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### Our Logo

The Lutherans Concerned logo unifies visual symbols of our Christianity and our sexuality into a single image. It has two parts: the fish and the pink triangle. The IX-Thus, or fish symbol, originated as a secret recognition symbol for the early Christian community. The pink triangle was used by the Nazis to identify the European homosexuals who perished in the concentration camps of the Third Reich. Both symbols are now used by their respective communities as honored signs of recognition and support.

### Statement of Sanctuary

The ministry of Lutherans Concerned, its meetings and its mailing lists are protected by our understanding of sanctuary. No participants need fear exposure or abuse in subscribing, joining or attending chapter functions.

All information that individuals may reveal of themselves is to be honored by others with total confidentiality. Mutual trust and respect, in the spirit of Jesus Christ, is offered to all who may elsewhere experience alienation, distrust or rejection. For the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we welcome you.

### Diversity and Anti-Racism

An equal-opportunity employer, LC/NA welcomes candidates for paid or volunteer positions who share our commitments to full participation for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and anti-racist accountability to communities of color.

# ELCA Synod Assemblies 2009

The 2009 synod assembly season was the most active ever for the movement for full inclusion in the ELCA. The synods of the ELCA met in individual assemblies beginning in April and ending in late June.

As in previous years, LC/NA sent informational kits featuring a beautiful three-panel display, as well as brochures and other materials, to assemblies across the ELCA. The panel sets were shared among 40 assemblies. Never before have we had a presence in so many synods. For several synods, this was the first time with an LC/NA-RIC display. The Holy Spirit often does her best work in community, and LC/NA strives to bring communities of supporters together. The displays are a wonderful

organizing tool, enabling supporters to find each other and thus put faces on our ministry. For both LGBT people and straight allies, the LC/NA display table is often where supporters first learn there are other people in the church like themselves, people who want to see change in the church and are searching for a way to realize that change.

The Goodsoil Legislative Team presented several memorials advocating for particular items *continued on page 8*

# ELCIC National Convention 2009

A Personal Perspective by Karen Mathiasen

The theme for the 2009 National Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) was “In Mission for Others: Signs of Hope,” based on the biblical texts from Romans 15:13 and Matthew 5:14-16. At a time when

despair and hopelessness abound, finding hope may seem a difficult task. Arriving in Vancouver to attend the National Convention as a visitor, on behalf of Lutherans Concerned in Canada (LCIC), I felt a mixture of emotions—eagerness, trepidation, curiosity, cynicism, and a measure of hope.

The details of what transpired at the ELCIC National Convention have been summarized well by Phil Soucy, Director of Communications for LC/NA,

in his daily reports to LCNA membership from the convention. Phil was my convention “buddy,” sitting together with me up in the visitors’ gallery, on the uncomfortable, hard chairs of a university sports complex, while the delegates and officers of the church sat at tables on the floor below (in more comfortable chairs, I presume). Sometimes I felt very separate and apart from the business of convention, having been a delegate for my congregation in the past.

*continued on page 11*



# The Editor

DALE TRUSCOTT



“So stay awake, alert. You have no idea what day your Master will show up... When he finally arrives... the Son of Man will take his place on his glorious throne... Then the King will say to those on his right, “Enter, you blessed by my Father!... And here’s why: I was hungry and you fed me...”

—Various verses from MATTHEW 25, THE MESSAGE, Eugene H. Peterson

**A**nd neither do we know what’s going to happen at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in August. Without doubt, the gospel of Jesus Christ calls

us as Christians to full inclusion, full inclusion of all people, created with the breath of God in us, blessed by God. Should the ELCA pass the Social Statement and ministry resolutions in August, we will celebrate a meaningful step toward the goal that the gospel has already held before us.

There is a sense in which we Christians not only do not know the day when the Master will “show up,” but we also don’t have the luxury or the joy of celebrating the full realization of the gospel. We have it as a “foretaste of the feast to come” in the gospel and in the eucharist. And by that I don’t mean an obsessive attention on afterlife, but rather a creative and faithful attention on what comes in or next in this life. If Christians aren’t always crying out for justice and for the fullness of the gospel, then we aren’t living the Christian life.

In this issue of *Concord*, you will see a summary of “where we are” in terms of the synodical assemblies and their actions or lack thereof on recommending the approval of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, the new social statement, and the resolutions to change church

policy concerning rostered persons who are in same-gender committed relationships. If one were to compare where we are today on the threshold of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to the 2005 Assembly or earlier assemblies, one would surely be amazed at how far we have come by faith. This time the recommendations come from the Church Council of the ELCA, chaired by the Presiding Bishop of the church.

But, we dare not rest on our laurels! There is always the tendency for folks to look at the polls and sigh in relief, go out for coffee and fail to realize the goal for which they worked so hard. I remember how hard the young organizers of the Obama campaign worked us here in Orlando during those last days before the election. “Don’t let up, don’t take a break, keep on pushing.” We were sending out visitors to people’s doors, offering rides to the polls right up to the hour the polls closed. And Orange County, Florida, went for Obama. An amazing turn around in a strongly Republican area! The same needs to be our attitude and intention in Minneapolis, and all across the ELCA. Don’t let

up. Keep on working. Keep on witnessing.

If you are going to be at the Assembly, Lutherans Concerned and Goodsoil will be there to help you know just what to do. We will be in graceful engagement in unprecedented numbers. But what if you, like me, will not be in Minneapolis? Start just like everyone at the assembly will start – pray! Pray long and hard and heartfelt for justice to prevail, for God’s will to be done, for full inclusion to come eversomuch closer to a reality at this assembly. Then what? Do you know an assembly member? Call her/him, or email her/him with a friendly and encouraging message. Speak with your pastor and encourage her/him to do the same. Send a message to your bishop, a word of encouragement, support and determination. Communicate! Communicate! It is simply amazing how “small” the world is; your words will be heard, your encouragement will help.

And it is not too soon to imagine what our work will be following the ELCA Assembly. Given some of the bitter rhetoric I see among those who do not favor the Social Statement and the resolutions concerning rostered persons, there may be hard challenges ahead for the church. We can find ways to continue our graceful engagement with those who feel that they have lost something. We may say farewell to some, but imagine the congregations and pastors and other rostered persons who may be able to return and enrich the ELCA again.

Let each of us, from wherever we are, whether that is the floor of the assembly or in our office or on our porch across North America, pray and work. This is our time; this is our moment! May God’s justice prevail and may God’s blessing rest upon all. ▼

## Publication Information

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# Executive Director



EMILY EASTWOOD

Often before big events, I have anxiety dreams, ones typical of my rather “type A” family of origin: I’ve left the house without the plane tickets. The sermon isn’t where I left it. I’m wearing clothes inappropriate for the occasion...if I’m lucky. My glasses seem to have someone else’s prescription. To an onlooker my dream would be a slapstick comedy. To me it is a Technicolor “scratch and sniff” action-packed nightmare in 3-D.

Last night I had my first dream about the ELCA Churchwide Assembly. Ok, I’m anxious about it. From conversations with others on the Goodsoil planning committee, I know I am not alone. Do we

**Passion. Peace. Presence. No Pumps. Amen. Let it be so.**

dare to hope? I’ve reviewed the map of synod assembly results over and over, and each time I’m overwhelmed by the sea of purple on the Concord map: a majority of synods in favor of passing the social statement that supports LGBT families in a way more consistent with practice in the ELCA than the current policy. Eleven more synods passed policy change than in 2007. I cannot stop myself from feeling hopeful. But, I’m wary. The process is already in motion, but the voting

members to the assembly are not mandated to follow the wishes of their synods. Rather, they will vote their consciences.

So, we still have work to do and a lot of it. In order for the church to change, the hearts and minds of individual voting members who are yet undecided must be changed. We know how change happens, one-on-one encircled by the Holy Spirit. Our volunteers will be engaged morning, noon and night, telling their stories of life and faith and listening deeply to voting members. Prayer, graceful engagement, solid legislative strategies, enough money, and the constant presence of the Holy Spirit will all be

## From The Board of Directors

On behalf of the LC/NA Board of Directors, we would like to express our sincere thanks for the commitment, dedication and perseverance of the LC/NA staff. Similarly to many non-profit organizations recently, we have had to ask our staff to deal with the loss of co-workers as we position ourselves to get through this tough economic period. Our staff has been asked to do more with less and they are continuing to be shining stars. We thank them profusely for all that they are doing for LC/NA especially during this synod assembly season as we ramp up for the ELCA churchwide assembly in August.

