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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.

This issue of *Concord* is gathered around two subjects: Advocacy and Pastor Bradley Schmeling's Disciplinary Hearing in Atlanta this past January.

In this issue you will find the story of Pastor Schmeling's hearing told in conjunction with the pertinent provisions of the Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). We also provide a brief history of the policy that is the problem; and we compare the decision in Pastor Schmeling's case with the ELCA's decision in 1990 to suspend and then expel the congregations of St. Francis and First United. And there are personal reflections from participants in and witnesses to the January hearing, including Pastor Schmeling and his

partner, Pastor Darin Easler.

On the subject of advocacy, you'll find interview reports from the "frontlines of advocacy," where the rubber meets the road, so to speak. You'll find a compendium of who's out there advocating on concerns of interest to us – in or at the ELCA, other denominations of faith communities, and in the broader secular society and world. Advocacy comes in many forms, as you'll find in reading Len Weiser's article. See the Kellogg family article for inspiration about outreach to educate others.

The Bradley Schmeling Hearing

Following is an account of the trial of the Rev. Bradley Schmeling, pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church on Ponce de Leon Avenue in Atlanta, Georgia. The section references, which frame the paragraphs of this article, are from the

Constitutions, Bylaws, And Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

7.11. This church affirms the universal priesthood of all its baptized members.

Born in 1963 in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, Bradley Schmeling took that to heart very early in life, and began practicing for the ministry as a young child, enlisting his sister and other kids on the block as congregants. Though pictures exist of young Bradley in full, self-made clergy garb, they are considered 'classified material' by adult Bradley, available for viewing only by close family and friends.

7.21. Within the people of God and for the sake of the Gospel ministry entrusted to all believers, God has instituted the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament. To carry out this ministry, this church calls and ordains qualified persons.

Bradley knew that he wanted to be a minister of Word and Sacrament. Not just a Lutheran

pastor, but a good Lutheran pastor. Accordingly, and at the proper age, he began in earnest his studies at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, followed by seminary at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio, culminating in the 1989 award of an MDiv degree. Examined by the required candidacy committee, approved for ordination, and duly called in accordance with the constitution of the church and the congregation to be the pastor of Calvary Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ohio, he was ordained and installed on November, 4 1989. Thus began his journey that transits this article on his way to the future.

7.22. An ordained minister of this church shall be a person whose commitment to Christ, soundness in the faith, aptness to preach, teach, and witness, and educational qualifications have been examined and approved in the manner prescribed in the documents of this church; who has been properly called and

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The Editor

DALE TRUSCOTT



My theme song is God's love and justice, and I'm singing it right to you, God. I'm finding my way down the road of right living, but how long before you show up? —PSALM 101:1 *The Message*

This is the first issue of *Concord* since my semi-retirement and move to Orlando, my first editorial following the inquisition of my friend Bradley Schmeling.

December 31, 2006, I resigned from serving a delightful little ecumenical mission church in Michigan, an Episcopal-Lutheran congregation. I served for four good years there, effectively merging the congregations and launching them upon new mission while the two denominations have yet to agree on a constitution for the parish. Interesting, given the legal maneuvering that goes on around LGBT concerns!

Kin and I found a home in Florida that we love and decided to move. I am now in "semi-retirement," teaching World Religion and Philosophy at two Orlando colleges/universities. Kin is rebuilding a career in cosmetology. (*Need a hair do?*)

Significant in that I have enjoyed 37 years of ordination, I have not been to worship since I conducted Christmas Eve Eucharist up north, and I don't know yet when I may return to that core experience of being a Christian. There are no RIC churches in Orlando, only a couple in Florida. [It's quite the red state, you know. Yet Disney is clearly diverse, Orlando sports the biggest gay club in the world and our

next-door neighbors, whose trucks are covered with rebel flags, have been cordial and neighborly!] Yet we cannot attend a Lutheran church here and be any more than tolerated with typical church double-talk.

There are several articles in this issue, whose theme is advocacy, and which also bring you heartfelt reflections on Pastor Bradley Schmeling's trial. [I call it inquisition because that is the historic basis for the closed ecclesiastical hearing

process described in our constitution and used in Atlanta.] And you will read in a couple of spots people's struggle, "Shall I stay?" or "Shall I leave?" I am having that struggle, too. The arguments pro and con are simple. If my concern is simply Kin's and my happiness and freedom, we would depart the Lutheran church world with me carrying fond memories of a successful, albeit closeted, career. But if my concern is for the lonely, hurting, despondent people who may be a part of Lutheran communities or

seeking to worship in one now and in the future, then I must stay and continue the struggle for justice. It is a microcosm of a typical "retirement" struggle. When one retires from a career, does one "give a damn" about those he/she leaves behind or does one continue to advocate for the goals and principles with which one tried to guide themselves during the career years?

Bradley Schmeling is a dear friend of mine. The courage and encouraging words he gives in his reflection on his own torture at the hands of the inquisition both intensifies my own struggle and heartens me. I suspect his experience and reflection will do the same for hundreds of you who are readers. There some of us have been; and there, but for the grace of God, go many more of us. Bradley's article ends with these phrases, "No more closed hearings. No more stories that don't get to be told in the light of day. No more removed. No more sent away. No more." I could not agree more! For the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which I love and respect

...does one continue to **advocate** for the principles with which one tried to **guide themselves** during the career years?

eversomuch more than I do the levitical dance of the institutional church, we must struggle on so that there will be no more of this sin disguised as "proper proceedings."

The wisdom of the Hindus, about whom I teach a bit in my courses, says that the last stages in human life are stages not of retirement but of wisdom, of sagely contributions to society and to faith. I hope I can do that and be that in whatever way I am gifted. Continuing to be your *Concord* editor is one

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Lutherans Concerned/ North America...

- Has the simultaneous goals of affirming the God-given nature of sexual orientation, proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ through inclusive worship and promoting positive changes in all expressions of the Lutheran church.
- Is an independent, membership-supported organization which has ministered to thousands of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and heterosexual people over 30+ years of service.
- Reaches out to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities across the U.S.A., Mexico and Canada. Its members also serve as resources to local Lutheran congregations, their pastors, and elected leaders.

We invite you to join us as we learn to better love ourselves and share that love with others.

Publication Information

CONCORD is published quarterly by Lutherans Concerned/North America www.lcna.org. Subscriptions are included with membership or are available separately: \$25 a year to non-members. First class or foreign postage is extra. Write if you have special mailing requirements. Requests for past issues, along with payment of \$5 per issue, should be sent to CONCORD Copies, PO Box 4707, Saint Paul, MN 55104-0707.

Submissions should be directed to: CONCORD Editor, PO Box 4707, Saint Paul, MN 55104-0707 or via e-mail to: concord@lcna.org. Appearance of names of individuals in this newsletter, or membership in Lutherans Concerned/North America does not constitute a definition of sexual orientation. The membership list of LC/NA and the subscription list to CONCORD are strictly confidential. Send changes of address to address above.

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Printed on recycled paper

ISSN 0741-98 72

Co-
Chair



LEN WEISER

I've been thinking a lot about writing this article, but I've put it off and put it off, not knowing how to start it. However, I just completed a search for biblical references relating to advocacy. The one that came up and hit home for me is Deuteronomy 16: 18–20. This passage is talking about appointing judges and the last sentence reads:

Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

I felt that advocacy was an easy word and concept about which I could write. But after reading that passage, my thoughts were taken in a different direction on advocacy. Advocacy is about standing

What does it mean for me to be a **justice-minded advocate**? Is **LC/NA** a justice-minded **organization**?

up for something or someone, "having their back", and supporting what they believe in or fight for. Advocacy requires that I give of my time, energy, and even money to help stand up for or support something or someone I believe in.

I understand all of that and live that in my day-to-day life and work. I see my role as an employer and one who provides services to seniors as advocacy. I help my staff understand their role as staff members providing care to and working with our residents to make sure they have all that they need to lead quality, enriched "freedom" years. Working with seniors isn't a "pretty" profession. It's not sexy, glamorous, or even viewed as prestigious by our society. However, for me it's the best profession I can be a part of to make a contribution to the welfare of others. Seniors are rich people in many senses of the word. We can learn so much from these elders. Now, some might disagree with me because society paints aging as a bad thing. So, I take a risk when I'm 'out there' advocating for seniors.

So, that's advocacy in my work life, but this still wasn't enough for me to write this article. So, I was again drawn back to Deuteronomy and the word

"justice." What does it mean for me to be a **justice-minded advocate**? Is LC/NA a justice-minded organization? Does LC/NA advocate and for whom does it advocate?

To be a justice-minded advocate, I have to reach out for, support, and uphold what is just and fair. So does LC/NA. We are well on the road to doing that. It is so clear to me that Lutherans Concerned/ North America, our organization, is upholding its mission while seeking fair-minded justice within the Lutheran church.

Our advocacy has many faces. Some of us in LC/NA are called to rant and rave at those who impose "rules" that exclude our LGBT brothers and sisters. Some of us work behind the scenes supporting those that are out in the trenches. And some of us advocate for justice just by asking people to stop telling jokes that are demeaning. No matter how we advocate for a justice-minded church, we are all aiming to change behavior, one person at a time. And by this the Kingdom of God comes into view more clearly.

As Christian believers we are called to be advocates for justice. What are you doing these days to advocate for justice in our world and in our Church?

Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Let those words sink in deep into your life. Let them shape your response for God's sake. As you read this edition of the *Concord*, you will read about advocacy, justice-minded advocacy. Read on... read the words about St. John's in Atlanta and Pr. Bradley Schmeling. Read on... read about advocacy by other organizations. Read on... read about Lisbeth Kellogg's presentation with her family.

God's blessings to you all! ▼

Executive Director



EMILY EASTWOOD

My tissue-paged pocket sized leather bound Bible which fits nicely in my briefcase, but also requires a magnifying glass or my bifocals pulled unnaturally high and tight against my nose, opens spontaneously, no gold ribbon needed, to one passage: John 14:15–17

Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask, and God will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees nor knows this Spirit. You know this Spirit, because this Spirit abides with you, and will be in you.”

In the year since Pastor Bradley Schmeling first told Bishop Ron Warren the truth, the truth that he loved Pastor Darin Easler, I have witnessed the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth, at work, stirring unintended and reluctant advocates to faithful and prophetic acts beyond tradition and outside the typical Lutheran comfort zone.

Bradley simply kept his promise to inform his Bishop when he found a life partner. He did not set out to provoke Ron Warren or ignite a revolt. When I arrived in Atlanta days after the charges were filed, many of the leaders of St. John’s voiced two ideas repeatedly. They did not want to be perceived by anyone as part of a “movement,” and they just wanted to keep their beloved pastor and St. John’s.

The decision of the Hearing Committee and I arrived in Atlanta almost simultaneously. When we both knew, Bradley and I held each other and let our grief overflow with the frank sobs of breaking hearts. The pain was deepened as we read 14 pages celebrating Bradley’s gifts for ministry, a call for policy change, and then the final sentence of removal. The Committee, as in times past, acted on behalf of a denomination bound by its own commandments rather than the

love of Jesus. The decision caused many, including myself, to remember and relive our pain as candidacy committees, seminaries, congregations, and Bishops chronicled our gifts and then pronounced rejection.

When I spoke to the press, I said that the decision was “astonishing and unprecedented,” as it challenged the constitutionality of the policy and called for immediate appeal and legislative action to end the official discrimination of the church. The decision was unprecedented in that other hearings for partnered gay pastors have ended in unqualified immediate removal. The decision was astonishing to those of us on Bradley’s legal team because an official elected body of the ELCA came out for justice, calling for an end to the policy of exclusion and giving the means to do it. The timing of removal was strategic to heighten the importance of quick action. While I had hoped the hearing committee would take a much bolder step, I see the work of the Advocate in a reluctant, duty bound, and intentionally prophetic band of believers.

I was present when the congregation received the decision. Disappointment and sadness settled on their faces. Bradley and attorney, Jane Fahey, spoke of the possibilities offered by the decision. I listened as some of those previously reluctant and unintentional advocates voiced that the Spirit of Truth was calling them to the center of the movement for full participation: calling them to the denominational and national stage; calling them to

RIC Snapshot

Ascension Lutheran Church is an RIC congregation in Garland, Texas shepherded by Pastor Kurt Friederich.



