

INSIDE

From the Editor 2

From the Development Director 3

RIC Pages 4-5

Holy Cross, Suspended for Calling Lionel Ketola 7

Extraordinary Ordination. 8

Update on Draft Social Statement 10

Glad There is GLAAD. 12

Hope, Homosexuality & Hospitality 13

Early Reflections on Election Day Results 14

Normal Rules for CWA 2009 . 15

Our Logo

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

Statement of Sanctuary

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

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

Diversity and Anti-Racism

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

Welcome to 2009

The Year of a Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA and a **Year of Exciting Work** for Lutherans Concerned/North America

- The announcement of Reconciling Lutherans is the lead article of this issue. Now we will have a roster of individuals around the world who declare themselves to be welcoming and for full inclusion.
- RIC Corner will take you to Illinois and Houston for a visit to welcoming congregations.
- Jodi Barry was extraordinarily ordained into the Lutheran ministry under the auspices of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries. This is a kind of first, since there is no congregation issuing a call.
- Learn about the progress of the draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality and about decisions by the ELCA Church Council regarding the voting process on the statement and other issues surrounding it.
- Read about Bishop Brauer-Rieke's Bible study at Creator Lutheran in Clackamas, Oregon and find the address for a link to his presentation.
- Find out why LC/NA is glad there is GLAAD.
- And look for articles from the Development desk, the editor, Director of International Programs, new resources from InfoX, and more...

Sign Up and Be Counted: Reconciling Lutherans Rolls Out

There are many members of RIC congregations who have little or no contact with LC/NA as an organization. While many have experienced the renewal and invigoration that can come from full inclusion, they often know very little about LC/NA's mission and how it works to accomplish it. They may even know very little about the RIC program itself, even though they support the cause.

Others, whether they are part of an RIC congregation or not, may encounter LC/NA and RIC at synod assembly info tables, Global Mission events, and other gatherings and say to themselves, "I want to see all people welcomed and included in the church... maybe I should check out that organization a little more closely" — but then, for one reason or another, return home without doing so.

In order to provide a quick, easy way to bring such folks closer to the mission and work of

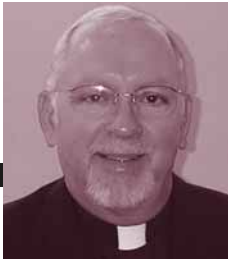
LC/NA, we are thrilled to announce a new program called Reconciling Lutherans.

Reconciling Lutherans is a program that invites all Lutherans to publicly witness to their call for a church and world that welcomes and includes all people. Reconciling Lutherans indicate their support of full inclusion by signing a Covenant of Welcome, affirming their commitment to encourage the church to extend a genuine welcome to all. Upon signing the covenant, their names are added to a public roster (*See the Reconciling Lutherans Covenant of Welcome on page 6*).

Perhaps the easiest way to describe Reconciling
continued on page 6

The Editor

DALE TRUSCOTT



Loss is Gain

I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. —PHILIPPIANS 3:8

There was an article in the *Orlando Sentinel* this week about the dividing Episcopal church in the United States. One of the conservative break-away priests said that every 500 years the Church goes through a major time of struggle. He claimed the attempt to form a new African-associated Episcopal province was such a “reform,” back to the “true church.” He’s right about the 500-year pattern, but he’s wrong

As the church continues to reject us in any way, they lose the **blessing** of our contribution and the **privilege of sharing the gospel** .

about what happens. It is reform that happens! Retrenchment happens in some circles, to be sure, but history shows that reform and new life are what truly emerge.

Last week I was nominated by the Bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod to serve a six-month interim ministry at a Florida congregation. Before the interview with the council could even happen, they had Googled my name and discovered me on the list of 82 who came out through our Devotional Booklet at the last Churchwide Assembly. They also found my website. They refused to interview me. The Bishop’s assistant was deeply saddened but was helpless to do more. I was angry, and saddened, but a bit relieved. The extra income would have been nice, but not

the aggravation. Out of it comes opportunity, not just to do an interim, but to raise awareness in a synod that has done little to work for inclusion. Lutherans Concerned/North America lives in Orlando in the person of me, just as LC/NA lives in each congregation and community

in which each one of you lives. We are living witnesses to the fact that, as the church continues to reject us in any way, they lose the blessing of our contribution and the privilege of sharing the gospel. And so now I have the opportunity to say, “Now that you know I’m here and have experienced the ugly face of rejection of ministry in this synod, we (LC/NA) will hold your feet to the fire of justice in the church and will offer you the opportunity to let us help you move forward toward inclusion.”

In the midst of what I believe was a great victory for our country in the election of Barack Obama to be president of the United States, the LGBT community experienced loss. The epidemic of amendments

to state constitutions limiting marriage to a man and a woman continued. But, again, the loss will become gain as the courts struggle to understand what is truly at issue here and that the protections of minority rights under the Constitution cannot be overlooked.

One congregation rejected me, but this issue of *Concord* has a list of new RIC congregations. Some people said they would not come to church if I were the pastor there, but thousands will respond to the opportunity now to become Reconciling Lutherans. I may or may not get to do much Word and Sacrament ministry in this synod (I have some other invitations, though.), but pastors just keep on being extraordinarily ordained and called into good ministries. What seems like loss in one place becomes gain for Christ in another, multiplied!

We are on the threshold of a momentous year, a year in which the ELCA will again be presented by the Holy Spirit with the opportunity to uphold justice and inclusion. There is a tremendous amount of work to be done throughout the church in preparation for Churchwide Assembly. Much of that work is already underway preparing for synod assembly season. But, with the economic downturn in the world, LC/NA is suffering a critical cash-flow problem. At a time when we need to be revving up our engines, there is a shortage in our monetary fuel. You have received a message from Executive Director Emily Eastwood about this. I echo her sentiments and encourage everyone to help as much as you can. ▼

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Development Chair



TOM VANDENBOSCH

“We Would Give Everything...”

I guess I don't have to tell you how difficult it is these days to pick up a newspaper, turn on a television or sign on to the internet without getting bombarded with gloom, doom and despair related to the current economic downturn. In recent days, I've found myself succumbing, at times, to the negativity and pessimism. Until memories of an eerily similar time, nearly 30 years ago, changed my perspective entirely....

It was Thanksgiving, 1979, and I had been looking forward to a much-needed four-day break. Instead, I spent the entire “vacation”—four straight days—sanding, staining and varnishing woodwork and painting walls in the new home my parents were building back in Sioux Falls. When it came right down to it, there really wasn't much choice....

After years of deliberation, Dad and Mom had decided in early 1979 to build a new home. Given the strong housing market in Sioux Falls at the time, they didn't hesitate to purchase the lot, sign the contract, and begin the construction of the new home before even selling the “old” home place. It was a seller's market.

Or so they thought. But they hadn't counted on the “Carter recession” which set in by mid-1979 and continued well into the following year. The Iranian hostage crisis triggered higher oil prices and our economy slumped. Interest rates climbed steadily, eventually reaching as high as 21 and 22 percent. Given those interest rates, there were no buyers in sight, and my parents found themselves with not one

*We learned about priorities, about **giving thanks**, about the care and provision of a gracious **God**.*

but two home mortgage payments to make each month. Their modest savings quickly depleted, they soon found themselves struggling to make ends meet. Bankruptcy seemed a real possibility.

Given their circumstances, I expected to find Dad and Mom in a foul mood when I arrived home in the early morning hours of Thanksgiving Day. To my surprise and relief, nothing could have been further from the truth. Upbeat and hopeful, they were in a far better mood than I had sensed in recent weeks. Something had clearly changed.

Had they been able to sell the house? No. But

there was a very specific reason for their change of outlook.

A day or two before my arrival, worn out by evenings and weekends on end working at the new house, Dad had suggested to Mom that they take a break and go to the mall. “We can't afford to buy anything,” Dad said, “but let's just try to relax and walk through the mall. Maybe stop for an ice cream cone or something.”