With much appreciation!

Len Weiser & The Reverend Gladys Moore  
(Co-Chairs of the Board)

required for success. And, win or lose on the floor of the assembly, our work will produce success.

This *kairos* time began in 2007 when the Rev. Bradley Schmeling was tried and removed from the ordained roster of the ELCA, when 82 LGBT ministers introduced themselves to the ELCA, when we first launched graceful engagement strategies. In 2007 the door closed by policies of exclusion opened a crack with the encouragement to bishops to refrain from or use restraint in discipline of partnered LGBT ministers and the congregations that call them. The only cogent argument against policy change in 2007 was delay until 2009 for passage of a social statement. We didn’t win policy change, but the assembly was a success by every measure. Well folks, it is 2009, the *kairos* time continues, and the Goodsoil collaborative is ready.

In my assembly dream, the legislative team huddles for one last time before hitting the floor for the opening night rules debate. Don’t ask me what all I’m wearing but the ensemble includes black pumps with three-inch heels. Not pretty. The team is in a sideline huddle like at a football game (they’ll laugh at that), they clasp hands above their heads and shout “passion.” Even in my dream, I thought “passion” was a good word as the entire team is united with a passion for the full participation of LGBT people and their families in the life of the ELCA. But, it wasn’t the only word. For this churchwide assembly we will be united in our passion and our mission, but I will pray for Peace and Holy Presence for all of us. We know our pain. No matter our sexual orientation or gender identity, that pain fuels us. We also know our joy in Christ Jesus who we gladly serve. He stilled the storm. May he still our fears and fill us with a peace beyond understanding that we may bring his message of love, forgiveness and acceptance to each other, to the voting members, to the whole church, and, indeed to the world. Passion. Peace. Presence. No Pumps. Amen. Let it be so. ▼

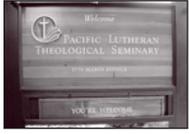
## RIC Settings

### Added to the Roster since last issue

- Christ Lutheran Church, Long Beach, California
- Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Littleton, Colorado
- St. Jacobus Lutheran Church, Woodside, New York
- Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, California
- Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Clifton Park, New York
- St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Minnetonka, Minnesota
- St. Timothy Lutheran Church, Geneseo, New York
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Columbus, Ohio
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Everett, Washington
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Pullman, Washington
- Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Madison, Wisconsin

For the complete list of RIC congregations, synods, and organizations, go to our website at [www.lcna.org](http://www.lcna.org)

# Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary Becomes Reconciling in Christ



By Carol Dunn

The seminary board met and discussed in the fall. They met and discussed in the spring, and this time they voted. In between, they asked faculty, staff, students, and alumni for

their input about an intentional welcoming for LGBT people to Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and about affiliation as an RIC seminary.

Students had an RIC training event. They made lists of likely pros and cons. More than 120 alumni responded by e-mail. The first night of its spring meeting, the board met with students to hear stories and listen to concerns as well as to dreams and prayers.

The outcome was a unanimous vote by the board of PLTS (a member school of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California) to include

It boiled down to **declaring** what kind of **welcoming community** the **seminary** has always sought to be.

sexual orientation in their welcome statement and to apply to become the first RIC seminary in the ELCA. The PLTS home page now reads, in part, “As disciples of Christ ... we eagerly learn from and welcome one another’s diversity, including, but not limited to, theological perspective, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender identity, relationship status, age, physical ability, social and economic status and sexual orientation.”

Dr. Gary Andeen, outgoing chair of the seminary board, said the board discussed fundraising, recruitment and whether they should wait until after the August ELCA Churchwide Assembly to see what actions might be taken there. Ultimately, he said, it boiled down to declaring what kind of welcoming community the seminary has always sought to be and to witnessing to a matter of justice and equity.

Andeen, long-time participant in the Oregon Synod Candidacy Committee, said he has always applied the strictures of the ELCA’s *Vision and Expectations* code to applicants for rostering in his synod, though he always believed them to be “inhospitable.” But with a request from students, led by Ryan Roberts with Tim Feiertag (former co-chair



of LCNA), to consider broadening the seminary statement and applying for RIC status, Andeen welcomed the chance to take the resolution to the seminary board for full discussion and a vote. He reported input from alumni all over the U.S., and while there were some negative comments, most were strongly in favor. The seminary board has prepared a full statement, on the internet at [www.plts.edu/docs/RIC\\_0409.pdf](http://www.plts.edu/docs/RIC_0409.pdf)

Seminarian Roberts (now graduated with an M.Div.) shepherded the student portion of the process from the first conversations with Gary Andeen through LC/NA training led by Michael Adee (More Light Presbyterians), Troy Plummer (Reconciling Ministries Network/Methodist) and Brett Bowman (LC/NA). Roberts pointed out that the decision was wholly in the hands of the board, though it will have impact well beyond the board room. He said, “We were attempting to express publicly a lot of what we already believe PLTS to be and also that welcome into which this community continues to grow.” Newly employed by the seminary admissions office, he suggests that the new student orientation will include a discussion of “what being RIC means about our community and how we hope its members will interact around contentious discussions and when the inevitable hurt is done. We also hope to continue offering the RIC Leaders’ Training Workshop as a January course, either annually or every other year.”

Seminary president, Rev. Dr. Phyllis Anderson, agreed that RIC status is entirely consistent with their vision statement: “Led by the light of Christ, PLTS is called to embody the Church’s bold and effective engagement with vital issues in an inter-faith and multi-cultural context with a strong Lutheran voice.” ▼

R I C P R O F I L E

# Edina Community Lutheran Church, Edina, Minnesota

By Carol Dunn

**1** 00 in 100! Over the course of 100 days (starting in May), 100 members will sign up to attend Goodsoil's August 19, 2009, worship and serve as volunteers at Churchwide Assembly.

That's The Challenge at Edina Community Lutheran Church (ECLC), in suburban Minneapolis.

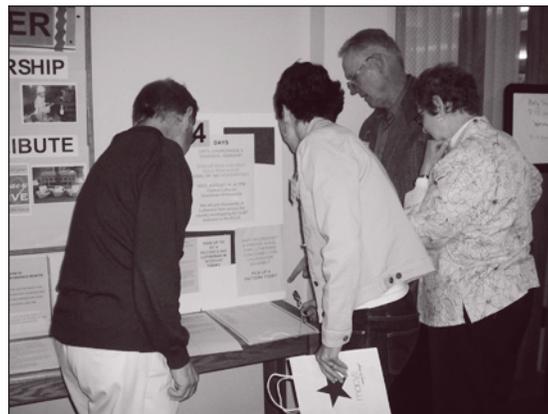
The congregation, RIC since 1985, has a long history and strong tradition of inclusivity, including a constitutional statement that Edina is open to calling LGBT public ministry leaders who are excluded from the national ELCA roster solely because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The **energetic RIC welcome** is a compelling reason to make **Edina** the first choice in an area with many Lutheran churches.

The congregation has heard repeatedly from new members--LGBT, allies and others--that the energetic RIC welcome is a compelling reason to make Edina the first choice in an area with many Lutheran churches.

One reason they planned The Challenge is to offer support to those for whom inclusivity is not so safe. In addition, according to Lauren Wendt, Mission & Ministry Developer, Goodsoil's gathering offers the congregation the "transformational opportunity...to worship with inclusive Lutherans from all over the country," to be surrounded by others who share these values, and to demonstrate to the community how strongly ECLC's lay and clergy members believe in them. With the blessing of the congregation, some of Wendt's time is devoted to assisting the Churchwide Assembly and Edina Lutheran's involvement with it.

The sign-up plan did not occur in a vacuum, but as part of the congregation's summer Mission Committee theme, which is focused on reconciliation, recognized through justice opportunities, prayer, and worship. Inclusivity is a safe principle at ECLC. But both staff and members recognize that this is not so in all congregations, and encouragement of others has also been a goal for the congregation. With the simple insertion of a sign-up form in the bulletin, ECLC had by late May already signed up 20% of members as Reconciling Lutherans, individual members making the



Members of the ECLC community sign up to reach ECLC's goal of 100 in worship with Goodsoil on Wednesday, August 19th.

intentional commitment to inclusivity.

