

Concord

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Changing Times or The Times - They Are A-Changin'

Remember the "Tilt-a-Whirl" ride at your friendly, neighborhood carnival? Around and around you'd go, each time at a different angle, and the world around you would look different each time. This issue of *Concord* takes our readers on a bit of a Tilt-a-Whirl ride through good news, encouraging news, challenges and apprehensions. All in all, it should be a good ride. Be sure to check out the enclosed insert. It is LC/NA's up to date information and comment on the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality report.

www.goodsoil.org is your **online source of information** about Churchwide Assembly

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.

Goodsoil is a collaboration of organizations (Lutherans Concerned/North America, Wingspan Ministry of St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church, and The Network for Inclusive Vision) working for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their families in the full ministerial and sacramental life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). We work to reconcile our church's policies and practices regarding same-gender marriage, blessings of covenanted unions, and the rostering of partnered LGBT ministers, harmonizing these with our shared values of faith, trust, commitment, monogamy, mutuality, and dignity.



Churchwide Assembly, our work is to engage the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in love and in grace, speaking the truth so that we may come to renewed understanding as the Body of Christ, overcoming estrangement and discord.

It's About Transformation:

Our mission is evangelical, recognizing how all human relationships are transformed in and through the encounter

It's About Reconciliation:

Reconciling all through Jesus Christ, God gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Throughout all of Goodsoil's efforts before and during the 2009

with Jesus. Set free by Christ in his forgiveness, and bound to the neighbor in love, Goodsoil grounds its work in the freedom of Christians to

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The Editor

DALE TRUSCOTT



May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. —ROMANS 15:5-6.

The Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality has issued its “Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies” based on “Proposed Social

Statement Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust.” The report acknowledges lack of consensus on the question of rostering lesbian and gay persons who are in what they have called “lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships” [LMSGRRs (?)]. It turns out that we disagree on the nature of sin and how to determine whether and when one is in it, the interpretation of the Bible and how it guides our lives, what will be best for people of same-sex orientations, how social and biological sciences inform us, the best way to serve the mission of God, and the level of disagreement the church can bear. I think that about covers everything, except that we also don’t agree on liturgies, hymns, doctrines and the proper interpretation of Luther, nor do we agree on secular issues such as politics and economics.

The report then enumerates the things we hold in common. We desire to live godly and self-giving lives in gratitude for the gifts of God promised and disclosed in the Gospel. We are called to proclaim and serve God’s word. We are committed to let the Bible and the Confessions guide us, to lead faithful lives and to pray and to work for this church.

Then come the four recommended steps to be proposed to the Churchwide Assembly in August. 1) Are we committed to finding ways to allow expressions of the church to recognize, support and hold publicly accountable LMSGRRs? I guess that means Blessings or Same-gender Marriages. 2) Are we committed to finding a way for LMSGRRs to serve as rostered leaders of this church? 3) Are we committed to bearing one another’s burdens in love over this disagreement? And 4) Will we adopt four resolutions about all this. The fourth resolution, after reiterating 1–3 above, asks for “structured flexibility in decision-making.”

All this will be reviewed, and may be revised, by the Church Council before it goes to the Assembly.

There is an insert in this *Concord* that will share information, opinion, and policy of LC/NA toward the Social Statement, Implementing Resolutions and Rostering Recommendations proposed from the Church Council to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly in August.

While I’m always tempted at first to be cynical and skeptical, I am encouraged by the possibilities extended to us and

to the gospel by these documents, reports and recommendations. The task force seems to desperately desire the unity, message and mission of the church to continue at the same time as the church finds a way to embrace its own, our individual differences and our callings from the Lord.

Here’s what we need to do: We need to work as hard as we can between now and August and all during that Assembly to get our stories out. We need to be engaged with everyone we know and many whom we don’t know yet and tell them about our lives, our loves, our commitments and our hopes. We need to call out to the whole church to let love prevail and to move through and beyond these recommendations to full inclusion.

I was not around when American Lutherans split into north and south over the issue of slavery at the time of the Civil War, but we did, you know. I was, however, around when we split, not institutionally, over the ordination of women. I was actually ordained in 1970 in the first national class in which women were ordained. And now we are struggling for inclusion again. The gospel will win this one, just as it has all the other potentially divisive issues faced over the last 2000 years. It may not win with everyone in the same “room,” but it will win.

I conducted a visioning retreat for a congregation in central Florida a couple of weeks ago, at the request of the bishop. It was for a once strong congregation that collapsed and split over recent pastoral leadership. And now they needed to focus their vision toward a new future. It went very well; they seemed to be genuinely good people. But lurking in the shadows of the meeting was an assistant pastor committed to a WordAlone position or even further right, if indeed there is such a thing.

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Publication Information

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LCNA Staff

Executive Director: Emily Eastwood
exec@lcna.org
Interim Associate Director: Ross Murray
RossM@lcna.org
Operations Manager: Brett Bowman
operations@lcna.org
Development Associate: Jerry Vagts
JerryV@lcna.org
Office Administrator: Tim Fisher admin@lcna.org
Data Entry/Clerical Assistant: Lissa Messner
lissam@lcna.org
Media Specialist: Bryan Wuest bryanw@lcna.org
LVC Intern: Dylan Flunker dylanf@lcna.org

LCNA Board of Directors

Co-Chair: Rev. Gladys Moore gladys@lcna.org
Co-Chair: Len Weiser len@lcna.org
Vice Chair: Rev. Richard Andersen
vicechair@lcna.org
Secretary: Rose Beeson secretary@lcna.org
Treasurer: Rev. Kenneth Feinour
treasurer@lcna.org
Director of Communications: Phil Soucy
communications@lcna.org
Co-Directors of Multicultural Relations:
René García multicultural@lcna.org
Jim Tyler multicultural@lcna.org
Director of International Programs: Philip Moeller international@lcna.org
Director of Youth, Young Adult, and Family Ministry: Ross Murray yoyafam@lcna.org
Canada Representative: Karen Mathiasen
canada@lcna.org
Bisexual Representative: Connie Monson
bi@lcna.org
Transgender Representative: Nicole García
trans@lcna.org
Youth Representative: Geoff Abel
youthrep@lcna.org
Chaplain: Rev. Rachel Thorson Mithelman
chaplain@lcna.org

Editorial

Editorial Director: Pr. Dale Truscott
concord@lcna.org
Associate Editor: Carol Dunn
concordRIC@lcna.org
Design: Jim Gerhard
Printed on recycled paper

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Co-Chairs



GLADYS MOORE
LEN WEISER



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Romans 8:28 says, "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to God's purposes." Sometimes it's hard to see how things are "working together for good", especially when people are losing their jobs, homes, and indeed, their lives in these difficult and violent days.

