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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.

Multicultural

World – Church – **Lutherans Concerned/North America**

Several feature articles in this issue of *Concord* are about people who are other than the majority Euro-American white culture in North America. We hope these witnesses of both joy and conflict will broaden your understanding.

Guided onto the Path of Peace, Love and Joy

Nicole Michelle García Tells Her Story

I was born on December 12, 1959, the oldest son in a Hispanic, Roman Catholic family. On December 12, 1532, the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared to an Indian peasant, Juan Diego, and told him to take roses to the Bishop of Mexico. As Juan

Diego opened his blanket, the roses fell to the floor and the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared on the blanket. I was a *Guadalupano*.

The church and the Virgin of Guadalupe were important parts of my life during my formative years. I grew up a good Roman Catholic boy. I played guitar in the church choir. While in college, I served on the church council. To the world, I was a quiet, studious, young man. On the inside, I constantly battled depression. I tried too hard to be the person I was supposed to be, but I never felt like I fit in anywhere. I spent hours, weeks and years praying to God to make me fit in. I didn't like the things the other guys liked. I wasn't good at, nor understood, sports. I felt uncomfortable spending time doing "guy things." I had to watch what they did and mimic their behavior so I could fit in.

I met Gwyn while I was in college. She said she liked me because I was gentle and sensitive. She was my first "girlfriend." She was very independent and open-minded. She introduced me to the *Rocky Horror Picture Show*. If you are not familiar with the movie, the main character

is a man who wears make-up and women's lingerie. In 1981, this cult classic played every Saturday night at midnight. People would dress up like the characters and act along with the movie. I saw *Rocky Horror* at least 30 times in two years. I had never heard the term "transvestite" before. I had never thought anyone else, much less in a movie, liked to do what I did. When I told Gwyn I liked wearing women's clothes, she was not surprised. She would actually let me "dress up" for her. I graduated college and started graduate school while Gwyn and I were together. We broke up during my first semester of grad school. I missed her terribly as a close friend and confidant. I thought I would never find anyone whom I felt safe sharing my secret. I didn't finish the second semester. I pretty much checked out of life. I moved out of my parents' house and lived in a house with a bunch of friends. I was a lost child in Boulder. I must say, Boulder was a wild playground in the '80s. I supported myself by working in retail sales. At one time or another, I sold men's

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The Editor

DALE TRUSCOTT



There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

—Galatians 3:28

Jesus traveled to primarily Gentile areas adjacent to Jewish Palestine – Gennesaret, Tyre, Sidon, and the Decapolis. He healed the Syro-Phoenician’s daughter.

He associated with Samaritans. And the early Christian community, largely under Paul’s leadership, moved out quickly among the non-Jews to include them among the faithful without penalty or prerequisite. When I teach about Christianity in my World Religions course, I ask the students to remember two words that I believe characterize the ministry and person of Jesus of Nazareth – egalitarian and commensality. Jesus, while he did make some comments that would indicate a bias toward his own nationality, seems to have acted in an egalitarian way. He was open to all people regardless of ethnic background or religious persuasion. And, he was willing to sit at the table and eat with all these different people, much to the chagrin of the Pharisees. I also point out to students that, in Christianity today, however, 11 a.m. Sunday is still the most segregated and diversity-exclusive hour.

This issue is about multicultural ministry in Lutherans Concerned/North America and in the LGBT community in general. But I need to comment here that, while the articles you will read

are varied and excellent, I come to the completion of this issue with a heavy heart. Two people were asked to agree to be featured here with articles about them and their ministries – two people agonized over their desire to accept the challenge and the honor – two people refused to be included because of the danger to themselves and their work, should these articles get into the hands of those who would discriminate against them because they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. And, so, while this issue celebrates our diversity and the progress of our ministry among people of all ethnic groups, this issue is also impoverished by what could not be included out of respect and admiration for those who felt they could not yet share.

We still have a long journey ahead of us. I read Len’s article about glasses being half-full or half-empty. And then I read about ENDA and how it passed the House of Representatives without a clause about transgender people, and how it undoubtedly will not pass the Senate and how, if it did, it would be vetoed by the regime in control of the presidency of

this country. We have a long journey ahead of us still.

And I read Phil Moeller’s first feature box about the International Program Committee, where he reports such sobering news from around the world as to the plight of LGBT people in such places as Lithuania, Singapore, Cambodia and Africa. We have a long journey ahead. But do you remember the Martin Luther King, Jr. quote? “... the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

Jim Tyler and René García, whose articles you will read here and whose leadership of LC/NA’s Multicultural Relations Committee has moved us so far ahead as an organization, deserve our heartfelt thanks for having assisted in the creation of this issue of *Concord*.

If I have any recommendation to readers of *Concord*, it would be for us to revisit the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, not with the eye of the modern Pharisees who call themselves Evangelicals or Fundamental Christians and are looking for expressions of law, discrimination, exclusion, separation and condemnation in Jesus, but with the eye of faith, faith in the Jesus who rose so high above his own discriminatory culture, who opened his arms on the cross to all, who affirmed the humanity and worthiness of those both inside and outside his ethnicity. Jesus’ gifts to the world through his life, his ministry, and through his death and resurrection desperately need to be told and shared again, to offset the distortions that abound and to reclaim the mission of the faith in a troubled world. Jesus would not want anyone ever to have to refuse to tell their story for fear of retribution. ▼

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.

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LEN WEISER

As I think about this time of year, I find I'm often still grieving the fact that summer has ended. I am such a summer person – loving the beach and warm weather (of course, a good cocktail after the beach before dinner is mighty fine, too!). However, as I was driving to Baltimore last week for a meeting, I was struck by the beauty of the leaves on the trees near the tollbooth. Such beauty! So for me, I can view this as a bad thing that summer has ended, or I can see it as a great time to experience the beauty of the environment as evidenced by the changing leaves. Glass half-full or glass half-empty? How should I look at it? Isn't it always this way? I can see

Glass half-full or glass half-empty?
Isn't it always this way?

something as being negative and others can view it as positive. It's how we look at things that gets us through each day. Perspective is everything. Here are some of the glasses on our table right now. You decide if they are half-empty or half-full or both.

Recently, Congress passed ENDA (Employment Non-Discrimination Act), which prohibits work place discrimination based on sexual orientation. ENDA does not include protection for our transgender brothers and sisters. So, is this a glass half-empty scenario? Or is the glass half-full in that we have made a small step towards ending discrimination with more work for us to do?

In September, the second annual leadership retreat for the Board of Directors, Regional Coordinators, staff and other leaders within LC/NA was held in Chicago. We had a jam-packed agenda trying to educate folks on what is happening in LC/NA as well as strategizing what we will be about as an organization during the next year and beyond. Some may have asked, "Is our work ever done?" It takes a lot of energy to be a reconciling church. During the leadership retreat, several committees jump-started into action. We have new members on our energized Multicultural Committee that is developing plans to move us toward becoming an anti-racist organization.

The Committee for Full Inclusion (of bisexual and transgender people in the RIC Program) has been working ever so hard since the September Leadership Retreat to see how we can assist RIC settings become fully welcoming to our bisexual and transgender brothers and sisters.

So much work ahead of us. Is the glass half-full or half-empty?

Great news! Jen Rude was ordained in November and Jen Nagel will be ordained in January. Oh, we need to rejoice with these bold and courageous congregations, living out the Gospel! But, yet, we have others who are qualified and called to ordained ministry who are still excluded. Is the glass half-full or half-empty?

Did I mention a lot of work ahead of us? The 2008 Synod Assembly season (even though it's next year) is quickly approaching. We have work to do! We need to elect voting members to the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly at the upcoming synod assemblies. We have got to get our ducks in a row and start mobilizing for this period. But yet, we have great reason to celebrate the decisions made at the 2007 Assembly. Is the glass half-full or half-empty?

Even though summer has ended and my strawberry blond hair is looking more strawberry now (I need the sun to bring out my blond!), I am hopeful. You see, this time of year can be viewed as a time to get geared up (kids go back to school, new budgets are prepared at work), a time to reflect on the beauty that life has to offer and to be thankful for what blessings we do have. To me, the glass is always half-full and half-empty. Half-full because we're on the road; half-empty because there is still more to do. It's how we look at it and view it that sets the tone of our day, week, month or process. It's when hearts, motivations, and determinations are full that we can move ahead and fill the glass even more. It's when we are thankful for the blessings we do have and are grateful for the love we have in Christ and in each other that we can keep fighting the fight so that we become a fully reconciling church. ▼

MOVING?

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

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.

Executive Director



EMILY EASTWOOD

Since I spend a great deal of my life these days in airports, I am intimately familiar with all manner of indoor people-moving transports. My favorites are the large conveyor belts with friendly voices admonishing “you are entering the moving walkway” as I approach. Once, my office-in-a-bag, which usually rolls dutifully behind me as I walk, got caught on the leading edge of the belt. The handle jerked free of my unsuspecting grasp, and I looked back to see my case, wedged, unmoving as I was propelled down the concourse. I turned into oncoming foot traffic: a family of four, each with a rolling bag in tow. I began to trot and then run towards my case, against the force of the conveyer. I heard myself say something like, “my life is in that bag...” Sad state of

*There is a conveyer belt called **heterosexism** and **homophobia** propelling people toward **greater oppression**.*

affairs, that. In my mind, the whole thing happened in slow-mo, almost a comedy, but not. I finally arrived at the starting gate, breathless, yanked my case free, and decided I'd walk to the gate on solid ground.

