

ELCA – A Failed Merger

- Merger of the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC – breakaway from LCMS).
- Incorporated in 1986
- Constituted in 1987
- Formed in 1988
- Operational in 1989

ELCA – A Failed Merger

- Designed to be a “New Lutheran Church”
- Designed to have “three expressions”
 - *National Church*
 - *Synod Office*
 - *Congregation (not officially church)*
- Designed to function non-democratically
 - *Power and decisions top-down*
 - *Money and resources bottom-up*

ELCA – A Failed Merger

- “Taxation” without representation
 - *Articles of Incorporation VIII – “the Church shall have no members with voting rights.”*
 - *Synod and national assemblies have voting members (not delegates) accountable only to themselves*
 - *Congregational voting members attend synod assemblies which elect voting members to national “churchwide” assemblies*
 - *Benevolence split ca 50/50 – synod / national*

ELCA – A Failed Merger

- Abandonment of Lutheran Theology
- ELCA's "gospel" of inclusivity supersedes the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - *Inclusivity as social agenda*
 - *Inclusivity as political agenda*
 - *Inclusivity as ecclesial agenda*
 - *Inclusivity as ecumenical agenda*
- Sin = Exclusiveness contrary to the ideology of inclusivity

ELCA – A Failed Merger

- Consequences of the gospel of inclusivity
 - *Law supersedes gospel*
 - *Churchwide assemblies supersede the Bible*
 - *Constitution supersedes the Lutheran Confessions*
 - *Religious humanism supersedes sound theology*
 - *Human rights supersede justification by faith alone*
 - *Inclusivity incorporates sinners and their sins*
- New Lutheran Church = Non-Lutheran Church

ELCA – A Failed Merger

- ELCA = “Episcopal Lying Charade in America”
 - Called to Common Mission – 19 August 1999
 - *Fraudulently claims that the Lutheran Reformers “deeply desired” to be Episcopalian, before Anglicans existed! The lie succeeded.*
 - Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification
 - *Basically a Roman Catholic understanding of justification*
 - *Contrary to LWF/ELCA reports, JDDJ was NOT signed on 31 October 1999 in Augsburg, Germany*
 - *Nine indulgences issued by Vatican since 1999*

ELCA – A Failed Merger

- “Building on the *Joint Declaration, The Church as Koinonia of Salvation (CKS)* with its recommendations offers, ..., ‘a step forward toward our goal of eventual full communion’ with the Roman Catholic Church.’” (ELCA News Service 29 April 2004)
 - Mark D. Menacher, “Current Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogues,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 20 (Winter 2006), 373-408.
- Paradoxically, while the ELCA fails and fractures, it envisages “full communion” with the Pope!

ELCA – A Failed Merger

– Recent Headlines -

- 08/14/2009 Finalists Named in ELCA Video Contest
- 08/13/2009 ELCA Synod Bishop Paul Stumme-Diers Accepts Call in Washington State
- 08/13/2009 ELCA Clergy Support Gay, Lesbian Rights, Ordination, Survey Says
- 08/12/2009 ELCA Presiding Bishop, Other Leaders Criticize Palestinian Evictions
- 08/11/2009 H1N1 Influenza Confirmed Among Some ELCA Youth Gathering Participants

ELCA – A Failed Merger

– Recent Headlines -

- 08/11/2009 Lutherans Take Action on Social Justice Issues
- 08/11/2009 ELCA Seminary Professor, Pastor to Preach on Ecumenical Radio Show
- 08/10/2009 ELCA Presiding Bishop Urges Lutherans to Sign Letter to Obama about Sudan
- 08/07/2009 Twitter, Facebook Expand Opportunities to Follow ELCA Churchwide Assembly

ELCA – A Failed Merger

– Recent Headlines -

- **ELCA Reports 4.6 Million Members, Offerings \$2.7 Billion in 2008**
-ELCA NEWS SERVICE (August 7, 2009)

CHICAGO (ELCA) -- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) reported a baptized membership of 4,633,887 in 10,396 congregations in 2008. The ELCA Office of the Secretary analyzed membership and income data obtained from reports that ELCA congregations submit each year.

David D. Swartling, ELCA secretary, said the data indicated a decline in membership of 76,069 and a loss of 52 congregations from 2007. The membership decline was slightly higher than in 2007 but less than in 2006, he said.

- **The ELCA started with 5.3 million members in 1987**

ELCA – A Failed Merger

- In 20 Years, the ELCA has:
 - Lost scripture alone as the source and norm of its life
 - Lost the Lutheran Confessions as accurate interpretations of scripture
 - Lost theological coherence and credibility
 - Lost the ability for basic honesty, like that most people expect of their children
 - Lost 0.7 million members
 - Lost 737 Congregations (11,133 – 10,396)
 - Lost the right to call itself Lutheran

ELCA – A Failed Merger

- Options for the future
 - *Stay and fight (WordAlone Network, CORE)*
 - *Stay and do nothing (majority of folks)*
 - *Leave and do nothing (various options, LCMC)*
 - *Leave and lead a decidedly Lutheran future (Road less travelled)*

Leaving A Failed Merger

- **ELCA Model Constitution**
- **C6.05 This congregation may terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the following procedure:**
 - a. A resolution indicating the desire of this congregation to terminate its relationship must be adopted at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present.
 - b. The secretary of this congregation shall submit a copy of the resolution to the synodical bishop and shall mail a copy of the resolution to voting members of this congregation. This notice shall be submitted within 10 days after the resolution has been adopted.
 - c. The bishop of the synod shall consult with this congregation during a period of at least 90 days.
 - d. If this congregation, after consultation, still desires to terminate its relationship, such action may be taken at a legally called and conducted special meeting by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present, at which meeting the bishop of the synod or an authorized representative shall be present. Notice of the meeting shall be mailed to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the meeting.

Leaving A Failed Merger

- **PROPERTY OWNERSHIP**

- C7.03. If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this congregation present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to transfer to another Lutheran church body, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation. Before this congregation takes action to transfer to another Lutheran church body, it shall consult with representatives of the Pacifica Synod.

Leaving A Failed Merger

- A Two Part Process to Leave the ELCA
 1. Two votes to leave the ELCA, 90 days apart
 2. One vote to join another Lutheran body in order to retain church property

Leaving A Failed Merger

- Where have faithful Lutherans gone?
 - *LCMS (Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod)*
 - *LCMC (Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ)*
 - *AFLC (Association of Free Lutheran Congregations)*
 - *Non-denominational*
 - *Non-church attending*
- Where will faithful Lutherans go? It depends upon:
 - *Women pastors?*
 - *Coherent vision?*
 - *Theological integrity?*
 - *Doing church or playing church?*

The Road Less Travelled

- Where will it be possible for our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren to attend church and be faithfully Lutheran?
- As a church, are we to be followers or leaders?
- Is it not time for a genuinely Lutheran vision in America, in which theology is more important than church politics?
- The Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (FELC) seeks to be that place.
- Study FELC at <http://www.f-e-l-c.org/>