As is true of many other ELCA congregations, Edina members made prayer shawls for the assembly, blessed at ECLC during worship at the end of July. These were then sent to Lutherans Concerned/North America for use during the Churchwide Assembly.

Wendt cautions that the rostering recommendations, while very important, should not overshadow the eight years of work by the ELCA Sexuality Task Force in developing a social statement on human sexuality. The rostering questions do receive much of the attention, but are only part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's understanding of human sexuality in all its variety. ▼

## Next Welcoming Church Training Sessions

**October 2-4, 2009**

**Atlanta, Georgia:** Organized by Reconciling Ministries Network and More Light Presbyterians.

**October 9-11, 2009**

**St. Louis: Reconciling in Christ Leadership Training**  
Bethel Lutheran Church, 7001 Forsyth Boulevard, St. Louis, Missouri  
Sponsored by LC/NA and The Institute for Welcoming Resources.  
[http://www.lcna.org/rictraining\\_2009-10-09.shtm](http://www.lcna.org/rictraining_2009-10-09.shtm)

**October 23-25, 2009**

**Bay area, California:** Organized by Reconciling Ministries Network and the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns.

**To register, contact:**

Ross Murray, [rossm@lcna.org](mailto:rossm@lcna.org),  
651-665-0861

# The Lutheran Magazine Changes

## Eastwood "My View" Article Without Her Permission

The July issue of *The Lutheran* carries an article by Lutherans Concerned/North America's Executive Director, Emily Eastwood. In it she reflects on the story of the early Christian

church in Acts, where she takes note of the ability and willingness of the Council of Jerusalem to adjust the traditions of Judaism at the time regarding exclusion of Gentiles unless they first became Jews, circumcised and kosher. Eastwood likens that Council's work to the challenge before the ELCA Churchwide Assembly this August. Then it was full inclusion of Gentiles; now the issue is full inclusion of Lutherans of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

The editors of *The Lutheran* chose to take liberties with Emily's crucial sentence about whether the documents from the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality and the ELCA Church Council take a position on the issue of full inclusion, making it seem as if Emily says no position is being taken. In fact, Emily said that the documents do take a stand, a middle ground of tolerance and calling for adjustment of policies accordingly. You will see in Emily's response to the editor her clarification: the church is advocating tolerance but not acceptance.

Here is the article as published in *The Lutheran* and Emily Eastwood's corrective letter to the editor.

### 'Not them and us'

Assembly actions: Hope and fear will meet  
by Emily Eastwood

Recently I opened my new Lutheran Study Bible to Acts, the story of the early church - a small band of believers fulfilling holy vocation by spreading the good news of Jesus Christ to the neighborhood, the region and the ends of the earth. For these few, division threatened. But just five chapters after Peter's Spirit-led baptism of the Gentile Cornelius, the Council of Jerusalem unloaded centuries of scriptural interpretation, tradition, prejudice, enmity and hatred, as the once-unclean Gentiles were welcomed to the new church without the prerequisite of becoming circumcised kosher Jews. Good choice.

Following eight years, over a million dollars and uncounted hours of study, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly meets in August as a 21st-century Council of Jerusalem to consider the full inclusion of another band of Gentile believers: Lutherans of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Views within the ELCA run the gamut. But the documents and motions being presented by the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality and the ELCA Church Council take no position - rather, a middle ground.

Since before the ELCA's startup, a growing number of congregations have welcomed the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender believers and their families, seeing in them the love and faith given by God through the Spirit. Many congregations have celebrated with same-gender couples as they promised love and fidelity to one another. Similarly, pastors in same-gender relationships serve our church with dignity and distinction, more and more of them choosing to share with the wider church who they are and whom they love.

If our mission is that given to the apostles by Jesus, I pray that we, too, will fulfill holy vocation with single purpose to further the story of God's redeeming grace in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For 2009, I had hoped for more than tolerance for my people. Yet I know that until Peter meets Cornelius over and over again, the hearts and minds of some in our church will remain unchanged. The ELCA that I imagine is big enough for all of us, not them and us. For today at the intersection of hope and fear, prayerful tolerance is an acceptable middle ground. May we always have an eye out for Gentiles. And may it be said that it was good to the Spirit and to us to make a good choice

**To: Daniel Lehmann, Editor, The Lutheran Magazine**

Letter to the Editor

Re: July 2009 My View

The published version of the July "My View" column regarding current sexuality discussions (page 53) had been materially changed without my knowledge.

The article reads, "Views within the ELCA run the gamut. But the documents and motions being presented by the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality and the ELCA Church Council take no position—rather a middle ground."

I wrote: "Views within the ELCA range from punitive rejection to prophetic advocacy. But the documents and motions being presented by the Sexuality Task Force and the ELCA Church Council take neither position—rather landing instead at a philosophical middle ground of tolerance, adjusting policies accordingly." The documents do take a position. Relative to full inclusion, same-gender unions, and the rostered service of ministers in same-gender relationships, the documents are descriptive of the church as it is, tolerant, but not as it should be, accepting.

Emily Eastwood, Executive Director  
Lutherans Concerned/North America ▼

### MOVING?

Filling out a change of address form ensures the delivery of your *Concord*. If you are moving, take a minute to complete this form. It will save you time and LC/NA money. In the end, that's just plain good stewardship!

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Mail completed form to Lutherans Concerned/North America, Inc., Attn: Database Updates, PO Box 4707, St. Paul, MN 55104-0707, or email to [database@lcna.org](mailto:database@lcna.org).

# Enthusiastic



## Connector: Jerry Vagts

Scholarship Created to Honor Jerry's Service  
by **Emily Eastwood**, Executive Director,  
Lutherans Concerned/North America

**A**s you know Jerry Vagts was released by LC/NA at the end of April 2009 for financial reasons. The Board, staff and I have all agreed that Jerry should be celebrated for his five plus

years of work. Indeed, our progress over that period owes much to Jerry, the enthusiastic connector who talks easily to anyone and has about two points of separation from everyone in the ELCA.

*Our progress owes much to **Jerry**, the enthusiastic connector who talks easily to anyone...*

I first met Jerry in Holden Village the same month I started as an employee of LC/NA. Jerry was the ice cream man. He sold more of the only worthy sweet-stuff in the village than any previous purveyor in the legendary snack bar. In fact, on occasion the snack bar would sell out. His plan, the flavor of the day, marketed by his color-matching fingernail polish and enthusiastic caftan-clad sales pitch after meals in the dining hall.

The following year in the fall of 2003, I met Jerry again, after services at his newly-minted RIC parish, Pilgrim Lutheran, in St. Paul, Minnesota. He re-introduced himself, and then, to the point, said he was looking for a job. I needed administrative help, badly. We agreed to meet for a lunch interview. It lasted three hours. Jerry had retired once already from a career in education. He was more than eager. He started at half-time doing basic admin out of my basement. And then there were two.

In those early days, I was perhaps even more intense and high strung than I am now. Jerry provided stability and structure to my days off the road and in the office. We ate lunch together; often he cooked. He greeted me in the morning with a hug: the gentle gender-bending giant and the petite anxious Amazon, both of us committed to our mission. Yes, we knocked heads—each others and our own, but our friendship and professional relationship grew as our work expanded exponentially.

Jerry and I both knew early on that admin wasn't really his thing. Eventually, he became our first Grassroots Organizing Coordinator. It was a great fit for the organization and for Jerry who worked the phones and email to coordinate and populate RIC trainings from coast to coast and in between. To date more than 500 people have been trained. Jerry was the in-person host of all trainings from January 2004 through August 2008.