I probably wouldn't have thought much about the incident if it hadn't been for Paul Hawkins of the National Association of Black and White Men Together who helped us with Finding the “I” in the Middle of Racism training at the LC/NA leadership retreat in 2006. I had been through several levels of anti-racism training previously and knew the classic definition that racism = power + prejudice. As a white person I knew that I was privileged and benefited, often unknowingly, from a system of institutionalized racism in this country. Still, I had no concrete image to help me explain racism, the intersection of oppressions and how LC/NA as an organization

committed to the full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities could become anti-racist.

When asked if people of color could be racist, Paul did not say yes or no; in fact, he skillfully avoided yes and no answers throughout the training. Instead, he went to the flip chart and drew a sketch of the people-mover. He told us that racism is like that big conveyor belt at the airport and all of us are on it. We can choose to stand still on it, but we are still moving ahead whether we want to or not. Even if we stand backwards, we are still moving. We can choose to walk adding our own speed, and with every step racism increases. Or, and it is a big OR, we can choose not to walk ahead, not to stand still, but to turn around and walk the other way. It's hard to walk the other way, it takes a great deal of energy, it takes time and lots of it, it takes real dedication to work against the prevailing system. But, if we don't turn and walk the other way, we participate in the advance of racism through our own inaction. To do nothing, is to act in concert with oppression.

I knew Paul was right. As I thought about our work for LGBT inclusion, I realized that LC/NA had made a decision to turn and actively work to stop the systems in church and society that oppress us. The first step, however, was realizing that there was a conveyor belt called heterosexism and homophobia which was propelling people of all sexual orientations and gender identities unwittingly toward greater and greater oppression. The second step was the turn. The third was to get moving in the opposite direction, building power to create the change we seek.

While racism, heterosexism, class-ism, and able-ism, are not the same, they each function like the conveyor. If we are not actively working against them, we are participating in their increase whether we are able to admit that or not. LC/NA is dedicated to working at the intersection of oppressions; the people-mover provides an image of one of those intersections.

It would have been easier in some ways for me to just let the belt carry me away from my office-in-a-bag, but what was in that case was so much more valuable to me that the turn was easy and the energy expended well worth every breath. How much more is a world without -isms of all kinds, worth to us? Pricey and priceless.

The challenge to LC/NA is clear. If we truly seek a “world without outcasts where all are called as guest and host at God's table of blessing and power” (LC/NA vision statement), we must not only make the turn, but walk with power and purpose toward that vision. I believe we've made the turn, but the rest of the walk lies ahead. May God grant us the courage to take the first steps and the tenacity to continue until our vision becomes reality. Amen. ▼

RIC Settings

Added to the Roster since last issue

- All Saints Lutheran Church, Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Elgin, Illinois
- Living Word Lutheran Church, Buda, Texas
- Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit, Emmaus, Pennsylvania
- Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, North Vancouver, British Columbia
- New Creation Church, San Jose, California
- Redeemer Lutheran Church, Portland, Oregon
- St. John's Lutheran Church, Jersey City, New Jersey
- University Lutheran Church, Seattle, Washington
- Zion Lutheran Church, Idaho Springs, Colorado

The Reconciling in Christ Program now has more than 400 congregations and church related organizations participating! For the complete list of RIC congregations, synods, and organizations, go to our website at www.lcna.org

By Carol Dunn, Co-Editor

As the rosters of RIC congregations and groups grow, so do the stories of how churches reached the decision to declare themselves Reconciling in Christ (RIC). Sometimes the process is simple and quick; sometimes not. Three examples below sample the possibilities.

An RIC church for 11 years, **Angelica Lutheran** in Los Angeles took the step to become Reconciling in Christ because they believe that God’s church is for everyone. This status, when combined with their location in a heavily Latino community, presents some immediate issues for a congregation that wants to work with its neighbors. Nevertheless, in partnership with the Los Angeles School District, Angelica houses a high school for LGBT youth. Pastor Paiva reports that other outreach activities and programs are in development.

The process was fairly simple and certainly speedy for **University Lutheran** in Seattle, Washington. The proposal began in the Justice and Peace Committee, which surveyed the congregation in 2006 about the RIC option. More than 60% responded with “it’s about time,” or “we are already RIC in spirit,” leading the committee in the fall of 2006 to initiate adult forums. The committee explained the process and implications, and heard from three other RIC congregations in the area. In one forum, a representative of Open Door

Ministries talked about what it means to be able to refer LGBT people to accepting congregations. (Open Door is an extended ministry of the Northwest Washington Synod, ELCA, and a member of Lutheran Services of America. It provides “consultation and pastoral care for HIV/AIDS and Gay and Lesbian Concerns.”) At the final forum, University Lutheran members gave their ideas for an affirmation statement.

After development and review, 100% of members in a congregational meeting approved the statement.

Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Raleigh, NC, took a much longer route. About 20 years ago, the pastor was involved in discussions to include orientation in the city anti-discrimination code. Kenneth Marks, now archivist at Holy Trinity, joined the church shortly thereafter (1988), and soon joined a city network working for equality. In July 1990 he attended the LC/NA assembly in Chicago, and began an almost 17-year journey to help the congregation become RIC.

Following a congregational vision program, Marks wrote how important RIC was to the LGBT community. These comments spurred the appointment of an Inclusivity task force that included Marks and his wife, Sue. Believing lack of education to be the main hurdle, Marks developed an adult forum series and Sunday school curriculum to provide

information and an exchange of views. Bishop Herbert Chilstrom was invited to Raleigh to lead a weekend of events, lending greater ecclesiastical support to the process.

An effective tool was a series in which ten members of the congregation told how Holy Trinity was – or was not – a welcoming congregation for them. The group included members of the African-American community, college students, a member who lost a spouse while in the congregation, senior singles, and members with physical handicaps, as well as gay and lesbian people, to demonstrate that inclusivity covers more than LGBTs. The successful affirmation was adopted in 2006, and is published every Sunday in bulletins and newsletters, as well as on the web page.

Santa Fe Ecumenical RIC Training Transforms Attendees into New Mexico Sunset

Have you ever seen a New Mexico sunset? The kaleidoscopic concert of color paints individual hues into a brilliant canvas, glowing as though illuminated from below by an unseen flame.

Thus was the journey of the Santa Fe Ecumenical RIC Training. Twenty-nine attendees, five leaders, and countless gracious volunteers came together for four days at Santa Fe’s Christ Lutheran Church from October 18–21, 2007—individuals

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“In Honor of...”

In Honor of...

Honored by...

Jodi Barry & Jenny Mason	As they commit their lives to each other and to God on October 6, 2007	Jill & Steve Abenth
Brett Bowman	In honor of Brett Bowman’s Birthday	Robert & Dale Bowman
Rev. Daryl D. Koenig	Donation in Honor of Rev. Daryl D. Koenig	Virginia Balter, Rev. Dawn Silvius and Kathryn Yandell
Wayne Morris		Doyle & Luciene Morris
Rev. Shawn Newton	Ordained to the UU ministry, June 10, 2007	Julie Reuning-Scherer
Heather Olson & Jessica Myhre	As they commit their lives to each other and to God on September 22, 2007	Jill & Steve Abenth
Rev. David Parsons	In honor and appreciation	The Lindley-Geiger & Quinn-Gacioch families
Ken Petersen	In memory of Ken Petersen	Rev. Nancy J. Hanson
David Ranheim	In honor of the 65th Birthday of David Ranheim	Karmi Anna Mattson
Jeff Ramm & Neal Hauschild	In honor of the Blessing Service for Jeff Ramm & Neal Hauschild	43 family members and friends
Wayne & Sindy Tellekson	In memory of Margaret Tellekson	Loren & Ruth Halvorsen
Dale Truscott & Kin Xuxa	In recognition of the work of Dale Truscott and Kin Xuxa	The Jennifer M. Lee and Jeffrey S. Chapski Family Fund of the Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund

Lutheran Volunteer Corps Intern Serves LC/NA

Kate Stoeckel serving in our St. Paul headquarters

In August, LC/NA was thrilled to receive Kate Stoeckel as she began her Lutheran Volunteer Corps internship in our St. Paul headquarters. Kate's responsibilities focus

on programming and support for LC/NA's Youth, Young Adult, and Family Committee, including developing resource material, coordinating activity for the Lutheran Student Movement's Winter Conference, and planning a full-day event to precede the *Hearts On Fire* assembly in July 2008. The pre-event will include worship, fellowship, workshops,



and discussion for high school and college-aged students.

Kate was already well known to staff and members when she began her internship. Kate had begun working in the LC/NA office in June to help with preparations for the 2007 Churchwide Assembly in Chicago. At the assembly, Kate spent countless hours working in Goodsoil Central, greeting and helping LC/NA members in a multitude of ways.

Kate comes to LC/NA from Gustavus Adolphus College, where her studies focused on religion and philosophy. At Gustavus, Kate was deeply involved with the college's Queers & Allies group and the Womyn's Awareness Center. Kate loves yoga, riding horses, and has experience with the trombone. The

LC/NA staff is deeply appreciative of Kate's talents and hard work. Much thanks also goes to Lutheran Volunteer Corps for making this internship possible. Kate can be reached at kates@lcna.org. ▼

RIC News

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moving together into the unknown. This assembly included people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, cultural backgrounds, ages, and faiths.

The presenters outdid themselves. Emily Eastwood, Rebecca Voelkel, Michael Adee, Jerry Vagts, and David Lohman were a finely tuned and choreographed RIC training team. They blessed us with their knowledge, skills, gifts, and talents with

humor, compassion, love, and a generous portion of God's grace.

Worship offered by Pastor Ben Larzalere moved training attendees and church members alike to tears, knitting together our weekend experiences and indeed our lives. No heart went untouched.

I especially appreciated the opportunity to visit with Nicole Garcia. Two years ago, at the age of 46, Nicole completed her transition from male to female. She shared a written account of her life and led a discussion. I learned about transgender and transsexual people in a personal way for the first time. Nicole is lovely. She has a quiet strength and relaxed peace about her

and her candor impressed us all.