They had barely entered the mall when they nearly bumped into a mother and her young daughter. And, to their amazement, the little girl was a spitting image of Amy, my sister's six-year-old daughter, my parents' first grandchild. But this little girl was severely handicapped with what appeared to be cerebral palsy. And this mother was pushing her little girl in a wheelchair. Dad and Mom looked at each other, their eyes welling up with tears.

“Laura,” Dad said to Mom, “I can't even begin to imagine how I would feel if that were our little Amy sitting in that wheelchair. I don't know if this grandpa could find the grace to deal with it. But I do know this much: If that were Amy, we would give everything—both of our houses and all our possessions, even our future earnings, if by doing so we could make Amy well again. We are so blessed. We have so much to be thankful for, and here we've been feeling sorry for ourselves, finding it difficult to trust God because of a temporary financial setback.”

Thanksgiving dinner that year was hamburgers from McDonalds (literally). But we did finish the sanding and the staining and the varnishing and the painting. Dad and Mom eventually managed to sell the “old” house (without going bankrupt). And, to this day, when I'm asked to reflect back upon my favorite Thanksgiving, I think back to the Thanksgiving the VandenBosch family learned an important lesson about priorities, about giving thanks in every circumstance, about the care and provision of a gracious God.

I'm guessing that, as we once again celebrate Thanksgiving in the midst of a recession, most if not all of you have spent more than a little time taking stock of your priorities. I know I have. And, for me, those priorities include a renewed commitment to work for the welcome and full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the Lutheran community and its ecumenical and global partners.

If that's one of your priorities as well, we invite you to partner with us in this kairos time by sending a gift of \$100, \$250 or even \$500 so that we can pull out all the stops to achieve policy change at the ELCA 2009 Churchwide Assembly. If we do our preparatory work, and do it well, we believe policy change is within our grasp. Your gift in support of those efforts will make a difference! ▼

R I C C O R N E R

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Elgin, Illinois

By Carol Dunn

Three years ago, former missionary, now parish pastor Rev. Olin Sletto wrote in an article in *The Lutheran*: “The invitation should be open, unconditional and inclusive. Jesus would want it that way.” He was

referring to eligibility to take communion, but his point could as easily apply to all other phases of life at Holy Trinity Church in Elgin, Illinois. God’s unconditional love is the message, and the message is put into action with the congregation’s policies and practices of inclusivity, extending from Communion for all who seek it, baptized or not, to its broad Reconciling in Christ affirmation, adopted in 2005.

The warm and welcoming people of the congregation, as they live out their inclusive policies, draw visitors to Holy Trinity. Elgin is about 30 miles west of Chicago, and the church has, since its establishment in 1903, taken its downtown location as a responsibility to serve the community. Many current members of the congregation drive long distances to attend, making

outreach to the community possible. The outreach includes soup kettles every Friday night, monthly visits to a local nursing home, a spring blood drive, and the annual coat collection for Elgin’s needy children. According to Sletto, “there are cases where parents carry their children to school in blankets and then return at the end of the day to take them home.” The need is great and congregation members respond generously every year.

Holy Trinity holds four services each weekend, including informal, contemporary, and traditional worship. The founding members of the congregation saw their mission

as providing “the faith of the fathers in the language of the children.” That effort is still in play as the congregation provides worship relevant to people today. The current mission statement, “Proclaiming Christ’s Love through Witness and Service,” reflects their ongoing work to bring the Good News to the people of Elgin.

Adults respond to the welcoming atmosphere, and the pastor believes that the tone has brought about a dozen adult baptisms in the recent past. Adults are not the only targets, however. This congregation of just under 500 members offers communion to all who wish it. The congregation is a “Book of Faith” congregation, the ELCA initiative for 2008–9. ▼

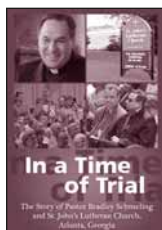


R I C N E W S

Time of Trial Video Updated

In August of 2006, then Bishop Warren of the Southeastern Synod filed formal charges with the ELCA against Pastor Schmeling because of his committed relationship with Rev. Darin Easler. The Discipline Hearing Committee concluded that they felt the current policy was “bad policy” and that under the ELCA’s constitutional standards, they “would find almost unanimously that Pastor Schmeling is not engaged in conduct that is incompatible with the ministerial office.”

This new version of the film takes us past Pastor Schmeling’s removal and on to the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Chicago, where his trial sparked LGBT ministers and their allies to come out in droves to push for policy change, urging the church



to allow ministers in committed same-gender relationships to be rostered. The Assembly voted against policy change, but by a smaller margin than ever before. The Assembly also urged church authorities to “refrain and restrain” in the discipline of LGBT pastors, effectively cracking the dam of discrimination and showing hope for upcoming policy change in the ELCA.

“I Love to Tell the Stories” on YouTube

We have spoken to you several times about the Storytelling Training, “I Love to Tell the Story.” This training teaches you how to weave your personal story into a narrative that makes a public point, how to use what you know best, your story, to further the cause of full inclusion. You can now see some of the results of that training on YouTube at www.youtube.com/lutheransconcerned. These stories by

individuals attending Hearts on Fire, our July 2008 assembly held in San Francisco, are inspiring and compelling, told in their own words. They are a resource for your own thinking and a resource for use in your congregation, group setting or gathering. If a given story inspires you and you think a friend would benefit from hearing it, you can forward the story to them.

There is no charge to use YouTube, to visit the Lutherans Concerned portion of their site, to view any of the videos, or to send any of the videos to someone else. It’s all free.

More of the storytelling videos from Hearts on Fire are being added as time goes on, so this is a site worth visiting again and again. ▼



Grace Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas

By Carol Dunn



When most people in the U.S. form a mental picture of “church,” they think of a building with a roof, electric lights, a piano or maybe an organ, restroom facilities, and a worship space. But if you are thinking church in the aftermath of hurricane Ike, you might not have those “conveniences.” What to do?

If you are Pastor Lura Goren of Grace Lutheran, Houston, you say, “let’s have church!” And you do. Sixteen people gathered on the porch that Sunday morning in September, the day after Ike’s visit. Someone walking by took a photo with a mobile phone, then joined the group. The next Sunday, still with no power, 35

beautiful organ. Some of us were attacked by ants...

“At the beginning of the service, I invited the congregation to admit these discomforts, even embrace them. Christians throughout time, and in many parts of the world today, worship outside, in vulnerability and discomfort. I invited those gathered to allow the discomfort to connect them to the church of all times and places. And I invite you to connect to those who

Montrose, the major LGBT Houston community, Grace voted in 2005 to institute a fully equitable policy for uniting couples in committed relationships. Since her ordination and installation, a number of LGBT people, ranging from women in their 20’s to a middle-age couple, have crossed the threshold, seeking a God whose grace applies to everyone.

At the end of September, Grace received a call from two women originally from South America seeking someone to perform an “emergency” commitment ceremony. The two had been victims of physical abuse as a result of living openly as lesbians. A year ago they came to the U.S. on a tourist visa. One, out of fear, had stated on her visa application that she was traveling with her “boyfriend.”

Now, after four years together and one in the U.S., they are seeking asylum here as sexual minorities. The immigration judge in their initial asylum hearing did not believe that they were in a lesbian relationship. At this point the immigration lawyer strongly recommended they have a commitment ceremony as a form of “proof” of their relationship. They had less than a week to carry this out since the lawyer had to file for a hearing with a very short timeline. Given the circumstances, Pr.



gathered to worship. In a thoughtful reflection on “inconveniences” which pushed beyond our own narrow perspectives, Pastor Lura said:

“Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.... (Matthew 8:20)

“After Ike, we mourn for those without homes, and we are among those whose homes are less comfortable than they were before: without water and electricity, our lives are more difficult...