“**M**y husband and I were looking for a church to call home when we learned that there was an RIC Lutheran church in the Dallas Metroplex. I was both excited and nervous to enter the small, unassuming building the next Sunday morning. The nervousness subsided when the congregation showed sincere smiles and an eagerness to share God’s blessings with us. They truly walk humbly, act justly, and love tenderly.

We haven’t officially joined the church yet, however. We do not wish to join as full-fledged members because that also means joining the ELCA, and neither of us feels welcomed by the entire church... so we have not joined.”

—Jacob and Jason Mutchler-Winningham.

RIC Settings

Added to the Roster since last issue

- Emanuel Lutheran Church**, West Warwick, Rhode Island
- First Lutheran Church**, Louisville, Kentucky
- Gethsemane Lutheran Church**, Austin, Texas
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church**, Decorah, Iowa
- Lutheran Campus Ministry – University of Colorado**, Boulder, Colorado
- St. Paul’s Lutheran Church**, Evanston, Illinois
- The Lutheran Episcopal Campus Ministry at Temple University**, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Mission of the Atonement**, Beaverton, Oregon
- Zion Lutheran Church**, Iowa City, Iowa

For the complete list of RIC congregations, synods, and organizations, go to our website at www.lcna.org

bring their story to the Churchwide Assembly. No one forgot their pain and disappointment, but few needed to stay only there. Their message is still simple: Pastor Brad is and will be their pastor. Now they are ready to take that prophetic message to the wider church and the world. They know the Advocate. The Spirit of Truth lives within them.

Their disappointment is ours, and for many of us, all too personal. The Hearing Committee has opened a door just a crack. Like Bradley, like other pastors being pushed by the Advocate to share their truth, like the people of St. John's, we now have big choices to make. Will we choose to stay silent, to keep our lives the same? Will we let our pain and disappointment paralyze and supplant the very idea of hope? Will we choose to circle our wounds like wagons? Or is the Spirit of Truth calling us to turn our private pain into public action?

Within 48 hours of the decision, with our **goodsoil** partners, LC/NA released to our members a comprehensive legislative plan responding to the challenge of the hearing committee. Synod assemblies will take up our memorials over the next three months. If we are successful at the synod level, our memorials will come before the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in August. Will the policy fall in 2007? I can tell you only this, we have the best chance we've had so far. If we do nothing, I guarantee the policy will not fall in 2007.

I ask you to read the passage from the Gospel of John once again. What is the Spirit of Truth calling you to do? Synod assemblies are upon us. We need you to help staff tables, to tell your stories, to be present in prayer. I ask all of you to come to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Chicago, August 5-11. We are working on a full week of activities including a festival service with Pastor Bradley preaching. Come to support Bradley, Darin and St. John's. Come for all the pastors who have been rejected by the ELCA for whom they love. Come for those who serve in silence. Come to tell your story. Be present for this next chapter in our history.

Are you scared? I am. Should I allow myself to hope? I must, because without hope I choose only the familiar within the safety of the circle of wounds. Should I just leave the ELCA behind and let others fight to change it? I tried to leave, several times actually, but the Advocate will not let me go. God is calling me, and, it seems LC/NA and our **goodsoil** partners, to help the church recognize the Spirit of Truth. I will be in Chicago, and, so will the Board of Directors, Regional Coordinators, and allied volunteers from all over the country. Will the policy fall? Maybe, but whatever happens, with the help of the Spirit, we will create change. We know the Spirit of Truth. The Advocate abides in us. We have everything we need. Amen. Let it be so. ▼

From the Editor

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of those ways. Maybe I'll start a blog! Maybe there are some churches of whatever brand down here in sunshine land who are ready to learn something other than avoidance when it comes to LGBT people in their midst.

Read on, my friends. We are in the midst of pivotal days in our movement called Lutherans Concerned/North America and called by all the other advocacy names you will see in Nancy Polancich's fine chart. The ELCA is in a pivotal time that their bureaucrats hoped would not come so soon. Ah, but the ways of the Spirit are not always the ways of the top floors of ELCA HQ. Many of us are in days of critical decisions and direction-setting for our lives. May our theme songs be as that of the psalmist, songs of love and justice sung right back to God, not to the hearing officers of the world, but to God! And may we find the right way down the road of living looking forward to the time when justice and God both show up. ▼

Next **RIC Core Team Leadership Trainings**

- **May 17-20, 2007**
Boston, Mass.
- **July 26-29, 2007**
Columbus, Ohio
- **October 18-21, 2007**
Santa Fe, N.M.
- **Nov. 15-18, 2007**
New York, N.Y.

To register contact:
Jerry Vagts, grassroots@lcna.org,
612-869-7471

We Need Your **Help!**

Come to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly

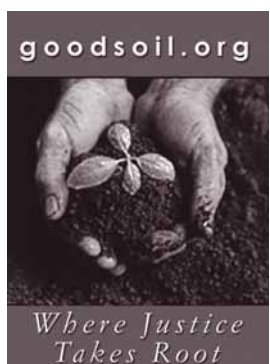
August 5-11, 2007
Chicago Navy Pier

Be involved in the life of your church
Important votes coming

Witness
Stand with Bradley
Support full inclusion

Volunteer (many needed)
Details and sign-up at www.goodsoil.org

Register as a Visitor on the ELCA website in April



The Story of the Trial

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ordained; who accepts and adheres to the Confession of Faith of this church; who is diligent and faithful in the exercise of the ministry; and whose life and conduct are above reproach. An ordained minister shall comply with the constitution of this church.

The congregation of Calvary found out that Bradley was all of that. He became their beloved pastor, serving them well for 6 years, during which both he and they flourished in God's soil, nurtured by Christ's grace, held up by the teachings and practices of Lutheranism.

In 1991, Bradley decided to inform his congregation that he was, and always had been, gay in his self-understanding. He didn't write them a

letter, or announce it from the pulpit or at a social event. He went to the home of each member of the congregation to tell them personally, to find out what they thought about that, and to insure that the work of Christ in their congregation, their community, and the Lutheran Church would not be harmed by this information. The Congregation Council affirmed Bradley's ministry and his retention.

He continued as their pastor until 1995 when he entered the doctoral program at the Graduate School of Religion, Emory University, Atlanta. While engaged in those studies, St. John's Lutheran Church, Atlanta, invited Bradley to consider a call to be their pastor.

Bradley reconsidered his graduate study priorities and submitted his name. He was open with the bishop and the congregation during the call process

The Policy That is the Problem

Presented here is a shortened version of a chart-form history of the actions of the ELCA and its predecessor bodies regarding lesbian and gay persons in ministry and LGBT persons in the church. The full version of this document is available on the Lutherans Concerned/North America website, <http://www.lcna.org>. This history of ELCA policy is very much a work-in-progress. A separate work-in-progress of the history of the policies in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) is also underway.

This information was gleaned from a variety of sources, including LC/NA, LLGM and ECP, Lars Clausen, and the ELCA. Thanks are owed to the original compilers and researchers. Some necessary preliminary notations:

1. Ordination policy is determined by a single national standard of the Division for Ministry.
2. ELCA congregations agree constitutionally to call pastors from this official ELCA Clergy Roster. Pastors may be removed from the Clergy Roster by a process of discipline for a variety of offenses spelled out in the document, "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline" (D&G). According to this document, "practicing homosexuals are precluded from the ordained ministry."
3. The current policy of discrimination against LGBT people emerged out of a dialogue between the Conference of Bishops and the Division for Ministry and was approved as policy by the Church Council. Changing the policy requires action of the Council, the Committee on Appeals (after an unfavorable decision based on the policy) and/or the Churchwide Assembly.
4. Except for H. George Anderson, Herbert Chilstrom, James Childs, Margaret Payne, Paul Egertson, and Bradley Schmeling, all of the pastors named in this history are now rostered by the Extraordinary Candidacy Project.
5. "Extra-ordinem" is a Latin term from *extra-* "out" + *ordinem* (nom. *ordo*) "order" literally meaning "out of order," especially the usual order—not in the sense of "out of order" that connotes broken, but the sense of actions that depart from the normal or regular way they are done.

Abbreviations used in the following edited chart:

- ALC** American Lutheran Church—predecessor body.
CB Conference of Bishops.
CC ELCA Church Council.
CWA Churchwide Assembly.
DGD Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline.
ECP Extraordinary Candidacy Project.
ELCA Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
LCA Lutheran Church in America—predecessor body.
LC/NA Lutherans Concerned/North America.

- LG** Lesbian or Gay.
LGBT Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender.
LLGM Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministries.
V&E Vision and Expectations.
- 1970** A Social Statement (on sex, marriage, and family) of the LCA.
1974 Lutherans Concerned/North America founded.
1980 A Social Statement (on human sexuality and sexual behavior) of the ALC.
1988 Three Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary seminarians, approved candidates for ordination, (Jeff Johnson, Jim Lancaster, and Joel Workin) publicly announce that they are gay.
1988 Conference of Bishops (CB) sets "interim guidelines" for gay and lesbian clergy: "Persons of homosexual orientation who seek to be ordained or who are already ordained will be expected to refrain from homosexual practice."
1989 Working groups draft first proposals for Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline (DGD).
1989 CB reviews proposed DGD.
1989 Committee on Appeals approves proposed DGD for consideration by 1989 Churchwide Assembly (CWA) — "homosexual genital activity" is included within "conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office."
1989 Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministry (LLGM) founded.
1989 ELCA Church Council (CC) recommends that the CWA amend the bylaws so that the CC, and not the CWA, has power to approve/amend DGD as a document separate from bylaws and constitution — "Practicing homosexuals are precluded from the ministry of this church."
1989 CWA amends the bylaws regarding DGD as requested by CC.
1989 CC approves final form of DGD, includes "Practicing homosexuals are precluded from the ministry of this church."
1989 CWA passes a resolution condemning sexual harassment and sexual abuse.
1990 CC approves Vision & Expectations (V&E) for ordained ministers.
1990 ELCA tries and suspends St. Francis and First United Lutheran Churches for calling, ordaining and installing openly-gay Ruth Frost, Phyllis Zillhart and Jeff Johnson.

- 1991** The Network for Inclusive Vision formed.
1991 CWA approves summary removal of congregations that call pastors not on the roster.
1991 CWA affirms that LG people, as individuals created by God, are welcome.
1993 V&E document applies to all ordained ministers.
1993 Presiding Bishop Herbert Chilstrom urges Clinton administration to lift the ban on homosexual persons in the military.
1993 CC approves V&E for rostered lay ministers.
1993 CC reaffirms opposition to all forms of verbal or physical harassment or assault of persons regardless of their sexual orientation.
1993 The Extraordinary Candidacy Project (ECP) created to provide a credentialing process for LGBT persons.
1994 Pr. Ross Merkel (St. Paul Lutheran Church, Oakland) disciplined and defrocked for being in a committed, same-gender relationship. Congregation retains him.
1995 LLGM becomes a national "mission society," offering financial, pastoral, legal and professional/mobility assistance to LG persons seeking to enter ministry.
1995 CWA affirms "gay and lesbian people, as individuals created by God, are welcome to participate fully in the life of the congregations of the ELCA."
1995 CWA commends synods working on statements on human sexuality.
1996 St. Francis and First United removed from the roster of ELCA congregations.
1996 The CB publishes "A Word of Welcome to Gay and Lesbian Persons."
1996 Pr. Steve Sabin (Lord of Life Lutheran, Ames, Iowa) tried and defrocked. His congregation retained him as their pastor.
1997 Pr. Deb Click (St. Paul's Lutheran, Newark, Ohio) forced to resign her call for being in a committed same-gender relationship, in violation of ELCA policy.
1998 Pr. Jane Ralph forced to resign her call as pastor in Kansas City for being in a committed, same-gender relationship, in violation of ELCA policy.
1999 Pr. Jim Bishoff forced to resign his call as pastor in San Marcos, Calif., for being in a committed, same-gender relationship, in violation of ELCA policy. Forms Independent Lutheran Church of All Saints.
1999 University Lutheran Chapel in Berkeley, Calif., called the Rev. Jeff Johnson as pastor. The Chapel has been "censured."

about his homosexuality. He told the bishop and the congregation that he was single, and that if he ever met someone with whom he wished to spend the rest of his life in a committed relationship, he would tell them.