Nevertheless, as followers of Jesus, we do not lose hope in God's promise to be with us and for us always and to keep on bringing good out of evil and those things which seek to work against the wholeness of life that God intends for all people and all creation.

From Gladys...

Shortly before our LC/NA Officers' Meeting in late January of this year, I had cataract surgery on my right eye and a new lens implanted. While I was at

As followers of **Jesus**, we do not lose **hope** in **God's promise**.

the surgery center for 3 1/2 hours, the surgery itself took a total of 11 minutes; a mere 11 minutes to remove a cloudy lens, put in a new one and send me on my way rejoicing. WOW!

Since the surgery, the whole realm of "sight" has become for me a continuous metaphor. Indeed, what's a metaphor for, as some have said, if not to spark new ways thinking and seeing the world? One of my new ways of seeing, or better yet, one of the insights I have received during this time of healing is

that of a mirror.

When I took the patch off my right eye the night after the surgery, I was absolutely amazed at how well I could see when I looked in the mirror. Immediately I realized that the eye that had previously been the "good" eye, was much more impaired by its own cataract than I knew. Perspective is everything! Looking in the mirror I saw more clearly than ever how truly visually impaired I was. The mirror showed me what I'd been missing.

Similarly, attending our officers' meeting and hearing Richard Anderson's report on development, was like standing in front of the mirror with new eyesight. For as I looked at Letters of Intent and Simply-Giving forms, I realized that while I had made commitments in my head at Hearts on Fire, I had failed to guarantee those commitments by putting them on paper. I immediately signed an Evergreen Giving form and asked for a new Letter of Intent so my family could consider making a planned gift to support the ministries of Lutherans Concerned/North America.

From Len...

During the September LC/NA Leadership retreat (Board members and Regional Coordinators) we were presented with Letters of Intent and Evergreen Giving forms. I immediately filled them both out. The issue with a Letter of Intent in the past was that I simply filled it out but didn't complete the necessary steps at home with my family to make this a reality. Now we have. Even in these troubling economic times, we have evaluated what we need to do to take care of our children as well as being sure that LC/NA will be remembered when I die. It is my family's commitment to the church and our hope for the church to see more clearly how we should witness to the Gospel that has prompted us to make these commitments. I hope that you will do the same.

In some ways, we in LC/NA have been a mirror for the ELCA and other church bodies for more than 35 years. We have sought to help the church "see clearly" the ways in which it has participated in the oppression of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Along the way we have gained allies, grown stronger and sharpened our vision for the tasks that lie ahead.

Your ongoing support of our work is critical, especially in times like these. So let us, as Co-Chairs of the Board of Directors, be the first to remind you of how important it is to see our work within the context of God's plan for justice for all peoples and indeed all of creation. And may our commitments encourage your commitments and your remembrance that all things do work together for good for those who love God and are called according to God's purposes (which we know includes those of us in LC/NA).

Peace and prayers for renewal,
Gladys Moore and Len Weiser ▼

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

I have this love/hate relationship with things electronic, especially my MotoQ... phone/PDA. Though I have learned from our Operations Manager, Brett Bowman, that most problems are due to user error (translation: my mistake), sometimes Moto has a mind of its own, and, perhaps, even a dark side.

At the office we have the dates of the upcoming synod assemblies in our individual and collective calendars. Great stuff, when it works. But, for a reason known only to Moto itself, in January it started greeting me with random reminders for synod assemblies and said they were suddenly just two days away. I paused the first time with a gulp... synod assemblies are close, always too close. I laughed the second time, since none of the assemblies actually begin till after Easter. The third and fourth times, I was downright annoyed and took corrective action. I

The document is **more descriptive** of the church as it is than prescriptive or... **prophetic** of the church as it **should be**.

rather abruptly reset the Moto-mind by removing the battery. I rested the unit for a few seconds while I gave the works a disapproving glare, replaced the battery with a snap, and restarted Moto. The untimely reminder was thankfully absent.

Then, on February 19th, Moto reminded me correctly that the ELCA Task Force was to release the second draft of the sexuality statement and accompanying rostering recommendations. A second reminder announced that Easter had arrived. Without conscious bidding, I gave several stunned seconds to wonder and hope. And then I read the documents.

Changes toward full inclusion made between the first draft and the proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality were no doubt due to the witness of LC/NA members and staff, the Goodsoil legislative team, and RIC volunteers and pastors at hearings in the field. Bravo! And thanks to all. As we said in our public response to this second draft, we share the core values of the document. Still when issues of sexual orientation and gender identity are discussed, the document is more descriptive of the church as it is than prescriptive, or dare I say prophetic, of the church as it should be.

While the document falls short of providing a rite of blessing or marriage for same-gender couples, it builds a case for committed relationships and seeks public accountability for same. Of critical importance, however, the document does not preclude pastors and congregations who wish to do so from providing services of blessing or marriage for same-gender couples. In fact, the document encourages the support of families in general without limiting the configuration to a heterosexual norm.

When it came to the rostering recommendations, I wanted to take the battery out and reset the whole thing. The document announced a good step forward and several steps backwards. The jewel of the Task Force rostering recommendations: Removal of the policy currently precluding rostered service by ministers in same-gender relationships... simple, to the point, and frankly all that would be required to lift the official ban. Surrounding this pearl are other recommendations which muddy the waters considerably with concepts of “bound conscience” and “structured flexibility.” Interpretations abound. Those of us who have suffered the open discrimination of church and society, rightly apply an earned hermeneutic of suspicion to the fine print. For us “bound conscience” is easily translated as “homophobia” and “structured flexibility” as an ecclesial license to discriminate on the basis of that homophobia. Ask yourself this question, “would such license be suggested by the ELCA for any other minority group?” I think not.

No matter the fine print, we know when policy change happens discrimination will not end. Still, we have always agreed that the call should be the test. We know that all congregations are not ready to call a pastor in a same-gender relationship. Pastor and congregation must make a good match. That’s okay. That’s all we ask. The ELCA polity and governing documents already provide discretion to all calling bodies. So, “structured flexibility” is already in place and in the right place.

By the time you receive this issue of *Concord* we will have received the ELCA Church Council version of the social statement and the rostering recommendations which will come to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly, August 17–23. (See the accompanying insert for the latest). You may be sure that the Goodsoil Churchwide Engagement and Legislative Teams will have been present on every front, working with bishops, churchwide program committees, and members of the Church Council.

