Lancaster Conference suspends credentials of Eastern Board president

Lancaster, Pa.—In a statement released to *Gospel Herald*, the bishop board of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference announced that the ministerial and bishop credentials of Paul G. Landis, Salunga, Pa., have been suspended for "unprofessional and inappropriate behavior" toward women.

The same statement, issued jointly with Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions (EMBM), reported Landis is no longer president of EMBM. He served in this position for 13 years.

According to the June 1 statement, the bishop board's executive committee suspended Landis' ministerial and bishop credentials on Jan. 27. In a related action, EMBM's executive committee granted Landis a leave of absence from his responsibilities while allegations of inappropriate conduct were being investigated.

In its March 18 meeting, the Lancaster Conference assembly received a report from a Hearing and Resolution Committee which had been asked to evaluate the allegations. The nine-member committee included professional therapists and churchwide leaders as well as leaders from neighboring conferences.

The Hearing and Resolution Committee reported "a clear sense of the Lord's leading in coming to a solid consensus," according to the June 1 release. After hearing the charges concerning Landis and meeting with him, the committee determined that "these stories had credibility and that unprofessional and sexual misconduct were evident."

The group also named persons to continue any needed contact with the women who were affected by Landis' behavior.

The release included a statement by Landis which follows:

"I recognize an ongoing personal need in my life that has resulted in developing inappropriate relationships and expressions with persons of the opposite sex that were not consistent with my own convictions of Christian propriety and purity. . . .

"I voluntarily acknowledge, confess, repent and seek healing and forgiveness from all who have been hurt or offended by my actions. . . .

"I have experienced God's grace and forgiveness and renew my commitment to faithfulness in these areas. . . .

"I ask for the prayers and support of the church as I continue to seek professional and spiritual healing in my journey from harmful patterns."

The joint bishop board-EMBM statement continues:

"An accountability group of three persons has been formed to relate closely to Paul during this time of treatment and recovery. They will advise concerning appropriate timing to consider reentry into church ministry assignments.

"In the meantime, Paul's ministerial credentials remain suspended. His work as president of Eastern Board officially ended on April 7, although salary and benefits will continue through June 30. . . . Norman Shenk serves as the acting president.

"While these have been difficult days, and we recognize that the process was not without flaws, we have also sensed anew the grace of God. We covet your prayers for continued healing for Paul, his wife Ann, and all who have been affected in this experience," the statement concludes.

240 graduate at AMBS, Rosedale, and Hesston

Scottdale, Pa. (AMBS/HC/RBI)—Commencement exercises in three Mennonite schools took place during the May 20-23 weekend. Some 240 students received degrees from Rosedale Bible Institute, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries (AMBS), and Hesston College.

Rosedale Bible Institute. "You must learn to be relevant in your generation without adjusting the foundation of truth," Mel Shetler told the class of 1993 at Rosedale's commencement exercises May 20 at the institute in Irwin, Ohio.

Some 22 people, the second largest class in the Conservative Conference school's history, received degrees in pastoral ministries, Bible and theology, Christian ministries, and biblical studies.

Shetler, pastor of Maple City Chapel in Goshen, Ind., spoke from the parable of the shrewd steward in Luke 16.

"The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light," he quoted, challenging the graduates to turn that around. He urged the class to share the light of the gospel with zeal and relevant techniques than surpass those of the business world.

AMBS. Before they stepped across the commencement platform May 21, the 41 graduates of AMBS were told to keep on walking—in time with their inner sense of call.

"Begin the long walk with God," said speaker Mary Campbell Cosby, pastor and co-founder of Church of the Saviour, Washington, D.C. "Once you have begun walking with God, all you need to do is keep on walking, and all of life will become one long stroll."

Along the way, Cosby encouraged the graduates to develop "intimate relatedness with the person of Jesus Christ" and from that relationship to listen for God's call.

AMBS graduated 32 students with the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree, five with the Master of Arts in Theological Studies degree, one with the Master of Arts in Peace Studies degree, and one with the Certificate in Theological Studies.

Cosby's address was followed by a charge to the graduates given by Gary Martin, instructor in evangelism and church planting. "Remember that the source of your competence in ministry is God, not the piece of paper you received tonight," Martin said. "Value highly your theological training . . . but proclaim only Jesus Christ as Lord."

Hesston College. Some 177 graduates received Associate of Arts degrees during commencement exercises May 23.

Kirk Alliman, former Hesston College president, addressed the class on the theme, "The Heart of the Answer Is the Question." He used the text in Matthew 7—"for everyone who asks, receives"—to validate the need for questions.

"I pray that in the graduating class of 1993," Alliman said, "there are members who will devote their lives to challenging the normal ways of doing and thinking while presenting to the rest of us alternatives that bring the world closer together and make God's presence more understandable and powerful.

"In this day when popular answers are given to superficial questions, we desperately need people who keep us focused on the Lord Jesus Christ."