On August 15, 2000, Bradley began as the pastor of St. John's Lutheran. Since that time, membership in the congregation has increased 52%, regular giving by members has increased by 70%, total giving to ELCA benevolence is up 14%, average weekly attendance at worship services is up 31%, and on average 34.4% of congregation attend weekly services. All of those measures within the ELCA are down nationally. Bradley is the kind of pastor, and St. John's the kind of congregation, that the ELCA should seek to replicate.

7.41. Letters of Call. Letters of call to ordained ministers of this church or properly approved candidates for this church's roster of ordained ministers shall be issued in keeping with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions as well as policies regarding such calls developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and approved by the Church Council.

Bradley has one of these, calling him to serve as the pastor of St. John's Lutheran church, Atlanta, Georgia. And, as he had promised he would do prior to receiving the call, he informed both the congregation and the bishop in 2006 that he had met Pastor Darin Easler and fallen in love, that they were going to be in a committed relationship the rest of their lives. The congregation held a party for them; the bishop asked Bradley to resign from the

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| <p>1999 CWA declines to propose a change in the standards for rostered ministry.</p> <p>1999 Pr. Ned O'Donnell installed, Christ the Victor Lutheran Church, Fairfax, Calif.</p> <p>2000 Presiding Bishop Anderson publishes "Clarification Regarding Same-sex Blessings and Ongoing Deliberation Concerning Homosexuality."</p> <p>2000 Abiding Peace Lutheran Church in Kansas City, Mo., calls and ordains "extra ordinem" ECP Candidate Donna Simon. The congregation has been censured by the synodical Bishop.</p> <p>2000 CC does not recommend the constitutional changes necessary to amend V&E.</p> <p>2000 CC expressed gratitude that conversations related to human sexuality have occurred in many areas of this church.</p> <p>2000 CC reaffirms the commitment of this church to continue to dialogue about human sexuality, including homosexuality, and the inclusion of gay and lesbian persons in our common life and mission.</p> <p>2000 Three congregations in Oakland/Berkeley call ECP Candidate Craig Minich to be the pastor of a new jointly sponsored outreach to urban youth. Pr. Minich was ordained "extra ordinem" in February 2001.</p> <p>2001 Pr. Robyn Hartwig (Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Sacramento, Calif.) informed the Bishop of her life-long partnership and awaits a decision as to potential discipline. Pr. Hartwig is both ECP and ELCA rostered.</p> <p>2001 Pr. Steve Sabin accepted an illegal and "irregular" call to Christ Church Lutheran in San Francisco. The congregation awaits a discipline decision by the synodical Bishop.</p> <p>2001 St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church calls and ordains "extra ordinem" their pastoral minister and ECP candidate, Anita Hill. The congregation was censured by the synodical Bishop.</p> <p>2001 Bishop Paul Egertson (Southern California Synod) resigns in protest of the policy on LG ordination.</p> <p>2001 CWA decides to implement jointly a churchwide study on homosexuality.</p> <p>2001 CWA provides that the process includes creation of a study document on homosexuality.</p> <p>2001 A first report to be brought to the 2003 CWA. The final report, complete with action steps for full implementation, to be presented to the 2005 CWA.</p> | <p>2001 CWA resolves to respect charitably one another as we examine our understandings and practices.</p> <p>2001 CWA requests materials to assist and support pastors as they provide pastoral care and counseling for persons concerned with these issues.</p> <p>2001 CWA requests a specific plan and timeline leading to a decision concerning the rostering of homosexual persons who give expression to sexual intimacy only in a relationship that is mutual, chaste, and faithful, to be presented to 2005 CWA.</p> <p>2001 CWA initiates a process to develop a social statement on human sexuality.</p> <p>2001 CC receives the report on the proposed statement on human sexuality.</p> <p>2001 CC resolves to continue thoughtful, deliberate, and prayerful conversation throughout the ELCA about human sexuality.</p> <p>2001 CC encourages refining the proposed options for this church's response by a) an exploration of the Lutheran understanding of the Word of God as foundation for the process; and b) developing a congregational study guide.</p> <p>2001 Pr. Arlo Peterson installed Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Key West, Fla.</p> <p>2001 Pr. Lyle Beckman installed First United Lutheran Church, San Francisco, Calif.</p> <p>2002 Rev. James M. Childs Jr. as director for the ELCA Studies on Sexuality and the 13-person task force to be chaired by Bishop Margaret G. Payne [New England Synod] appointed.</p> <p>2002 CC recommends approval of the following proposed elements: A six-year time line for the studies on sexuality, a communications plan, a total budget of \$1.15 million for the six-year study.</p> <p>2002 ECP Candidate Sharon Stalkfleet ordained "extra ordinem" and installed, Lutheran Ministry to Nursing Homes, St. Paul, Trinity, Resurrection Lutheran Churches, Oakland, Calif., Trinity Lutheran Church, Alameda, Calif.</p> <p>2003 CWA requests the Task Force for the ELCA Studies on Sexuality to continue to include the concerns of youth and young adults.</p> <p>2003 CWA supports the ongoing work of the ELCA Studies on Sexuality, especially about blessing of same-gender relationships and ordination of those in committed relationships.</p> | <p>2003 CWA declined to alter the time line established by the 2001 CWA.</p> <p>2004 ECP candidate Jay Wiesner ordained "extra ordinem" and installed, Bethany Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minn.</p> <p>2004 Pr. Dan Hooper installed Hollywood Lutheran Church, Hollywood, Calif.</p> <p>2004 Pr. Jenny Mason installed Central City Lutheran Mission, San Bernardino, Calif.</p> <p>2005 CWA urges ELCA to concentrate on finding ways to live together faithfully in the midst of disagreements.</p> <p>2005 CWA continues respect for the guidance of the 1993 statement of the Conference of Bishops; and further that this church welcomes gay and lesbian persons into its life and trust pastors and congregations to discern ways to provide faithful pastoral care for all to whom they minister.</p> <p>2005 CWA does not pass Resolution III providing separate (and not equal) procedure for ordination and rostering of LGBT persons in committed, same-gender relationships.</p> <p>2006 Eric Christensen, ECP candidate for ordination, called by St. Luke's Lutheran Church of Logan Square in Chicago as their pastor, subsequently ordained "extra ordinem" and installed in October.</p> <p>2006 Megan Rohrer, ECP candidate for ordination, called by Ebenezer Lutheran Church of San Francisco as their pastor in a specialized ministry with the homeless. Pr. Megan Rohrer's "extra ordinem" ordination occurred in November.</p> <p>2006 Pr. Robert Goldstein installed St. Francis Lutheran Church, San Francisco, Calif.</p> <p>2007 Pr. Bradley Schmeling, St. John's Lutheran Church, Atlanta, was charged and put before a discipline hearing for being in a committed, same-gender relationship, in violation of ELCA policy. In its decision, the Hearing Committee found with "near unanimity" that the ELCA policy is "at least bad policy" and may be in violation of the constitution of the ELCA. The Hearing Committee called for the ELCA to change its policy and outlined two ways that could happen. Bound by the current policy, the Hearing Committee ordered Bradley removed from the clergy roster effective August 15, 2007, leaving time for the Committee on Appeals to declare the policy unconstitutional or the 2007 CWA to change the policy.</p> |
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The Story of the Trial

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clergy roster and, upon receiving a refusal, eventually filed charges against him.

20.13 The accused shall be entitled to a hearing before a discipline hearing committee as described in the bylaws... If the accused is an individual, the hearing shall not be open to the public unless both the accusers and the accused agree to a public hearing. At a hearing not open to the public, a limited number of concerned persons may attend as provided in the bylaws.

The Bishop of the Southeastern Synod, Ronald Warren, did not agree to a public hearing, despite the fact that Bradley specifically asked for it. Representing Pastor Bradley were the Rev. Susan

Bradley informed the congregation and the **bishop** that he had **fallen in love**... the **congregation** held a **party** for them...

Fahey, of the Presbyterian Church, and the Rev. Robert Rimbo, formerly Bishop of Southeast Michigan Synod, currently pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Manhattan. Also allowed to be present were Judy Schmeling, Bradley's mother; Pastor Darin Easler, Bradley's partner; and Laura Crawley, President of St. John's congregation, as the congregational representative.

20.21.01 Ordained ministers shall be subject to discipline for: ...
b. conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office;

More on this when we look at the decision of the Hearing Committee.

20.21.07 When charges are brought by a synodical bishop... the synodical bishop... shall deliver a copy of the charges to the accused and the secretary of this church.

Bishop Warren did this on August 8, 2006.

20.21.08 A discipline hearing committee shall be convened to conduct a hearing. The voting members of this committee shall be composed of 12 persons of whom six shall be selected by the Synod Council's Executive Committee from the Committee on Discipline of the synod and six shall be selected from the churchwide Committee on Discipline under the process described in 20.21.12... A hearing officer selected from the churchwide Committee of Hearing Officers under the process described in 20.21.14. shall preside as the non-voting chair of the discipline hearing committee.

The Hearing Committee for Bradley's trial was comprised as outlined in 20.21.08. Of the six coming from the churchwide Committee on Discipline, Bradley was allowed to choose two. The Hearing Officer, the non-voting chair of the committee, was James Ellefson, James Ellefson, a lawyer and long-time member of the Committee of Hearing Officers.

20.21.17 In each specific case for which a discipline hearing committee has been constituted, the committee shall, within 60 days... meet with the accused and the accuser(s) to hold a hearing.

The trial of Bradley commenced on January 19th in unmarked meeting rooms down a cul-de-sac hallway in the Sheraton Midtown at Colony Square in Atlanta. The sessions of the trial were held from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, with the usual breaks, including one for lunch. The sessions ended on Tuesday, January 23rd, whereupon the deliberations commenced. Their deliberations ended on January 24th. The decision of the Hearing Committee was written by James Ellefson, and promulgated 15 days later on February 8, 2007.

20.21.19 At the hearing, the accuser(s) may present evidence in support of the charges and thereafter the accused shall be entitled to present evidence.

The Rev. Lowell Almen, Secretary of the ELCA, appeared before the Hearing Committee to go over the ELCA constitution, bylaws, policies, *Vision and*

Reflections on the Trial

Pr. Herbert W. Chilstrom

Does the Church Ever Change? Of Course It Does!

When I was asked to testify at Atlanta on behalf of Pastor Brad Schmeling I gave it careful thought. As a former presiding bishop of the ELCA, I recognize that my involvement in any current issue is questionable in the minds of some folks. But I also see myself as a member of this church whose convictions need to be shared with others.

The issues at the hearing for Pastor Schmeling were quite clear. The prosecution argued, correctly, that ELCA and predecessor church policy precludes ordination for those in same-gender relationships. Neither I nor any of those testifying for Pastor Schmeling questioned this reality.

The issue, however, is whether the ELCA



should continue to impose that rule. That, in turn, leads to still another question: Does the church ever change its mind? Yes, of course it does! We are always in the process of studying Scripture, examining tradition, listening to the voices of reason, and making judgments on the basis of experience. That is why we now ordain women. It is why we handle divorce of pastors on a case-by-case basis. It is why we permit younger children to share in the Lord's Table. Change is inevitable when it becomes clear to a majority that it is necessary.

Many of us have come to believe that the stance of the ELCA regarding ordination for those in faithful same-gender relationships needs to be changed. Biblical scholars have given us new insights into the passages we once thought were an airtight case against any expression of same gender affection. As more and more homosexual persons have emerged from their closets, we have come to see that they are no different from those of us who are straight. Some in both camps lead

very immoral lives. But most live responsibly, and many share the same convictions regarding the core of our Christian faith.

My decision to testify on behalf of Pastor Schmeling was based on the changes I have experienced in my own views over a period of more than 30 years. I can no longer justify excluding well-qualified persons in faithful same-gender relationships from ordained ministry.

The strong majority on the hearing panel — all elected to reflect deeply on the governing documents of the ELCA — apparently agreed. They concluded that the Constitution of the ELCA does not require such exclusion. They urged that documents like "Vision and Expectations" be revised by deleting this limitation.

The outcome of the hearing panel's decision was far more positive than many of us had expected. I applaud the panel for its wisdom and courage. Their added call for a policy that will open the door quickly for

Expectations and Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline.