Jerry was at his best in large groups and was especially successful as host at various ELCA and WELCA conventions and hospitality suites. Jerry knows how to throw a party and work it. He was and

*continued on page 16*

## "In Honor of... "

### In Honor of...

### Honored by...

Joe Brown	In memory of Joe Brown	Mike Crandall, Mark Engel, Dorothy Klefstad
Michael Carmack & Missy Seekel	In celebration of the wedding of Michael Carmack & Missy Seekel	Lauren Parke
Michael Corcoran	In honor of Michael Corcoran	Kenneth Dragseth
Tom Fenton	In memory of Tom Fenton	LC/Central Florida
Rev. Dr. Ted Fritschel	In honor of the 45th anniversary of the ordination of Rev. Dr. Ted Fritschel	Nicole García, Lynn Johnson, Nancy Konvalinka
Franklin D. Fry	In memory of Franklin D. Fry	Franklin G. Fry
Laurie Garfield & Rod Olsen	In memory of Laurie Garfield and in honor of Rod Olsen	Kathy Shattuck
Jeannine Janson & Mari Irvin	In honor of Jeannine Janson & Mari Irvin	Robert & Dorothy Arnold
Robert Joppa	In honor of Robert Joppa's MBA graduation	Marti Scheel
Ada Kane	In memory of Ada Kane	Fanny Johnsson
Kathe King & Dave Eitland	In Honor of Kathe King & Dave Eitland	John Stoltenberg & Joseph Hamilton
Steve Miller & Wayne Morris	In honor of the Blessing Service for Steve Miller & Wayne Morris	Doyle and Lucienne Morris
Rev. David Parsons	In honor and appreciation	The Lindley-Geiger & Quinn-Gacioch families
Jeff Ramm & Neal Hauschild	In honor of the Blessing Service for Jeff Ramm & Neal Hauschild	Tom Grote & Rick Neal, Linda & Bill Janeshek
Dale Truscott & Kin Xuxa	In recognition of the work of Dale Truscott and Kin Xuxa	The Jennifer M. Lee and Jeffrey S. Chapski Family Fund of the Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund
Len Weiser & Kent Bollman	In honor of the Union of Len Weiser & Kent Bollman	Maureen Heckler

in the social statement and ministry recommendations. Because many synod memorial submission deadlines didn't mesh well with the release dates of the drafts from the task force, the Legislation Team prepared three "rounds" of memorial templates. Unavoidably, submitting legislation became a somewhat messy and confusing endeavor in some synods. Through it all, our Regional Coordinators and synod liaisons did a wonderful job of doing what was needed to ensure our memorials made it to the assembly floor. In all, we recruited and equipped liaisons in 51 synods to work toward passing the Goodsoil memorials and/or defeat opposing legislation.

In the end, the Legislative Team presented two pieces of model legislation: the first was a memorial urging the churchwide assembly to adopt the proposed social statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, which, among other things, would allow for

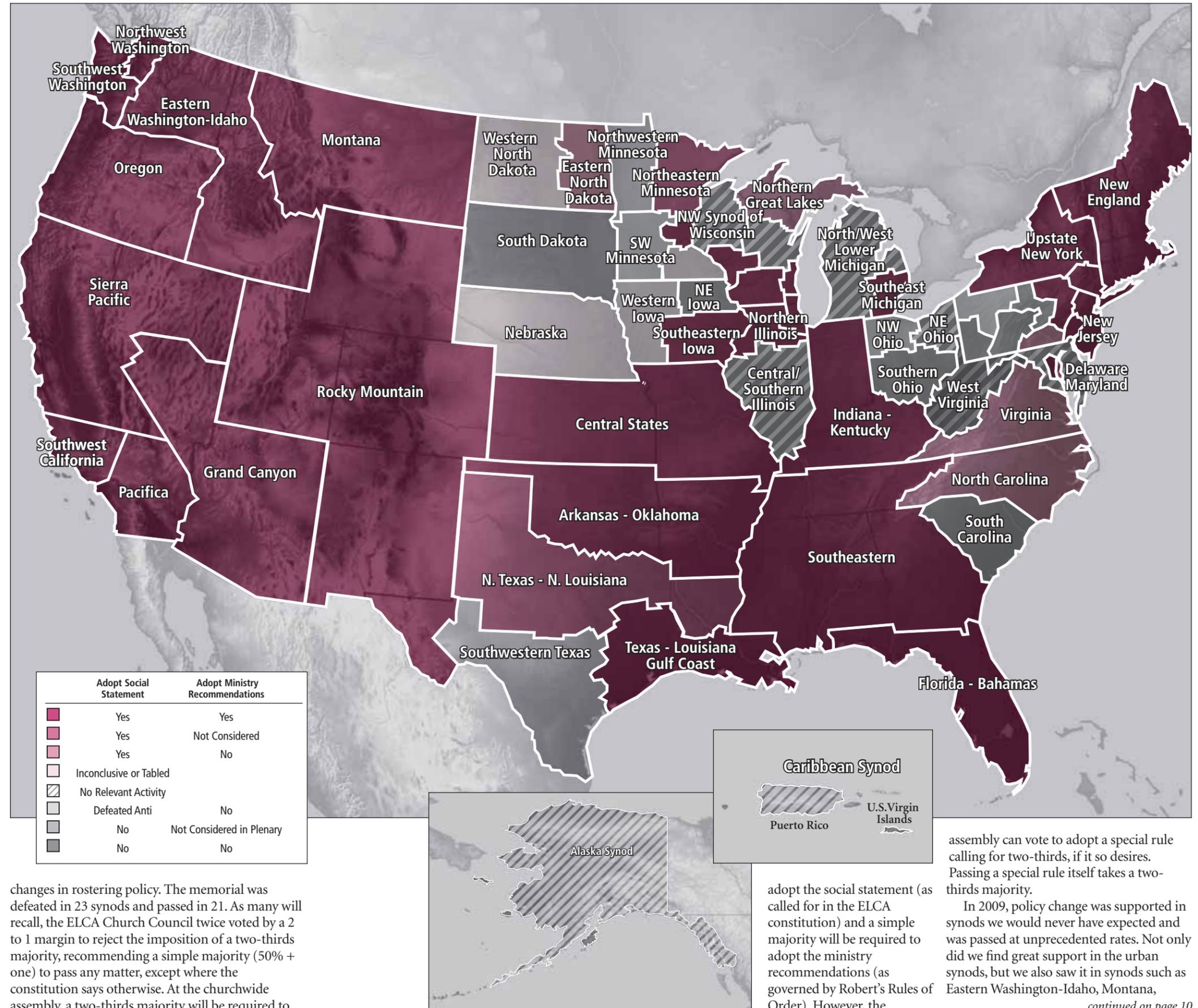
**Nearly half of all the synods in the ELCA have urged the churchwide assembly to adopt the ministry recommendations.**

congregations to recognize committed same-gender relationships. The second memorial urged the churchwide assembly to adopt the ministry recommendations, which would allow for ministers in same-gender relationships to be placed on the roster of the ELCA.

For each memorial, an overwhelming majority of those synods that considered the Goodsoil memorials (or their equivalents) passed them. Forty-four synods considered the memorial urging the adoption of the proposed social statement, and 38 passed it. Of the 39 synods that considered the ministry recommendations, 33 passed it. **Note this well: A majority of all the synods in the whole denomination have urged the churchwide assembly to adopt the ministry recommendations.**

Seventeen synods passed a resolution to adopt the following two additional implementing resolutions of the social statement: 1) "To develop resources for congregations or faith-communities and ministers that choose to do so to support same-gender relationships by holding them publicly accountable in the exchange of promises of lifelong love and fidelity" and 2) "to develop procedures for the reception from another Lutheran church-body and for the expedited reinstatement to the roster or to candidacy of those whose rostering was precluded by previous policies on same-gender relationships."

Opponents of full inclusion circulated a memorial that received a more mixed response from the synods. This memorial called for imposing a two-thirds majority requirement for any motion to come before the 2009 Churchwide Assembly regarding



changes in rostering policy. The memorial was defeated in 23 synods and passed in 21. As many will recall, the ELCA Church Council twice voted by a 2 to 1 margin to reject the imposition of a two-thirds majority, recommending a simple majority (50% + one) to pass any matter, except where the constitution says otherwise. At the churchwide assembly, a two-thirds majority will be required to

adopt the social statement (as called for in the ELCA constitution) and a simple majority will be required to adopt the ministry recommendations (as governed by Robert's Rules of Order). However, the assembly can vote to adopt a special rule calling for two-thirds, if it so desires. Passing a special rule itself takes a two-thirds majority. In 2009, policy change was supported in synods we would never have expected and was passed at unprecedented rates. Not only did we find great support in the urban synods, but we also saw it in synods such as Eastern Washington-Idaho, Montana,

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FROM THE DESK OF THE  
Development Vice-  
**Chair**



RICHARD ANDERSON

**T**his is a *kairos* moment—a time of special significance and special opportunity as LC/NA prepares for the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Minneapolis. In many ways, everything LC/NA has worked for since its inception in 1974 has been preparation (“prologue”) for this moment.