Once the Council agrees on its version of the Social Statement and Rostering Recommendations, Goodsoil will look to you and your congregations to take the message of full inclusion to your synods and from there on to the Churchwide Assembly. Together, the power of the Spirit, along with our collective witness and organization, worked wonders in 2007 yielding the passage of memorials on full policy

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Development Vice-Chair



RICHARD ANDERSON

Members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are at a critical crossroad in the journey toward full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons in the church. It is critical that Lutherans Concerned/North America moves to the next level in our ongoing efforts to accompany gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons on that journey, removing roadblocks and paving the way for real change to occur. That goal can only be accomplished to the extent that we are successful in enhancing our resources, both human and financial.

The Development Committee of Lutherans Concerned/North America has been established to assist with a major paradigm shift so that an

A development strategy which will help LC/NA accomplish the goals of its mission

appreciation for and whole-hearted commitment to donor-centered fundraising may be embraced by all of our members. We are fully engaged in the creation of a development strategy, which will help LC/NA accomplish the goals of its mission.

The Development Committee is chaired by Richard Andersen. Other members are Jason Chesnut, Diane Duke, Kathleen Gates, Cheryl Grasmoen, Greg Jahnke, Philip Moeller, Cheryl Persighe, Donn Rosenauer, Erik Strand, Tom VandenBosch, and Kathy Yandell.

These Development Committee members will be contacting and building relationships with each of the Regional Coordinators in the US and Canada. The Regional Coordinators, in turn, will be asked to contact and build relationships with the Chapter Leaders in each of the Regions. The Development Committee members, the Regional Coordinators and the Chapter Leaders will all work together to identify the members of LC/NA Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Congregations.

As contacts are made and relationships are developed, the members of LC/NA will be asked to consider three levels of giving: (1) Estate gifts; (2) Major gifts and (3) Regular monthly pledges. The Development Committee would like each LC/NA member to consider giving a legacy gift at the end of life through their will. An indication of this intention may be accomplished by signing a "Letter

of Intent." This letter of intent is a non-binding agreement stating that when a member dies a portion of their estate would pass to LC/NA.

Secondly, the Committee has identified, as part of the development strategy, an immediate need for funds to support LC/NA efforts for the Churchwide Assembly in August 2009. Members will be asked to make a one-time gift to support the work and activities of LC/NA at the Churchwide Assembly.

Thirdly, the Committee will ask each member to provide ongoing operational funds for LC/NA through monthly financial pledges. LC/NA has established the Evergreen Giving Program as a way to make automatic monthly donations. The LC/NA Board of Directors see Evergreen Giving as a way for LC/NA members to pay their membership dues and as a way to broaden the LC/NA membership base.

Richard Andersen reports that the co-chairs of the LC/NA Board of Directors, Gladys Moore and Len Weiser, and our Executive Director, Emily Eastwood have individually embraced the new development plan by making personal commitments.

Additionally, the Development Committee is working with each of the members of the LC/NA Board of Directors to develop their gifts.

Members of the Development Committee have expressed their strong endorsement of the strategic plan and their willingness to reach out to the Regional Coordinators, Chapter Leaders, RIC Congregations and all the members of LC/NA to ask for participation in the plan. Our goal with this strategy is to develop significant contributions toward the work of LC/NA while broadening our membership base. ▼

From the Editor

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One member approached me during lunch wondering if it was worth doing all this work for the congregation's future if the larger church was doomed to split over "sexuality issues." As I finished the retreat, I simply said, rather ambiguously, "This has been a successful and hopeful visioning retreat for us, and we have accomplished it with 180-degree opposing points of view in the room on the hot button issues before the church. We need to listen to one another in love and respect and continue to remind ourselves that the gospel needs to be preached and lived in our communities, people need to be loved and respected and cared for... I wish you well as you go forward."

Was I confident, as I left that retreat, that their hopes would be realized? No! But my confidence in Jesus of Nazareth and his message has not faltered. Take Jesus with you on this journey, all the way to the Assembly in August. Tell your stories. Be yourselves. The journey is toward full inclusion, and we shall be there! ▼

Faith Lutheran Church,



Leavenworth, Wash.: RIC for Twenty Years

By Carol Dunn

Faith Lutheran Church in Leavenworth, Washington, celebrated being a Reconciling in Christ congregation on February 22, 2009.

Understanding the diversity of all of God’s people’s gifts was the theme, concentrating on including the gifts of the Church’s gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered members. Faith has been a Reconciling in Christ congregation for almost twenty years. The mission statement of Faith Lutheran is to be “the gracious and reconciling presence of God through: sacramental worship, congregational nurture and ministries of peace, mercy and justice for all creation.”

Special speaker for the Sunday worship was one of Faith’s musicians. Tim Gubsch was a Lutheran pastor of the ELCA, but left the roster to go through the process of coming out. He is a small business owner with his partner, Michael, and has lived in Leavenworth for ten years.

“Being an RIC congregation has been a beacon of hope for the LGBT community in the valley,” Tim said. “I know of friends who gained courage and hope because of Faith’s public affirmation. Today it is important to take the next steps to flesh out what it means to be an open, welcoming and affirming congregation.”

Mr. Gubsch then shared what it was like to be a gay Lutheran and to go through the process of coming out. “There was a lot of grief and pain to let go of old images of what my life would be. Now, if you had told me ten years ago that this is where I would



be, I would not have imagined. I have a wonderful partner. We have two children who love us. Being gay is like being left-handed or blue eyed. It is a part of a person. The church should not be the last place to celebrate and accept its LGBT members. It should be trailblazing a way to be accepting and affirming of all of its members. When I look at my children and their circle of friends, being gay or lesbian or bisexual or transgendered is accepted.

“There are plenty of churches speaking out to defend California’s Proposition 8, to argue for marriage only between a man and a woman, to forbid LGBT members to use their gifts in the position of pastor. Where is our voice in that conversation? Today, if Paul were writing Galatians he would not only celebrate the oneness of Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female. Paul might also say: gay and straight, bisexual and transgendered, black and white,

republican and democrat, immigrant and citizen. Let us be that voice which speaks for the right for all of God’s people to be accepted and affirmed and welcomed. Let us encourage those in monogamous relationships to have the right to have their life relationship blessed in the church the promises that are made to another.”

The service was a great celebration of what Faith’s legacy has been, but also a challenge for the congregation. The Church needs to go forth in its mission and to speak and act in a way that will express to the world the gracious and loving act of Jesus, who welcomed all and affirmed their gifts for ministry.