“At Grace, we also were without a place to “lay our head” after the hurricane... no air conditioning, and muggy air. No

“Having church” and making God’s extravagant love known to all is what Pr. Lura does.

never have homes, for whom our church porch is the most safe and comfortable place they know, not the least...”

“Having church” and making God’s extravagant love known to all is what Pr. Lura does. Since she arrived at Grace in July as a called candidate from the Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries roster, this congregation (the only RIC church in the Texas Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod of the ELCA) has grown from an average of 28 in worship to an average of 38. Located in

Lura decided to accommodate their special need. After a more than two hour meeting of tears and laughter, she agreed to do her first “holy union” as a pastor. She also agreed to testify at the upcoming asylum hearing.

Pr. Lura said in the post-Ike situation, “Jesus meets us wherever we gather, but if he is particularly present in the difficult, uncomfortable places, we shouldn’t be surprised.” And she is a pastor willing to meet us there also. Thanks be to God! ▼

Reconciling Lutherans

continued from page 1

Lutherans is by analogy: Reconciling Lutherans is to individuals what RIC is to congregations. It is a public affirmation of welcome. *Whether you are a member of an RIC congregation or not, and whether you are a member of LC/NA or not, it is important for your voice to be heard as a Reconciling Lutheran.* Each name added to the list of Reconciling Lutherans will strengthen the call to the church for change. For too long, many Lutherans have presumed that there

Each name will **strengthen the call** to the church for change.

is simply not enough support for the church to proceed with changes in teaching and policy. But they can presume this only as much and as long as welcoming church members let them. By revealing the true depth and breadth of support for change, the Reconciling Lutherans roster will give courage to all Lutherans and leaders to give voice and take action, bringing closer the day when all are truly welcome.

If the passage of Prop 8 in California teaches us anything, it teaches us how important it is for welcoming and inclusive voices in the church to speak out and stand up for the equality and dignity of all. We cannot allow fear-mongering to be seen to characterize the Christian stance on same-gender couples and their families.

Christians all over the world have a better way than what was decided by the slim majority in California — that way is the way of Christ's love for the neighbor.

Part of the inspiration for Reconciling Lutherans comes from our ecumenical

partners in the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) within the United Methodist tradition. RMN is the equivalent to our RIC program. In 1995, RMN set a goal of signing up 10,000 Reconciling Methodists prior to their churchwide convention in 1996. As of today, their list exceeds 17,000 names on a public roster.

Our goal is similar: to obtain 10,000 signatures and names by the start of LC/NA's 2010 Biennial Assembly, *Let Justice Roll*. We call upon all members of LC/NA and RIC congregations to get to work immediately, encouraging your family,

friends, and other members of your congregation to let their voices be heard as Reconciling Lutherans. Some may wish to adopt a spirit of friendly competition, vying within your congregation or chapter to see who can sign up the most people.

Why not become a Reconciling Lutheran today? How about right now? All you need to do is complete the Reconciling Lutheran form online at www.lcna.org, or you can become a Reconciling Lutheran by providing your name, address, city, state and ZIP code/Postal Code, phone, congregation, and email address on a piece of paper that you sign stating that you accept the Covenant of Welcome. Send your acceptance to Lutherans Concerned, 100 Oxford Street North, St. Paul, Minnesota 55104. Including your email address will allow us from time to time to provide you with additional information related to, and in support of, the mission of Reconciling Lutherans.

To have the impact on the church you

desire, to be an agent and witness for change you want to be, the list of Reconciling Lutherans is designed to be and needs to be a public list. From time to time, Lutherans Concerned may publish the Reconciling Lutherans list.

Lutherans Concerned will never reveal more about you than your name and hometown. Never will your phone number, address, or email address be revealed or shared.

Become a Reconciling Lutheran. Let the light of your welcome become a beacon for others. ▼

Next **RIC Core Team** Leadership Trainings

January 8–11, 2009

Anaheim, California

Four 90-minute sessions in conjunction with the Gay Christian Network Conference

February 6–8, 2009

San Antonio, Texas

February 18–21, 2009

Great Falls, Montana

March 13–15, 2009

Detroit or Ann Arbor, Michigan

Organized by the UCC Coalition and More Light Presbyterians

March 19–21, 2009

Tallahassee, Florida

April 23–26, 2009

Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

September 4–6, 2009

Chicago, St. Louis, or Dallas

Organized by Integrity

October 2–4, 2009

Atlanta, Georgia

Organized by Reconciling Ministries Network/More Light Presbyterians

October 23–25, 2009

Bay Area, California

Organized by Reconciling Ministries Network/UCC Coalition

o register contact:

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

Covenant of Welcome

As members of the body of Christ, we are called to be ministers of reconciliation both in the church and in the world. Through our baptism we are reconciled to God through the saving grace of Christ Jesus. As children of God, Christ calls us to lives of reconciliation, wholeness, integrity and authenticity. We are challenged by the Gospel to be agents of healing and love within our church and society.

We affirm with the apostle Paul that in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female" (Gal 3:28). Christ has made us one body with many members, equal at the foot of the cross and at Christ's table of blessing and promise. God's extravagant welcome is sure.

As a Reconciling Lutheran, I call on the Lutheran church to extend God's extravagant welcome and a genuine invitation for acceptance and full inclusion to

People of every age, class, color, and ethnic origin....

People of all sexual orientations and gender identities....

People who are single, married, divorced, separated, blessed or partnered....

People who are temporarily-able, disabled, or of differing abilities....

And I ask God, the giver of life and all creation, to guide my ways in living out the ministry of reconciliation always seeking to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ.

Holy Cross Lutheran Suspended for Calling Ketola

On November 15, 2008, Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Newmarket, Ontario, Canada, was informed it was suspended by the Bishop and Synod Council of the Eastern Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), based on the May 2008 call and ordination of Rev. Lionel Ketola as Associate Pastor and Ambassador of Reconciliation. The May events violated the ELCIC policy not to ordain or call an LGBT person who is “self-proclaimed,” that is, open and public about his or her sexual orientation. Pastor

*We have **acted together** as a congregation and together we will continue **to seek the guidance** of the **Holy Spirit**...*

Lionel Ketola is open about his orientation and his marriage to Stephen. Same-gender marriages are legal in Canada, but are not recognized by the ELCIC.

Lionel is on the roster of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries (ELM), the first Canadian to join that roster. ELM is a Lutheran credentialing body open to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. The ordination of Lionel was *extra ordinem*, a Latin phrase meaning outside the usual rules.

Pastor Dawn Hutchings, pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran, said, “While we all knew that such a judgment was possible, it still hurts. To be suspended by our church for doing what we have felt called to do for the sake of the Gospel, is painful. Our sadness is tempered by the knowledge that we have acted together as a congregation and together we will



continue to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we respond to the Eastern Synod’s failure to live up to its professed desire to be a church “In Mission for Others.” We will do all that we can to encourage, help, and challenge our Bishop and Synod Council to live up to their “expressed desire to responsibly work toward changing policies that preclude the full participation of all God’s people in our ecclesial life.” As faithful members of the ELCIC we shall continue to work and pray for the day when all God’s children enjoy the freedom of equal opportunity in God’s holy church.”

Pastor Lionel Ketola said, “It is especially difficult to hear of the suspension of this vibrant Lutheran congregation for their decision to call me, while just one day earlier hundreds of people had gathered with the city’s mayor in nearby Oshawa, Ontario, in support of a lesbian couple who were the victims of anti-gay violence. We yearn for the day that our church’s calls for justice for all are matched with deeds embodying a commitment to equality for all. Our church must become one of full inclusion of all in the life of the church, following the teachings of Christ. I, along with the people of Holy Cross, remain committed to working in partnership with our ELCIC to see this dream become a reality.”

