



July 23, 2002

Dear Bishop Boerger,

Actually, I want to say, "Chris," for that's how I've known you for 20 years. But now you're a one-year-old ELCA Bishop. In your installation, so called, you've undergone what many of us Confessional Lutherans describe as being the "magic touch." Do you remember that evening ten months ago at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Marysville? By phone you asked me to convene this meeting. This was before your installation when about twenty of us WordAlone leaders within the Northwest Washington Synod gathered to talk with you. You were in your usual kind mood in spite of the pointed questions you were asked. All of us appreciated that since it was truly a totally new experience!

What I remember most about that evening was how you responded to the question, "Well, if you don't believe it (meaning the "magic touch" of so called historic episcopacy) why are you going to go through with it?" As I recall, you pointed out that several lay leader friends would extend their hands upon your head, as well as the official Episcopal and ELCA ones. That, you said, would strengthen your witness to the Priesthood of All Believers. Somehow this lay participation in your Installation Service would shift the focus away from the official message and newfound faith of the ELCA in the Episcopal belief of TACTILE POWER as adopted in CCM. For this was a power in which you said you did not believe. Perhaps you didn't intend this interpretation of your eagerness to involve lay leaders in your installation. But it's what I heard and how I came to understand what you said that night. I'm sure that the others in the room heard what I heard and reached much the same conclusion.

Now let me advance the calendar to last Saturday afternoon, July 20, 2002, and to the ordination of Daniel Shaw at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Tacoma. I thought it was a beautiful and carefully crafted Service. The church was full. The hymn singing was memorable! For me Daniel's greatest witness on Saturday afternoon was his willingness to stand up and be counted as a Confessional Lutheran by requesting this Service. Obviously, he asked to be ordained by those who could best serve the witness that he

wanted to bring. Obviously, it was a witness that lay outside the claims of historic episcopacy. I applaud and thank him for that!

Will his ordination make a difference to the future of the ELCA? Will he become an example to other seminarians to go and do likewise? I hope that it will. I pray that it will. Unfortunately, that is not likely to happen. I was reminded of this during the remarks from the pulpit. In making reference to you Pastor Foege said, "He graciously granted (it)...," referring to the new "exception" provision for ordination. What power those words convey! "He graciously granted (it)..." One might expect to hear such words uttered about a king or queen or even by the Lord himself. But when they refer to a Lutheran bishop and to the ordination of a new pastor, I cringe. The implication is clear. If you had chosen not to grant Daniel Shaw's request for an episcopate-free ordination, you could have done that. You had the power to say "No" as well as "Yes." Some call that freedom. I do not. No matter how hard I try I cannot twist this new ELCA policy into anything that remotely resembles freedom let alone truth, as based upon what we Lutherans have confessionally understood the truth of Holy Scriptures to be for over four centuries. That simply cannot be erased from the pages of our Lutheran past!

This gets me to why I needed to write this letter. Earlier you officially asked me if I was still a member of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Burién. The answer is "Yes, indeed!" I know that this constitutes a basis for withdrawing my name from the ELCA clergy roster. As you know, Our Saviour's congregation joined the association of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC). Soon after, they withdrew from the ELCA. This was a month or two after we became members there. But I don't want to be "withdrawn" from the ELCA some 46 years and three Church Bodies (ELC, The ALC and ELCA) after my ordination. Like all other Lutheran pastors, when ordained, I promised to be faithful not to a Church Body but to the Scriptures and to the Lutheran understandings of the Scriptures (The Confessions). As sad a day as this is for me personally, I NEED to and do hereby resign from the ELCA clergy roster. It's the only way I can sleep well at night...in attempting still... to keep the promises I made long ago.

A Serving Retired Servant of Jesus,
Rev. Dr. Paul Braafladt

(Paul Braafladt has been an active Confessional Lutheran leader in the Pacific Northwest for the past several years even though retired. Until January 1, 2002, he served as Chairman of the Wordalone Committee in the Northwest Washington Synod area of the ELCA and as Coordinator for the Wordalone Network in the Pacific Northwest States and Alaska. He also organized the Free Conference on The Lutheran Confessions held during February 2002 in the Seattle area.)