Faith Lutheran is a trailblazer in its community. Its members have been involved in a local organization called MEND, Meeting Each Need with Dignity, which has fed the hungry in the valley by supporting the Community Cupboard. It also has supported affordable housing by its SHARE land trust program, which provides

quality, environmentally-sensitive, permanently-affordable housing for low and moderate income residents. Faith members also are active in citizenship classes, English as Second Language classes, and a weekly free medical clinic. John and Mary Schramm, members of Faith, own and operate Jubilee Global gifts, which sells fair trade merchandise to raise money for the above programs and other programs which work for peace and justice in the world, as well as for social ministries of the ELCA. ▼

Executive Director

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change in 21 synods. With your help that and more are possible in 2009.

For now, in the weeks between the release by the Task Force and the decisions made by the Council, we find ourselves in a Lenten journey calling us to a time of prayer and action; compelling us to draw on our strengths of vision, faith, and courage. No matter the outcome of the Church Council meeting or the Churchwide Assembly, Easter has most assuredly come as it does each Sunday, even in Lent. No matter the calendar, the Motomind, the will of the church in this time and place, Christ is risen. Christ is risen, indeed. Such is our truth and the foundation of our faith and ministry. ▼

RIC Settings

Added to the Roster since last issue

- Creator Lutheran Church, Clackamas, Oregon
- Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Shoreline, Washington
- St. John Lutheran Church, Westville, New Jersey
- Advent Lutheran Church, Harleysville, Pennsylvania
- Emanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, New Haven, CT
- Faith Lutheran Church, Canoga Park, California
- Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Austin, Texas
- Resurrection Lutheran Church, New Berlin, Wisconsin
- St. Peter’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

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

“WOW!” *Heard from* Region 1

After four and a half years of working as Regional Coordinators for Region I, the payoff came for Karen and Paul Jolly on RIC Sunday—January 25, 2009.

In the course of the day, they:

- presented the RIC certificate to Maple Leaf Lutheran in Seattle and celebrated with a rainbow cake.
- heard from Gary Schulstad of Creator Lutheran in Clackamas, OR, that they had voted YES on RIC
- learned that Prince of Peace Lutheran in Shoreline, WA, had voted yes to become RIC
- heard that Trinity Lutheran in Everett, WA, approved a revised Welcoming Statement so they are also RIC.



- and rejoiced that Trinity Lutheran in Pullman, Wash., voted YES to be an RIC congregation.

Karen’s reaction to this outpouring of good news was “Wow, wow, wow!” She pointed out that these triumphs came after several years of hard work: “planting the seeds,” she called it. But

what glorious life-affirming fruit those seeds bore!

Maple Leaf, Seattle celebrated its first RIC service with 50 in attendance. Pastor Maynard Atik presided and Bishop Chris Boerger preached, stating, “I’m preaching to the choir.” He thanked those in attendance for continuing the struggle for change. He made it clear in his very supportive words that he also was tired of waiting.

Back in Portland to be part of the RIC celebration there, the Jollys reached the host church and couldn’t find parking; the church was packed with about 150 people energized by the ‘09 RIC liturgy. They were

*You are **touching** people in ways you do not even know or can **imagine**.*

greeted with the sharing of the peace, were warmly welcomed and found seats in overflow chairs.

Pr. Susan Kitner, assistant to the bishop, delivered the message, and Pr. Robyn Hartwig, newly installed at St. Andrew in Beaverton, and Ron Nitz, pastor at Mt. Carmel in Portland, presided.

At the end of the service, two local pastors gave a history of LGBT acceptance in the Oregon Synod. The Oregon Synod voted to become RIC, but did not let the matter stop there. The synod passed memorials and resolutions calling for change in 2005 and 2007, and, in 2009, a congregation called an openly lesbian pastor.

In a note to other Regional Coordinators, Karen said, “You are touching people in ways you do not even know or can imagine.” This 2009 Sunday of Reconciliation, congregations in Oregon and Washington voted to do the same: reach out to and

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Clackamas congregation welcomes gay community

By Ellen Spitaleri, The Clackamas Review
(www.clackamasreview.com), March 10, 2009
Reprinted with permission.

“The stars lined up” in Happy Valley, said Rev. Dayle Askey, when her congregation at Creator Lutheran Church voted to official welcome the gay community into its church.

The congregation recently adopted an Affirmation of Welcome that is “designed explicitly to welcome people who have historically been excluded” from churches, including gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons, said Gary Schulstad, a member of the committee that put together the affirmation.

In January, church-goers voted to accept the affirmation with a 93 percent approval rating, resulting in Creator Lutheran officially becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation. RIC is a national program set up in 1984 to recognize Lutheran congregations that welcomed lesbian and gay believers. In 2002, action was taken to include people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the RIC program.

Askey said it was important to adopt the Affirmation of Welcome and become a Reconciling in Christ congregation because although Creator Lutheran was already “known for being friendly, we wanted to take welcoming to the next level – we want to be extravagant in our welcome.”

“We wanted this, not just for our members who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual, but for the people who love them. We want to be purposeful in our welcome,” added Toni Hartung, office administrator at the church.

Year of discernment

The process of writing the Affirmation of Welcome took a little over a year, but “the congregation has been moving toward this from day one,” said Askey, who has been the pastor of the church for 10 years.

Schulstad noted that the committee embarked on “a year-long process of discernment and listening” in December of 2007 that culminated in the congregation voting to pass the affirmation by 93 percent.

Hartung, a committee member, said she and Schulstad were fortunate enough to attend [a Lutherans Concerned] training last March that really got the affirmation process up and running.

Educating the congregation about what an Affirmation of Welcome entails was of prime importance to the committee, Schulstad and Hartung said, so they scheduled an event per month to let people experience the process as it happened.

One activity that was a turning point occurred when a former intern at Creator Lutheran returned to talk about his decision to come out as a gay pastor.

“He was not out when he was here and he was much-loved,” Askey noted.

Sharing concerns

People of all sexual orientations were invited to share their stories about past church experiences and members of the congregation were asked to “name their fears and concerns,” Schulstad said.

“[The committee] wanted people to feel comfortable expressing doubts and concerns. There were no arguments – we just listened and addressed these [concerns] later,” he said.

Last August, Bishop David Brauer-Rieke, a congregation member, put together a Bible study that gave an understanding of how the scripture has been taken out of context in relation to the acceptance of other sexual orientations in church.