Emily Eastwood, Executive Director, Lutherans Concerned/North America, said of the suspension, “Once again the authorities of the church have failed to demonstrate leadership, failed to follow the lead of the Christ and Holy Spirit, and, instead, have endorsed a policy of oppression and discrimination based on dusty prejudice and ignorance. Holy Cross has chosen to live life as Christ’s church should. One day, and soon, the rest of the church will follow the example they have set — recognizing that LGBT people have always been part of the wondrous diversity of God’s creation and Christ’s redemption.”

In his letter to the congregation, Bishop Michael Pryse, widely known for his progressive thinking and support of LGBT issues, said that he wanted the strong relationship with Holy Cross to continue, that the synod council took no joy from the discipline decision it made, and that the synod council would continue to “responsibly work toward changing policies that preclude the full participation of all God’s people in our ecclesial life.”

Suspension falls short of removing the congregation entirely from the denomination. Under the suspension, the congregation may not send official delegates to regional or national church assemblies, may not vote on any matters coming before such meetings, and no member of the congregation may hold any elective office in the ELCIC above the congregational level. Members of the congregation may continue to participate in the programmatic and worship life of the church.

The suspension is to remain in effect as long as Pastor Lionel Ketola holds his position in the congregation or until the ELCIC recognizes his call and ordination to ministry. ▼

Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries Issues its First Call

Jodi Barry has felt a calling to ministry since she was in high school. Yet for years she thought there wasn't room for her ministry in the Lutheran church. "Once I started the coming out process regarding my sexuality, I thought my calling and my sexuality were incompatible." After college, Jodi moved to Texas. Although she left the church at that point, God didn't stop calling. In Texas, she was invited to attend the Cathedral of Hope, which was then affiliated with the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) and has since become a congregation of the United Church of Christ (UCC). Jodi recalls, "While I was at church that first Sunday, I cried through the whole service, and especially during communion. It was the first time I'd ever seen a woman preside, and the invitation to communion has stayed with me. You don't have to be a member of this church, or of any church; all we ask is that you be seeking a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. It was my first time back in church as an out lesbian, and I wondered where this new relationship with God would lead."

The journey back to the Lutheran church had a number of resting places, including the MCC, UCC, and American Baptist Church (ABC). As Jodi says, "These were all welcoming, wonderful places. But they were not home." All along the way, her discernment about her calling and her relationship with Jesus continued, eventually leading her back to Minnesota. There she attended United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, some classes with Rev. Anita Hill. She graduated in 2001 with an M.Div. degree and then followed up with a year of residency

The congregation lays hands on Rev. Jodi Barry as Rev. Anita Hill (ELM Roster) presides over the ordination.



in Clinical Pastoral Education.

From there she began ministry in the Twin Cities as a hospital chaplain, first at North Memorial Medical Center and Regions Hospital. For the last five and half years she has served at Mercy Hospital. Her chaplaincy work is a good fit for Jodi's passions and callings, which include ministering to un-churched people, emergency preparedness, and training. She describes her work as a "gift."

"Working at Mercy Hospital has been amazing," she writes. "When patients ask me if I have a church, I joyfully respond that the hospital is my church, and my congregation changes every day. Chaplaincy ministry is ministry in the moment, and I feel so honored and blessed to minister to folks in extremely difficult times."

As with many professional clergy positions, credentialing is important, and the hospital system requires it. This means that Jodi needed to be ordained. But because of the current exclusionary policies of the ELCA, there simply is no synod or churchwide body that will agree to call a minister who is in a same-gender relationship. In other words, because Jodi names as spouse the Rev. Dr. Jenny Mason, the ELCA precludes Jodi from the ordained ministry.

It may seem odd to some of Jodi's patients and co-workers that there is any difficulty at all with Jodi's home denomination. "As a chaplain," said Jodi, "I minister to staff and patients, many of whom will never know anything about the unfair policies of the ELCA. Many of the staff and patients to whom I minister don't go to a church or belong to a faith community. For them, I am the only minister they may know."

This is where Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries (ELM) is able to fill in the gap. ELM's mission is to credential and roster qualified candidates no matter what their sexual orientation or gender identity. The organization maintains a rigorous candidacy program that follows all the standards required by the Lutheran church, with an important exception: there is no requirement that LGBT candidates refrain from entering into committed same-gender relationships. When a minister is ordained outside of the denomination's rules, it is said to be *extra ordinem*— or, as it has come to be called in plain English, "extraordinary." Jodi's is the sixteenth such ordination within the Lutheran context. There are 46 members of the Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries Roster."

In the case of parish pastors, ordination in Lutheran denominations occurs after a call to ministry from a congregation. For chaplaincy ministries such as Jodi's, where there is no established congregation, the synod or churchwide organization acts as the calling body. This left Jodi in a predicament: her ministry is not attached to a congregation and the synod wouldn't ordain her. Taking what they refer to as "emergency measures," ELM was able to solve the problem. Jodi's ordination marks the first time that ELM, rather than a

congregation, has called and ordained a partnered LGBT minister. Rev. Phyllis Zillhart, one of the first three “extraordinarily” ordained ministers ordained in 1990, noted the “historic first” of ELM’s initiative. Speaking with the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, she said, “We don’t want to form our own denomination. We want to be a part of this one.” ELM’s position, consistent with that of the Lutheran reformation, is that when the bishops refuse to ordain, the churches can and must ordain ministers themselves.

It seems only fitting, then, that Jodi Barry was ordained on Saturday, October 25, just one day before the celebration of Reformation Sunday. The ceremony was hosted by Grace University Lutheran of Minneapolis, where Jodi also serves as Youth Director. The co-pastors of Grace took part in the ceremony, with Rev. Dan Garnaas preaching and Rev. Mary Halvorson, along with Rev. Anita Hill, presiding.

During the rite of ordination, all the gathered clergy and laypersons—friends, family, co-workers, colleagues—came forward to lay hands on Jodi, setting her apart to the office of Word and Sacrament in the one holy catholic Church. Jodi expressed her vows: to assume the office believing that the Church’s call is

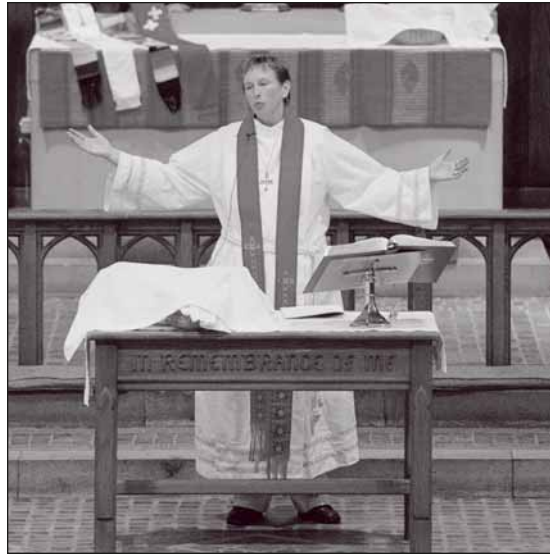
*May your hands, which **have touched and will touch** many precious lives, continue to be a source of healing, strength, and **hope to all** you touch.”*

God’s call; to confess that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God and are the norm of its faith and life; to accept, teach, and confess the creeds and acknowledge the Lutheran Confessions as true witnesses and faithful expositions of the Holy Scriptures.

With clear, strong emotion, Jodi stood and turned to receive the acclamation of the congregation.

Jodie then received commissioning to the position of Staff Chaplain in the Spiritual Care and Pastoral Education Department of Mercy Hospital. She received five “reminders of common calling to serve the Lord Jesus and his people.” These were a baptismal shell, proclaiming her identity as God’s beloved child; a Bible, symbolizing the Word of God speaking and acting through her ministry; a communion set, revealing the presence of Christ the wounded healer, who embraces, feeds and sends; a box of tissues, representing the ministry of compassionate presence practiced at the hospital. The final reminder was the gift of her own hands, anointed with oil and blessed with the words that Jodi has used to bless her co-workers at the hospital: “May your hands, which have touched and will touch many precious lives, continue to be a source of healing, strength, and hope to all you touch.”

