have churchwide assembly voting members base their votes on the majority view of their congregations or synods on the issues of blessing gay unions and the ordination of practicing homosexuals.

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod voted to ask the ELCA Church Council to have a direct majority vote of ELCA congregations on recommendations of the ELCA sexuality study and subsequent ELCA policy. On the opposite side of that state, the Southwestern Minnesota Synod Assembly passed a resolution similarly calling for any revisions to the "Vision and Expectations" ordination standards to be submitted to congregations for a vote and adopted only upon approval of a majority of the congregations.

However, the Southwestern Minnesota Syn-

od voted down a resolution to have congregations study the "Vision and Expectations" ordination standards and to have the 2003 synod assembly vote on affirming a 1990 "Vision and Expectations" statement.

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod and the Minneapolis Synod each failed to pass resolutions calling for equal or fair representation by conferences on synod councils. The Minneapolis resolution would have had conferences electing council members directly rather than nominating them for a vote by the synod assembly.

With regard to the CCM ordination requirement, the Montana Synod passed a resolution supporting seminary graduates who seek to be ordained outside the historic episcopacy, as allowed under a 2001 by-law amendment passed by the churchwide assembly. The Western North Dakota Synod Assembly directed the synod bishop to grant exceptions to the ordination-by-a-bishop requirement to candidates who request exceptions based on conscience and/or theology.

In the Southeastern Minnesota Synod a resolution failed that supported candidates seeking ordination requirement exceptions.

The Minneapolis Synod adopted a resolution supporting any bishop wishing to be installed without submitting to the historic episcopacy requirement.

That synod also asked that the ECUSA be asked to clarify its understanding of the Tucson Resolution, which is an ELCA Conference of Bishops 1999 vote on various aspects and interpretations of CCM.

Lutheran Clergy Connect

Lutheran Clergy Connect is one way for congregations seeking a pastor to connect with potential candidates. Congregations can connect with pastors who believe that Christ alone is sufficient for the unity of the Church and the Word of God is the authority for the Church. Lutheran Clergy Connect is also posted on the WordAlone website. (www.wordalone.org).

If you would like your congregation listed on Clergy Connect, please mail or fax your request on church letterhead, signed by an officer or call committee chair, to WordAlone Network, 2299 Palmer Dr. Suite 220, New Brighton, MN, 55112 Fax: 651-633-5994. Give the following information: Pastoral position, Congregation, Address, Contact person, phone number and E-mail address.

The listing on this page in our printed newsletter was a partial listing of the most recent pastoral positions at that time.

For an up-to-date listing click on Clergy Connect on our home page.