

UPC TIMES

April 2002

### **The Confessing Church Movement**

The current controversy within our Presbyterian Church USA about the questions of the ordination of practicing homosexual persons and the meaning of marriage came into sharp focus this past summer when the General Assembly voted in June to amend our Book of Order in a way that definitive guidance as a denomination concerning ordination would have been eliminated from the Book of Order so that each Presbytery and congregation would make ordination decisions as they felt wise. This would have set aside the present Book of Order standard concerning ordination standards: "Faithfulness in marriage of a man and women, chastity in singleness". This resulted in Amendment A and as of this month it is clear that the Presbyteries of our denomination have decisively defeated this amendment. Our Presbytery of Seattle is one of those Presbyteries that voted to defeat Amendment A and therefore to retain the standard that is now in the Book of Order.

One result of this year of crises in our denomination is that many church Sessions throughout the country have become a part of the Confessing Church Movement. Our own Session at its regular meeting on February 26, 2002 adopted the Union in Christ affirmation and in addition had concurred in the Pastoral Statement I have written as to our pastoral goals in the light of this church wide concern. Our Session's statement is available at the Kiosk.

As we discussed in our present series of expositional sermons on The Greatest Book, St. Paul's letter to the Romans we as followers of Jesus Christ should not be surprised to recognize that the turbulent line goes through the Church; just as it goes through the world. Controversies are often a part of that turbulence. This means that we as individuals, as families, as a Christian fellowship are ourselves a mission field that needs God's grace, truth and healing every day of our lives. The good news is that God is at work in all mission fields with the amazing grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and that grace changes lives and makes us whole. Therefore we never give up on a family, never give up on a person, and never give up on a church, because God never gives up on us.

Your Pastor,  
Earl F. Palmer