“It was an on-line collaboration, with statements from other churches. It was a blog-like presentation, and people added comments,” Schulstad said.

High school students in the congregation were also part of the process, and came up with some of the actual wording, including the “come as you are” part of the affirmation, Schulstad noted.

In September, a draft of the Affirmation of Welcome went out in survey form.

The committee wanted to test the waters to see what result a January vote might have, Schulstad said, adding, “A 93 percent approval rate was really important to us.”

Schulstad kept a blog and had a “rainbow box” set up at the church for comments, resulting in “so little negativity,” Askey said.

She considers the acceptance of the affirmation as significant because “with the percentage, it becomes not only an Affirmation of Welcome, but an identity” for the church.

“It says ‘Like Luther, here I stand,’” said Hartung, noting that the affirmation is “another step in our becoming such a welcoming congregation.”

establish mutually supportive communities of love, care, and trust among God's people, no matter what their sexual orientations and gender identities may be.

It's About Proclamation:

We give witness in all ELCA contexts—congregational, synodical, and churchwide—proclaiming the message of freedom in Christ with boldness and power, as did Paul among the Gentiles, as did Peter with Cornelius, and Philip with the Ethiopian eunuch. We acknowledge and celebrate the public promises of commitment for all couples. We call for one standard of ethical conduct for all ministers—regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. We encourage all members and leaders in the ELCA to similarly give voice to the transformed relationships they see before their own eyes.

Goodsoil at Churchwide Assembly 2009

The 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly (CWA09) begins with an opening service of Holy Communion on Monday, August 17, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. and adjourns at 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, August 23.

Goodsoil intends to have a presence throughout the

*The freedom of **Christians** to establish mutually supportive communities of love, care and trust*

assembly. From graceful engagement with voting members during meals to a large, public worship service, Goodsoil intends to be involved with every aspect of the assembly.

Information about the churchwide assembly can be found on the ELCA's official Churchwide Assembly 2009 website by going to www.elca.org. There you will find the ELCA schedule, as well as registration and housing information. We do not know exactly when the Social Statement on Human Sexuality, the Implementing Resolutions, or Rostering Recommendations will be considered, but believe that will happen in the latter part of the week.

Goodsoil activities during CWA09 include:

Goodsoil Central will serve as the center of Goodsoil activity during the assembly and will be conveniently located in the Minneapolis Convention Center where the assembly is taking place.

Receptions, displays, pastoral care, morning and evening prayer, and an information desk will all be located in Goodsoil Central. We also plan to have an education room to serve as a center for delegate caucuses and legislative training.

In all that we do, Goodsoil's approach reflects an attitude of "graceful engagement from within." We have designed ways to work with voting members by meeting them where they are, sharing stories, and walking with them toward change. Graceful engagement includes prayer, storytelling, and

one-on-one conversation. We need 200–300 volunteers for the week to do this work. You can **sign up to be a volunteer** on the Goodsoil website. Come and help: Goodsoil intends to do graceful engagement every day of the Assembly during the morning plenary session, through worship, lunch, and the afternoon plenary session. All Goodsoil participants must be properly trained in graceful engagement.

Graceful Engagement Training will be focused on public narrative storytelling, non-violence, and community organizing. Graceful engagement requires a peaceful, non-anxious presence and the ability to remain that way if the person being engaged becomes anxious or angry. Voting members will use these methods to prepare talking points during debate. Other participants will use graceful engagement at meals, meetings, and through personal contact between Goodsoil participants and voting members. Graceful Engagement training sessions will be held daily from Sunday, August 16 to Thursday, August 20.

During the months leading up to CWA09, weavers from across the ELCA will knit, weave, and crochet **Prayer Shawls** in support of the full inclusion of all people in the life of the church. These shawls will be made at synod assemblies, congregational gatherings, and elsewhere. They will be collected and brought to CWA09 and distributed to Goodsoil participants for use in graceful engagement.

On Wednesday, August 19 at 7:30 p.m., **Goodsoil Worship** will be held at Central Lutheran Church, right across the street from the Convention Center. Expect more than 1,000 to be in attendance at this inclusive worship event. It will feature the Rev. Barbara Lundblad preaching. This event is open to the public.

Shower of Stoles display is a collection of more than a thousand liturgical stoles representing the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people of faith. These religious leaders have served in thirty-two denominations and faith traditions, in six countries, on three continents. Each stole contains the story of a LGBT person who is active in the life and leadership of their faith community in some way: minister, elder, deacon, teacher, missionary, musician, administrator, or active layperson. The collection celebrates the gifts of LGBT persons who serve God in countless ways, while also lifting up those who have been excluded from service because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The collection bears witness to the huge loss of leadership that the Church has brought upon itself because of its own unjust policies.

Resources will be distributed to voting members and visitors every morning during the Assembly. Resources will include devotions on the surprising ministry of Jesus to the outcast and stories of LGBT Lutherans, including youth and young adults, elders, pastors, and families.

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Training Event Becomes Course at PLTS

RIC Training Event is held at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, California
by Ryan W. Roberts

In late October of 2008, three students from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS) in Berkeley, California, sat down with Emily Eastwood, Executive Director of LC/NA, and the PLTS Dean of Students, Cheryl Heuer, to make a plan of action to get

PLTS designated as an RIC seminary. These students (Tim Feiertag, Adrienne Strehlow, and Ryan Roberts) proposed that the seminary host a Reconciling in Christ Leaders Training Event as a course that would grant credit toward the seminary's graduate degrees. Both Eastwood and Heuer were excited to support the students in making that possibility into reality for the coming Intersession in January 2009.

Now the **PLTS community** is working toward becoming an **RIC seminary**.

A flurry of activity began immediately since the course was to take place a mere three months after the idea was originally presented. Neither LC/NA nor PLTS had funds in their budgets to bring trainers to Berkeley for the week and produce all the resources to be distributed to students. Feiertag, Roberts, and Strehlow committed to raising the necessary funds, estimated at \$3000. The challenge of such a large sum in such a short period was daunting, but after some initial difficulty in getting donors to commit, the students were able to raise almost \$3500 from a small group of generous supporters. Donors included the PLTS Student Association, several local RIC congregations, the seminary's pastoral team, and several local ELCA clergy.

Another task facing the group was framing the course and content in such a way that it conformed to the Association of Theological Schools' requirements for graduate-level studies. Eastwood took responsibility for crafting a formal syllabus and the requisite written tools for evaluation of students' learning. Since the training workshop is designed for a four-day intensive event, it lends itself well to nightly reflection and preparation. With learning goals and assignments built into the curriculum, the PLTS faculty approved the course as an elective on the path to graduate degrees for church leaders.