Bev Larzalere, the endless energy source behind the training, wrote: "We gathered together—a collection of faithful folks from nine states and a variety of Christian denominations with the common mission of learning to foster and maintain welcoming ministries. The time was inspirational and motivating. It was holy time. We have been transformed by the blessed experience of our communal BEING."

We have taken with us a piece of each other, every one.

—Janet Field, All Saints Lutheran Church, Albuquerque, N.M. ▼

Next **RIC Core Team Leadership Trainings**

January 17–20, 2008

St. Paul's Lutheran Church,
Clearwater, Florida

February 21–24, 2008

St. Matthew Lutheran Church,
North Hollywood, California

March 6–8, 2008

Central Lutheran Church,
Portland, Oregon

August 7–10, 2008

Lord of Life Lutheran Church,
Columbus, Ohio

To register contact:

Jerry Vagts, grassroots@lcna.org,
651-665-0861

How Inclusive Is Your Welcome?

The RIC program began as a way for congregations and other settings to demonstrate their desire to welcome and include lesbian and gay community members. Five years ago the assembly of Lutherans Concerned/North America made a decision to expand the welcome of the RIC program to include people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, including bisexual and transgender people. How has your RIC community lived into this expanded welcome? Does your welcome statement include people of all sexual orientations and gender identities? Has your community taken time to learn more about the experiences of bisexual and transgender people and considered how to best demonstrate your welcome?

To find out more about what you can do to expand and deepen the welcome at your RIC setting, please contact us:

Educational resources and updating your welcome statement: grassroots@lcna.org

Expanding your welcome to the transgender community: trans@lcna.org

Expanding your welcome to the bisexual community: bi@lcna.org

Extraordinary life full of love, service and honey buckets

by **Elise Patkotak**, published Nov. 21, 2007, Anchorage Daily News

This is one of those columns I never imagined I would be writing. I always just assumed Ken would outlive me. But a sleepy driver on a dark road in Minnesota ended his life much too early, if mercifully quickly.

I'd known Ken Petersen and his partner Rob for over 30 years. We spent much of that time exchanging tacky Christmas presents. I always felt at a disadvantage in the competition. Rob and Ken were invariably able to overcome their inherent

good taste with an even better sense of the absurd. My "Jesus on a Half Shell" is all the proof needed that they were the best at this exchange.

So you'd think with the kind of history we shared, I would have known a lot more about Ken than I obviously did after reading his obituary. In a world with problems

A devout Lutheran, even though his church sometimes tried to negate the **essence** of who he was.

that sometimes seem overwhelming, Ken was living proof that one person can make a difference.

Among his many accomplishments, he could lay claim to being a pediatrician who served as both chief of pediatrics and chief medical officer at the Alaska Native Medical Center

during his 30-some years of service there. He also worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as a pediatric consultant on issues relating to the health of Alaska Native children. When he was compelled to take a mandatory retirement, he simply moved over to the World Health Organization as a consultant for the polio eradication program in Pakistan. Until his death, he continued as a volunteer consultant in Alaska on issues of infectious diseases in Alaska Native children.

My first encounter with Ken came when he and Rob Burgess made a proposal to me while I was the

North Slope Borough health director in the mid-'70s. They would share one salary and live together in the village of Wainwright while studying how best to teach and train local people to become community health aides. It was a bold proposal. No Alaska village of that size had ever before had one, let alone two, physicians living full time in their community. And the lessons they learned that year still reverberate in the way community health aides are taught and the methods and language used in compiling their manual.

My fondest memory of that time is the urgent call I received from Rob soon after he and Ken moved to Wainwright. The call was for a toilet seat cover. Seems that Rob, in his enthusiasm to live as healthily as possible with fairly primitive sanitation, decided to vent their honey bucket. What this actually accomplished, as anyone who has ever tried venting a honey bucket straight to the outside in an Arctic village will tell you, was to freeze the bucket and its contents. Ken found this out the next morning when he was the first to use it. The metal seat was, to put it mildly, freezing. The contents, I should add, were frozen solid.

We provided a cover for the seat; Ken and Rob thawed their bucket by means best not described in a publication sometimes read over a meal. I knew then that I had something special happening in Wainwright. Not only would these two dedicated people put their hearts and souls into finding the best way to teach health care providers in remote

Alaska villages, they would also put their hearts and souls into each other. How else to explain why Ken didn't immediately run to the airfield, begging anyone who would listen for a flight away from the frozen toilet? They shared a love I've envied ever since, a love full of gentleness, respect and caring that will not die with Ken's death.

Ken was a devout Lutheran, even though his church sometimes tried to negate the essence of who he was. But Ken was not a man easily deterred. He knew his God was a God of love who would never turn away from an expression of love as fine and good as that which he shared with Rob. So he embraced his church, singing with a clear and beautiful voice in its choir.

I'm reminded of the old poem by Edward Markham, "He drew a circle that shut me out, heretic, rebel, a thing to flout. But love and I had the wit to win, we drew a circle that took him in." Ken took us all into his circle of love. And we were the better for it. ▼



Nicole García

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clothing, jewelry, women's perfume and cars. By November of 1989, I was living with my cousin in the back room of her trailer. I worked as a sales associate for a large discount retailer. I was going nowhere, fast. One morning, after spending the night heaving my guts out, I found myself in a detox center. Something had gone terribly wrong in my life. It was only then I realized I had lost all direction, faith and hope. I started attending Alcoholics Anonymous. I grudgingly allowed God back into my life. It was God's fault that I ended up at the bottom. If God had taken away those horrid feelings, I would have been all right, but I was willing to let God have another go at it.

During the following years, I worked hard. I was promoted a few times and became an assistant store manager. I was able to afford my own place. I was praying again, but I hadn't found a church to attend on a regular basis. I was "buying and purging" on a regular basis. I would get the courage to buy a few pieces of women's clothing to wear around the house. Later I would feel terrible about having these feelings and throw away all the women's garments. I did my best to repress those so-called "shameful" feelings. I met Regina in 1993.

Regina was every man's dream. My family adored her. We were married on October 1, 1994. We had a big wedding in a Roman Catholic Church. I was finally the "man" I was supposed to be. Just to make sure I was the "man," I dove into a new career, law enforcement. It was perfect. I didn't have to think about what I was supposed to wear. I was trained to be commanding. I finally learned to be macho. By my 41st birthday, I was exactly where I was supposed to be. The American dream was in hand. I was married to a wonderful woman. We lived in a large house near downtown Denver. There were two new cars in the garage. We both had successful careers that provided a comfortable life. I went to church with her because I was supposed to, but mostly because I looked forward to breakfast afterwards.

After eight years of marriage, things weren't working. We wanted to have kids,



My moment of clarity came when I realized and accepted who I am. I am a woman.

but she didn't get pregnant. It was my fault. A couple has to sleep together to have kids. I always managed not to be around. I usually worked second shift. I took on extra duty. I always made the excuse of wanting to make extra money to fix up the house or pay bills. I couldn't tell her it was awkward sleeping with my best friend. That's how I thought of her. She was elegant. She dressed with style and taste. I wanted to be just like her. That was wrong. I had to work harder. I had to keep those feelings repressed. Vodka helped the repression. I began to resent her. I blamed her because I was unhappy. She readily agreed to a divorce. I bought a little house in the suburbs and looked ahead to an uncertain future.

Alcohol and guns do not make a good mix. A few weeks after I moved into my new little house, I sat at the kitchen table with a bottle of vodka and a pistol. Half the bottle was already in me. How could I end up here? I had had it all! Why would I walk away from a perfect life? What was wrong with me? The only reason I didn't end my life that day was the death of a fellow officer. He had committed suicide a week before. At his funeral, I saw the look of hurt and dismay in the faces of his family and friends. I could not cause the same harm to my family. I cried out to God, "I have prayed for you to make me what I am supposed to be!" I realized I kept praying for what "I" wanted. I gave up and gave in. "Do what you will with me, Lord, but I can't do it alone. I need your

help". Within a day or so, my employer sent out a message about confidential mental health treatment. Stress, anger, and depression were my companions. I made the call. After two sessions, my therapist recommended long-term therapy.

Ouch, that hurt. I went to a therapist for long-term treatment. She helped me come to terms with the fact that I *may* be a "cross-dresser."

She recommended a support group, the Gender Identity Center of Colorado (GIC). I went to the GIC and found other people who had the same feelings. I still felt like a freak, but at least I had a support group. In February 2003, I attended the *Goldrush* conference, sponsored by the GIC, bringing together the transgender world for a few days. Speakers and workshops dealt with a wide variety of topics, such as make-up, clothes, surgeries, therapy and how to walk and talk like a man or a woman. I started the conference trying to come to terms with the fact I may be a cross-dresser. I happened to sit in on a workshop that dealt with transsexuals; nothing that concerned me directly, but there weren't any other workshops of interest during that hour. As I sat there and listened to the stories of those around me, I realized they were telling my story. The shame, embarrassment and feelings they described were mine. During that workshop, I had a "moment of clarity." I first heard that term described in the *AA Big Book*. It is a moment when the alcoholic comes to terms with life. This "moment of clarity" is the inspiration to change. My moment happened when I realized and accepted who I am. I am a woman. A tremendous weight was lifted off my shoulders. Serenity replaced the pain and heartache I had kept inside. I felt something I had never felt before, inner peace.