Bishop Ronald Warren testified before the committee as the accuser.

For, and in addition to, Bradley, the following testified before the Hearing Committee:

- Barbara Arne, member of St. John's and head of the Call Committee that called Bradley
- Paul Arne, member of St. John's
- John Ballew, member of St. John's
- Mary Benis, a member of Calvary Lutheran, Pastor Bradley's congregation in Columbus, Ohio
- Jeanette Burgess, AIM, member of St. John's, Music Director, and member of Southeastern Synod staff
- Joanne Chadwick, retired Executive Director of the ELCA Commission for Women
- The Rev. Bishop Herbert Chilstrom, first presiding bishop of the ELCA
- Laura Crawley, President of St. John's congregation
- The Rev. Dr. David Fredrickson, New Testament professor at Luther Seminary, St. Paul
- Pastor Sue Gamelin, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, High Point, North Carolina, previously Assistant to Bishop Warren in both the Southeastern and the Florida-Bahamas Synods
- The Rev. Dr Eric Gritsch, retired professor of the Confessions and Church History (translated the Book of Concord), Gettysburg Seminary
- Joshua Love, 18-yr-old member of St. John's
- James Mayer, 70-yr-old member of St. John's



Prayerful laying-on of hands on Friday evening.

- The Rev. Ben Stewart, member of St. John's, PhD candidate at the Candler School of Theology, previous chaplain to Holden Village Retreat Center
- Dr. Jonathan Strom, Associate Professor of Church History and Chair of History and Interpretation of Christianity, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, as well as a member of St. John's
- The Rev. Jennifer Thomas, pastor of Lake Park Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin and member of the ELCA Church Council

20.21.21 The discipline hearing committee shall render its decision in writing. The written decision shall be in two parts: a. Findings of Fact. In this part, the committee shall set forth what it has found to be the relevant facts, that is, what it believes to be the truth of the matter.

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those who have been removed from the roster to be considered for return to places of service in the church is the most any of us could have expected.

Now I pray that the ELCA as a church will follow the lead of the hearing panel and make these changes.

Rev. Darin Easler

"Do not consider the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing."
Isaiah 43: 18-19a



This verse comes to mind as I think about the experiences surrounding Bradley's trial in January. The trial consisted of those five very intense days behind closed doors with the Hearing Committee; but in reality, they were the culmination of all that's happened since March 2006 when Bradley first went to Bishop Warren to tell him about our relationship. What I have felt – since that day

in March until now – is the profound strength, support and prayer so generously and graciously shared from people all across this country and throughout the world. It was that strength and support I felt most profoundly as we entered those days of the trial proceedings in January.

I felt deeply blessed to be able to be in the hearing room for those days. I knew it would be one of the most difficult experiences, but also one of the most profound experiences of my life. As I entered the room, I was painfully aware of the walls that surrounded us – allowing us to be on the inside, while keeping everyone else out. This felt like a painful metaphor for what the ELCA's policy regarding its LGBT clergy, seminarians, members and allies has been like for far too long. I felt the weight and pain of those stories carried with us as we entered those days.

Through Bradley's testimony I also felt the empowerment of my story being told – of being quietly dismissed by the ELCA, allowed

to "fall off the roster," transfer to the United Church of Christ, and disappear from the ELCA as the faith family I had been a part of since my baptism on Reformation Sunday, October 31, 1965, my ordination on October 4, 1998, until August 3, 2006 when I was removed from the ELCA roster.

But Bradley's story, and the incredible testimony of the St. John's members and the other witnesses and representatives of Bradley's case – reflects the intersection of the story of the ELCA over the past twenty years, and the story of Bradley's life and ministry, shaped in and through the Lutheran Church, and flourishing in the dynamic and spirit-filled ministry happening at St. John's Lutheran Church.

The hearing felt like the presentation of two stories of contrast – a perfect example of Luther's theology of paradoxical realities. We heard the story based deeply in law – of the ELCA's policies, rules and procedures that

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The Story of the Trial

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First, you should read all 14 pages of the decision of the Hearing Committee, a well-written document that makes its points in plain English, not at all a taxing read. (www.lcna.org or www.stjohnsatlanta.org).

The committee said that, based on the standards of the ELCA Constitution (see Chapters 7 and 20, portions of which are quoted above), it “would find, with near unanimity, with near unanimity that”

- there is nothing about Pastor Schmeling’s acknowledged and stipulated homosexual relationship that would impede the proclamation of the Gospel or the right administration of the sacraments.”

There is **nothing** about Pastor Schmeling’s relationship that **would impede** the proclamation of the **Gospel**.

- if the decision were only by the standards of the ELCA Constitution, they would find “that Pastor Schmeling is not engaged in conduct that is incompatible with the ministerial office, and would find with near unanimity that no discipline of any sort should be imposed against him.”
- Pastor Schmeling “is recognized as an innovative worship leader and has been called upon by the synod to plan and organize worship at two synod assemblies.”
- “the trends in congregation membership, in worship attendance and in stewardship at St. John’s also suggest that Pastor Schmeling has had the support of the vast majority of the

congregation from the very beginning.”

- Pastor Schmeling “is able to communicate with young people, share the faith in a manner that they find interesting and helpful, and help them develop language for talking about their faith.”
- Bradley “possesses the patience and other qualities that are required to walk with a particular young person on a journey from confirmation to agnosticism to atheism and back to agnosticism, with the hope that the journey will finally return that young person the faith.”

The committee expressed nearly unanimous concern that the ELCA’s policies on pastors in same-gender relationships “are at least bad policy, and may very well violate the constitution and bylaws of this church,” and called for the denomination to change the policy.

The committee said that there were two ways the policy could be changed: an appeal to the ELCA Committee on Appeals on the basis that the policy is unconstitutional and having the matter brought before the 2007 Churchwide Assembly (August 6–11) to have it “remove the language that specifically precludes practicing homosexuals from service as ordained ministers of this church” and “remove the specific prohibition against homosexual sexual relationships.”

b. Determination. In this part, the committee shall state whether, based upon the facts that it has found, it believes discipline should be imposed and, if so, what discipline it has chosen to impose.

By a vote of 7 to 5, the Committee, stating that it is bound by the prior decisions of the Committee on Appeals, determined that Bradley is to be removed from the clergy roster of the ELCA on August 15, 2007, unless the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly

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Pr. Easler continued

have provided one source of identity within the church; but then the gospel story of a gifted and faithful pastor who has been blessed in, through and with the congregation of St. John’s. It was through that story that I felt the Holy Spirit blowing through the room – pushing against those rigid walls. I experienced the profound paradox of the church – on one hand in its most rigid, legalistic and fearful place; and on the other hand, the place where the church is fully alive, dynamic, creative and spirit-filled – where real ministry is happening, lives are being transformed, and Christian faith is being shaped and shared every day.

It was and is – that movement of the Spirit – that could not, and cannot be controlled or contained by any legal hearing, rigid set of policies, or arbitrary set of procedures. It was truly one of the moments where I have felt the church most alive, and certainly, the Spirit of God present in the gathering of God’s

people. I felt I was standing in the midst of a kairos moment – a God moment – where God was indeed doing a new thing. I turned to my neighbors – Bradley’s mother Judy, and St. John’s Council President, Laura, who were sitting with me in the back row of the hearing room, and I said, “I wish the whole church could be here to share in this moment and this experience.” It was that powerful and that profound.

I do not know where the Spirit will blow next in this continued journey for the ELCA, for Bradley and the congregation of St. John’s Lutheran Church. But I do know one thing – the Spirit is truly alive and well and so very present in this whole process. In that Spirit-presence and power – I feel profound hope and peace; and the reassurance that indeed, *God is doing a new thing!*

Judy Schmeling Arnette

I took one look at the placement of the tables and chairs in the room and knew immediately that this was unlike any church meeting I had ever attended. No coffee urn graced a corner with someone fussing over sugars and creamers. No casual conversation about roof leaks or Sunday School.



This stark hotel meeting room had been configured as a court room. On one side were tables for Bishop Warren and for Bradley with their representatives. Placed across the room was a long table for the twelve commissioners, the hearing officer, and two facilitators. A witness table and a station for the court reporter completed the scene. The tone was hushed, the atmosphere restrained. We were warned to refrain from communication with

A Word from Pastor Bradley Schmeling following His Trial

I had just begun to give my testimony on Saturday morning during the hearing when I heard singing in the hallway. “Come and fill our hearts with your peace. You alone, O Lord, are holy.” Although

I had been kept in the dark about the details, I knew that it was the prayer weaving being delivered to the hearing committee. I found out later that the group was being herded into a room near the “courtroom” lest they unduly influence the proceedings; a testimony, I suppose to the perceived power of our collective prayer life.

There was not one moment in the entire experience when I did not feel surrounded with prayer. What struck me most powerfully is the amazing ability of our community and its allies to make church, even when the institution cannot. Every morning when we arrived to pray and to have a morning devotion, there was a thick stack of paper on the table in our “witness preparation room.” It was a list of the names of the people who had signed up online to pray with us that day, 1200, in all, from all over the world.

The round table in that room was also filled with candy wrappers, water bottles, the remains of lunches nibbled on nervously by many of the witnesses, computers, folders, notebooks, empty

soda cans. There were never enough chairs because people seemed to be always arriving. I’m not sure if it was just my spirit’s perception, but that room always seemed brighter than the hearing room next door. We would emerge from the hearing room at breaks and at the end of the day, and I felt bathed in the light of this waiting place. Of course, most importantly, that room was constantly filled with a community of talent, spiritual wisdom, theological conviction, political savvy, and personal power.

There was one point when someone came in and told us not to laugh so loud. “It sounds like you’re having too much fun” There is, indeed, a powerful joy that comes from genuine gospel witness. I began to understand for the first time how Paul could call for the church to “rejoice in the Lord” always, even as he sat in the darkness of his prison cell. For so many of us, the experience of the hearing was transformative, empowering, and profoundly liberating.

Throughout the trial, witness after witness, spoke to the need for the church to ground itself in the gospel, not in a contested policy. It struck me that this case takes us to the heart of the Lutheran tradition. Is it faithful to our tradition to say, “We must enforce the policy because we are duty-bound to follow the law?” Can the Bible really be understood primarily as the place where we meet Christ, a book that creates faith, a living source for this generation? Can the gospel proclaimed and the sacraments administered rightly be enough of a standard? Can a local assembly, the laity, gathered around Word and Sacrament, call the pastor that it believes serves the gospel in that place, even though other assemblies in other neighborhoods might not be able to call that pastor? Can two words, “are

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“the other side” or the media in or out of our cloistered environment

So... this is what happens when your son challenges the rules of the church? As Bradley’s mother, I was one of his three observers to be chosen to listen and watch these proceedings. As observers, we sat behind the counsel’s podium and the legal teams on straight-backed meeting room chairs. Beside me, joining in support, sat Darin Easler, Brad’s partner, and Laura Crawley, St. John’s Council President.

And so the work began... and it was work... from 9:00 until 4:30 or sometimes longer. The first day my shoulders ached with tension as again and again we were reminded by the opening witnesses of the rules, when and how they were established, what documents constitute the highest authority of the church. It was an exhausting day... and it was only day one!

I wondered if those who put these barriers and limitations in place realized the impact of

their decisions that brought us to this day. Did they really know what message their votes from the past and the verdict of this committee would be sending to any gay child baptized into the body of Christ? I thought of Bradley, and a host of others like him, growing up in the church who absorbed that message early in their Christian life.

It was with some relief that the days became more interesting as witnesses were called. Tension still lingered and there were cross-examinations and insinuations that hurt when your child is “on trial” in the church that he loves. As for those witnesses, what a glorious seminar of sharing and learning it could have been, were it not a closed legal proceeding. God’s people spoke eloquently... bishops, pastors, synod staff, seminary professors, council officers, music director, parents, youth, church members. Other truly memorable moments came during the superb presentations of Rev. Jane Fahey and Rev. Robert Rimbo on Brad’s behalf.

After four and a half days, the trial seemed to end abruptly. No more witnesses to challenge; closing statements made. We were dismissed. The committee stayed on.