The reception was decked out splendidly in red, the traditional, liturgical color for ordinations, reminding us of the fire of Pentecost. Napkins were red, tablecloths were red, and the hundreds of little hot cinnamon candies scattered gaily on the tables were red. Much of the decorating, serving, preparations, and clean-up were performed by the congregation members of Grace University Church.



The newly ordained Rev. Jodi Barry (ELM Roster) presides over communion

RAY VOSS

Also red was the stole presented to Jodi during the service. This stole was first presented to Rev. Anita Hill by Rev. Lynne Lorenzen at Anita’s ordination in 2001. Lynne, a dedicated ally, had received it from Rev. Rebecca Hostetler, a lesbian woman who left the ELCA roster at her bishop’s request when he learned

she was in a committed relationship. Lynne passed the stole to Anita, asking that she pass it on to the next extraordinarily ordained minister. And so the red stole has been passed on ever since, going to Rev. Sharon Stalkfleet, Rev. Jay Wiesner, Rev. Erik Christensen, Rev. Megan Rohrer, Rev. Dawn Roginski, Rev. Jen Rude, Rev. Jen Nagel, Rev. Lionel Ketola, Rev. Lura Groen, and then to Rev. Jodi Barry. All are members of the ELM Roster.

As the Spirit moves, so does the stole. Thanks be to God! ▼

Note: Sources for this article include Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries’ press release, the service bulletin for the ordination and commissioning of Rev. Barry, and the Minneapolis Star Tribune.

Plan to **attend** Clergy Call 2009 For Justice and Equality



Moving from Acceptance to Advocacy

May 4 & 5, 2009
Washington, D.C.

Details/Register at
www.hrc.org/issues/religion

Process and **Timeline:**

Update on the **Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality** of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

If you find the journey undertaken by the Social Statement on Human Sexuality to be confusing, you're not alone. The process is complicated. What follows is an update and summary of the progress so far.



Response Period Has Ended, Comments Tallied

November 1 was the deadline for sending in responses to the Draft Social Statement. About 2,000 written responses were sent to the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality in both hard copy and online formats. Each response was read by at least several task force members. Even though the number of responses is significantly higher than for previous social statements, the 2,000 represent only a tiny fraction of the total population of the ELCA, which is just under 4.8 million. Since no attempt was made to do a controlled, scientific sampling or survey of ELCA members, there is no way to draw statistically valid conclusions.

According to a preliminary report from the churchwide Office of Research and Evaluation, the responses to the draft shared a common, if

relationships and others saying it should not.

Another way that church members responded to the draft statement was to take part in the synodical hearings held all over the country, over 120 in all. The verbal responses recorded at these hearings were not included in Research and Evaluation's report. Reports from the hearings, coming from LC/NA allies and others, suggest that, over all, the responses from hearings were not significantly different than what were collected in written form.

LC/NA thanks all of its members and supporters who participated in the response phase, either with written responses, with statements made at hearings, or both. Your voices were indeed heard. Had our people not participated, the conclusions drawn by church leaders would likely have been much different. Even without a statistically representative sample, a response that skewed strongly negative may well have been interpreted to be reflective of the general mood of the church. But your participation has helped ELCA see, if it hasn't already seen it, that those who support full inclusion are not a fringe group speaking from the sidelines. We are engaged in the discussion, we sit at the table, and our numbers are growing steadily.

November Meeting of the Task Force

As of this writing, the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality has just finished their second-to-last meeting in the ELCA national offices in Chicago, Illinois. They met there on November 7 and 8 to discuss three items of great importance to people throughout the ELCA: a second draft of the Social Statement on Human Sexuality, implementing resolutions, and a report on recommendations for the rostering of ministers in same-gendered relationships. Each of these items is of key importance and each is related to the other.

The text of the social statement is the most important part, of course, as it establishes what policies can or cannot be enacted in the ELCA. Beyond policy, the social statement will determine what issues the ELCA can advocate for in the public realm and how the church may marshal its resources to speak to perceived needs in the community. To use a fairly recent example, because the church adopted a social statement on health care, the ELCA Church Council was able in 2004 to take concrete steps toward supporting organ, tissue, and blood donation. Lives were saved. With a favorable social statement on sexuality, the ELCA will be able to support families—no matter if there are children present or not, no matter what form a family takes—and uphold the work that families do to provide safety, shield intimacy, and build trust.

Implementing resolutions are recommendations accompanying the social statement. These usually propose concrete steps and directives for carrying out the broader commitments adopted by the social statement. For instance, LC/NA has called for an implementing resolution that "develops resources for

Your participation has helped the **ELCA** to see that those who **support full inclusion** are not a fringe group

unsurprising, characteristic: polarization. By and large, responses tended to be either strongly positive or strongly negative, with relatively few in between. For example, 33 percent of respondents felt that the draft failed to "provide a useful and adequate framework to help the church discern what it means to live faithfully with our neighbors in the increasingly complex sphere of human sexuality."

Thirty-seven percent said the draft did that job very well, with the remaining 30 percent responded somewhere between those two poles. Additionally, many felt the statement should be more "Bible-based." Many felt it is too long. Many expressed disappointment that the draft does not take a stand on committed, same-gender relationships, with some saying that the church should support and affirm same-gender

RIC Settings

Added to the Roster since last issue

Augustana Student Congregation, Augustana College, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Maple Leaf Lutheran Church, Seattle, Washington

Peace Lutheran Church, Lauderdale, Minnesota

Reformation Lutheran Church, Columbia, South Carolina

St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Bridgeport, Connecticut

Trinity Lutheran Church, Lilburn, Georgia

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

education about and advocacy for the equal treatment of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the life of this church and broader society.”

The third item under consideration is a report on recommendations pertaining to the rostering of ministers in same-gender relationships. This part was added as an “extra” task, assigned to the Task Force by the 2007 Churchwide Assembly. These recommendations, if passed by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly, will determine the church’s policy regarding the rostering of ministers in same-gender relationships.

The content of the implementing resolutions and the rostering recommendations cannot be incongruent with the social statement.

What Happens Next?

Although the November Task Force meeting was important, the group will not sign off on the social statement, implementing resolutions, and rostering recommendations until their final scheduled meeting, which takes place January 23–25, 2009. At that point the social statement ceases to be called a “draft” and will then be called the “Proposed Social Statement.” On February 18, the ELCA will provide rostered leaders a confidential preview of the statement and all recommendations, followed with a public release of those on February 19. Only the social statement and implementing resolutions will then be addressed by the Program Committee of Church in Society. (The recommended resolutions on rostering required by the 2007 Churchwide Assembly will be sent directly to the ELCA Church Council, since it acts as the assembly when the assembly is out of session.) Church in Society will meet on March 13–14 to discuss the items presented to it and will pass along its comments to the Executive Director of the Church in Society unit. The Executive Director will then recommend the proposed social statement and implementing resolutions to the Church Council.

Each of these three (Proposed Social Statement, implementing resolutions, and CWA 2007 required rostering recommendations) will go before the ELCA Church Council at its March 27–30 meeting, where it will make the final decisions about what language is contained in each of the three parts. The Church Council can make substantial changes to the Task Force’s proposals if they so choose. Once they have agreed to the final texts, they will place the texts on the agenda of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly. At this point, the statement will be called the “Recommended Proposed Social Statement.”

Between April and June, synod assemblies will have the opportunity to speak to the social statement, implementing resolutions, and rostering recommendations through memorials. If the statement and recommendations are not favorable to same-gender couples and their families, the best strategy before the opening of the Churchwide Assembly in August will be for the synods to call for

changes to the texts. The Goodsoil Legislative Team will provide template memorials to bring before synod assemblies.