When January 20th finally arrived, fourteen students had enrolled in the class, including twelve from PLTS and two from the Pacific School of Religion, one of eight seminaries that join PLTS in constituting Berkeley's Graduate Theological Union. Following an inspiring, meditative, and hope-filled viewing of the inauguration of Barack Obama, introductions were made: the Rev. Troy Plummer, Executive Director of Reconciling Ministries Network; the Rev. Dr. Michael Adee, Executive Director of More Light Presbyterians; and Brett Bowman, Operations Manager for LC/NA, served as trainers for the three days of the course. The students gained a great deal of energy and momentum as they engaged each other in practicing the skills that are taught during the training.

In the last hour of the course, the students laid out a plan to engage the PLTS community about working toward becoming an RIC seminary. Using skills they learned in the Leaders Training, students have met individually with faculty and staff members, made a presentation to the PLTS faculty as a whole, and hosted a community-wide discussion to weigh the possible benefits and risks of seeking that designation. They are discerning with the faculty and Board of Directors of PLTS what steps to take in the coming months. The Board of Directors will vote on a motion about seeking RIC designation at their meeting in late April. ▼

www.goodsoil.org

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We will hold educational events open to all voting members and visitors, offering a chance to meet LGBT pastors, families, and visit the Shower of Stoles Display. A pageant, Come to the Table, will be presented, commemorating the 125-year commitment of St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran church to inclusion and welcome. St. Paul-Reformation: one of the first Lutheran churches in the United States to be racially integrated, the first Reconciling in Christ congregation, and one of the first

congregations to call an openly-lesbian pastor.

Legislation

The 2009 synod assembly year is expected to be our busiest in the history of the ELCA. We anticipate more synods than ever before will consider resolutions and memorials calling for the full inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Synod memorials are the best way for advocates for full inclusion to ask the church to end its policies of discrimination.

While there are many thousands of full-inclusion advocates across the ELCA, only

1,000 ELCA members get to vote on the proposed Social Statement, implementing resolutions, and recommendations on ministers in a same-gender relationship. "Memorials" are the way to ensure that those 1,000 voting members hear your call for a more inclusive and just church. Don't let your voice be silenced.

Text of the template memorials for synod assembly use: www.goodsoil.org/legdocs/2009MemorialTemplates.pdf. Guidelines are also available on the website. ▼



Creating Change 2009

That change was in the air, in the water, in the spirit of the times, and on everyone's mind was readily apparent in Denver during the end-of-January annual meeting of the

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), officially The National Conference on LGBT Equality: *Creating Change*.

Lest any make a mistake from reading the name, NGLTF is about all LGBTQA issues and advocacy. Fully integrated into the conference were many sessions dealing with issues of faith and spirituality,

***Creating Change* was all about **advocacy**.**

ranging from "The Power of Sexuality and Spirituality and the Implications for Our Justice Work" to "Creating Dialogue with Religious Conservatives" and "Interfaith Coalition for Transgender Equality."

The January 29 – February 1 assembly was preceded by day-long institutes on Wednesday and Thursday. One of those was on ENDA, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which is expected to go before both Houses of Congress this year – as a fully, inclusive bill prohibiting discrimination in the workplace on the basis of either sexual orientation or gender identity. (See separate article on ENDA, pg. 14)

More than 2500 people attended the convention and its 256 workshops, caucuses, plenary sessions,

networking opportunities and evening events.

Creating Change was all about advocacy. In her welcome to the attendees, NGLTF Executive Director Rea Carey staked that down: "Nothing less than full equality for our families will do. Nothing less than a fully inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act will do. Nothing less than care and dignity for our elders will do. Nothing less than safe school and safe streets will do. Nothing less than a National Aids Strategy will do. Nothing less than repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell and the federal Defense of Marriage Act will do. Nothing less than passage of a fully inclusive federal hate crimes law will do. Nothing less than our freedom to love and to live will do."

These and many other topics were the subjects of sessions within the conference. It was a packed four and half days – challenging, informative and joyful.

Nicole García, Transgender Representative to the LC/NA Board, one of the LC/NA attendees to the conference, said that "three topics were interwoven into every aspect of the conference: California's Proposition 8, reaching out beyond your traditional community for new ideas, and non-discrimination in employment (ENDA)."

In her State of the Movement address to the assembly, Rea Carey reflected on the moments of joy and gains achieved in 2008, not the least of which were "the election of a Community-Organizer-in-Chief" to the White House: the defeat of an initiative in Colorado to end affirmative action, defeat of an English-only proposal in Oregon, the rejection of Prop 202 in Arizona that would have penalized businesses hiring undocumented workers, defeat of initiatives in California, Colorado, and South Dakota related to reproductive freedoms, passing a law in Colorado protecting LGBT people from housing and public accommodations discrimination, non-discrimination laws passed in 8 localities, the successful defense of the Montgomery County, Maryland transgender rights ordinance, Connecticut became a freedom-to-marry state alongside Massachusetts and defeated efforts to overturn that, 18,000 marriages in California and the battle over Prop 8 is not over, cities and towns in many states including Arizona, Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah and Wisconsin establishing domestic partnership or similar registries, New York's decision to respect out-of-state same-gender marriages, EqualityMaine's introduction of a marriage bill they believe will pass in 2009, and that 450 out-LGBT people were elected to and serving in local, state and federal offices.

She also spoke of the pain in last year: losses in statewide motions in California, Arizona, Florida and Arkansas. She admonished the convention not to continue recriminatory attacks on others in the LGBT community for these defeats. She specifically cited the erroneous but widely bruited statistic that the African-American community was somehow to blame for the passage of Proposition 8 in California, when, in fact, party affiliation, conservative ideology, frequent church-going and the voter's age trumped

Nicole García (left), Transgender Representative to the LC/NA Board, George Cole (Affirmation, Gay and Lesbian Mormons), Howard I. Soloman (World Congress of GLBT Jews), and Rev. Dr. Yvette A. Flunder (Presiding Bishop, Radically Inclusive) after presenting a resolution calling for the full involvement of communities of faith in efforts for equal rights and full inclusion.

all other factors in the Proposition 8 vote – including race.

She exhorted everyone to fight for equality, to continue to lead the transformation of society into a better place, to keep our old friends and collaborators and make new ones, and to continue to lift up and thank the allies in the movement.

