

## The Rev. Canon Carlson Gerdau

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To the editor of "The Living Church":

I must take exception to the March 22<sup>nd</sup> coverage of the Bishop-elect of Northern Michigan. I admit to begin with what Reinhold Neibuhr called "an ideological prejudice". The Diocese of Northern Michigan is one of my two homes. I was ordained there in 1959, served there for twenty years at various times nine of the congregations, and represented the diocese at five General Conventions and one Special Convention.

Since ceasing to serve Northern Michigan, I have kept up with it through regular visits and personal contacts and watched with interest as it has evolved, changed, and developed. I don't buy everything that goes on—for example, I don't think that the model of mutual ministry fits all; I think there is a place in the Church for cardinal rectors. But I can attest that all is done with the utmost integrity. Let me set the record straight on several insinuations and accusations in your magazine. First the Bishop-elect was not "for all intents and purpose, Chair of the Search Committee". He was never part of the Search Committee, but at the request of the Standing Committee, he attended the first two meetings to train them in team-building. Granted that he was the only candidate presented by the committee, but the committee made great effort to find and contact other candidates. Yes, he has used liturgical experimentation, has used gender-neutral language, and has used the New Zealand prayer book, but he is not the only person to do so in the Episcopal Church. In my background, I was a member of St. Mary's the Virgin in New York City while in boarding school and college, and we did not know what the prayer book was, had non-communicating masses, and the strangest liturgical practices on Good Friday [i.e. crawling to kiss the Cross] which are now part of Good Friday in many places. Open experimentation is how change comes about. The fact that not everyone followed the rubrics of 1928 is how the 1979 prayer book came into being.

The accusation that there is something wrong because St. Paul's Church Marquette uses liberal Roman Catholic documents borders on the absurd. Many of us have read and been influenced by Hans Küng. Or how many are there like me who are partly formed by the writings of Thomas Merton who started as a pre-Tridentine Catholic and moved to the extreme liberal side of the Roman Church. Are we under indictment by "The Living Church"?

The suggestion that the bishop-elect should not be confirmed because of the model of episcopacy in the diocese "could bring about an unsettling precedent" is dubious. The model is a concept that

is based on the premise that a bishop cannot do everything or have all the talents necessary but needs a supportive community. To suggest that somehow what Northern Michigan is doing violates the model of episcopacy forgets that episcopacy in the life of the Church has been everything from the prince-bishop of the Middle Ages to a bishop in the Irish Church who was under the abbot of the monastery.

Finally to fault the Bishop-elect because he practices Buddhist meditation is to not understand who he is. He has made it absolutely plain that he is an "absolute Christian" but that Buddhist practices have helped him to understand the suffering of the world.

Unlike you I think Kevin Thew Forrester should be confirmed by bishops and Standing Committees. His willingness to explore the wide dimensions of spirituality and northern Michigan's willingness to explore new models of ministry are needed by the House of Bishops and the Church at large.

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