The 2009 synod assembly year is expected to be our busiest ever. We anticipate more synods than ever before will consider memorials calling for the full inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and

The recommended resolutions on rostering will be sent to the ELCA Church Council.

gender identities. While synod memorials can’t dictate what the Churchwide Assembly must do, they nevertheless can have a real impact. They can change the tone and dynamic of the discussion in the church. In all this, the Goodsoil Legislative Team will need your help. If you’ve never before worked on getting legislation passed in your synod, this will be a great year to start. Please contact the LC/NA office at admin@lcna.org and let us know you’d like to help. ▼

Notes from the International Program Committee (IPC)

China and the Power of the Cut Sleeve: The most common euphemism in China for homosexuality is “the cut sleeve,” but this not-easy-to-explain term has lost its user base as homosexuality has become more openly acknowledged and embraced. As officials braced for the onslaught of tourists for the Olympics many LGBT advocates worried that there would be a crackdown on restaurants and bars serving the homosexual community. Although there seemed to be some evidence of that, by and large it was part of the overall tightening of control encountered by all service establishments and not confined to just the “gay clubs.” Although homosexuality is not new to Chinese culture, being referenced even in court documents of the classical period, it has been falsely claimed to be a western import. It cuts against the traditional Chinese value system of the family in which personal issues become the “property” of family image and face. Being a homosexual is not a personal issue, therefore, but is a concern for the extended family. In-laws and distant cousins all get into the act! What has been imported from the west recently, however, is religious fundamentalism and, especially recently, ex-gay or reparative therapy. A new sort of cultural imperialism is being advocated by groups in China that have external support. It all sounds a bit familiar, and local advocates hunger for news about progress overseas that they can share in China as evidence of growing global tolerance and affirmation.

Portugal: In 2001 the Portuguese Parliament granted the legal rights to gay and lesbian couples who have lived together for more than two years, allowing them the same rights as granted to heterosexual couples in common law marriages. In 2004, moreover, Portugal became the first country in Europe and the fourth country worldwide to explicitly ban sexual orientation discrimination by constitutional legislation. [The others included Ecuador, Fiji, and South Africa]. There was considerable hope this year, then, that same-sex marriage would find equal support in Parliament. However, the October 10th vote on two variant proposals for legalization was overwhelmingly defeated, with only 17 and 11 supporters out of 230 members of the Parliament.

Where are things? For an international survey of legal recognition of same-sex couples go to marriagefoundation.org/mlf/publications/international. The information is summarized in a table and on line access to the specific legislation for the respective countries is also provided.

—Philip Moeller, Director, IPC

Glad There Is GLAAD...

Lutherans Concerned IS glad there's GLAAD

GLAAD, Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, exists to ensure accurate coverage of LGBT persons and issues in the press. They have joined in the struggle within

communities of faith to work in support of full inclusion and against inaccurate and misleading coverage of efforts to achieve it.

Founded in 1985 in New York City in reaction to the *New York Post's* sensational and defamatory coverage of AIDS, GLAAD spread to Los Angeles where it began working with the entertainment industry to provide accurate portrayals of LGBT people and their issues. Since its founding, GLAAD

*GLAAD has lifted the **rock of silence** off discrimination, **oppression**, violence and fatal attacks **against LGBT** persons.*

has grown from its local chapter base to become a national organization with headquarters in New York City, offices in Los Angeles and San Francisco, and staff that work on the ground to support the grassroots efforts of local LGBT advocates and organizations across the United States.

GLAAD got the *New York Times* to change its editorial policy and start using the word "gay" in 1987. Today, more than 1000 news outlets run gay and lesbian announcements along with other wedding announcements as result of GLAAD's work.

GLAAD has lifted the rock of silence off discrimination, oppression, violence and fatal attacks against LGBT persons, focusing national attention on the murders of Matthew Shepard, Arthur "J.R." Warren, Brandon Teena, Fred Martinez, Gwen Araujo, Angie Zapata, Lawrence King, Sean Kennedy and others; on the anti-gay pronouncements of "Dr. Laura" Schlessinger; on the openly gay heroes and victims of 9-11; on the anti-gay right's fraudulent "ex-gay" ads; through the Be An Ally & A Friend PSA campaign and through the growth and re-launch of the Announcing Equality campaign, among others.

For years, GLAAD has combated faith-based anti-gay defamation. National news staff took on defamation by Rev. Jerry Falwell and James Dobson and Focus on the Family, trained Soulforce spokespersons and challenged the Catholic hierarchy when gay priests were scapegoated for the church's sex abuse scandal. Since 2007, GLAAD added staff to assist welcoming movements in communities of faith to engage media as they work for full inclusion. It was then that Ann Craig filled the position of



Ann Craig, Director of Religion, Faith and Values for GLAAD

Director of Religion, Faith, and Values and in that year began to work with Lutherans Concerned/North America. Ann's work with GLAAD is to further its overall mission of "promoting and ensuring fair, accurate and inclusive representation of people and events in the media as a means of eliminating homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation."

Ann Craig came to GLAAD after a long career in the United Methodist Women's Division where she provided theological leadership and wrote legislation to address LGBTQ teen suicides and raised LGBT issues in workshops and in print. Before going to seminary, Ann helped found Affirmation, Integrity and Dignity chapters in Virginia, and later helped establish a Gay-Straight Coalition at Yale Divinity School and co-chaired the national Affirmation council in the United Methodist Church.

GLAAD's work with LC/NA began in July 2007, assisting in media training and promotional activities prior to the introduction of the 82 LGBT ministers to the ELCA at the churchwide assembly in Chicago and then with follow-up assistance in getting the news of that event out into the mainstream media. Through GLAAD's efforts that positive story ran in more than 100 media markets, often "localized" to include Lutheran ministers in local communities either LGBT or supportive of full inclusion and the end of religious oppression on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation.

Ann said, "I am thrilled to be part of GLAAD's outreach to around twenty LGBT faith groups as they use media to amplify their message of equality in their faith traditions. The work of Lutherans Concerned/North America in organizing 82 ministers to come out was the biggest story of my first year with GLAAD. What an honor to help garner media for this transformative moment."

Since then GLAAD has continued to work with Lutherans Concerned and Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries. The latest effort supported the participation of Lutheran clergy and leaders at the

continued on page 13

Hope, Homosexuality & Hospitality

Bishop Brauer-Rieke Presents Bible Study in Oregon Congregation **By Gail Sieckman**

In July of 2008, Creator Lutheran of Clackamas, Oregon, took a significant step in its Year of Discernment process related to RIC questions. The congregation invited Oregon's Bishop, Dave Brauer-Rieke, to present a Bible study on the handful of texts that seem to refer to (if not indict) homosexual behaviors.

Bishop Brauer-Rieke's Bible Study is entitled *Hope, Homosexuality, and Hospitality*. It is available as an on-line recording with PowerPoint slides (www.oregonsynod.org/bookoffaith/hhh) and offers insightful and informed perspectives on the cultural, political, and social contexts in which these several texts were written.

I have to say that, when I first got wind of the link to the on-line recording of Creator Lutheran's class, I got excited. I shared the link with many friends

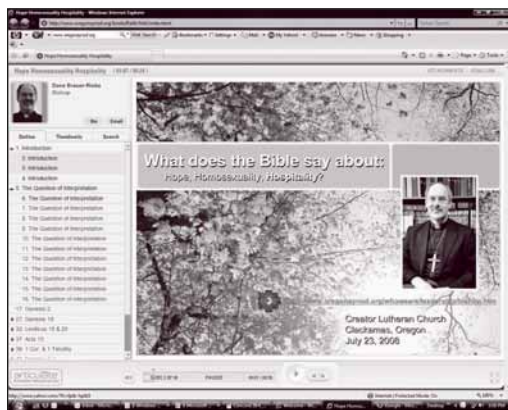
Bishop Brauer-Rieke's **hermeneutic** is grounded in the **ideas** that the Church is an **inclusive community**.

whose lives might be enriched by it. I have listened to it several times and feel encouraged and enlivened each time. I was pleased that writing this article gave me a reason to go meet with the Bishop and talk about his ideas and experience.