Here are several steps you may wish to take in preparation for the Churchwide Assembly:

**Step 1. Become a Reconciling Lutheran.** Your support of LC/NA helps promote healing and positive self-esteem for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people of faith. Reconciling Lutherans is to individuals what RIC is to congregations: it is an affirmation of welcome. *Whether you are a member of an RIC congregation or not*, it is important for your voice to be heard as a Reconciling Lutheran as we

Whatever step you take...you will be **supporting** the work of **full inclusion**.

prepare for the Churchwide Assembly. Each name added to this public roster of Reconciling Lutherans will strengthen the call to the church to become truly welcoming and inclusive. (There is no fee to become a Reconciling Lutheran.)

**Step 2. Become a member of LC/NA** with your financial commitment. If you are not a member of LC/NA and would like to join, visit the LC/NA web site ([www.lcna.org](http://www.lcna.org)) and use a credit card to make your payment. Or if you prefer, print a membership form and mail it together with a check. Suggested rates begin at \$50 for individuals, with a wide range of other contribution levels offered. Your support adds your voice as we advocate for positive change within the Lutheran churches. By joining Lutherans Concerned you also support local chapters who receive a portion of your membership fee, which are the only dues local chapters receive.

**Step 3. Evergreen Giving** allows you to support LC/NA by periodic withdrawals from your checking, savings, or credit card account. It helps us plan our revenue and meet our goals from a more predictable income stream. And you don’t need to remember to write those checks each month! Just download and print the PDF authorization form found on the LC/NA website ([www.lcna.org](http://www.lcna.org)), fill in the personal information and institutional donation sections,

attach a voided check or savings deposit slip and mail it all to LC/NA, PO Box 4707, Saint Paul, MN 55104-0707.

**Step 4. Make a one-time cash gift** to support the work of LC/NA at the Churchwide Assembly. Your gift will help LC/NA affirm that all people are created in the image of God, including people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. With your support LC/NA will continue the ministry of support, education, witness and empowerment.

**Step 5. Become a “Friend of Andy”** by making a planned gift to support the ministries of LC/NA. You may sign a “letter of intent” to indicate a legacy gift. A few examples of planned gifts include: Gifts made through your will or trust, through a beneficiary designation, a retirement plan or IRA or through a life insurance policy.

These five steps are possible ways you may support the work of LC/NA as we prepare for Churchwide Assembly this August. You may choose one, two, three or more of these action steps, but whatever step you take please be assured that you will be supporting the work of full inclusion in the Gospel.

Given the “new” economy it is no longer possible for many of us to give out of our excess. We need to step up to the plate even if it requires lifestyle changes, in support of our core values. And, for many if not most of us, the acceptance and full inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities within the ELCA is in the top tier of our core values.

We ask you to join others in being part of a caring community that has helped thousands of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people who were alienated from the Lutheran Church and other denominations find healing and wholeness in the Gospel of Christ. ▼

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## Synod Assemblies

*continued from page 9*

Central States, Arkansas-Oklahoma, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast, Indiana-Kentucky, Florida-Bahamas, and others. Even in synods where we did not obtain a majority of support, we saw much smaller vote margins than in the past. In almost all of the synods where our legislation did not succeed, supporters of change garnered at least 40% of the vote.

All in all, 2009 was a very successful assembly season. Many thanks go to our regional coordinators, the Goodsoil Legislative Team, synod liaisons and other contacts, and LC/NA staff members. Our supporters worked graciously and courageously. Navigating the waters of synod constitutions, Robert’s Rules, and complicated local politics is not an easy task, especially when faced with determined opposition. We now turn hopefully toward the churchwide assembly in Minneapolis. ▼

## ELCIC Convention

*continued from page 1*

However, I also felt very supported and accepted by so many people attending convention.

Lutherans Concerned had a low-key presence at this convention, but we were not invisible. On the morning just before convention was convened, LC/NA and LCIC jointly sponsored and presented a Storytelling Training Event for visitors and convention delegates. Phil Soucy presented the Storytelling Program, with help from LCIC Board members, Rev. Tyler Gingrich, Everett Freeman, and me, as well as Walter Rothenberger, convenor of the Toronto Chapter of LCIC. We had a smaller group than we had hoped for, but participation was lively, and feedback was very positive from participants. Attending this training program for the third time myself, I was able to continue honing my own storytelling skills.

The Hospitality Reception held by Lutherans Concerned in Canada was also very well received, with more than 70 attendees at a late evening event, in an informal lounge setting warmly lit by candlelight, comfortable seats (thank goodness!), with good food and a cash bar. (Note to self: next time we need to order more beer than wine. We ran out of beer!) The room bubbled with the sound of talking, laughter, and yes, even some tears.

I had the opportunity for a lengthy conversation with a lay delegate who is not a supporter of full inclusion of LGBTQ individuals in the life of the ELCIC, and was able to successfully use skills learned in RIC training for “graceful engagement.” At the end of our conversation, I thanked him for attending our hospitality event and for speaking and listening to me, and he told me that he wished that there could be more interactions like ours, calm and rational. It was a Spirit-filled moment, and for me, definitely a sign of hope. He still may not be an ally, but we found common ground, and both expressed the desire that our church can find a way to live together with diverse opinions. Several individuals also approached me with their regrets for being unable to attend our hospitality event, while expressing their support for Lutherans Concerned and for LGBTQ individuals in the life of the ELCIC.

During one-on-one conversations, many stories were told throughout the days of convention: the personal pain and struggle

of long-time pastors still “in the closet,” the pain of the parent whose child has left the Lutheran church because their same-gender marriage is not accepted, youth who don’t understand what all the fuss is about, and many, many more, the sharing of my own story several times, and getting more



*Supporters of full **GLBTQ** inclusion spoke with respect, relevance and clarity...**Bishop Susan Johnson** demonstrated the essence of **grace** under pressure.*

comfortable and more effective with each telling. It was a blur of faces for me, reconnecting with old friends and acquaintances, meeting new people from all over Canada, meeting email contacts in person, finding connections because people knew my family or some other reason.

All right, you may ask, but what actually happened on the convention floor? Bishop Susan Johnson, chairing her first national convention, was repeatedly challenged from the floor by those representing Solid Ground and the conservative right, particularly over procedural issues and especially the “No Action” recommendations made by Reference and Counsel (R&C) about motions that the supporters of Solid Ground had submitted to the Convention. While some “opponents” spoke calmly and dispassionately, there were also those who spoke in anger and disrespect. Allies and supporters of full GLBTQ inclusion spoke with respect, relevance and clarity, demonstrating a balanced, thoughtful, heartfelt approach. From the first challenge to the Chair, it was clear that Bishop Johnson’s leadership had the strong support

of the delegates. If anything, the repeated challenges became tiresome, the National Bishop clearly had the sympathy of most delegates, and the challengers were viewed with frustration and little patience. Although clearly tried at times, Bishop Susan’s behavior was the essence of grace under pressure.

Allies had submitted two motions on “restraint in discipline” related to same-gender issues. R&C submitted “No Action” recommendations to both motions, as it had for several earlier motions submitted by Solid Ground supporters. Ironically, the same people arguing for full disclosure and discussion at the beginning of the convention were now asking that the rationale for “No Action” not be provided to convention delegates, a complete reversal of their previous position. The lack of consistency was very apparent. Those in support of full inclusion did not challenge R&C’s decision. R&C’s rationale was three-fold: the last ELCIC national convention in 2007 was not able to pass

a motion on the blessing of same-gender unions, the ELCIC constitution gives jurisdiction over issues of discipline to the synods, and synods have the choice of a range of discipline options. In essence, it appears that this “No Action” recommendation of these motions upholds the authority of the Eastern Synod’s passing of two “restraint in discipline” motions related to same-gender issues at last year’s synodical assembly. The National Convention upheld the R&C recommendation for no action. So, there were no big victories, but a small one.