When I left the conference, I was walking on air. I called a cousin, Kelli. Kelli and I grew up together. She was one of the first people I told about my cross-dressing. I was ecstatic on the phone. She told me to slow down and think about what I was

telling her. She was supportive, yet made me realize not everyone would be as happy about my decision. Oh, my! What would Mom say? Dad? My sisters? Work! I needed a plan. I told my therapist who referred me to another therapist, who specialized in Gender Identity Disorder. Ouch, I had a disorder. Oh, well. My new therapist seemed very nice, but she questioned everything I said. After a couple months, she formally diagnosed me as having Gender Identity Disorder. She wrote a letter recommending me for hormone replacement therapy. She referred me to a medical doctor and on July 8, 2003, I started hormone replacement therapy. Phase One of the plan was completed. I had a psychological evaluation and had a disorder. I was under the care of a medical doctor. Time for Phase Two: telling my family. Luckily, I had developed a network of friends at the GIC and church. Oh, haven't I mentioned St. Paul, yet?

At the GIC conference, I met René. She was also in law enforcement and already in transition. We had a lot in common and talked almost every day. She asked me to go to church with her – a Lutheran church! Mom would have a fit if she found out I went to a protestant church. She would have a fit if she knew I wore a dress every weekend. Such is life. I went to St. Paul Lutheran Church in downtown Denver. As a part of my therapy, I decided to dress as a woman during the evenings and on weekends. I was very careful only to go out where I would be safe and usually with friends. I had become fairly good with make-up and clothes. Some good role models and teachers seemed to appear in my life. When I walked into St. Paul, I was terrified. I was sure people were staring at the “man in a dress.” René sat next to me and held my hand.

Once the service started, I felt right at home. The organ music was beautiful. The choir was filled with the voices of angels. The Pastor preached love, acceptance and compassion. It was as if he knew exactly what I needed to hear. After the service, people came up to me and introduced themselves. Everyone asked me where I was from and if I liked the service. They all asked me to come back. Thank you, Jesus! I was home. I attended St. Paul Lutheran Church regularly for several months before I went to catechism classes. I joined St. Paul in April 2004 because of the people

who embraced me as an individual, not as a transgender woman. The people who didn't really understand what I was going through were willing to listen to my story, learn and accept. I truly learned what it means to be accepted and, in turn, learned to accept others. I learned how to pray, not for myself, but for the courage and patience to help others. I went to St. Paul to celebrate my faith, to celebrate my life. St. Paul was a sanctuary during the implementation of my plan to transition from a man to a woman.

Most transitioning transsexuals lose their jobs and their families. I knew I was taking a tremendous risk, but the alternatives were not acceptable. I would not live as I had before. I would not take my own life. I pressed on. I told my sisters first. They seemed to take it well. At first, that is. Mom also took it well at first. The meltdown came a day later. Dad took it the

St. Paul Lutheran Church was a sanctuary during the implementation of my plan to transition from a man to a woman.

best. My family was concerned for my safety and wellbeing. Mom was afraid I would end up alone in the world. To be honest, I had the same fear. For the first six months after telling my immediate family, I chose not to see them while wearing women's clothing. They needed some time to process the concept of Michael becoming Nicole. I provided some literature to my family. One of my sisters talked at length with my therapist to make sure I wasn't seeing a quack. After six months, I began to show up at Mom and Dad's house wearing more feminine clothing, then some make-up. Mom's face went white the first time I showed up in a dress, hose and heels. After that, she started buying me blouses and jewelry. It took time, patience and understanding, but my family stuck with me. They all lived through their own transition.

I was relieved by the reaction I received at work. I was very careful about my appearance, but my longer hair and nails started attracting attention. I initially came out to an officer with whom I had a close professional and personal relationship. She was so understanding and supportive. With her help, I told a few more officers, then my immediate supervisor. My

immediate supervisor was wonderful. He listened, asked questions and helped me go to the next level. A couple meetings down the road, I was invited to attend a department-wide supervisors' meeting. There were 45 high-level administrators from the entire department. The Director gave me her full support, directing all her subordinates to contact her directly if there was any dissent in the ranks. She is definitely a gift from God. I transferred from the streets to a desk position for the transition. In my new office, everyone was cordial. My new co-workers gave me the time to grow and blossom. There were a few who had a difficult time accepting what I was doing, but it wasn't long before everyone in the office was a friend and supporter.

I had to sell my house to help pay for surgery. I had gender reassignment surgery in Trinidad, Colorado on November 11,

2005. My birth certificate was amended to reflect my name, Nicole Michelle García, and my sex, female. Recently, I transferred back to the streets. It was a tearful day when I left the office where I transitioned. My co-workers had become wonderful friends.

Dad passed away two years ago. He made sure everyone knew that he embraced me as his child. He loved me for being me. I have since moved in with Mom. Yes, it is true: we all become our mothers. I am no different. Mom and I shop together. We visit family together. She may get a pronoun wrong every once in a while, but in her heart, I am her baby, no matter what.

I have truly blossomed at St. Paul Lutheran Church. I am now the convener of the RIC committee. Some Sundays I am a Eucharistic minister, usher, sacristan or, once in a while, I can just sit in the pews. At St. Paul, I listen to the Word and celebrate my faith. I gather with my friends and break bread. The day I “gave up and gave in” was the day my life was guided onto the path of peace, love and joy. ▼

Stories of Multiculturalism:

A Taste of what a Multicultural Church could be...

By: **René García**, Co-Director of Multicultural Relations

Co-Director of Multicultural Relations Jim Tyler and I attended the *Spirit of Wholeness in Christ, a Racial Ethnic Multicultural Event* held July 12–15 at the Los Angeles Airport Marriott, an ecumenical gathering of the ELCA, Presbyterian Church USA, and the Reformed Church in America.



As we were waiting to confirm our workshops, I saw a handwritten sign announcing a meeting of the “European American Lutheran Association (EAL).” The first thing out of my mouth was “Is this a joke? If you want to see European American Lutherans gathered, all you have to do is walk into an ELCA sanctuary.” Seeing this sign brought negative experiences to mind, thinking of some former students who, upon hearing an announcement regarding an ethnic student group, whined that “We should have a ‘White’ Student Association.” (Being typical teenagers that “already know everything,” they were revealing that they may not have learned enough about systemic racism, white privilege, and their pervasive influence in everyone’s life in America.) As the event continued, I later learned that the group EAL is legitimate and the ELCA Church Council had approved its creation in 2006. Its purpose is “to organize as an alliance of people of European descent who will build trust with communities of color and stand as allies in the struggle to address and dismantle racism.” The

association will have its organizing conference in August 2008.

In addressing LGBT issues, I do have to admit that I did arrive at the Spirit of Wholeness event with some nervousness as to what to expect, since stereotypically communities of color have not been as accepting of sexual minorities as Euro-Americans are.

My first, abrupt “going there” was sharing the first meal with a group of Puerto Rican Presbyterian pastors and their wives. The pastor sitting next to me asked in Spanish “So, René, are you married?” Before responding, I had to consider for a couple of seconds how I was going to answer – legally the answer is “no,” but I have been in a same-gender relationship for more than nine years. So, “biting the bullet,” I answered affirmatively explaining that I am gay, etc. He seemed to be cool with this, asking me if my partner was present. We then continued the conversation, discussing the stances of our denominations regarding LGBT people.

Later, in the opening worship, ELCA Presiding Bishop, Mark Hanson, exclaimed that the ELCA needs to start “walking the talk” about building a multicultural church. He went on to say that people in the ELCA cannot talk about their own sexuality, so they discuss that of gays and lesbians. Wow! How prophetic it would be if he would give the same message at a Churchwide assembly!

The remainder of the event was excellent with an overall progressive and affirming theme from workshops and folks that I met. Jim and I especially enjoyed the cultural celebration held on the final night – a big “talent show” of song and dance and drums from an array of cultures. I personally thought that a group of Middle Eastern dancers “took the cake,” dancing and jumping over swords while prompting folks in the audience to join in, with many almost upstaging the performers themselves. Absolutely fabulous! ▼

Anti-Racism Part II: A road map to diversity?

By: **René García**, Co-Director of Multicultural Relations

During the spring board meeting last March in Chicago, LC/NA leaders took time to participate in a second anti-racism training led again by Paul Hawkins and Nat Martin of the National Association of Black and White Men Together. Our workshop title, “Kicking the Tires on Diversity,” offered us the opportunity to seriously discuss taking our hopes and aspirations for LC/NA becoming an anti-racist organization from the “talking” stage to that of action.

Before we began any brainstorming on what LC/NA can do to increase diversity, we explored corporate and social justice models and approaches

to diversity: social justice focusing more on “doing the moral thing” and corporate focusing on “what’s good for business and avoiding discrimination lawsuits.”

Discussions really became interesting when we discussed the “anti-racist highway,” starting from segregated (a monocultural organization) to transformed (a multicultural and anti-racist organization). Based on the descriptions of each “road stop”—i.e. segregated, club, symbolic, awakening, redefining, and transformed—we were asked, “Where is LC/NA?” At which “road stop” are we currently “parked?” The discussion was expanded to where the ELCA is parked. During this exploration, it was recommended to change the

continued on next page

Transformation from Within: LC/NA's commitment to multiculturalism

By **Wendy Sherer**, Region 6 Co-Coordinator

Dedicated to... co-creating a world without outcasts... asserts the newly-adopted vision statement of Lutherans Concerned/North America. It sounds like a true picture of the Kingdom of Heaven, brought to you by Jesus himself. But such a grand vision requires openness, vulnerability, and in some cases, sacrifice.



Ever since the adoption of LC/NA's "Intentional Commitment to Ethnic and Cultural Diversity" at its 2004 Biennial Assembly in Minneapolis, the organization has embarked on a challenging journey toward a fuller embrace of all cultural identities. And the journey continues.

The first step was appointing a Director of Multicultural Relations, someone specifically from a community of color, who would serve as a member of LC/NA's Board of Directors, and also convene a task force (with representatives from African, Asian, Native and Latino/Latina communities, respectively) to direct the multicultural strategy. René García first accepted this position in 2004, and now shares co-directorship with Jim Tyler.