For the last time, I gathered with other participants in an adjoining room reserved for Bradley’s team. We had come there daily for morning devotions, recesses and lunch breaks. It was our sanctuary where we found the comfort and support of friends from Lutherans Concerned and St. John’s who were always vigilant. Their prayers, their hugs, their songs, their words of encouragement softened the harsh realities to be faced. I was reluctant to leave that loving circle where the Holy Spirit moved so strongly.

And now that the decision has been issued, I will try once again, as the Bible tells us in Joshua 1:9... “be strong and very courageous.” Before us, other rooms of formality and legality wait to hear our voices.

A word from Pastor Bradley Schmeling

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precluded,” have more authority than an assembly’s testimony or a hearing committee’s finding of fact? Can we legitimately claim that we have found a way to journey together faithfully if some leaders are eliminated from the community?

The standard that operated for the church in Acts was the presence of the Spirit. Even though the

Pr. Bradley Schmeling presiding at Eucharist.



church was surprised that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on the Gentiles, they felt they had no choice but to baptize and, eventually, acknowledge their genuine ministry. Peter himself resisted this change for a long time. As he was on the way to Cornelius’ house, he fell into a dream and heard God say, “What God has made clean, you must not call profane.” The church was moved to include the Gentiles, even though there was no way they would subscribe to all the policies laid out in the ancient, Jewish purity code.

The hearing committee caught part of that vision by calling for the church to change the policy at this summer’s churchwide assembly. In the end, they could not call my ministry profane. I’m grateful that they made the case public in their decision. It’s clear to me that they felt a need to make known the

In the end, they could not call my ministry profane.

power of the Spirit they experienced behind those closed doors. One of the most powerful moments in the hearing came at the end of Jane Fahey’s closing argument; a direct invitation to the committee to find a way to move forward together, charging them with the authority of the gospel to do what is right. Several of the members of the panel called out, “Amen,” at the end, for a moment forgetting the hearing officer’s instructions not to respond visibly to anything they heard.

There must have been just enough space under the door of that room, at the end of that very long,

Missing Parts of the Body of Christ! Survey Information on LCNA’s website

[There is an article in the Summer issue of Concord about this research being conducted by Rev. Vicki Pedersen. Information about this research is now posted prominently to our website, www.lcna.org, with the ability to download a form to participate in the survey. That information is repeated here to make you more aware of what we are doing and why. Pass this information on to people you know who may be a Missing Part of the Body of Christ!]

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, [gay or straight] – and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body...[and] The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you...’” (1 Corinthians 12:12–15, 21, emended)

Are you a “missing part” of the Body of Christ we call “Lutheran?” That is, are you or do you know someone who is, a former “rostered professional” who has left the professional leadership in our church due to issues related to sexual orientation or gender identity? Did you “come out” to your bishop and find yourself removed from roster, whether by action of a synod’s disciplinary committee, a bishop’s insistence, or your

own voluntary decision? Or did you simply quit your professional identity and rostering without telling the real reasons why, preferring to keep it a private matter?

You are still a valued member and part of the Body of Christ. Although you may have heard the Lutheran church say to you, “I have no need of you,” the truth is the whole Body of Christ needs to be made aware that you have been severed from it, that you are missing! The Lutheran church has no “mirror” to reflect back to it how hacked and dismembered its Body of Christ has become because of its policies and guidelines that do not allow its gay and lesbian pastors to live in chaste, covenanted relationships with their partners.

Many people are oblivious to this “cost” to the church and to the personal lives of countless faithful pastors and church professionals. Instead they live with the false impression that this whole discussion and debate about “homosexuality and the church” only concerns a few.

An effort is being made to gather this data – numbers, years of service, synods served, as well as names and stories when possible – to put a mirror before our church. Imagine the numbers if all the “casualties” of our church’s policy were added together from every one of the 65 synods in the ELCA for the last 20 years since its inception, or even earlier from its

predecessor bodies.

What would the “body count” be – 300? 600? 1,000 or more? It’s time to end the guesswork and give back to the church as true of a picture as possible about what it has been doing to its own body. Your help is needed to make this possible.

LCNA member, Chaplain Vicki Pedersen, is devoting time through June 2007 to researching, gathering data and stories, and writing a summary into a book or other format in preparation for the ‘07 Churchwide Assembly in Chicago.

Anonymity will be protected for those who desire that.

The survey form is attached on the website so it can be downloaded, completed, and emailed to Vicki (missing@lcna.org) for those who wish to participate. Or, they could simply email her at the same address, indicating willingness to be surveyed and she will contact them.

Make contacts with others in your Synod who would be supportive of this project and who may know people, who know people, who can put a count, if not a name, to the “missing parts of the Body of Christ” in the ELCA. Encourage them to make information known to missing@lcna.org.

narrow hallway, to let the Holy Spirit sneak into the closed hearing. Oh, how I long for a church that the Holy Spirit does not need to invade or have to slip into at the margins. I do trust Christ, so I have confidence that the policy will change. The church can only resist the power of the Spirit for so long. But, I have to be honest and tell you, that I'm deeply tired of hearing, "We think you're a great pastor. If it were up to us, we would affirm your ministry and keep you on the roster. But the church just isn't ready for you. You're going to have to wait longer while someone else with more authority than us changes the policy."

How long must we wait, O brothers and sisters of the faith?

I'll certainly find the strength and the courage to pack my bags (or load the wood on my back) and head up the mountain to Chicago. I'm blessed to be serving a congregation that is absolutely clear about the welcome inherent in the gospel, as well as its own call to be a gospel church in its little corner of Atlanta, Georgia. I feel clear in my ordination and in my call to serve the church. But the ELCA needs to know that it's time to make this change now, not necessarily because we all agree on the issue of homosexuality or even to keep me on the roster, but because the church of Jesus Christ cannot continue to wound and destroy people. Every time the church chooses to remove a pastor for being faithful in a promised relationship or to deny approval to an otherwise qualified candidate for ministry, we deny the claim of Christ in Baptism. Every time the church chooses to delay eliminating the policy, there are countless people who become convinced that the church can never be a place for them to find Christ. There are young people who are right now feeling called to serve Jesus in the public ministry and are, at the same time, realizing that God has created them to love differently than the majority of their brothers and sisters in the faith. We must be a church that opens doors, rather than a church that closes them. The experience of St. John's Lutheran Church, which I think could be the experience of the whole ELCA, is that when you open your doors and welcome everyone, the church grows by leaps and bounds. We simply must find the ways to be faithful TOGETHER. No more closed hearings. No more stories that don't get to be told in the light of day. No more removed. No more sent away. No more. ▼

The Story of the Trial

continued from page 10

changes the policy or the Committee on Appeals finds it to be unconstitutional.

Within 30 days, one of the parties may appeal to the Committee on Appeals and may request the Committee on Appeals to stay the effective date of the decision. A stay may be granted in whole or in part and subject to such conditions, if any, as the Committee on Appeals may require. The decisions of the Committee on Appeals shall be final.

On March 6, 2007, Pastor Bradley's appeal was submitted to the Committee on Appeals, following the advice of the Hearing Committee and their argument that the policy may be in violation of the constitution of the ELCA. On March 8, 2007, Bishop Ronald Warren submitted an appeal as well. ▼

New Staff at LC/NA

LC/NA is pleased to announce the hiring of Tim Fisher as Administrative Assistant, effective April 2, 2007. Tim has been a member of LC/NA since the Gather Us In conference of 2004. He will be working at the LC/NA headquarters in St. Paul under the direction of Operations Manager, Brett Bowman, aiding Brett in keeping the office running smoothly. He will also assist the other staff members as requested.

Prior to joining the staff of LC/NA, Tim worked for over ten years as Administrative Secretary in the office of Nokomis Heights Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. Tim and his wife, Christine Hurney, are active members of that congregation, serving on the council and a number of committees.

Tim reports that he is "thrilled about the opportunity to work with LC/NA for positive change in the church." His public advocacy for GLBT people began in 2001, following the appearance of an anti-gay church leader who addressed the Nokomis Heights congregation during an adult-education hour. Tim has worked toward the goal of full inclusion in a number of settings, including local congregations, online discussion groups, op-ed pages, synod assemblies, and the 2005 Churchwide Assembly in Orlando. He serves as chair of the Joint Synod Committee for Inclusivity, a committee of the Minneapolis- and St. Paul-Area synods. He holds degrees in English from St. Olaf College (Northfield, Minn.) and a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from The American University (Washington, D.C.). Tim and Christine enjoy restoring their 1921 bungalow and hunting for treasure at estate sales.



Save the Dates

Lutherans Concerned/North America Biennial Assembly & North American RIC Conference

San Francisco State University
July 3-6, 2008

Keynote Speaker: Rt. Rev. V. Gene Robinson

Come For Pride the week before,
Stay For Hearts on Fire

More details, a website, coming...
Stay tuned...



7-5 Decisions

- Two of Them

In 2006, Pastor Bradley Schmeling was charged by Bishop Ronald Warren, Southeastern Synod, for violation of ELCA policy for being in a loving, lifelong, committed same-gender relationship.

Bradley had refused to resign from the clergy roster, so a discipline hearing was convened. Bradley was, indeed, openly gay to the Bishop and the congregation at the time he was called in 2000 as pastor of St. John's Lutheran in Atlanta. The decision of the Hearing Committee, 7-5, was to remove Bradley from the clergy roster at the end of six months, allowing time for the ELCA Committee on Appeals or the 2007 Churchwide Assembly to change the policy.

In 1990, the very first disciplinary hearing in the fairly newly-formed ELCA convened concerning charges against two San Francisco Lutheran congregations, St. Francis and First United, for having called openly gay and lesbian pastors, none of whom were on the ELCA's roster of ordained clergy at the time they were called. The pastors were the Rev Ruth Frost and Rev Phyllis Zillhart (St. Francis), and the Rev Jeff Johnson (First United). A consolidated disciplinary hearing was held in the summer of 1990 pursuant to the charges filed by Bishop Lyle G. Miller, Sierra Pacific Synod. The decision of the Discipline Committee, 7-5, was to suspend both congregations from the ELCA for a period of 5 years, after which they would be removed from the roll of ELCA congregations if they were still in violation of ELCA policy. The committee proposed a 5-year suspension period to offer the ELCA a substantial time and two churchwide assemblies during which to discern, study and decide to change, clarify or reaffirm existing ELCA policy.

Two committees, two 7-5 decisions, nearly a generation apart, how do they compare? (You can read both decisions at www.lcna.org.)

First, the similarities: they both decided to impose the severest disciplinary punishment by 7-5 votes. Absent change, the congregations and Pastor Bradley are removed from the ELCA by actions of the committees. Technically, both committees' reports are 14 pages long; although there is an Open Letter to the ELCA in the 1990 decision as well as several minority reports published alongside the official decision.

Both committees expressed the belief that their duty was to uphold the constitution of the ELCA. They both allowed time before the severest portion

of their imposed punishment became effective. And, in both cases, they said that they had done so in order to allow time for discernment and understanding – and such changes as that might bring.

There are differences that cause the two time-separated decisions to diverge.

The 1990 hearings were public; the 2007 hearings were held in secret.

The 1990 decision was about congregations, and their offense had been to call as pastors persons for that office who were not on the roster of ELCA clergy because they were openly gay or lesbian. In the 2007 case, the offense was the pastor's, that of being in a committed, same-gender relationship. Both orbit the same issue: the oppression of LGBT Lutheran clergy by a policy of discrimination that wrongfully disallows the same fulfillment of a life lived in partnership afforded the rest of clergy.

In the 1990 findings, the committee stated that both congregations appeared to be acting from principle and loving disagreement with the stated policy, but that the committee "declined to make" a determination that the policy was contrary to the Confession of Faith and Statement of Purpose of the ELCA. The majority of the committee upheld the policy as given, and examined it no further. The majority of the committee found that neither congregation had called as pastor persons who were on the clergy roster of the ELCA or approved by the synodical bishop "at the time of their call." The congregations were guilty as charged – though there is in the record some disquieting information concerning the Bishop Miller's handling of Jeff Johnson's certification.