Leaving University of British Columbia, the site of the 2009 ELCIC National Convention, I was full of mixed feelings: disappointed at the lack of progress made on full inclusion of LGBTQ individuals in the life of the ELCIC, sad about the acrimony and bitterness of some delegates, thankful for the grace-filled moments of music, worship, sharing and connection, hopeful because of the positive signs of mission and ministry in our church, and grateful for all those allies in the ELCIC who accept, support, and advocate for those of us who identify as LGBTQ. ▼

# Transgender Ministry Update

By **Nicole García**, Transgender  
Representative to the LC/NA Board

Since my election as the Transgender Representative in July 2008, I have identified three objectives I want to accomplish during my first two years on the Lutherans Concerned/North America, Board of Directors. First, I want to identify training materials that can be used to assist congregations become fully inclusive. Second, I want to identify other religious organizations that share the same goals of LC/NA and form working relationships with the Transgender leadership of the various groups. Third, I must find ways to reach out to the secular world and find organizations, in the Transgender community, where I can find those who have been excluded from the Gospel of our Lord,

*We have to ensure we are **prepared** to be truly **welcoming and affirming**.*

Jesus Christ. In my quest, all three areas came together, hand-in-hand. This is how it all came about.

From the last issue of the *Concord*, you know, in January 2009, I attended the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force annual conference, *Creating Change*. During that conference, I was invited to a meeting of the National Religious Leadership Roundtable. As a result of joining the roundtable, I was invited to attend the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) “Lobby Day” in Washington DC, which would include a meeting of the National Transgender Religious Leaders Summit. During *Creating Change*, I was invited to become a member of the speaker’s bureau for TransFaith Online. TransFaith Online participated in the TransHealth Conference, held in Philadelphia from June 11–13, where I presented a workshop on welcoming and affirming programs. At each conference and at each meeting, I met Transgender leaders who are active in welcoming and affirming

*During the National Transgender Religious Leaders Summit, Nicole García, (right) participated in a press conference with (left to right) Pr. Jay Wilson (ELM), Pr. Megan Roher (ELM), Pr. Malcom Himshoot (UCC) and Woody Comacho (at the podium).*



BERNARD SCHLAGER

programs in various denominations and religions. At the secular conferences, *Creating Change* and the NCTE lobby days, I met so many people who were driven away from the church and were astounded that I was an active member of any church. I was able to proclaim the Gospel and spread the Word that ALL are forgiven and welcome at the table of the Lord. I have to thank you all for giving me this office, this time to reach out and do the work of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Through the guidance of the Lord, I am well on the way of achieving my second and third objectives.

As members of RIC congregations and as Reconciling Lutherans, we have to ensure we are prepared to be truly welcoming and affirming. To achieve my first goal, I have asked the editor of the *Concord* to print the Internet addresses for web pages and sites where educational information and curriculum can be downloaded. I take full responsibility for including the curriculum from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), *Gender Identity and Our Faith Communities, A Congregational Guide toward Transgender Advocacy*. Please, direct all comments to [trans@lcna.org](mailto:trans@lcna.org). Before you send your message, take a look at the HRC guide. It is good. I was hurt by HRC action in 2007. I went to the NCTE lobby days, not the HRC Clergy Call, because I have not totally forgiven HRC for leaving the Transgender community behind in 2007, but the guide is presented in a way to educate and illuminate. I personally know some of the people who contributed to the guide and I respect their work. Take a look at the HRC material, with an open mind, then, send me your comments at [trans@lcna.org](mailto:trans@lcna.org).

We are all sent on a journey. I attended conferences and made contacts with people around the county, because Jesus declared it so. You, my friends in Christ, make the difference. Look at the material I cited. Talk to your Pastors about the full inclusion of the Transgender community. Talk to your fellow congregants about your experiences as a Reconciling Lutheran. I will continue to reach out to other denominations and religions to ensure they all know Lutherans Concerned/North America is working hard to achieve the full inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the Lutheran communion. ▼

## Training materials available

- **Human Rights Campaign** – <http://www.hrc.org/issues/religion.asp>  
Gender Identity and Our Faith Communities: A Congregational Guide for Transgender Advocacy
- **The Institute for Welcoming Recourses** – <http://www.welcomingresources.org/>  
All in God’s Family, Creating Allies for our LGBT Families Building an Inclusive Church: A welcoming Toolkit transaction, A Transgender Curriculum for Churches and Religious Institutions
- **Lutherans Concerned/North America** – <http://www.lcna.org/>  
A wide selection of printed materials, video and the Reconciling in Christ Leadership Training program
- **National Center for Transgender Equality** – <http://www.nctequality.org/>  
Teaching Transgender

# I Thee Wed

By **James Tyler**, Co-Director, Multicultural Relations Committee, LC/NA

**O**n June 3, 2009, New Hampshire became the sixth state in the U.S. to sanction gay marriage, following Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, Iowa and Maine. Here in California,

the State Supreme Court has handed down a decision upholding Proposition 8 banning same-gender marriages but upholding the legality of those already performed. My friends, Dan and Carl and Denise and Karen, have their marriages but grieve for those who now cannot get married in California. The future legal status of their marriages continues to hang in the balance if challenges are filed.

“Gender restrictions violate the State Constitution’s equal protection guarantee.” This is what the California Supreme Court said in May of 2008, and 18,000 gays and lesbians got married. Almost immediately the religious opponents mounted an initiative to put Proposition 8 on the ballot in November 2008. The gay community and allies mounted a campaign to fight the proposition, but money and time were against them. Money came from outside of California to support the

**Organizing and movement-building for full equality will continue as a struggle for civil and human rights until it is achieved.**

proposition. Educating the general population around this issue takes time and we did not have enough of it. The proposition passed on Nov. 4, 2009. Very quickly, the case was taken to the State Supreme Court to determine if the rights of one group of people might be so easily voted away by an opposing group.

Most recently, the Miss USA Pageant became a vehicle for the continuing debate. Miss California, Carrie Prejean, who became Miss USA, was asked her opinion on gay marriage. She answered that she believed marriage was to be only between a man and a woman. Prejean attended a conference of the National Organization for Marriage in Washington, DC, where she recorded a voice message for the organization to thank their supporters and to solicit contributions. As of June 10, 2009, according to the Associated Press, Prejean was fired by Donald Trump from the USA pageant. It is reported that she violated her contract by speaking against gay marriage while neglecting some of her appearances.

In Los Angeles, Rabbi Denise L. Eger has become the new president of the Board of Rabbis of Southern California. Rabbi Eger has been a tireless fighter against the ban on same-gender marriage. She speaks

out for gay marriage at her West Hollywood synagogue where I have attended various services. As leader of some 300 rabbis, she finds gay marriage to be one of several pressing issues before the Board of Rabbis. Rabbi Denise Eger and Karen Siteman were married by a rabbi in 1994. Last October they became one of the 18,000 gay and lesbian couples who now found their marriage status awaiting the decision by the California Supreme Court. Now they, too, find themselves, though still married, in a painful position.

On Tuesday, May 26, the California Supreme Court revealed its decision on gay marriage. The California Proposition 8 ban on gay marriage will stand, while the legal marriages of the 18,000 same-gender couples who previously were married in California are upheld. This means that all Californians are not necessarily entitled to equal protection under the law. It is a mixed and disturbing decision. It is not clear how the laws can and will apply to same-gender couples.

Plans were made to respond to the California Supreme Court decision the Saturday after it was handed down. People were asked to come to West Hollywood as well as to the City Hall in Fresno. The Fresno gathering was called “Meet in the Middle for Equality,” since Fresno is located about midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco. At the Fresno demonstration, a group of about one hundred pastors signed a declaration that they would not perform any marriages until same-gender couples are also granted the same rights.

The demonstrations and protests began early that Tuesday afternoon and no doubt will continue. A court challenge to the decision and another proposition are planned. There continues a debate as to how soon a court or ballot challenge should take place. Having adequate time to educate the public is a major factor for the success of any challenge.