I asked the Bishop if he had found anything unexpected when doing his own initial study of the texts. He said he had done his first study in a paper 25 years ago, so has not had any surprises recently. He accepted this particular invitation to teach "because I love teaching!"

And for over 30 years he has been thinking about civil rights, and the State's job (as his attorney father saw it) of facilitating healthy relationships among its

citizens. As a parish pastor for 20 years, Bishop Brauer-Rieke's focus has been upon building and cultivating the community of faith and hope. Protecting and supporting families in the church has been a high priority of his. In light of the great diversity among families in the church today, the mandate to support and protect is challenging and complex.



And so, Bishop Brauer-Rieke brought his energy to the task of exploring the problematic Scriptural texts. For many LGBT brothers and sisters, these "lobber texts" as they are called, have been used to reduce the most important relationships of our lives to something sinful and abhorrent. They have been the basis for societal and familial exclusion of LGBT members. Their use has perpetuated oppression, isolation, and alienation. They have contributed to our disregarding and de-valuing the authority of our own experience as we have clawed our way through the decades.

Depending upon one's perspective, there might be several approaches to reading Scriptures. The bases on which one reads and understands Biblical writings are called hermeneutics. Bishop Brauer-Rieke's hermeneutic is grounded in the ideas that the Church is an inclusive community, that mission trumps other issues, and that we need to be thinking about community-and-care when considering LGBT issues. He asks, "What does the Spirit say, through the Bible, to us, for others, about our LGBT brothers and sisters?"

I have been hanging on and hanging out in the Lutheran church for all the years of my life. But I have felt a keen lack of interest in Bible studies, largely because of those darn llobber passages. Since they have been used to whack me and mine, I have stayed guarded and cynical about exploring things in the Bible. Why should I bother? Why should I open myself up to this Book as authoritative if I am just going to get nailed?

Through the years of education by LC/NA, the RIC process, and my own coming of age in many ways, I am feeling less disinclined to actually engage with the Bible. Bishop Brauer-Rieke's exploration of these texts encourages, even thrills me. It offers a hermeneutic I can embrace, a redemptive perspective, good news, and something like Gospel for me. Check it out yourself, and see if you don't come away with a whole new slant on things. ▼

Glad There Is GLAAD

continued from page 12

press conference of religious leaders opposed to Proposition 8 in California in the run-up to the recent election. Bishop Mark Holmerud of the Sierra Pacific synod of the ELCA and Emily Eastwood, LC/NA Executive Director, were among the dozens of Lutheran religious leaders to voice their opposition to this oppressive measure.

Though there were disappointments in the recent outcome of ballot initiatives in Arizona, Arkansas, California, and Florida, the small percentage by which most of those measures passed compared to the large percentages in the past speaks volumes about the success that accurate portrayals of issues and persons in the media can achieve. And, that is precisely what GLAAD does. ▼

Early Reflections on the Results of National Election Day 2008

Ready times these: full of drama, historical events of the highest order, gains in the struggle for justice and equality in the larger society, and some disappointments as well.

So, what happened overall?

Barack Obama was elected President of the United States, an event of such significance that history will remember it forever. That an African-American was elected president is extraordinary; it speaks well of the nation and its electorate. The great hope is that a corner has been turned in the struggle against racism. His election does not mean there is not significant work yet to be done against racism.

To win by such overwhelming numbers that Senator McCain graciously and eloquently conceded, foreclosing the awful tumult that has marked recent national elections, was both healing and positive. For LGBT people and allies, Obama's election is also significant because LGBT people were publicly included in his vision of the inclusive America of which he is now the highest leader.

State constitution/law amendments:

- Both Arizona and Florida passed anti-marriage amendments to those state constitutions, Arizona by a fairly wide majority and Florida by only 2%.
- In California, the vote count on the anti-marriage state constitution amendment known as Proposition 8 stands at 52% in favor and 48% opposed, with the absentee ballots still to be counted. The Secretary of State of California will

Change is coming in our church too.

report once that count is completed. The margin on November 5th was 400,000 votes in favor, out of some 10 million cast. Opponents of Proposition 8 conceded the issue to the Yes votes when it turned out that the vast majority of the remaining absentee ballots had come from rural districts where there were very few polling places and those had gone solidly for Prop 8. Supporters of LGBT rights have already filed suit to overturn the passage of Proposition 8 on procedural grounds. Additionally, consider that in 2000 the vote on then-Proposition 22 was 61% in favor and 39% opposed; considerable and substantial change has taken place.

- Connecticut voters voted down an attempt to undo the court decision that supported marriage equality. And so, on November 12, 2008, Connecticut joined Massachusetts in allowing same-gender marriages.
- And in Arkansas it is now illegal for cohabiting, unmarried couples of any stripe to adopt or act as foster parents.

Elections to Legislative Bodies:

- Openly gay Representatives Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) and Barney Frank (D-Mass.) were re-elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Jared Polis (D-Colo.) was elected and will join them, raising the number to three. Polis has declared his open support for an all-inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act.
- Also in Colorado, Betsy Markey, an outspoken supporter of LGBT rights, defeated Marilyn Musgrave, the author of the Federal Marriage Amendment and a vocally anti-LGBT member of congress, and will take her congressional seat in January.
- In Congress, at the time of our printing, the House of Representatives is made up of a Democratic majority of 256-175 Republicans, with 3 races (California 4th District, Virginia 5th, and Ohio 15th) still undecided. The Senate has a Democratic majority of 58-40 (Democrats + 2 Independents who caucus with the Democrats), with 2 races (Minnesota, and Georgia) still undecided.
- In New York State, Democrats now outnumber Republicans in the State Senate.
- In Wisconsin, Democrats now are a majority in the state Assembly and Senate.

In her emailed message to the members of LC/NA about the national elections, Emily Eastwood, Executive Director, said, "Change is coming in our church, too. In a marked departure from past history, Bishop Mark Holmerud stood on the steps of San Francisco City Hall and made plain that "No on Prop 8" was the Christian response. Also, as "refrain and restrain" continues to hold in the ELCA, our efforts across the church are expanding through the courage and strategic action of our volunteers. Obama is a master of oratory and inspiration but the key to his victory came from his many years of grassroots organizing, building relationships across ethnic, racial, religious, economic, and even party lines. Our task is the same.

"We know the ultimate outcome is assured, but at times like these the journey seems almost too long to bear. In the between time, may the arms of Jesus enfold us as we grieve. May our losses fire us. May the Holy Spirit infuse and enthuse. May God empower us for meaningful personal action as we work for the day when joy, validation, and equality will become a reality in policy and practice in the church and the world." ▼

ELCA Church Council Votes to Recommend Normal Rules for CWA 2009

The ELCA Church Council decided to recommend no super-majority changes to normal rules regarding the actions coming before the 2009 Churchwide Assembly in August in

Minneapolis, Minnesota. The decision was made in response to a proposal coming from the Office of the Secretary and the council's five-person Legal and Constitutional Review Committee at the council's recent meeting in Chicago, November 14-16.

The council acts for the churchwide assembly when the assembly is not in session, just as your congregational council acts for the congregation. Among the tasks the council performs leading up to

Consensus is something that leaders of the church should **work toward** in creative ways.

an assembly is to recommend to the assembly the rules by which it will govern its meeting. The assembly then debates and votes on the rules that will govern its proceedings as the first order of business it takes up.