A senior seminarian, Jeff Johnson had been approved for ordination as an openly gay man by the synodical professional preparations commission (candidacy committee) within the Lutheran Church in America a month prior to the 1988 merger forming the ELCA. This approval by a candidacy committee was valid for a year through May 1989. However, in June 1988, synodical Bishop Miller decided not to recommend Jeff to a congregation in the synod for call, having determined that Jeff was unwilling to make a life-long vow of celibacy. In essence, the bishop set aside the committee's decision despite the fact that the constitution gave him no such authority for such an action and that every witness at the hearing qualified to comment on the action "agreed that a synod bishop may not 'decertify' a candidate who has received committee approval." In 1990, the Hearing Committee did not explore this issue further, nor did they ask for any of what they reported knowing were "lengthy church manuals and other documents address[ing] matters pertaining to call." They just noted that "none were offered into evidence."

First United wanted to call Jeff for ordination on Pentecost of 1989. The bishop “urged them to wait,” which they did, with the result that by the time they called Jeff in November 1989 the bishop wrote to them two days later that he was no longer a certified candidate for ordination (Jeff’s certification having expired) and if it proceeded, the congregation would be in violation of the constitution.

The 1990 decision cited ambiguity in the ELCA policies of the time and called for “study, dialogue, reconciliation, and progress toward more unified understanding of the matters in dispute.”

By its own report, the 1990 Hearing Committee received “oral and written testimony from over 100 witnesses,” but completed its hearings in just three days.

The 1990 Discipline Committee addressed an Open Letter in sections: to Lutherans worldwide; to all members of the ELCA; to the bishop, staff, and council of the synod; to the members and pastors of St. Francis and First United; and to the Churchwide Organization of the ELCA, including the Conference of Bishops – but not a word to the three LGBT pastors in the middle of this or directly to LGBT Lutherans anywhere.

To all members of the ELCA, the 1990 committee reported as “good news” that the “church is healthy,” in fellowship, and that all the participants in the hearings displayed commitment to the Gospel and respect for others. ELCA members were told that the two congregations had brought grave concerns to the committee, concerns that were beyond the limited context of the committee’s process. The committee said the two congregations told of the profound disaffection that the rejection and condemnation of homosexuals by institutional religion caused. That prohibiting partnered LGBT clergy said that homosexual expression of love was immoral, that an immutable part of LGBT persons was evil, that loving,

committed LGBT relationships were no different from exploitive ‘one-night-stands.’ They said the congregations thought that monogamous clergy relationships could serve as models of responsibility for the gay/lesbian community. The committee reiterated its call for careful study and frank discussion, setting aside assumptions and listening without harsh judgment.

St. Francis and First United were told the 1990 committee had been moved by the expressions of God’s love in their ministry. The two were asked to reach out with their full gifts to all in the ELCA, including those who disagreed with them, and to do so with patience and understanding. The two congregations

*The ELCA policy is **at least bad policy** and may very well **violate** the **constitution** and bylaws of the ELCA.*

were advised that, although it is possible to act ourselves into new ways of thinking, there is “a point when further action does not advance thinking,” that “action too confrontational can impede thinking,” that the congregations should “strive for congregational life and practice” which would enable them to stay in the church. “Direct your efforts in compliance with the rules...”

The 1990 committee told the ELCA Churchwide Organization, including the Conference of Bishops, that “it was no longer enough to work on stating with precision how the predecessor church bodies dealt with issues concerning ordination of practicing homosexuals. We need to struggle anew with the questions and try to forge an understanding that can be embraced by the diverse voices of this new church...”

In the 2007 decision the Hearing Committee said frankly that the ELCA policy is “at least bad policy, and may very well violate the constitution and bylaws of the ELCA.” This committee heard

testimony from 19 witnesses over a 5-day period.

The 2007 committee heard that Bradley was a duly ordained minister of Word and Sacrament, who had been approved as a call candidate by a bishop who was well-aware that Bradley was gay.

The 2007 committee reported the fulsome praise of Bradley’s ministry it heard and its own investigation into the increases in membership, attendance, giving, and ministry at St. John’s since his arrival as pastor as well as its own evaluation of his gifts of ministry.

In the end, the 2007 committee was “nearly unanimous” in calling upon the ELCA to change its policy, finding there

were two ways that could be accomplished, and suggesting the solution in each of the ways.

In 1990, with reference only to the constitution of the ELCA, the committee found the accused congregations guilty and, by a 7–5 vote, suspended and ultimately expelled them from the ELCA.

In 2007, with reference only to the constitution of the ELCA, the committee found the accused not guilty: “there is nothing about Pastor Schmeling’s acknowledged and stipulated homosexual relationship that would impede the proclamation of the gospel or the right administration of the sacraments. If relieved of the specific requirements of *Definitions and Guidelines* and permitted to decide this case under the standards of constitution chapters seven and twenty, this committee would find almost unanimously that Pastor Schmeling is not engaged in conduct that is incompatible with the ministerial office, and would find with near unanimity that no discipline of any sort should be imposed against him.”

continued on page 24

“In Honor of...”

In Honor of...

Rev. David Parsons

Wayne Morris

Wayne Morris

In honor and appreciation

Honored by...

The Lindley-Geiger & Quinn-Gacioch families

Doyle & Luciene Morris

His Family

Letter from Bishop Margaret Payne

Editor: The following letter was addressed to the Hearing Committee but disallowed by the Hearing Officer, and is published with the good bishop's permission as her thoughts on the subject. Bishop Payne shared this comment preceding her letter: "Since the letter that I wrote to be considered at those deliberations was not permitted to be introduced, I believe that it now simply represents my own opinion regarding our life together in the church, and my hope that the work and wisdom of the ELCA Task Force continues to be honored in all matters regarding homosexuality. I am not advocating disobedience, but for consideration of alternate options to removal from the roster, restraint in administering discipline, and the possibility of a moratorium on the administration of discipline until further study and conversation takes place."

January 11, 2007

To Brothers and Sisters in Christ of the Disciplinary Panel
for the Rev. Brad Schmeling:

During the time that I served as the Chair of the ELCA Task Force for Sexuality Studies (2002–2005), I came to regard those remarkable and committed people as a group that truly grasped the present reality of the ELCA with regard to issues of homosexuality, and integrated that reality with a discernment of and desire for God's will for church at this present time. Their final report reflects what I believe is the wisest counsel that has been offered thus far in this delicate and challenging matter before our church. As you listen, ponder and pray your way to a decision regarding this case, I hope that you will see your deliberations as part of a larger picture of the ELCA seeking to be faithful in its response to the present understanding of sexual orientation in our world as well as God's will for our life together as the Body of Christ.

I believe that each of the three recommendations of the Task Force offers wisdom for your work. The first recommendation, which was approved overwhelmingly by the Churchwide Assembly in 2005, asks that the church "concentrate on finding ways to live together faithfully in the midst of our disagreements." It notes that our God-given mission is "at least as important as the issues about which faithful conscience-bound Lutherans find themselves so decisively at odds."

I ask: Is there any way that your decision-making might honor the present reality of the deep divisions on this issue in the ELCA and broaden your decision beyond a single situation of non-compliance of a policy that is passionately debated in our church at this time? Could your work somehow pave the way for further discussion and consideration of other ways to deal with transgressions of rostered leaders who are otherwise faithful, competent and gifted leaders for mission in our church?

The second recommendation of the Task Force is not immediately relevant to the situation before you now, but it does include the important observation in its commentary that faithful members of the

ELCA give different answers to the question: Is sexual activity between two people of the same sex always a sin? It notes that "the ELCA needs to continue in prayerful study of Scripture with one another." Such a study will likely be underway soon in the ELCA, ("Book of Faith: Lutherans Read the Bible"). Until a time in the future when we are further along in that renewed study of scripture, the decisions that are made will not reflect a complete engagement with the issue in a way that is more deeply informed by understanding of scriptural wisdom in this matter.

In my view, the third recommendation is most relevant to this situation. The Task Force recommended that the ELCA:

"...continue under the standards regarding sexual conduct for rostered leaders as set forth in *Vision and Expectations* and *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*, but that, as a pastoral response to the deep divisions among us, this church may choose to refrain from disciplining those who in good conscience, and for the sake of outreach, ministry, and the commitment to continuing dialogue, call or approve partnered gay or lesbian candidates whom they believe to be otherwise in compliance with *Vision and Expectations* and to refrain from disciplining those rostered people so approved and called."

As you may recall, this recommendation was not forwarded to the Churchwide Assembly. Instead, the ELCA Church Council forwarded a resolution that outlined a policy that would have allowed for exceptions to the present guidelines. That resolution was defeated by the assembly. It is impossible to know what the assembly might have decided had the original recommendation come before it. I trust that God was present in the process that led both to the change in the recommendation and the final vote, yet I cannot help but believe that the original recommendation, and accompanying discussion, might have led to the creation of space needed for a helpful time of dialogue as part of our faithful journey of discernment in this matter. Members, pastors and bishops will inevitably continue to differ in their conscience-bound positions on this issue, but I believe that the permission to exercise restraint in disciplinary action might be a helpful option during this time of discernment.

I ask: Is there any way that your decision-making could be guided by the wisdom of the Task Force that suggested the possibility of restraint as a helpful guide in our life together as further study, prayer and dialogue guide us to discern God's will?

It is my hope and prayer that you will feel called to consider creative and Spirit-informed ways in which this situation may be resolved.

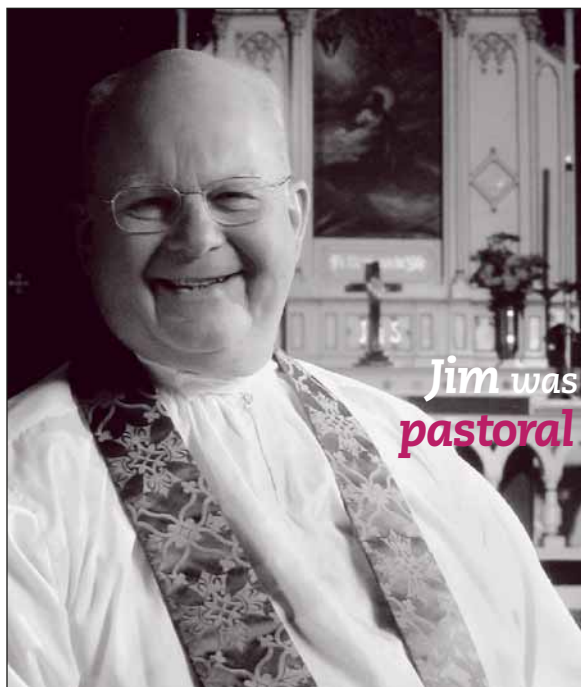
In the peace of Jesus Christ,
The Rev. Margaret G. Payne,
Bishop, New England Synod of the ELCA ▼

A Founder of LC/NA Dies at 73

[Editor's note: Jim's publication of the *Gay Lutheran*, the predecessor to the *Concord* makes his loss especially poignant to me. He will be deeply missed.]

One cannot focus on advocacy for justice and full participation and not call Jim Lokken to mind, and celebrate him. Jim, a founding member of Lutherans Concerned/North America (LC/NA), former Assistant Pastor of St. Francis Lutheran Church in San Francisco, gay man, counselor and mentor, inveterate story teller, music lover, and patient advocate for full-inclusion, died on September 22, 2006, of a heart attack at age 73.

Jim's pastoral roots go back to the old Evangelical Lutheran Church. His parents were married at Bethany Lutheran Church (now RIC) in Minneapolis in the 1920s, and subsequently moved to Pasadena, California, where they raised Jim and his brother, Stan.



Jim was known for his patient persistence and pastoral response to all in his advocacy for LGBT people.

Jim graduated from Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington, in 1955 and then Luther Seminary in St. Paul, where he was ordained in 1959, a member of the last class before the merger that created the American Lutheran Church.

His first call was as a three-point pastor of Our Savior's, Immanuel and Lincoln Lutheran churches in Barrett, Minnesota. Subsequently, he served as assistant pastor of First Lutheran church in Brookings, South Dakota, before moving to New York City.

In New York, he worked as Assistant Editor, Lutheran Forum magazine, New York, 1966–1968.

He continued his editing and writing ministry as part of the editorial staff of The Liturgical Conference, Washington, D.C., 1968–1972; in the Information Department, American Bible Society, New York, 1973–1975; as Editor of The Lutheran New Yorker, 1975–1976; and as Production Director for The Liturgical Conference, Washington, D.C. in 1976–1978.

In 1974, he responded to an invitation from the Rev. Jim Siefkes to gather in Minneapolis with a handful of other gay and lesbian Lutherans. At that meeting Jim became one of the founding members of LC/NA.