Several significant actions have emerged from the work of this task force, namely the commitment by Lutherans Concerned/North America to become an

*We cannot **free others** from their discrimination until we have attempted to **free ourselves**.*

anti-racist organization. This recognizes that any group dedicated to dismantling oppression for one population must necessarily address whatever additional prejudices may already exist within the system. We cannot free others from their discrimination until we have seriously attempted to free ourselves from our own.

To that end, the leadership of LC/NA has participated in an ongoing series of anti-racism workshops, aimed at helping identify the roots of racism in our society and the ways we all participate in that system of privilege, even those of us who already experience other kinds of oppression ourselves. This process has understandably been surprising, controversial, even painful at times, but the commitment to anti-racism remains strong.

Another outgrowth of the multicultural initiative has been a series of immersions, coinciding with meetings of the Board of Directors. As of this writing, the board has encountered a Mexican border community, a Native American sweat lodge,

and Afro-American culture in Chicago's South side. An Asian immersion is scheduled for the upcoming board meeting in San Francisco in Spring 2008.

Lutherans Concerned/North America has also made many of its publications and resources bi-lingual, offering Spanish translations of membership and RIC brochures, promotional videos (including RIC and transgender awareness), and selected articles from each issue of *Concord*.

LC/NA has seen some success from this intention toward fuller inclusion of diverse communities. For example, the goal to realize 10% participation by persons of color at Toronto's 2006 assembly was met. But the journey is ongoing, and challenges remain if we are truly dedicated to our ultimate goal of "a world without outcasts."

René García reflects on the multicultural efforts of LC/NA thus far, observing that, "as we go through this process, we need to make sure that we're keeping everyone on board. As we have seen in this ministry with LGBT persons, simply saying 'All are welcome' isn't always enough."

García has learned through his experiences in this position that intentionally inviting persons of color into the mix of leadership requires genuine openness to what each person brings. In many cases, they may offer ways of relating, organizing, or discerning the Spirit that differ from the ways the organization has typically functioned in the past, and it may be more difficult to be fluid in our process of growing multiculturally than it is to continue along the same road and hope newcomers will simply "adapt."

"If we are truly open to the vulnerability of being transformed," says García, "then we will eventually realize that on this exciting journey – no matter what we may have planned – "the Spirit calls the shots." ▼

Anti-Racism Part II

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question to "fully accepting LGBT people" and see where people and congregations, in addition to the ELCA, fall on the roadmap.

Towards the end of our training, we started brainstorming ideas and strategies to assist LC/NA in going further on the roadmap. Additional anti-racism training was included in the September Leadership Retreat in Chicago; and, at that retreat, the Multicultural Relations Committee gained four new members: Nicole Michelle Garcia, Vikki Ward Martin, Emily Van Aken and Dean Atkinson. Working with LC/NA Co-Chair Jeannine Janson, Nicole Garcia and Emily Van Aken volunteered to draft a resolution that will serve as LC/NA's roadmap to becoming an anti-racist organization. ▼

Vance Blackfox Will Not Be Prevented from Doing His Ministry

By Carol Mahnke

"Ridiculousness!" That's Vance Blackfox's word for the petty quirks of prejudice that impose barriers to his dreams, the dreams of his forbears and the dreams of millions of people.



"For my ancestors, it was not being able to speak their native tongue" at the boarding schools where they were taught and required to speak only English, he explains. For him, it's the rule in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that precludes gays and lesbians in committed relationships from being ordained as pastors.

"I've been told since I was 13 that I should be a pastor," Blackfox says. But it's not an option for me." So, this fifth generation Lutheran has plunged himself into ministry in the ELCA and beyond.

Active in the Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO) from 1989 to 1996, Blackfox served as president of the Churchwide (national) Board of the LYO and as chair of the Multicultural Advisory Committee board of the LYO. He chaired meetings, planned youth gatherings, presented keynote speeches and

Mention of this **quirk of the ELCA** brings on one of the **sighs** that speak **louder than words** from this young man.

workshops, led worship and was an emcee and panelist before audiences of up to 38,000 people during that time.

Out in the world Blackfox has represented the ELCA at three Young Adult Summits of the National Council of Churches as both a stage manager and coordinator of Spiritual Renewal sessions. Blackfox also represented the ELCA by serving as a youth steward and stage manager for the World Council of Churches' (WCC) 8th General Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1998, setting the stage for dignitaries such as Nelson Mandela. He was also involved in the WCC's Study on Jerusalem in Jerusalem, an in-depth and close up look at the conflict between Palestine and Israel.

More recently, Blackfox has served the church as a staff member with the Women of the ELCA, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, California Lutheran University, the Oaks Indian Mission, and multiple congregations. Most people would need a secretary and support staff to keep track of the innumerable youth and multicultural activities, gatherings,

committees and publications to which Blackfox has contributed and continues to contribute.

Blackfox grew up in Oaks (New Springplace, Indian Territory), a member of the three larger families that make up that community. Some of their lineage can be traced back to Georgia and Tennessee before the Cherokee Nation was forced to move to Oklahoma.

In addition to being a fifth generation Lutheran, Blackfox can trace his lineage, on his mother's side, five more generations back with Moravian ancestors, and another five generations beyond that.

He was valedictorian of his graduating class in Oaks, and then graduated from Texas Lutheran University in Seguin, Texas, in 1997 with a degree in Communication Studies and a minor in Ethnic/Culture Studies. He is currently just three courses short of a Master of Science degree in Leadership and Ethics from John Brown University in Siloam Springs, Ark.

Already he has had 18 years of experience in youth ministry, leadership and spiritual formation, 11 of those years as an elected or appointed lay leader in all areas of the ELCA.

And yet the church precludes Blackfox from becoming a pastor.

And that hurts.

He's had some very close relationships and knows he would not want to remain a chaste and lonely single all his life. That's what the church would expect of him if he were to be ordained.

And as passionate and enthusiastic as Blackfox is for the ministry of his church, mention of this quirk of the ELCA brings on one of the sighs that speak louder than words in a conversation with the young man.

But it is what it is, Blackfox acknowledges. And he's not going to let it prevent him from doing ministry as a lay leader.

Despite having been raised in a fairly conservative area of the country, Blackfox's experiences gave him the courage at the age of 19 to come out to his parents. His parents, who first reacted with fear and denial, soon realized that he was the same son they had loved from birth and that they would continue to love him. His father died recently.

Currently, Blackfox works as manager for guest services at the Cherokee Casino Resort, training employees, doing leadership training and facilitating communications between guests and employees.

In addition to continuing to do ministry through the church, Blackfox continues to serve as motivational speaker, workshop and training facilitator, and as an emcee for events across the church and in the world. ▼

African American Congregations Break the Silence

By **Vikki L. Ward Martin**, Reverend Seminarian,
Lutherans Concerned-Chicago Chapter

"Chicago, Chicago, that toddlin' town. Chicago, Chicago, I'll show you around..." See the offices of the ELCA's Presiding Bishop, Churchwide Units and Metropolitan Chicago Synod. See the ethnically diverse ELCA congregations in the city clustered in conferences within the synod. See the many congregations in the various Metro Chicago synod conferences that represent communities of faith joined together in the spirit of *koinonia* who publicly identify as Welcoming Churches, inclusive of LGBTQ persons, their families and friends. See in particular the call and response, of bold faithfulness within the predominately African-American congregations of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod South Conference of Churches who plan to publicly and openingly "Break the Silence" on human sexuality and LGBTQ issues during the forthcoming Lenten season.



Historically, the 21 congregations of the South Conference have not collectively participated in open dialogue on LGBTQ issues, intentional welcoming or the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) program. The reasons are many and varied, but ultimately all find root in systemic historical and ongoing institutional racism, both within and outside the walls of the Church. The historical sexual exploitation of women of color, the societal denigration of cultural mores and norms relative to sexuality, the imposition and replacement of such with Eurocentric "Victorian" perspectives and class distinctions within have served as indoctrination to

No collective dialog, not RIC... because of **systemic** historical, ongoing **institutional racism**

yet another deeply rooted homophobia "ism" within the African American community. Carla Powell, Associate Pastor, Ebenezer Lutheran Church and Co-Dean of Metropolitan Chicago Synod Northwest Conference, comments that as a white pastor serving a predominately white congregation that has been RIC for many years and is fully welcoming, "it is often difficult to speak about LGBTQ issues within multicultural (or non-white) ELCA congregations because one of the largest barriers to having further conversations between RIC congregations (which are mostly white) and multicultural congregations (which are mostly non-white) is the racial divide." Alas, "we rarely have close enough ties with one another to build significant relationships in which honest, respectful conversations can flourish." Pastor Carla posits that "prep work on issues surrounding racism, participation in anti-racism training, reading about racism and the 1960s civil rights struggle with

willingness to learn from one another will foster ways to be intentional across racial lines."

It was with this sensitivity and awareness that the Lutherans Concerned/Chicago chapter (LC/Chicago) initiated outreach efforts to the South Conference Churches earlier this year. As stated by LC/Chicago Communications Coordinator Carolyn Doughty, "everybody deserves to know that our Creator God is a loving God that accepts everyone the way they were created."