Based on the decision by the church council the rules recommended to 2009 assembly are:

- Social Statement on Human Sexuality – two-thirds majority to pass, required by the ELCA constitution
- Resolutions to change or amend the Social

Statement – two-thirds majority to pass

- Implementing Resolutions submitted by the Task Force to follow the passage of the Social Statement – There may be a motion to “bundle” these with the social statement and require a super-majority to pass them individually. If so, that will be handled at the time, but otherwise it is simple majority to pass
- Resolutions submitted on the subject of rostering – simple majority
- Substitute resolutions on rostering or other matters – simple majority
- Resolutions deriving from memorials sent in by synods – simple majority

This decision is consistent with past practice governing the actions at the 2007 Churchwide Assembly in regards to both the passage of a social statement and with motions dealing with the rostering of ministers in committed same-gender relationships. At that assembly, there were no super-majority special rules imposed on the actions of the assembly. In 2005, there were two-thirds majority special rules because the resolutions going before the assembly actually directly re-worded the documents, rather than simply directing the re-wording.

The council took three votes related the proposed rules. The first was on an amendment that would require a 60-percent majority on anything regarding sexuality or rostering. This proposal was soundly defeated. Two additional votes, tallied at 19-10 and 18-14, resulted in the council recommending no changes to the usual parliamentary standards.

Some of the details of the council's discussion are illuminating. At its November meeting, the church council was presented with two versions of the rules: one that would impose a requirement of a two-thirds majority for passage and one that would require only a simple majority. These two versions were offered simultaneously for the council's consideration. As is

continued on page 16

“In Honor of... ”

In Honor of...

Honored by...

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Joe Brown | In memory of Joe Brown | Mark Engel, Dorothy Klefstad, Robert & Janice Schuster |
| Franklin D. Fry | In memory of Franklin D. Fry | Franklin G. Fry |
| Bonnie Brodie Hassebrook | In memory of Bonnie Brodie Hassebrook | Shirley Gangstad |
| Brian & Randine Hughes | In honor of Brian & Randine Hughes' 25th Wedding Anniversary | Thomas & Erin Becker |
| Steve Miller & Wayne Morris | In honor of the Blessing Service for Steve Miller & Wayne Morris | Doris Hanson |
| Tim Mumm | In honor of Tim Mumm's 50th Birthday | Helen Henrichs, Jim & Kathy Shattuck |
| The Rev. Shawn Newton | Ordained to the UU ministry, June 10, 2007 | Julie Reuning-Scherer |
| The Rev. David Parsons | In honor and appreciation | The Lindley-Geiger & Quinn-Gacioch families |
| Jeff Ramm & Neal Hauschild | In honor of the Blessing Service for Jeff Ramm & Neal Hauschild | Tom Grote & Rick Neal, Arthur & Nancy Timms, Linda & Bill Janeshek |
| Dale Truscott & Kin Xuxa | In recognition of the work of Dale Truscott and Kin Xuxa | The Jennifer M. Lee and Jeffrey S. Chapski Family Fund of the Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund |
| Deana Weindorf | In honor of Deana Weindorf's 59 beautiful years! | Christi Weindorf |
| Len Weiser & Ken Bollman | In honor of the Union of Len Weiser & Ken Bollman | Maureen Heckler |

Normal Rules

continued from page 15

stated in the ELCA's official record of the meeting, "the Office of the Secretary and the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee proffered these rules... not as advocates of a particular point of view, but primarily to clearly frame the discussion..." In that spirit, three members of the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee voted to forward two different rule options to the floor of the full council. The remaining two committee members abstained.

During the discussion that followed, a few council members noted that in all previous social statements other than the statement on education adopted in 2007, implementing resolutions were bundled together with the social statement itself. In those cases, the bundle required a two-thirds majority to pass. In response, the following points were made (*presented here in summary*):

- The Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality was given an assignment unprecedented in the history of the ELCA: to provide, within the context of a proposed social statement, a report and recommendations on an existing policy. Therefore, the precedent regarding how a social statement's implementing resolutions are handled does not clearly apply to such recommendations.

- Never before has an assembly adopted rules so broad as to require a two-thirds majority on "anything related" to a particular topic.
- The current rostering policy was passed by a church council operating by simple majority, rather than by a churchwide assembly operating by two-thirds. Therefore, the history of this particular policy suggests that it should pass by a simple majority. To require two-thirds is inconsistent and unfair.

Leaders on the council provided an excellent model for living together **faithfully** amidst disagreements.

- Otherwise, the most closely applicable precedent was set in 2007, when the rostering issue came before the assembly without constitutional or bylaw implications: it required only a simple majority.
- If the rostering recommendations were to be given a two-thirds standard in 2009, and if they failed to be adopted, they would likely simply return to the churchwide assembly in 2011 via synodical memorials and would then require only a simple majority. Thus the "cleanest" way to proceed is the way that the church does all of its business except as otherwise noted in the constitution and bylaws: by simple majority.

Others suggested that because of the

nature of the topic addressed by the social statement, implementing resolutions, and rostering recommendations, it would be best for the church to change policy only if could do so within the strong consensus of a two-thirds majority. A summary of responses:

- A two-thirds consensus on difficult topics shouldn't always be left to a churchwide assembly to demonstrate. Instead, consensus is something that leaders of the church should work

toward in creative ways enlivened by the Holy Spirit. Leaders will not build consensus by imposing nearly impossible standards of majority, but rather by serving as bridge builders and truth builders. A two-thirds majority would sacrifice justice for an imagined simplicity.

- To require a two-thirds majority because we think some will disagree lacks integrity. We should never govern from fear but rather from humility and courage. To change the ELCA's rostering policy is not a seismic change. The church will be okay.
- We need to remember our society's history. There is a tendency for those in privileged positions-whether it be privileges of race, ethnicity, wealth, or sexual orientation-to protect the status quo. Those who are most affected by the "isms" of racism, etc.... have had to bear higher standards than others when calling for welcome, justice, and inclusion. The implications of this particular social statement, implementing resolutions, and recommendations will be felt with greater and more direct force by some communities than by others.
- Some may think a two-thirds vote is closer to consensus, but it is a lot less than prophetic.

The church council's discussion was at all times thoughtful, respectful, and calm. Prayers were offered by council members before taking each of the votes described above. In their deliberation, ELCA church leaders on the council provided an excellent model for living together faithfully amidst disagreements, while still remaining open to the nudging of the Holy Spirit. Praise be to God! ▼

New Resources available at InfoX

Take a look at what the holiday spirit has to offer at InfoX, LC/NA's online resource center found at <http://infox.lcna.org>.

Hearts on Fire – Highlights DVD

Whether or not you were able to attend the Hearts on Fire, the 2008 Biennial Assembly of Lutherans Concerned and the North American Reconciling in Christ Conference, this DVD will inform and inspire you with great speeches, sermons, and Bible studies. Included are the following presentations from the conference:

- Bishop V. Gene Robinson's Keynote Address and Questions and Answers
- Kelly Fryer's Keynote Address and Questions and Answers
- Bishop John Selders' Keynote Address
- Bible Studies with Rev. Gladys Moore
- Sermons by Rev. Bradley Schmeling and Rev. Barbara Lundblad

\$10. Running time: approximately 250 minutes



Testimony Time: A Positive Perspective on Homosexuality

Join Pastor Lowell O. Erdahl as he presents *Testimony Time! Sharing My Present Convictions Concerning a Positive Perspective on Homosexuality*. Rev. Erdahl has been a strong advocate for LGBT people and their families for many years, and he brings his years of experience to this video. Also included is an introduction by Pastor Anita Hill of St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church (St. Paul, Minnesota). Great for congregational adult forums. Rev. Erdahl is Bishop Emeritus of the St. Paul Area Synod of the ELCA, having also served 20 years as a parish pastor and 5 years on the faculty of Luther Seminary. He also is the author and co-author of several books on love, marriage, and relationships, including *Sexual Fulfillment for Single and Married, Straight and Gay, Young and Old* (with Rev. Herb Chilstrom).

\$8