Emily Eastwood, Executive Director of LC/NA, said of him, "If it were not for Jim Lokken and Howard Erickson, their efforts to keep LC/NA going during the early years, and their dedication to communication with members, we might not have an LC/NA today. Howard and Jim were largely responsible for the *Gay Lutheran*, predecessor to the *Concord*. In later years Jim was a consistent and frequent participant in the online LC/NA discussion group. His last direct email to me urged frequent and substantive communication with our members, true to a theme to the last."

Late in the 1970s, Jim moved to California, joining St. Francis when John Rollefson was pastor. In 1982, while Jim DeLange was pastor of St. Francis, Jim Lokken was called as a non-stipendiary assistant pastor, a position he held until his retirement in 1996. In retirement, he was a participant and a highly regarded presence in Internet discussion groups on LutherLink.

Jeannine Janson, co-chair of LC/NA, remembers that Jim included the "promises of the Gospel" in every sermon. Jim was known for his patient persistence and pastoral response to all in his advocacy for LGBT people. Wise in his knowledge of people, Jim knew how to engage them in a process of personal change and acceptance leading to a transformation. He was ever non-confrontational.

A man who loved music (he even named his dog E. Power Biggs), he is remembered for the clarity and loveliness of his singing voice.

Of him, Jim DeLange says, "He always dealt with people in a pastoral way. A faithful church person, he loved to tell stories, sometimes over and over again. It is hard to accept the fact that he is gone. He was one of those people whom you assumed would always be here." ▼

Stories from the Frontlines of Advocacy:

An Interview with Ralph Wushke

By Vicki Pedersen

Ralph Wushke is probably the longest continuing member of LC/NA in Canada, having joined in 1978. He was LC/NA co-chair from 1988–90. Now a minister of the United Church of Canada and chaplain at the University of Toronto, Wushke holds the Master of Theology (2004 University of Toronto/Victoria-Emmanuel) in queer theory, philosophical hermeneutics and sexuality ethics. He has a long involvement in LGBTQ activism in church and society, and the Canadian HIV/AIDS movement.

Why are you an advocate?

The policies of the church are... immoral, unjust policies that take away the right of called and baptized Christians who would otherwise be eligible for ordination, to follow their hearts, and to follow their calls... They are irrational



policies also rooted in deep fear... We've managed to use reason to understand that our policies discriminating against divorced people and against alcoholics, etc., were not reasonable. (Yet) we have not been able to use reason to get beyond our deep fear of homosexuals....

What does being an advocate mean to you – is it “in-their-face?”

Change in church and institutions is always a multi-aspect exercise. You have the activists who radicalize people, advocates who work on policies, parliamentarians who actually debate and vote to make change, and then you have the citizens who listen and consider votes as we speak. They have their hearts turned and vote differently... I think they are all necessary.

Radical activists are the first ones to call attention to something radically wrong and raise the question. They have, I think, the most courage because they have to go against the weight of a whole institution and be ridiculed for their position, and be misunderstood for their

Who Is Doing the Advocating? *Compiled by Nancy Polanchich*

[Editor' Note: the following is a valuable compendium of information about organizations within and without the church that dedicate themselves and their work to justice for lesbians, gays, and bisexual and transgender persons. It is not intended to be exhaustive. We are grateful to Nancy Polanchich for her research.]

Organizations affiliated or connected with the ELCA

Organization	Website	Mission Statement/Purpose
Extraordinary Candidacy Project	www.ecpsems.org	ECP credentials openly gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender seminarians, candidates, ordained and commissioned ministers who are preparing for professional vocations in congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and independent Lutheran congregations.
Goodsoil	www.goodsoil.org	Goodsoil is the official website of a collaboration of organizations that work to overcome the policy and practice of discrimination within the Lutheran communion against LGBT clergy, same-sex marriages and covenanted relationships.
Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministries	www.llgm.org	LLGM is a national mission society that supports openly identified sexual minority pastors, seminarians, and lay ministers who have been discriminated against because of their sexual orientation.
Lutheran Network for Inclusive Vision	www.inclusivenet.com	The Network provides a public roster of church leaders committed to witness to the inclusive Gospel of Jesus Christ by fostering the full inclusion of sexual minorities (i.e. persons who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender) in the congregational life and ordained ministry of the ELCA.
Lutherans Concerned/North America	www.lcna.org	LC/NA works for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Lutherans in all aspects of the life of their Church and congregations. We provide a place of comfort and safety. We reach out and teach that Christ's message, the Gospel, is for everyone equally. We call for the blessing of committed and covenanted same-gender relationships, and for the ordination of those called to minister.
Wingspan Ministry	www.stpaulref.org/wingspan.htm	Wingspan Ministry is a ministry of pastoral care, education, advocacy and support for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. Wingspan is affiliated with St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church, St. Paul, Minn.

position, so it takes good courage of heart and conviction to be on that front line.

What is your highest priority in advocacy right now?

I feel like the Lutheran church and Anglican communion... are spending so much time being distracted by their debates on homosexual orientation that they cannot focus on the real burning issues of the day which are climate change and global market economies... Of the other queer related issues... I would say sanctuary, i.e. welcoming congregations, would be first on my list, then ordination, i.e. the right to work; and same sex marriage/blessing would be third.

Will we succeed and when?

I'm encouraged by the speed with which things are changing... Studies show that... there is a continually increasing approval rating for all matters related to acceptance of homosexuals in US society... The influence of the religious right is less powerful than they would like you to think it is... I actually think that within 10 years, probably, the

question will be resolved for Lutherans... As it is in Europe; (they) will have gotten over it, happily calling and bringing queer pastors, blessing their relationships, and moving on... Just maybe the group that has moved on will get to focus on being church and not be paralyzed by the right or the endless time wasted in debate.

Why not just leave the churches?

Being a member of the church is not the same as being a member of a frequent flyer loyalty club. Being religious and participating in the ritual of faith-based communities is an essential part, integral to our identity, to practice and live our spiritual faith. We have the right to be queer and the right to be religious, and hold those two things together. Many people in the mainstream LGBT communities will say exactly, 'Why not leave the churches?' and many people in the churches will say, 'Why not leave the church? Get out of here.' But I say we have the right to answer our call and occupy that space which is both a queer space and a religious space. ▼

The Truth is Out There

By **Linda A. Marousek**

Local heroes Rick and Mary Ann Nelson live a long way from anywhere: on Puget Island in the Columbia River between Washington and Oregon, near Cathlamet, Washington, population 600. Cathlamet is 25 miles from the nearest interstate highway. That means that Rick and Mary Ann drive two hours to get to meetings of



both of their LC/NA chapters: Portland Metro, in Portland, Oregon; and South Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. They stay a little closer to home for PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays); it's only 25 miles to Longview, Washington for meetings of the Lower Columbia PFLAG chapter, and it's just across the river to the Cathlamet PFLAG meeting. Sometimes Rick and Mary Ann are the only ones at the PFLAG meetings. They keep going.

Rick Nelson is the publisher of Cathlamet's *Wahkiakum County Eagle* newspaper. Mary Ann Nelson teaches in the preschool program

at St. James Family Center in Cathlamet. They have been married for 32 years. They are long-time members of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Cathlamet. Rick and Mary Ann are the parents of two young adult children, both of whom have come out. Why are the Nelsons advocates for LGBT folks in the church? "Because of the kids. My kids, all of the kids." Here's what they have to say to our interview questions.

Why are you advocates?

Our advocacy comes out of being parents. Our children are loving, cooperative people. We couldn't be prouder of them. They were active in our church for their whole lives. Our church is our children's family. During a local church meeting about the 2004 sexuality study, people didn't know it, but they were railing against my child. Our son, for example, has always described himself as a "nerdy geek." Being different is always tough on kids. We'd always hoped

*We don't want **our children** to be **rejected** by their **church family**.*

that his life would get easier; now he'll always have this hurdle to deal with. We don't want our children to be rejected by their church family.

What does being an advocate mean to you – is it "in-their-face"?

For some people, just mentioning this issue is "in your face." For example, we planned a Council-approved informational meeting on becoming an RIC congregation, hosted it, brought treats, and

continued next page

Stories from the Frontlines

continued from previous page

made flyers and stuffed the bulletins. The usher removed the flyers because he didn't agree—he comes from a family that attended churches with literal interpretation of The Bible – and said people didn't want “this shoved down their throats.”

Our approach is to be educational: to teach; to say, “This is my experience, these are my feelings, this is another way to look at it.”

What is your highest priority advocacy right now?

There is a potential our daughter may want to seek ordination. Our highest priority is education and acceptance. We are sharing our own learning

[Editor's note: And share it they do! A typical month includes trips to Portland and Tacoma for LC/NA meetings; shorter trips to Cathlamet and Longview for PFLAG meetings; and as many Sunday visits as they can manage to other Lutheran churches to meet people and talk about LC/NA and the importance of becoming RIC. Oh, they have full-time jobs, too. Still, Mary Ann says she wishes they could do more.]

Will we succeed?

Total acceptance in the church is what Jesus meant. It's meant to be.

Who Is Doing the Advocating? *continued*

Partner organizations under the umbrella of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Institute for Welcoming Resources

Affirm United/S' affirmer ensemble	www.affirmunited.ca/	Affirm United/S' affirmer ensemble is an organization of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities within The United Church of Canada. They work to provide the full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in the church and society. They are a worshipping, pastoral and prophetic community celebrating the biblical and theological liberation. They believe that all people are created in the image of God and are unconditionally loved by God.
The Assn of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists	www.wabaptists.org	Members of the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists (AWAB) are churches, organizations, and individuals who are willing to go on record as welcoming and affirming all persons without regard to sexual orientation or gender identity, and who have joined together to advocate for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons within Baptist communities of faith.
Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Interests	www.bmclgbt.org	The Council is a network of Mennonite and Church of the Brethren communities who welcome gay, lesbian, transgender, and bisexual members.
Gay, Lesbian and Affirming Disciples Alliance, Inc.	www.gladalliance.org	The Gay, Lesbian and Affirming Disciples Alliance, Inc. is a presence working for the full dignity and integrity of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered and affirming people within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). GLAD Alliance welcomes all who make common cause with us and conducts its activities through the congregations, regions and general church and other manifestations of the Disciples of Christ.
Institute for Welcoming Resources	www.thetaskforce.org/our_work/	A program of the National Gay and Lesbian Task force, IWR is an unprecedented joining of LGBT secular and faith-based leadership roundtable/IWR organizations that provides new resources, training and strategies to increase the number of people of faith who support equality for LGBT people.
More Light Presbyterians	www.mlp.org	More Light Presbyterians are individual members and congregations of the Presbyterian Church (USA) who are faithful to God's call and believe that God continues to open new understandings of scripture and the Word in the life of Christ. As a Christian community, they believe that the church must seek to live out those understandings in their life together.
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force	www.thetaskforce.org	The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force works to build the grassroots political power of the LGBT community to win complete equality. We do this through direct and grassroots lobbying to defeat anti-LGBT ballot initiatives and legislation and pass pro-LGBT legislation and other measures.
Nat'l Religious Leadership Roundtable	www.thetaskforce.org/our_work/	The National Religious Roundtable is an interfaith network of faith initiatives/religious leaders from pro-LGBT faith, spiritual, and religious organizations. It brings together people of faith who support equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.
Reconciling Ministries Network	www.rmnetwork.org	Reconciling Ministries Network is a national grassroots organization that exists to enable full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the life of the United Methodist Church, both in policy and practice.
Room for All	www.roomforall.com	Room for All supports, educates, and advocates for the full inclusion of LGBT persons within the Reformed Church of America.
Soulforce	www.soulforce.org	The purpose of Soulforce is freedom for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people from religious and political oppression through the practice of relentless nonviolent resistance.
The UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns	www.uccoalition.org	The Coalition provides support and sanctuary to all our lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender sisters and brothers, their families and friends; advocates for their full inclusion in church and society; and brings Christ's affirming message of love and justice for all people.

Many LGBT people have been severely hurt by religious bigotry and oppression. Why not just leave the churches?