Through the diligent and collaborative efforts of a number of people—including the Rev. Dr. Ray Legania, synod liaison and Associate to the Bishop; Pastor Booker Vance, South Conference Dean; the Metro Chicago African American Strategy Team presided by Pastor Beverly Conway; and LC/Chicago—plans are for the South Conference Churches to gather together each week during the Lenten season for combined worship, prayer and to "Break the Silence" on LGBTQ issues and intentional welcoming. They will do so with presentations, reflection and dialogue. The RIC program will be introduced and RIC bulletin inserts will be included on Sundays and during the Lenten services. The weekly presentations include:

- "All God's Children" a video presentation led by Pastor Gwen Miller, Zion Lutheran Church
- "Human Sexuality in a Changing World from a Youth's Perspective," led by South Conference Dean Pastor Booker Vance, St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, the Rev. Dr. Wyvetta Bullock, Associate to the Presiding Bishop, facilitating discussion
- "Human Sexuality in a Changing World from an Adult's Perspective," led by Pastor Beverly Conway, Redeemer Lutheran Church
- "LGBT vs. Jerry: A Life Calling" led by the Rev. Dr. Ray Legania, Associate to the Bishop and Relator to the Northeast and South Conference of Churches, with speakers Pastors Darryl Thompson Powell, Bethany Lutheran Church and Carla Thompson Powell, Ebenezer Lutheran Church
- Panel Open Discussion on LGBT Issues, facilitated by Pastor Paul Moonu at St. James Lutheran Church with panelists Pastor Beverly Conway, Darryl Powell, Carla Thompson Powell and Ross Carmichael

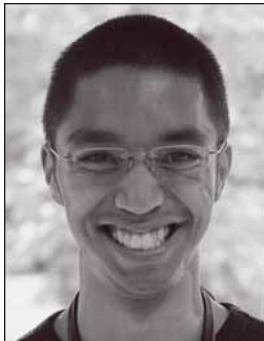
Plans are to continue the dialogue beyond the Lenten season with the hoped-for goal that some of the congregations might become RIC.

When asked for reflections on the Lenten plans, Pastor Conway stated with bold clarity, "My position on this issue is, to me, simple and in keeping with God's word. We are all made in the image of God. Everything that God made is good. That applies to you and me and to every other human being." Amen, Pastor. ▼

Queer and Brown and Lutheran: An interview with **Jeremy Posadas**

By **Bea Chun**

Jeremy Posadas, Secretary of LC/NA, has served on the legal team representing Pr. Bradley Schmeling, as well as on the Goodsoil Legislative Team, which coordinated the ELCA-wide assembly strategy for full inclusion. He is currently working on a PhD. in Religion at Emory University. We were interested to discover more about his background.



You are of Asian descent... why is it that you are Lutheran?

I was raised in a fundamentalist Southern Baptist family, since several family members came to the U.S. with the assistance of Southern Baptist missions. As my identity as a queer person emerged in middle and high school, I found it less and less possible to remain in the conservative Christianity in which I was raised. My stepmother is a lifelong Lutheran, and we began attending her congregation. I first fell in love with Lutheran liturgy, and then I fell in love with the Lutheran tradition's potential for a theological openness that I didn't find in fundamentalist theology.

Being **queer and brown** means that I am **doubly a minority** in the Lutheran world.

How do race, religion, and sexuality interact for you?

My sexual identity emerged in conjunction with my racial identity, because we live in a society that privileges the white male body as the norm for beauty and power. Being queer and brown means that I am doubly a minority in the Lutheran world, which is overwhelmingly straight and white. So race, religion, and sexuality have all contributed to my experience of social power structures. At the same time, race, religion, and sexuality have all provided resources for working to undo structures that marginalize not only me, but most other of the world's people.

What should a pastor know about ministry with Asian/Pacific Islander (API) LGBT persons?

Take time to build meaningful relationships! Not just with individuals, but also with community organizations. There are many ways a congregation can build relationships with LGBT Lutherans – for instance, by becoming RIC. But congregations may need to identify non-Lutheran Asian organizations with which to join in relationships.

What kind of support is there for API LGBT persons in Lutherans Concerned?

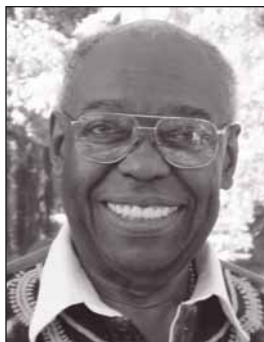
One reality that LC/NA has to respond to is that the Lutheran denominations within LC/NA are all overwhelmingly white. But LC/NA has a responsibility to grow in its accountability to people of *all* races. Part of that growth, therefore, will

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Ain't I a **Gay** Christian?

By **James P. Tyler Jr.**, Co-Director of Multicultural Relations

I was baptized in a Baptist church when I was about eight. By twelve, I was playing piano for Sunday school. By fifteen, I knew I was gay yet took part in all the musical activities of several churches. I began piano and a band instrument in fourth grade. Organ study began when in tenth grade and today I still hold a church position as organist. My contact with Lutheranism began when I went to college to become a music educator. With apologies to Sojourner Truth, "An' Ain't I a Christian?"



I served in the Army as clerk typist and Chaplain's Assistant. An Honorable Discharge certificate hangs on my wall. I hold two degrees in music. I was never a biological father but I served as "parent" to thousands of boys and girls in my thirty-four years of teaching music. "An' Ain't I a gay educator?"

A non-gay man from Colombia shared my home for ten years. I helped him learn English as he earned his Master and PhD degrees. For more than ten years I have been sharing a home and serving as caregiver-companion to a fine lady in her maturity.

For most of my life I have worked to bring awareness and change to this toxic atmosphere of racism and homophobia. I have done this while serving on a synod council and the ELCA Commission for Church in Society and by leading discussions in churches and community organizations. I now serve as Co-Director of the Multicultural Relations Committee of Lutherans Concerned North America. "An' Ain't I an African American?"

I have sung in choirs and played pipe organs in churches and cathedrals in Sweden, Holland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, China, Australia and New Zealand, to name but a few countries. I have returned to play the organ on the campus of a college in Virginia where I was born. This is the same state that afforded blacks no opportunity to attend school, so it was not until I was nine that I learned to read and write in the schools of a small town we moved to in Pennsylvania.

"Now Ain't I African American, an Educator, Gay and Christian?!" ▼

Extraordinary

Merger

Extraordinary Candidacy Project and Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministries merge and become **Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries**

On Reformation Day (October 31) 2007, Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries announced its formation from the merger of the Extraordinary Candidacy Project (ECP), the ECP Roster, and Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministries (LLGM). Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries (ELM) describes itself as a national non-profit that credentials and rosters openly gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people for ministry; supports these pastors by working with congregations that will call them and by providing mission grants to support

To create the **church as it should be** in the now.

their ministry; and provides a network of support to the congregations and pastors. Pastors from the ELM roster currently serve fourteen ELCA and two independent Lutheran congregations.

As part of its announcement, ELM released its Theology Statement by “nailing” it to the door of the Lutheran Church through a virtual posting of the document. The statement urges “Lutheran churches around the world to return to their Lutheran core and end the practice of mandated celibacy for gay,

lesbian, bisexual, and transgender pastors.”

Emily Eastwood, Executive Director of LC/NA, congratulated the board and roster of ELM on the merger: “As LC/NA remains committed to graceful engagement through systemic change from within which will allow for the full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities within the Lutheran communion, we congratulate



ELM on the formation of a merged organization that seeks to create the church as it should be in the now. For LC/NA, ELM is an anticipatory and prophetic community living a vision of full inclusion without further study and delay. ELM calls and exhorts us to a future they are already living, where LGBT pastors are free to answer their calls from God, and congregations are free to confirm those calls.”

ELM also announced that Jen Rude would become the first ELM-approved candidate to be ordained *extra ordinem* following the merger. See the story of Jen’s extraordinary ordination on page 17.

Further information about ELM, including its Theology Statement, can be found at www.elm.org. ▼

Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries and The Rite of Extraordinary Ordination

By whose authority do we call and ordain? By Christ’s authority, for the purpose of joy and healing within the whole body of Christ, given for us and for all people. ELM takes refuge in the same emergency measures invoked by the 16th Century reformers:

As a result, when the regular bishops become enemies of the gospel or are unwilling to ordain, the churches retain their right to do so. For wherever the church exists, there also is the right to administer the gospel. Therefore, it is necessary for the church to retain the right to call, choose, and ordain ministers. This right is a gift bestowed exclusively on the church, and no human authority can take it away from the church, as Paul testifies to the Ephesians when he says: “When he ascended on high... he gave gifts to his people.” (Martin Luther, *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*)

• • •

Rooted in the extraordinary ordinations that were performed by Martin Luther and the reformers as recorded in the Lutheran Confessions, and in accordance with our vision, policies and bylaws, ELM will authorize ordination of extraordinary candidates for ministry. An extraordinary ordination may occur when: an individual has received a call from God; God’s call is discerned and accepted by the ordinand; the call is recognized and endorsed by the governing board of ELM; and the call is ratified by the Church through the issuance of a letter of call to the ordinand from one or more congregations, assemblies, parishes or communities of believers.

The call from God is to be a minister of

Word and Sacrament in and to the one, holy, catholic, and Apostolic Church. All power in the rite of ordination belongs to God. However, so that the catholicity of the church may be expressed, bishops, pastors, and representatives of other congregations and faith communities will be invited to participate in the laying on of hands. The assembled clergy affirm and welcome the ordinand into the college of ministers of Word and Sacrament. The laity participate in this gracious act of God; by presenting the ordinand and thus naming the ordinand worthy to be set apart and; by speaking their “Amen” to the prayer invoking the pastoral gifts of the Holy Spirit upon the ordinand.

Excerpted from ELM Theology Statement



(Another) Extraordinary Ordination

Jen Rude called as Associate Pastor at Resurrection Lutheran, Chicago
By **Jeannine Janson**, Co-Chair

On Reformation Sunday (October 28) 2007, the congregation of Resurrection Lutheran Church of Chicago voted to call Jennette (Jen) Lynn Rude to serve as Associate Pastor and posted at its website an invitation to Jen's ordination *extra ordinem* on Saturday, November 17, and her installation on Sunday, November 18, 2007.

