

Monday, June 18, 2007

Preliminary Report on Memorial

The longer memorial sent in by my congregations has reportedly been discussed by the floor committee for doctrine. The discussion lasted a couple of hours, which was how long the same discussion took last year.

I was asked by a fellow traveler what I thought would happen with these memorials. My realistic/pessimistic prediction for this memorial was that the floor committee would basically say "We already have a doctrinal statement on the ministry, and are unwilling to change that. Let this be the answer to any memorials that challenge it." This prediction has reportedly come true. The good news in this was that the discussion was cordial, with deep concern for unity in the synod on this doctrine. The floor committee also spoke of a resolution promoting continued patience and study. So the memorial was not a complete failure.

The problem remains that there is basic disagreement on the meaning of our doctrinal statement. As I have pointed out, a fine paper was delivered at our last General Pastoral Conference on how the PMW might be "parsed," or how we should read it. This "parsing" is not far from my own understanding of the PMW, and I could possibly subscribe to the PMW on that basis. Yet quite a few of the pastors who heard that paper voiced deep concerns, and even basic disagreement. A majority of the PCM (the committee that drafted the PMW) has privately expressed agreement with the "parsing" paper, but there has been no public endorsement of any particular understanding of the PMW.

So if the floor committee's work is adopted by the synod convention, then a serious problem remains to challenge the unity of our synod. Instead of basing our unity upon the teaching of scripture, we will be basing our unity upon the mutual acceptance of a human document that apparently allows for a variety of interpretations. This is dangerously close to "teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." It's the basis of unity in church bodies that have departed from the historic Christian faith -- the faith founded upon the unambiguous doctrine of holy scripture alone.

Posted by Jesse Jacobsen in PMW at 13:34