The church is proclaiming God’s love. LGBT people need to satisfy their need for God’s love, and the church has to be there. Sometimes we are tempted to walk away from the church. Sometimes we want to say, “This is it; we’re leaving!” But then, something positive happens. Right after the difficult meeting we had about the 2004 sexuality study, we saw the first ad in The Lutheran for LC/NA. We emailed Emily Eastwood, and heard right away from Families Concerned and Pastor Ginger Georgulas in Texas. Every time we think, “This is it; we’re leaving!” we find someone who needs to hear our support, who

needs to talk to real people. We don’t want anyone to go through this alone. We have to stay to support that person.

Rick and Mary Ann Nelson are on a sometimes solitary journey in a rural church, working with LC/NA as rural advocates. We are truly blessed by their traveling of this road with and for us. ▼

An Interview with Loxi Dailey

By **Carol Dunn**



Loxi Dailey was born into what she describes as a “blue collar” family, and had no regular church until 12th grade, though she was raised knowing Jesus loved her. Her aunt’s Lutheran pastor baptized her when she was 17, and she did adult catechism study at 20. Her training then was what she describes as “ultra-conservative.” After college, she taught, married, became a mother, and in 1987 took a job in the registrar’s office at Trinity Lutheran Seminary (Columbus, Ohio) and stayed there for 15 years, moving then to west-central Florida.

Why are you an advocate?

I was not always an advocate; I was raised in a conservative household, and was too afraid of getting into trouble to ever question the status quo on anything. (People who know me now will find that hard to believe!) My Lutheran years were spent in pretty conservative congregations, until I went to seminary to work in the registrar’s office, and eventually become the Registrar and International Student Advisor.

I can’t give the exact time or date when I realized that I didn’t believe that being LGB or T was a sin, it probably has to do with getting to know a person and then finding out the person is LGB or T – and that it doesn’t make any difference in how I feel. I think the reality is that homosexuality went from being an ‘issue’ to having skin put on it – I met, got to know, care about, and love persons who were GLB. My office became a safe place at the seminary – and I have always been humbled by the sharing of life stories that were confided to me.

What does being an advocate mean to you?

Confrontation, on any issue, is hard for me, and I don’t speak out until I really feel pushed to do so. I also think you catch more flies with honey than vinegar – seems to me it says somewhere in scripture that a kind word turns away wrath. One of

The **hardest thing** was to watch some of the most **gifted students** choose **not to seek ordination**.

my good friends at seminary, a lesbian, participated on panels and in forums. and it was absolutely awesome to watch people’s minds be changed simply by listening to her story, seeing her demeanor and her way of telling her story.

What LGBT issue is your highest priority now?

The hardest thing from my years at Trinity was to watch some of the most gifted students, who are like my own children (I was “seminary mom” to many) finally decide that they couldn’t agree to Visions and Expectations, and thus chose not to seek ordination.

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MOVING?

Filling out a change of address form insures 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!

Name _____

Old Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

New Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

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.

Stories from the Frontlines

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Sometimes this meant that they changed degree programs. Other times it just meant that they would be doing other ministry. But in all cases, they were not permitted to follow their call to ordained ministry and the church is so much poorer for it.

My priority is ordination for LGBT persons – with no restrictions – no second class citizenship – period.

No other group is kept from presiding at the table. Women are there now, persons of color are there, persons whose first language isn't English are there, left-handed people (assuming right-handedness is 'normal') are there, blue-eyed persons (assuming brown eyes are 'normal') are there. And *IF* the position is that homosexuality is a sin, then that doesn't hold water either. Adulterers are there, liars are there, coveters are there, those who don't honor their parents are there. I think I've made my point. Seems to me that if homosexuality were such a big deal, Jesus would have at least mentioned it!

What do you see ahead for the church at large?

Only God knows! But I believe we are called to keep struggling for change. Jesus spoke against the established church of his day when he believed the church's position was wrong; Martin Luther spoke against the established church of his day when he

believed the church's position was wrong. Are we called to do less?

Many LGBT people have been severely hurt by religious bigotry and oppression. Why not just leave the church? You belong now to a church that is not RIC; why do you stay?

I don't know why they stay. Their faith is obviously stronger than mine. But as long as they stay, I'll stay in support of them.

When we moved to Florida, my hope was to belong to an RIC congregation. At that time there were only four in Florida, and none in the Tampa Bay area. In 2006, St. Paul's in Clearwater became RIC; I automatically thought that I should transfer my membership there. After I talked with nine of my clergy friends, and three of my gay and lesbian "kids" from seminary (two of whom are ordained, and one who completed two degrees and isn't), every one of them said that I should stay in a congregation where there is still a journey to be taken, rather than being in one that has already been through the process. ▼

Who Is Doing the Advocating? *continued*

Jewish Advocacy Organizations:

Keshet Congregations	www.keshetcongregations.org	Keshet Congregations is an organization of Conservative- movement-affiliated congregations and individual congregants in the Conservative Movement who believe that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Jews should have equal rights in our congregations, be able to fully participate in the positions of professional and lay leadership, and be ordained as rabbis and cantors through Conserva- tive movement institutions.
Union for Reform Judaism	www.urj.org/jfc/inclusion/	The committee on Gay and Lesbian Inclusion works with gaylesbian/congregations and communities to develop a more welcoming inclusive culture. They have resources to help; including referrals to local organizations, liturgy appropriate for a variety communities, and Kulanu, our program guide for implementing gay and lesbian inclusion.

Secular Organizations:

Family Pride	www.familypride.org	Family Pride is a non-profit organization committed to securing family equality for all loving families, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer parents, guardians, and allies.
GLSEN	www.glsen.org	The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network envisions a future in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
Human Rights Campaign	www.hrc.org	The Human Rights Campaign is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans- gender equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans, HRC strives to end discrimination against GLBT citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all.
PFLAG	www.pflag.org	PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill- informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.



Living in a **Trans-Family**

// relaxed after I saw that it wasn't going to be in an auditorium with hundreds of people," Jennan said about the experience. "But, I still had to think about what I was

going to say, and how I was going to say it. My friends don't always understand about my dad, and so I like speaking out to help people understand."

Jennan is 10.

The experience: a panel discussion in front of 40-50 faculty and staff of Normandale Community College, Bloomington, Minnesota. The panelists: Lisbeth and Deb, Ian (17), Rowen (14), and Jennan Kellogg. The subject: "Living in a Trans Family."

Jennan was not originally scheduled to participate. She put her foot down, as 10-year-olds are wont to do. "I have always thought that, since I

*I have **learned so much** in the last eight years, and am better **equipped to serve** where I am.*

am the youngest, this affects my growing up the most; so I should get to speak," said she.

On Wednesday, September 20, Normandale conducted its annual mandatory all-day diversity training for faculty and staff, a day devoid of classes or competing activities. There were three tracks: racism, cultural, and LGBT. Attendees could choose between the presentations in all the tracks throughout the day to tailor their learning. The

Kellogg panel ran for an hour and fifteen minutes in the afternoon.

Lisbeth is a theologian, writer, transgender female partner of Deb, father of their three children, and the Bisexual Representative (*bi@lcn.org*) on the board of Lutherans Concerned for the 2006–2008 biennium. The opportunity for this presentation came up because Deb is on the faculty of Normandale.

"When, in 2002, Deb was in the interview process to be hired as the German Department in the World Languages Department, she mentioned, so they would know, that I was transgendered male-to-female. She instantly became a member of the Diversity Committee, a permanent committee of the college," Lisbeth said.

Deb says, "While the committee was planning our annual Diversity Day, someone suggested that having an informational session on how we "evolved" into a functioning transgendered family would be very interesting. We talked to the kids about it; Rowen was willing because she thought that our experiences as a family might help someone else. Ian was a bit more reluctant, but finally decided that this would be good for all of us. Jennan really wanted to participate because she felt that she, too, had something to say."

For her own part, Deb said "God has taken something that initially seemed so horrible, and by His grace, has turned our situation into something very positive and hopefully of benefit to others. I have learned so much in the last eight years, and am better equipped to serve where I am than if our situation were more typical. I think our situation and how we have tried to handle it has made our kids more mature and more compassionate than they would otherwise have been. Do I wish my husband was 'normal?' Of course I do, but I am not unhappy with my/our life as it now stands. God has been very good to us."

They had neither script nor rehearsed/prepared remarks. Each member of the family simply spoke for themselves as they wished.

"On the day, I opened with a bit about my history: how I had come to realize that I was, and always had been, in the wrong body, and what I have done about that. I talked about that being a decision about a process that had to be taken as a family, since everyone was going to be affected by it," Lisbeth said. "Then each told the part of the story, the part of living in a trans-family that they wanted to talk about."

Rowen said, "This was cool. I liked doing it, and would do it again. It's cool being a student and teaching teachers. This is not a subject you can find out information about by talking to someone 'normal.' You have to talk to us. There is no such

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Living in a Trans-Family

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thing as normal. ‘Normal’ is just a word people use to hide their individuality.

“My dad told me who he is when I was 5 years old. At the time, I didn’t understand what it would mean; I didn’t understand what it meant. As I got older I still didn’t understand. In 6th grade I grew very angry at people who didn’t/don’t like my dad. In 7th grade I began to wish he was ‘normal,’ but by 8th grade I didn’t care anymore. It’s never been as big a struggle as religion, but at times it has been hard.”

Ian said, “I talked about how the transition was different for me. I had more trouble adapting to the new situation than Rowen and Jennan because I knew Dad before that. It was strange and disconcerting to me that my father believed he was female. There was a period when I was so angry I could have strangled him. But I came to grips with that largely thanks to my first girlfriend.”

Lisbeth said she had no trepidation beforehand about her family doing the panel discussion. “I knew they would do fine; we speak up in this family when we have something to say.”

The Kelloggs found the audience to be self-starting about asking questions, clarifying what they had heard, inquiring for information they hadn’t heard. The feedback they have received after the event was that the discussions, and they, were very well received.

Jennan gets the last word as well: “If my dad wasn’t the way that he is, I would miss all these opportunities to help people understand.” ▼

7–5 Decisions

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But, bound as well by the policy, the committee voted 7–5 to remove from the ELCA someone they found to be an exemplary pastor, and gave the ELCA and all of its members six months to change that outcome.

So, how do they compare?

There are those who say that while the vocabulary surrounding our oppression seems to have changed or become more technical/precise, in reality what happened in each disciplinary hearing (of congregations or clergy) over the past 20 years is the same situation of oppression caused by the church’s policy and of our community’s resistance to it. That, the ELCA has become much better today than it was 17 years ago in controlling the spin, subverting dissent, removing clergy/congregations expeditiously and enforcing secretly in processes and decisions. That, the importance of the 2007 decision lies not in its uniqueness or in its unprecedented nature, but in the way it says even more clearly and stridently what has been said since the beginning: that this policy has been found sufficiently wanting it should be set aside. Some say what really concerns the bishops right now is not the

2007 hearing decision, but ensuring that what is currently going on in the Anglican and Episcopal churches does not happen on their watch.

However, there are others who say that considerable movement has to have happened for a churchwide committee to be “nearly unanimous” in calling for the end of this policy. That, if the situation was simply a repetition of the past, SSDD (Same Stuff, Different Day), those who advocate against us would not be as exercised as they are. That, the ministry and life of an LGBT pastor in a committed relationship was examined and the only fault found with him, his ministry, and the relationship was a policy that has to go. That the vote during the 2005 Churchwide Assembly on a process to allow for ordained clergy in committed, same-gender relationships that came within 7 votes of a majority out of 1100 was significant and indicative of the progress towards justice. That, likewise, the defeat at the 2005 Churchwide Assembly of the Hesse motion calling simply for the continued enforcement of the standards outlined in V&E and D&G was significant because it said that whatever it is the church wants in this regard it isn’t what it has.

All agree that work and prayer must

continue unabated. All agree that no one should set themselves up to be easily hurt or disappointed. All agree that we and these issues are not going away; there will be no silence on these matters until the Spirit moves enough people – as the Spirit has done before: at the Council of Jerusalem about who gets in, and again on the need for reformation, on the keeping of slaves, on the equality and ordination of women. The goal is the day when no one will rise to endorse the ignorant proposition that LGBT people are not part of the rich natural order of God’s creation, just as today none but the ignorant rise to celebrate the earth-centered universe or slavery as a part of God’s plan. ▼