Nicole García noted, “Every workshop I attended stressed the fact that each community must reach out beyond its traditional support structure. Each person must open their hearts and minds to new ideas and a new paradigm. Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farm Workers Union and legendary social justice heroine, underscored that concept in her address. The struggles of the Hispanic community of the 1960s and 1970s mirror the quest for the rights of the LGBTQ community now. Ms. Huerta underscored the need to reach out beyond the boundaries of your community.”

The work of communities of faith in the movement for full equality was obvious from the very first moments of *Creating Change* when, at the start of the first plenary session, Rev. Rebecca Voelkel, Institute for Welcoming Resources and Faith Work

Each community must reach out beyond its traditional support structure.

Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and Joel Kushner, Director of the Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles, presented a statement to the assembled about the National Religious Leaders Roundtable (NRLR), celebrating its tenth year of advocacy for full inclusion and public witness countering the false notion that religious leaders and communities of faith were opposed to LGBT equality.

The NRLR is an interfaith network of the leaders of more than 70 religious organizations who represent millions of LGBT people of faith founded by the Task Force in 1998. Lutherans Concerned is one of the founding members.

In part, the statement said that “when conservative religious voices are lifted in oppression, our pro-LGBT religious voices must be lifted in liberation.... This tradition of lifting up truth and speaking with the voice of LGBT spirituality as a gift cannot be denied. The National Religious Leadership Roundtable continues to speak truth to power.”

To which Rebecca further commented: “We call on conservative religious communities to heal the hatred, we challenge progressive people of faith to speak out in our support and we remind our LGBT communities that supportive communities of faith are alive and well.”

Nicole García said, “As the Transgender Representative of LC/NA, I am part of the Planning Team for the Third Annual Transgender Religious Summit (co-sponsored by The National Center for Transgender Equality [NCTE] and The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry

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

[CLGS]), which will take place in Washington, DC, April 26-28, 2009. This type of coalition building is integral to the passage of a fully inclusive ENDA.

Marking the increasing importance of close participation by the welcoming movements of communities of faith to counterbalance the massive

participation by those who say they oppose equal rights for LGBT people for religious reasons, the National Religious Leaders Roundtable presented a resolution to the Creating Change assembly:

Whereas religious conservatives are on the forefront of anti - lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender activism;

Whereas progressive LGBT and allied people of faith have to be at the forefront of the movement for LGBT equality and liberation, that their voices are fully heard and their experience working with faith communities validated in order to counter faith-based anti-LGBT activism;

Whereas the Obama Administration announced a range of policy shifts in support of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, our families and communities; which will provoke ongoing resistance from religious conservatives;

Therefore, we of the national Religious Leadership Roundtable at the 2009 National Conference on LGBT Equality: Creating Change in Denver, Colo., urge our own mainstream LGBT organizations to prioritize work with faith communities and in all planning to assure the presence of LGBT faith leaders with an equal and fully empowered seat at the table.

The resolution was met with thunderous applause *Creating Change* will meet again February 3–7, 2010, in Dallas, Texas. ▼

Next **RIC Core Team** Leadership Trainings

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

To register contact:
Jerry Vagts, grassroots@lcna.org,
651-665-0861



Ordinations, Ordinations, Installations!

Since the last issue of *Concord*, there have been two clergy ordinations and an installation that we want to celebrate and bring to your attention.

On Saturday, December 6, 2008 Jay Wilson was ordained in San Francisco, called to be minister to the “homeless and home-blessed” by First United Lutheran Church. Jay is described in Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries’ web site as a “queer and genderqueer transguy, autistic and disabled, who identifies as a Lutheran postmodern, third-wave feminist, academic geek, disability rights activist, and social justice advocate.” And now, like many of those called by the Lord who were different in one way or



another, Jay is doing his ministry with the added affirmation of the church and the Holy Spirit, gifted with oversight for Word and Sacrament in his work.

Stephen Keiser was ordained on January 25, 2009 in the Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion in Philadelphia and installed there as co-pastor. Stephen is the first extraordinary ordination in the ELCA in the eastern United States. Keiser becomes the 10th pastor in the 134-year history of this center city church. Prior to his ordination, Stephen had served for eight years as a lay pastoral leader in the congregation.

And, on February 22, 2009 Bradley Froslee was installed as pastor of Calvary Lutheran Church in South Minneapolis, MN. This brings to five the number of congregations in the Twin Cities that have called partnered gay and lesbian clergy. Brad grew up in Vining, Minn., completed his M.Div at Harvard



Divinity School and recently served at St. Luke Presbyterian Church in Wayzata, Minn. Officially Brad is “on leave from call” in ELCA jurisdiction and the congregation is listed as “vacant.”

Isn’t it amazing how qualified, good ministers are serving when they are “on leave” or “not ordained,” and how congregations who are “no longer part of the ELCA” or “vacant” are conducting vibrant ministries by the power of the Holy Spirit! Rejoice, the Lord is doing great things among us! ▼

Top left: Steve Keiser is surrounded by the laying on of hands in ordination. Bottom left: Bradley Froslee is installed in the midst of affirmation. Above: Jay Wilson holds the means of grace before the congregation.

We Love to Tell the Story

It was a cold afternoon for telling stories in St. Paul. On second thought, it was a warm morning in Sun City. No, wait – it was Ontario. Actually, it was all of the above. On January 17, folks

from Texas, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, Georgia, Ontario, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Carolina, Nebraska, Arizona, Indiana, and Ohio participated in LC/NA's first-ever "webinar" to be trained in strategic storytelling—more than sixty in all (including, reportedly, one smart dog in Milwaukee). Jeremy Posadas, a doctoral candidate at Emory University focusing on the intersection of liturgy and justice and

Part of a **broader plan** to train scores of people all over North America to tell **their own stories**

a member of the Goodsoil Legislative Team, provided superb training from his home phone in Atlanta.

Although the training featured a strong web-based component, participants nevertheless met in teams of at least three people working together face-to-face. The content of the training was provided by Jeremy on teleconference, guiding everyone through the training materials and video clips online and answering questions, while the storytelling practicing and critiquing was done in groups of three people. This particular webinar model allowed for many more folks to participate than would have been possible otherwise and yet retained the element of face-to-face contact that is essential to good storytelling.

The webinar represents just part of a broader plan to train scores of people all over North America to tell their own stories strategically, compellingly, and efficiently, honing stories into powerful, two-minute instruments for persuasion. Strategic storytelling is one of the most effective methods of faith-based community organizing, providing a means to integrate your own stories with talking points and positive frames for engaging the church. LC/NA's trainings are based on the public narrative techniques developed by Marshall Ganz of Harvard University and practiced by many, including the Obama presidential campaign. Telling stories put faces on abstract concepts, making them personal and immediate. They build relationships and help to communicate values. They are a great way to teach, inspire, and motivate others to action. They form the lynchpin of LC/NA's campaign to get the "movable middle" moving toward full inclusion.

