

February 2, 2017

The phrase in the motion to proceed that has caused the most discussion at the three gatherings I have attended so far, is approval 'in principle.' Both Lutherans and Anglicans have asked for a clearer statement of what is intended by these words. Principally this is about how 'locked in' a congregation would be at this stage if they voted in favour of continuing to the next steps.

Rather than getting into extensive legalese, Bishop Shaw has suggested the following interpretation. A vote in favour 'in principle' enables a congregation to *continue* with the process and provides an opportunity for voicing concerns that could be addressed as the Lutheran Anglican Joint Commission named in the motion prepares its report for our respective Synods.

This is in the spirit of 'If you have concerns, what can we do to make this work for you'? These concerns would be addressed in the period between 'approval in principle' (February 5 and 12) and May 31 when the proposed Joint Commission makes its report. And so what we are seeking on February 5 for Christ Lutheran and for Anglican parishes on February 12 is a decision to continue to participate rather than to withdraw from the process. The time line ahead is clear. The end is in sight.

As we say this is a work in progress. A vote in favour of proceeding at this stage continues our faith-walk together. That ultimately is what this is all about. All five congregations set their feet together on this path towards a greater union. The vision was and remains to do together better what we could not do nearly so well alone. We live in uncertain times. Surely, it is better to do this together than alone.

As Jesus said,

***I pray... that they may be one.
As you Father are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us
—that the world may believe
(John 17. 21)***

Please feel free to share any or all of this with your congregation.

With every blessing,

+Patrick
Commissary