On Reformation Day (October 31) 2007, Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries announced its formation from the merger of the Extraordinary Candidacy Project (ECP), the ECP Roster, and Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministries (LLGM). See that story on page 15.

Thus, on November 17, 2007, Jen Rude became the first pastor to be ordained in the newly-formed Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries.

Who is Jen Rude?

Jen was born in Isle, Minnesota, and lived in Buffalo, Denver, Sioux Falls and Berkeley, before moving to Chicago after graduating from Pacific School of Religion with a Master of Divinity in 2005. A lifelong Lutheran and pastor's kid (and grandkid), Jen began to feel called to ministry while attending

Sexual orientation has nothing to do with how well a person can minister a congregation.

Augustana College in Sioux Falls. After coming out as a lesbian, Jen wondered whether or not this call would ever come to fruition. Deciding to go to seminary anyway, Jen was nurtured and encouraged

by mentors to follow her call, even if it meant confronting church policies of discrimination. While in seminary, Jen began the candidacy process for ordained ministry both within the ELCA and with what is now Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries (ELM). Jen was approved for ordination by ELM in November 2006 (the ELCA postponed her approval). Jen began serving Resurrection in 2005, first as an intern, then as Community Minister. Jen has also served as Youth Outreach Minister at The Chicago Night Ministry, working with young people who are experiencing homelessness, many of whom are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth. The Rev. Paul Landahl, former bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the ELCA, was quoted in the Chicago Tribune as saying, "Jen is a wonderful candidate for ministry."

And Resurrection Lutheran Church?

Resurrection is a Reconciling in Christ ELCA congregation, located in Lakeview, Chicago. When you click on "About Us" at Resurrection's website, you will find these words: *Invite * Include * Involve * Inspire + In Christ*. By virtue of their call to Jen Rude, Resurrection is the fourth congregation in 13 months to demonstrate its opposition to the ELCA's policy requiring lifelong celibacy of gay and lesbian clergy.

About Jen's call, Resurrection member Kathy Young was reported in the *Chicago Tribune* as saying, "We all realized that sexual orientation has nothing to do with how well a person can minister a congregation."

The Rev. Brian Hiortdahl, Lead Pastor at Resurrection, had this to say about Jen and her call: "Jen's ministry with us for the past two years has been a Godsend, and in our congregation's experience, she has more than proven herself worthy of ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. The congregation's vote to call Jen is consistent with this community's legacy and mission and we hope this action will encourage others to join us in our mission, in prayer and in our pews."

Extraordinary Ordination

The Rev. Jen Rude was set aside for Word and Sacrament ministry by the laying on of hands at an extraordinary ordination service that I was delighted to attend. Resurrection's sanctuary, including the balcony, was filled. By my count, there were nearly 175 of us present to witness, participate in and celebrate the joyous occasion. Those in attendance included about 30 clergy, more than 20 of whom were vested and processed during the entrance hymn, *In Christ Called to Baptize*. Among the vested clergy were the Revs. Jeff Johnson, Ruth Frost and Phyllis Zillhart, who were ordained in the first extraordinary ordination on January 20, 1990. The Rev. Erik Christensen (Co-Chair of and rostered by

ELM and pastor at St. Luke's Lutheran Church at Logan Square, Chicago) presided at the service, and the Rev. Jeff Johnson preached. Pr. Johnson is also rostered by ELM and serves as pastor at University Lutheran Chapel in Berkeley.

In his sermon, Pr. Johnson said, "It will be 18 years in January since we first began to speak of 'extraordinary' ministries. It was early in January of 1990 when Ruth, Phyllis and I received a letter written on the Eve of the Feast of the Epiphany from the Rev. Dr. Krister Stendahl, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Stockholm. Dr. Stendahl told us that he could not attend our ordination because he had previously scheduled a trip to Moscow; however, he wanted to send his blessing:

Since I cannot be with you at your ordination, which – it seems must take place *extra ordinem* – I want to send you a greeting affirming my conviction that the steps that your congregations and you are taking stand well before God. My conviction is also that it is right for your congregations and you to proceed in an extraordinary manner and find ways for your ordination. Church history in general and Lutheran history in particular supply precedents.

Pr. Johnson went on to say, "We have been living through an era which has seen the ordinary way of doing things bog down in discrimination, deception, denial, dysfunction; and 18 years ago was born among us the description of our movement as 'extraordinary,' and of these kinds of ordinations as *extra ordinem*, sustaining our conviction to continue to move forward toward something new."

For the Rite of Ordination, Jen was presented by her grandparents, The Rev. Roger and Shirley Prescott, who spoke these words: "We present for ordination to the holy ministry of Word and Sacrament Jennette Lynn Rude, a baptized child of God reared by and among us who, having made her own affirmation of faith, we now commend to the church to serve in the office of pastor."

Following the Hymn of Ordination, *Will You Let Me Be Your Servant*, Pr. Christensen, placed both his hands on Jen's head while the vested clergy and rostered individuals came forward to impose their right hands in representation of God's whole Church; and during their laying on of hands, we sang *Veni Sancte Spiritus*.

Jen's parents, The Rev. Ron and Nancy Rude, and her sister, Angela Camara, presented her ordination stole. Exhorters were: Heather Bradley, Gerry Katsma, the Rev. Joseph Blotz, the Rev. Brian Hiortdahl, Eric Price, the Rev. John Hassey and the Rev. Megan Rohrer.

Then, with Jen in our midst, we all laid hands on her and on each other. Joining us in the laying on of hands was the Rev. Paul Landahl, former bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the ELCA. During this laying on of hands, Pr. Christensen said these words: "Baptized into the priesthood of Christ, we are all called by the Holy Spirit to offer ourselves to God in thanksgiving for what God has done and continues to do for us. May our commitment be renewed today to proclaim the praise of God and bear God's creative and redeeming Word to all the world.

"Gracious God, you have blessed each of us with unique gifts, and you have called us into specific occupations, relationships and activities using those gifts. Enable us to use our talents to witness to our faith in you and to communicate your love to the

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Congregation Votes to Call ELM Pastor

LC/NA Board Chaplain, **Jen Nagel**, is called to serve Salem English Lutheran Church in Minneapolis – **Extraordinary Ordination** Set for January 19, 2008

Seeking to speak the language of their neighborhood, in 1889 Salem English Lutheran was one of the first Lutheran congregations west of Chicago to worship in English.



On Sunday November 11, 2007, it also became one of the first Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations to call a member of the Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries (ELM) roster.

"After a long period of diligent and prayerful study, Salem has joyfully made the decision to call Jen as our pastor," explains Jan Olson, a member of Salem for over 30 years and part of the Call Committee. "Jen has the gifts for ministry that our congregation needs at this time!"

Jen has been serving as the Pastoral Minister of

Salem Lutheran for four and a half years. On January 19, 2008, she will be ordained *extraordinem* and installed as a minister of Word and Sacrament and become their pastor. For more information on Jen and her call go to www.elm.org.

Jen is currently serving as Chaplain to the LC/NA Board of Directors. We are delighted for Jen, and we know that Salem English will continue to benefit greatly with Jen as their pastor. ▼

Out of the Extraordinary – Benefit Album

Out of the Extraordinary is a compilation album project to raise visibility of the issue of ordination of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) pastors and raise funds for scholarships and debt relief for the LGBTQ pastors that have chosen to be or have been forced outside of the ELCA roster of pastors.

The CD features a range of Lutheran, LGBTQ and other artists, including Indigo Girls, Sara Thomsen, Jonathan Rundman, Richard Colligan, Dakota Road, Bread for the Journey, Judy Fjell, David Maxon, Agape, The San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, and The Transcendence Gospel Choir.

To hear song clips, find out more and to order, go to www.elm.org/oe.



ENDA: A Beginning, Not an End

On November 7, 2007, in an historic vote, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the **Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)**, 235-184.

E NDA provides protections against discrimination in the workplace (hiring, firing, promoting, disciplining) on the basis of sexual orientation. This action by the House caps decades of

efforts to prevent employers from using perceived or known sexual orientation as a factor in decisions regarding employees or job applicants.

The passage of the bill is also significant because, over the strenuous and vocal objections of more than 350 LGBT organizations, protections on the

Deeply flawed... abandoned the transgender **community**

basis of gender identity were removed from the bill in the weeks prior to the vote. The passed bill offers protections only for lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons, not transgender persons.

Senator Edward Kennedy, D, Massachusetts, has said that he intends to introduce the ENDA bill passed by the House into the Senate. Observers rank the chances of the Senate passing ENDA as slim-to-none. Additionally, the White House has announced that, should any ENDA legislation pass the

Congress, his senior advisors would recommend to this president that he veto the bill.

Emily Eastwood, Executive Director, LC/NA, said, "We see the House passage of protections on the basis of sexual orientation as another step in the interminable quest for equality in this country. The strategy to pass this non-inclusive bill was deeply flawed in that it abandoned the transgender community for the sake of what, to some, seems a meaningless victory, given the slim chance it will become law. I ask you to join LC/NA in working to make inclusive equality a reality in our church and our world. If we share this dream and turn our private pain into public action, that dream will become a reality."

Lisbeth Kellogg, Bi Representative to the LC/NA Board, said, "The outcome on ENDA felt a lot like a replay of the Churchwide Assembly in Chicago last summer. The support of more than 350 organizations for a full-inclusion ENDA and the strenuous efforts of many people during the legislative process were not enough: a bill passed that did not include workplace protections for gender identity, just as the support of 22 synods was not sufficient to undo the prohibitions precluding rostered service by LGBT persons in committed relationships. That said, we go on: LC/NA will not back down from its belief in full inclusion."