More importantly, organizing and movement-building for full equality will continue as a struggle for civil and human rights until it is achieved on a national level. It is noteworthy to consider that this struggle may be taking up where the civil rights movement left off in the effort to achieve equal rights for all. That struggle is now being waged state by state but the real goal has to be the reversal of the federal law called the “Defense of Marriage Act.” It is worth noting that also on the same date as the California Supreme Court decision came the announcement of the selection by President Obama of the first latina to be nominated for the U.S. Supreme Court, Judge Sonia Sotomayor. The wheels of justice turn slowly, but grind exceedingly fine.

Last week, in the middle of June, Gay Pride Month, the LGBT community received what many felt like a slap in the face from the Obama Administration. The Department of Justice had President Obama sign on to a brief that would support the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). This filing took place in Santa Ana, California, during the

*continued on page 16*

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **CRISIS: 40 Stories Revealing the Personal, Social, and Religious Pain and Trauma of Growing Up Gay in America.**

Ed. Mitchell Gold with Mindy Drucker, with a Foreword by Martina Navratilova. Greenleaf Book Group Press: Austin, Texas. 2008

*Reviewed by Bishop Lowell O. Erdahl, Emeritus, St. Paul Synod, ELCA*

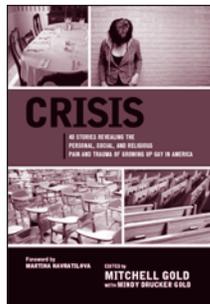
I am embarrassed to confess that even after college, seminary, internship and further graduate study, I began my ministry fifty years ago with no understanding of sexual orientation and with attitudes toward homosexuality grounded in ignorance. Today I thank God for gay and lesbian Christians who have been my teachers. They have opened my mind and heart to the significant segment of humanity who, through no choice of their own, desire love, affection and sexual fulfillment in partnership with a person of the same sex. Most important among these teachers are gay and lesbian friends who have opened their hearts in personal sharing of who they are and yearn to be. Others have confided their identity and suffering during pastoral counseling and some, with admirable courage, have put their stories in print for all the world to read. All have helped to diminish my ignorance and transform my attitudes.

Now, thanks to Mitchell Gold and the publication of *CRISIS*, each of us is invited to meet forty more of these courageous “educators.” Their “revealing” stories, which center on childhood, teen years and young adulthood, tell of struggles, loneliness and suffering often caused by the condemnations of both church and community.

Here are a few snippets from their moving testimony.

“My minister said I would go to hell if I didn’t rebuke the homosexual demon within me and be spiritually treated by him.” —Irene Monroe.

“I decided that rather than ‘give in to my temptation,’ I would kill myself in some kind of ‘accident’ so that no one would ever know.” —Mel White.



“Being an ‘abomination’ sounded totally beyond God’s love.” —Gene Robinson

“I couldn’t decide which would be the bigger sin: being a homosexual or taking my own life. When the church is the center of your life and you are not accepted there, what do you do?” —Bruce Bastian.

“I acted Richard the Straight and pretty much got away with it...My real self, the self I had been taught by my family and culture to hate, was beginning to agitate for recognition, for light and air and life.”

—Richard Chamberlain.

“I never thought, ‘I’m gay.’ I didn’t have words for it. But I knew I was very different.”

—Howard Bragman.

“It was as if we didn’t exist...I never had a single conversation about sexual orientation with anyone.” —Donna Red Wing.

“I thought that nobody in the universe would ever understand me.” —Jim Normel.

“‘You need to leave,’ said his mother. She turned to my father, ‘Rolph, we can’t have him in the house anymore.’”

—Brandon Rolph Kneefel.

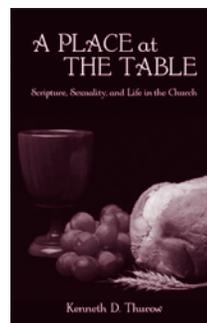
“The notion that I would have chosen to identify with a group that seemed universally despised is as stupid a view as is possible for a rational human being to hold.” —Barney Frank.

From a mother’s confession:

“I learned of Anne’s homosexuality in a ‘coming out’ letter she wrote to us from college...Here is an excerpt from the letter I sent her... “The most difficult part of your letter was the gay thing. I will never accept that in you.” Then, after Anna’s suicide: “While Anna was alive I was unteachable. What if I had condemned her in my heart, and sometimes to her face without reason?...I began to wonder if what I’d been taught all my life in the church was true... We began to understand...that the Bible says nothing about innate homosexuality as we know it today, or about people of the same gender living in loving, committed, monogamous relationships.”

—Mary Lou Wallner.

If you want to learn from the best scholarship on homosexuality, read books such as *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World* by Martti Nissinen, and *A Time to Embrace* by William Stacy Johnson. If you want to learn from the powerful witness of forty fellow human beings who tell it “like it is” read *CRISIS*



### **A Place at the Table: Scripture, Sexuality, and Life in the Church**

Kenneth Thurow. iUniverse (New York, Bloomington): 2009  
118 pages.

*Reviewed by the Rev. Martin Billmeier*

Kenneth Thurow’s book, *A Place At The Table*, serves up

good fare for any congregation that wishes to discuss the hot topic of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in the church. Thurow’s style and content is accessible and down-to-earth enough to make this book a good discussion starter for any church group, especially for the non-theologically trained. He writes from the perspective of a parish pastor, whose long career in the ELCA, mostly in the Rocky Mountain Synod, brought him face to face with people wrestling with faith, their families and their sexual orientation.

Thurow’s book wisely focuses primarily on the Biblical issue, which is where the fault line between opposing sides seems to lie in any synod or churchwide assembly debate. But, in addition to the Bible, he also addresses the question of what the current controversy over human sexuality means for the mission of the ELCA. Perhaps most helpful for church group study is the section of resources at the end of the book for discussion of homosexuality and the church.

The first course Thurow serves is in the introduction and first chapter. He tells of his own journey and evolution as a parish pastor as he deals with real-life non-heterosexual (his preferred term) people and explores the topic with colleagues. He outlines typical responses that he has found the church makes to the question, “How shall we characterize or understand homosexuality?” Most people come up with one of four responses, he says: wicked

perversity, devastating misfortune, a genetic or psychic flaw, or a manifestation of creation's diversity. No one who reads this book in a discussion will feel his or her point of view was left out.

He then goes into a helpful discussion of the Lutheran Confessions and the place of sexuality in the minds of the Lutheran reformers, a discussion rarely seen in this type of book. I say helpful because, while the confessions do not address homosexuality (and neither, for that matter, does Luther, except perhaps in his rather cryptic descriptions of what went on in the monasteries of his day), they do address the issue of celibacy. Specifically, the reformers' "understanding of creation and human nature led them to oppose any ecclesiastical or legal demands that were contrary to flesh-and blood realities. They affirmed that humans are sexual beings, and that attempts to suppress sexuality have unhealthy consequences." Pastor Thurow notes that the reformers' logic in applying the "flesh and blood" realities test to celibacy can inform our discussion of LGBT clergy and the ELCA's current policy. Good discussion starter for a church group.

The main course of *A Place At The Table* is found in chapters two through five where Pastor Thurow serves up the topic of the Bible and homosexuality. He begins with a helpful reminder of church's historical record opposing scientific discoveries going back to the ecclesiastical condemnations of Copernicus and Galileo when the church used, of course, the Bible for its science. He says of the church's history of using the Bible to oppose science, "In each case, what was written in the text came to be recognized as not the last word, not literally true, but rather a construct that reflected the age and culture in which the text was written." Is the church not simply repeating past mistakes as a new generation of people attempts to beat back the biological realities that science has revealed about sexual orientation as a natural variation? From this point Pastor Thurow covers Lutheran hermeneutics and challenges the ELCA to a consistent method of interpretation that follows Luther's method of interpretation—"what conveys Christ"—and notes that Luther himself was "willing to dismiss portions of the Bible which he saw as falling short of that standard."