ENDA was co-sponsored by Rep. Barney Frank, D, Massachusetts, and Rep. Tammy Baldwin, D, Wisconsin, the two openly gay Members of Congress. Frank said that the bill was the end result of decades of efforts to provide civil rights protections for LGBT persons. Despite that, in late September, it was announced that he was removing gender identity from the bill because he feared the bill would be defeated.

Prodigious efforts to re-instate protections based on gender identity were launched by United ENDA (www.unitedenda.org), a coalition of more than 350 LGBT organizations, to re-instate protections based on gender identity.

Baldwin announced that, if the non-inclusive bill were to move out of committee and onto the floor of the House for a vote, she would introduce an amendment that restored the removed protections.

After assurances were given by the Democratic leadership of the House that the Baldwin Amendment would be allowed on the floor, sufficient members of the House Education and Labor Committee – where the bill was in committee – voted to move the bill to the floor for a vote.

United ENDA's efforts galvanized grassroots and lobbying support, initially to get Frank to re-instate gender identity; after the bill left committee, to support the passage of the Baldwin Amendment; and finally to pulling the bill or voting it down, when it became clear that there were not enough

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

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www.lcna.org/assembly

Brochure and registration materials inserted in this issue of *Concord*. For questions about assembly, e-mail assembly@lcna.org



votes to pass the Baldwin Amendment and, as a result, therefore the leadership was not going to allow the amendment to come to a vote.

The day before the vote was taken, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the NAACP, the National Education Association, the United Auto Workers, the AFL-CIO, the National Employment Lawyers Association, the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the American Federation of State, County, Municipal Employees and a number of other groups signed an open letter expressing their reluctant support of the non-inclusive bill. Previously, HRC had taken a neither-support-nor-oppose position on the non-inclusive bill. Joe Salmonese, president of

HRC, said that the non-inclusive bill was not their preference, but they recognized the political realities precluding the passage of an inclusive bill. HRC has pledged to commit resources to transgender education efforts to facilitate future expansion of ENDA protections to include gender identity.

During the debate, numerous U.S. Representatives, including Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, expressed their disappointment that this bill was not all-inclusive. Baldwin, when her amendment was introduced, said that she recognized there were not sufficient votes to pass the amendment, but that the “people who are being left behind by this bill deserve to know that they are not forgotten.” She pledged to continue the struggle until

gender identity is protected. She then withdrew her amendment.

In a last-ditch effort to scupper the entire bill, Republicans made a motion to Recommit with Instructions, a parliamentary maneuver that would have sent the bill back to committee, effectively killing it for the rest of the year. That motion prompted an impassioned speech by Barney Frank. The motion was soundly defeated. The bill subsequently passed.

United ENDA has said that its goal is the passage of inclusive ENDA legislation in 2009 following the national elections in 2008, which are expected to produce an even more amenable political environment. ▼

We Share Values, Commitments, Struggles and Our Lives

From **Kate Stoeckel**, Our
Lutheran Volunteer Corps Representative



The week after Churchwide Assembly last August, I went to Washington, D.C. There I met five strangers who were to be my housemates for the coming year. As members of the

Lutheran Volunteer Corps (LVC), we'd pledged to a year of service and living in intentional community on a monthly living stipend. Living in this kind of community is different from just having housemates because we've committed to certain ideals and to each other. That means we intentionally spend more

I'm lucky. I do my work at LC/NA where my passion for **justice** is constantly renewed.

time together. We share a food budget, and we make decisions together that are guided by our mutual commitments to simplicity, faith, and justice (like deciding to use worms to turn our food scraps into nutrient-rich “castings” for the garden). Many people don't understand this kind of living arrangement; it seems odd to do so much sharing and impractical to worry so much about composting

or spending time with the people who share your rent. But that's the point, we don't just share rent. We share values and commitments, and, for this year, we'll share our struggles and our lives because we are committed to making this year about more than just a job.

But our jobs aren't just jobs, either. We work with various non-profit organizations doing everything from direct service to advocacy for the

environment, refugees, and other justice-oriented causes. I'm very lucky because I do my work at LC/NA, a place where exciting things are happening and my particular passion for justice is constantly renewed. It was sometime during college that I realized I wasn't the only one who felt unwelcome in the church. And I've since become committed to seeing the day when *no one* will feel unwelcome and we can begin repairing the damage that has been done. Working for LC/NA has given me the opportunity to work toward that goal in a whole new way and I'm enlivened, challenged, and continually blessed by this work and the people I meet because of it.

LC/NA is beginning the process to have (hopefully!) another volunteer for the 2008–2009 year. If you or someone you know (the only requirement is that you be more than 21 years old) is interested in being a volunteer for LC/NA or one of the many other fabulous organizations that works with LVC, go to: www.lutheranvolunteercorps.org or feel free to e-mail me with questions (kates@lcna.org). ▼

Ordination

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people we meet each day. Empower this priesthood of all believers to be ministers of your reconciliation, love, hope and justice. Keep us steadfast in our commitment to serve all creation in your name, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.”

And the people said, “Amen.”

Pr. Christensen then asked the gathered assembly these three questions: “Will you, assembled as the people of God and speaking for the whole Church, receive Jennette as a messenger of Jesus Christ sent to serve God’s people with the Gospel of hope and salvation? Will you regard her as a servant of Christ? Will you pray for her, help and honor her for her work’s sake, and in all things strive to live together in the peace and unity of Christ?”

And we responded, “We will.”

Pr. Christensen then said, “Let it be acclaimed that Jennette Lynn Rude is

ordained a minister in the Church of Christ. Jennette has Christ’s authority to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, serving God’s people.”

And the people said, “Amen. Thanks be to God!” and broke into prolonged, thunderous, celebratory applause!!

After the service, I asked various people how they felt. Jen’s grandfather had this to say, “Super duper. I’m very moved... wonderful to be here;” and Jen’s dad, “elated, proud, thankful.”

Lois Voss, Co-Chair of ELM, said, “I’m very proud to be part of this, and I look forward to the call of many more ELM candidates and pastors.” My partner, Mari Irvin, simply said, “Joyous, joyous, joyous.”

On Sunday morning, Jen was installed, with the Rev. Carla Thompson Powell, Dean of the Northeast Conference of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the ELCA, serving as the Installing Minister. The rite of installation was concluded with even more prolonged, celebratory applause as

the members of Resurrection received and greeted their new pastor. And then, Jen put on a green chausible – a gift to her from her new congregation – and presided over the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

It was indeed, joyous, joyous, joyous, and I, too, felt super duper, elated and thankful.

A Word from the ELCA

It has been reported that the Rev. Wayne N. Miller, Bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the ELCA, has announced that he will follow the guidance of the church’s new policy of “refrain or restraint” that was passed at the ELCA’s Churchwide Assembly this summer, in hopes that his “refrain” from disciplining Resurrection will allow the church to stay in dialogue.

Bishop Miller also sent Jen a letter, which was reprinted in the ordination service folder. In his letter, Bishop Miller wished Jen “well as you begin a new phase in your ministry at Resurrection Lutheran Church.” His letter concluded with, “May your ministry be blessed with love, may your witness to the community be bold, and may the Lord grant you strength and peace in the days ahead.” ▼

Notes from the International Program Committee (IPC)

Beginning with this issue, each issue of the *Concord* will include a box with brief notes on LGBT issues from an international perspective. We hope this will be helpful to you in tracking global progress in inclusivity.

Update from Latvia: Those of you who attended the LC/NA Assembly in Toronto recall the story related by Pastor Maris Sants of the organized anti-gay attacks, including the throwing of excrement, experienced by Maris and other participants in last year’s Pride event in Riga. The delegates at the Assembly resolved that LC/NA should communicate its concern over the lack of equal protection under the laws of Latvia and the EU. The IPC assisted with this communication. Although it is hard to say what the impact of our campaign was, we did receive letters of recognition from the Government of Latvia, and this year Maris reports that security was provided by the police to the participants. Unfortunately, the Pride event in neighboring Lithuania did not fare so well this year and participants were subjected to attacks with smoke bombs. Maris, who has been excommunicated from the Latvian Lutheran Church for being gay, is now in the process of applying for recognition under the new ELM process. We hope he and his partner will be with us in San Francisco for *Hearts on Fire*.

Singapore: The issues of decriminalizing homosexual sex has surfaced with widespread controversy. That there has been any discussion is significant in a country where the government controls even the counter-culture. Change may be slow in coming. The bill presented in parliament to decriminalize such sex acts was voted down in October. The informal comments from high levels say, “it is too soon, and we will see.” To date, most religious groups have avoided public comment.

Hun Sen, the Prime Minister of **Cambodia**, announced in late October that he was severing his ties with his adopted lesbian daughter. He maintained, however, that he was not discriminating against gays [only his daughter?] and appealed to society to show respect for them. It is hard to wade through the mixed messages on this one.

Our partnership with local support groups in **Brazil** has been disrupted by local institutional instability. We hope to recast the relationship based on open discussions with the Lutheran seminary there that we hope will lead to, at least, a workshop in 2008.

Countries in **Africa** continue to provide disheartening news on LGBT rights and associated issues. Problems have been reported in the international press in Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and Uganda, to name a few.

—Philip Moeller, Director, IPC

Jeremy Posadas

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include partnering with communities of color outside of the Lutheran world. Our focus needs to continue to be advocating for justice for queer or LGBT people within Lutheran churches, but relationships we build with communities of color will deepen our own understandings and commitments to justice for *all* people, across lines of race, sexuality, and religion.

What is something that would surprise most people to learn about you?

My brother, sister, and I all got the same tattoo before my brother left for his military service in Iraq. ▼

[Ed: Author Bea Chun did not ask where Jeremy’s tattoo is located!]