The rest of the Biblical section deals deftly with the seven "clobber" passages traditionally used to prove that homosexuality is roundly condemned in the Bible, passages that have been treated by

Biblical scholars in more comprehensive works. The value of Thurow's treatment is its non-technical nature, which again makes it a good access point for laypeople to begin a discussion. Thurow helpfully points out inconsistencies, what he calls "the ground shifting," in regard to Biblical interpretation on matters such as divorce as well as the ground objecting to non-heterosexuality: from "mental disorder" to "promiscuous lifestyle" to "Biblically proscribed." Thurow suggests that what this shifting ground reveals is not a reasonable argument, but simple prejudice. He concludes the Biblical section with a chapter called "Life Outside Eden" in which he allows that while science has not conclusively found the causes of homosexuality, nonetheless, the Bible does conclusively argue for love of neighbor, which includes listening to the witness of LGBT people about their own experience of being sexually different. Throughout the

Biblical chapters he also suggests that listening to the lives of LGBT people will reveal the Holy Spirit at work in their lives, a sort of "by their fruits ye shall know them" observation.

For dessert Thurow serves up a chapter entitled "Welcome is Our Mission." The strength of this concluding chapter is that Thurow keeps his argument Biblically-grounded. He constructs a theology of inclusion based primarily on passages from the Gospels and Paul. He notes that throughout the Bible there is a tension between the dynamic of "preservation," which sought to keep the community intact by emphasizing difference and setting rules for who's in and out, and the dynamic of "mission," which is found in Israel's call to be a light to the nations, to Jesus' great commission to "the ends of the earth." He finishes with four recommendations to the

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## Notes from the International Program Committee (IPC)

Although we are all aware of the strains that have seized the international financial community and the citizens of the world, there are still creative ways of voicing concerns and exerting pressure. In May, the Director of the International Program Committee (IPC) expressed concern in formal correspondence addressed to the **President and Prime Minister of Ukraine** over municipal limits being placed on free expression for Pride events in certain cities. This is similar to the communication with the government of Latvia over retaliatory acts in Riga, which had involved Pastor Maris Sants. Although it is often hard to know the effects of such actions, in the case of Latvia, the Pride demonstration the following year in Riga was subsequently given equal protection under the law. Let us hope we do as well in Ukraine.

The actions taken relative to Ukraine were advocated by the **International Gay and Lesbian Association (ILGA)**, to which LC/NA now belongs. The IPC encourages individual members of LC/NA to check out their web-site ([www.ilga.org](http://www.ilga.org)) and consider joining this group.

May 21–24, the **European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups** had their annual Conference in Helsinki, Finland. Marti Shield represented the IPC and LC/NA at the sessions, including providing a workshop presentation. Thank you so much, Marti! Recall that we had Enric, one of the co-presidents of the Forum, with us at LC/NA's assembly, *Hearts on Fire*, in San Francisco. We have a joint communiqué with the Forum, developed in conjunction with *Hearts on Fire*, and hope to see them again with us at the 2010 LC/NA Assembly.

The Forum marked June 20 for a Christopher Streets Day, called Pink Saturday. Instead of a parade, however, there will be a "Pink Petition" for presentation to several embassies representing countries where gay rights are not given the status of basic human rights, as for example in Pakistan, Poland, Latvia, Russia, Iraq, and Iran.

**LGBT people around the world are facing continued struggles to just survive.** A transgender woman was murdered in May in Venezuela, marking the fourth reported such slaying in the last six months. Remember that 80 countries around the world consider homosexuality illegal, and five of them punish homosexual acts with death.

**Nevertheless, the times are changing, indeed.** President Obama has noted the significance of June as Gay Pride month, and both the State Department and USAID have followed suit with special comments, ceremonies and programs that focus on the contributions of their LGBT staff.

**And change is coming to Europe, too!** The new Bishop of Stockholm, Eva Brunne, would seem to be the first openly-lesbian bishop in the world! Her partner is also clergy and they have a three-year old son. Their relationship has been blessed by the Swedish Lutheran Church.

—Philip Moeller, Director, IPC

## NEWSFRONTS

### A treasured friend of Lutherans Concerned has left us



John E. Haaland, 94, died, April 15, 2009. John and his wife, Chris, were prime movers for sixteen years in helping their congregation in Albuquerque learn about the movement to welcome all and eventually decide to become an RIC congregation, the first in their city. John and Chris began their advocacy on behalf of LGBT people back in 1968, and their involvement increased steadily through the next decades. Family, friends, “adopted daughters,” all these continued to spur their activism. John’s commitment grew to spread the word to all Lutheran churches that inclusivity is God’s will.

This was only one of the ways John served his Lord; ecumenism and speaking out for those who had little or no voice, especially the poor, were also high interest activities. He started a Shoes for Kids program which is now 50 years old, developed the Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry (advocacy for the poor) in the state of New Mexico, and readily gave service to the Lutheran Church

at local, synodical and national levels. He will be greatly missed.

### Pr. Arnold Tiemeyer Dies



Arnold Tiemeyer, Lutheran pastor, activist for AIDS sufferers and for health care for the elderly, staunch supporter of full inclusion, and chair of the East Coast Candidacy Panel of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries, died of cancer at age 72 on May 31, 2009.

Lutherans Concerned celebrates the life and work of this tireless advocate for those most needing healing and comfort. He will be missed, though others take up the work where he left off.

Following his ordination in 1962 into the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), one of the predecessor bodies of the ELCA, he served as a parish pastor in Waterloo, Iowa, and Chicago. For 17 years to the mid-1980s, he served in the LCA’s national headquarters, finishing as the assistant executive director for the Division for Missions in North America.

A graduate of Wittenberg University and the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, he was awarded an honorary doctor of

divinity by Wittenberg in 1985. In 1985 he moved to Philadelphia.

In Philadelphia, he was the president of the Lutheran Home at Germantown, 1985–95. In 1989, he proposed that the northwest Philadelphia social services agency open the first nursing home for AIDS in Philadelphia, called Betak. A storm of controversy resulted, prompting the *Philadelphia Inquirer* to chastise several city council members for failing to help fund Betak. In the end, Montgomery County, Pa., provided some financial support. Betak ran until the winter of 1996–97.

A vice president for senior health and community services at Jefferson Healthcare System, 1995–2000, he brokered an agreement in 1998 whereby Genesis ElderCare Network set up a skilled nursing center in Wayne for elderly people released from hospitals but still needing nursing care.

He served as the interim director of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania, lobbying state legislators. From 1999–2008, he served on the board of the Philadelphia Senior Center.

Married for 49 years to his wife, Betsy, he is also survived by two sons, Michael and Peter, a daughter, Ann, and four grandchildren. ▼

### Jerry Vagts

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is a schmoozer, par excellence.

Since April, Jerry has been doing some traveling, including a trip to Denmark with his oldest daughter. Ask him about his grandchildren, his convertible, the summer wedding of his youngest daughter, his trip to Boston, and his tan...unbelievable. He volunteered in the LC/NA—RIC booth at the St. Paul Area Synod Assembly, and we hope to see him at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in full Jerry regalia.

Jerry will be celebrated, toasted (and perhaps roasted just a little) in person at Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters, the biennial assembly of LC/NA and RIC Convention in July 2010. Jerry’s big heart and his devotion to family extended to the LC/NA family and to me. Jerry changed me and the organization for the better. Thank you just doesn’t cover it.

In the meantime, the Board is pleased to

announce the creation of the Jerry Vagts Training Scholarship Fund. Those wishing to contribute to the fund in Jerry’s honor may do so by sending donations marked for the Vagts Scholarship Fund to LC/NA, P.O. Box 4707, St. Paul, Minnesota 55104. The fund will be reserved for those who need financial assistance to attend RIC trainings. Jerry will be notified of each donation to the fund. ▼

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week of Gay Pride-Los Angeles Festival.

Needless to say, there was an uproar heard around the country. I am personally not too surprised that the filing took place in Santa Ana; it’s in Orange County, where a lot of anti-gay legislation has gotten its start. It leaves so many of us dismayed, shocked and perplexed, let alone angry, as to how President Obama could turn his back on GLBT people who worked so hard

to get him elected. I personally think he got a lot of pressure from California and that he is being misinformed about the GLBT community. ▼

### Book Reviews

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ELCA that are very similar to the four recommendations the churchwide assembly will vote on in August. Perhaps most helpful for any church group that use this book for discussion are the resources in the appendix, which include helps to discuss homosexuality in general, Bible discussion hints, an overview of the path to ordination for pastors in the ELCA and even a children’s sermon to help with questions that might be raised by kids in a congregation. This book is a good place for any congregation or church group to begin a discussion of the greatest ecclesiastical controversy of our time.. ▼