The January webinar focused not only on training folks to tell their own stories, but also to prepare them to train others to do the same. Participants will take their new skills to train others at congregation and synod events in preparation for the 2009 ELCIC National Convention and the ELCA synod assemblies and Churchwide Assembly. We will also train allied voting members to use these methods as they work with other voting members in their home synods. Voting member-to-voting member conversations will be particularly key in advancing our legislative agenda. Engagement will occur at meals, at meetings, and through personal contact between storytellers and voting members.

When we tell our stories to even one other person, the Holy Spirit is most certainly present. When we inspire that person to tell two or three others, justice begins to roll. ▼

"In Honor of... "

In Honor of...		Honored by...
Joe Brown	In memory of Joe Brown	Mike Crandall, Mark Engel, Dorothy Klefstad
Franklin D. Fry	In memory of Franklin D. Fry	Franklin G. Fry
Beverly Hashimoto	In honor of Beverly Hashimoto	Emily Hashimoto
Brian & Randine Hughes	In honor of Brian & Randine Hughes' 25th Wedding Anniversary	Thomas & Erin Becker
Kathe King & Dave Eitland	In Honor of Kathe King & Dave Eitland	John Stoltenberg & Joseph Hamilton
Steve Miller & Wayne Morris	In honor of the Blessing Service for Steve Miller & Wayne Morris	Doris Hanson, Doyle & Lucienne Morris
Rev. Carol Mork	In honor of Rev. Carol Mork's retirement from Edina Community Lutheran Church	Marilyn David
Tim Mumm	In honor of Tim Mumm's 50th Birthday	Helen Henrichs
Rev. Keith Olstad	In honor of Rev. Keith Olstad's installation at St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church	Marilyn David
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, Linda & Bill Janeshek
Kristen Schroeder	In memory of Kristen Schroede	Betty & Steve Schreuder
Dale Truscott & Kin Xuxa	In recognition of the work of Dale Truscott and Kin Xuxa	The Jennifer M. Lee and Jeffrey S. Chapski Family Fund of the Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund
Len Weiser & Kent Bollman	In honor of the Union of Len Weiser & Kent Bollman	Maureen Heckler

ENDA—This Time A Fully-inclusive Bill

In the United States, ENDA, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, will come to the fore again in 2009. This bill, when passed and signed into law, will add sexual orientation and gender identity to the prohibitions against employment discrimination.

Sometime in the Spring of 2009, Rep. Barney Frank (D, Massachusetts, 4th District), Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D, Wisconsin, 2nd), and newly-elected Rep. Jared Polis (D, Colorado, 2nd), the three openly-gay members of Congress, will be among the sponsors of legislation that precludes discrimination solely on



Rep. Barney Frank
(D, Massachusetts, 4th District),



Rep. Tammy Baldwin
(D, Wisconsin, 2nd District)



Rep. Jared Polis
(D, Colorado, 2nd District)

the basis of one's actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. Unlike the 2007 legislative history of ENDA, this time it will continue through the Senate, and when passed, is assured of the new president's signature — as much as the previous bill was 100% assured of the previous president's veto.

The environment in **2009** is much more **favorable** to a **fully-inclusive** bill.

Some history: ENDA came before the House of Representatives in 2007, sponsored by Frank and co-sponsored by Baldwin and others as a fully inclusive bill, meaning it included gender identity. In September 2007, while in process, it became clear to the democratic leadership of the House that sufficient members were on thin ice supporting full inclusion that the passage of that bill was threatened.

United ENDA (www.equalityfederation.org/enda), a coalition of nearly 400 member organizations under the leadership of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Center for Transgender Equality, had been lobbying congress heavily in support of the Frank bill, and began even more intense efforts to keep the bill fully inclusive. Despite the best efforts of United ENDA, the fully inclusive

bill was withdrawn, and a bill that did not include gender identity replaced it — and subsequently passed the House. The Senate did not take up the bill, and the Bush White House had made it abundantly clear all along that any such legislation would receive the president's veto.

The 2009 ENDA legislation will begin with the introduction of the bill in the House in the spring, with a vote scheduled in the fall of 2009. The 2009 bill will be the same as the earlier bill and all-inclusive. United ENDA and other advocates will watch over the process to ensure the bill at the end of the process is the bill that is wanted. Any attempt to make the bill non-inclusive will be met with vigorous opposition by United ENDA and Lutherans Concerned. This is not expected to happen, since the environment in 2009 is much more favorable to a fully-inclusive bill, in large part because of all the education on the subject around and after the 2007 bill in the House.

Rep. Baldwin has set up an LGBT caucus in the House, with 50 members initially, as a focal point for and disseminator of information from members of congress to members of congress.

The Senate will take great interest in the progress of the bill through the House, so it is considered vitally important by United ENDA that everyone contact all the members of their congressional delegation (both senators and your representative) to tell them of your support for this year's fully inclusive ENDA bill. And, you should do that regardless of whether you know that your individual members of congress do or do not support ENDA already. Those known to be in favor can be reinforced by your call; those opposed can be influenced to lessen their opposition.

There will be an exemption built into the law, as there is now, for religious organizations.

Through All Member Emails and other means, we will keep you informed about the progress on the bill, about activities that you can support, and alerts to have you contact your congressional delegation or individual members of congress. ▼

“WOW!”

continued from page 7

touch LGBT people, their families and their allies in ways the congregations cannot imagine. The belief that people can worship God in a supportive environment is what brings them from tears and fears in the parking lot into the sanctuary and to the altar. What a blessing! ▼

Pride shown at the Inauguration of Barack Obama

By **Scott Binde**, Metro Washington, D.C. Chapter, Regional Coordinator, Region 8

I went down with some friends for the inaugural swearing in, although we were a mile or so down the National Mall from John Roberts and Barack Obama. We arrived a couple hours ahead of time but there were already massive crowds.

Getting there was a logistical challenge as all bridges from Virginia into the District were closed to traffic and getting into the subway station, much less a train, was nearly impossible. Fortunately, a couple weeks ahead of time, my doctor gave the green light to begin cycling again and since the bridges were open to pedestrians and cyclists I decided that cycling was the way to go. Secure bicycle valet parking was provided and it worked out nicely. A couple

Thousands just **locked their bikes** to anything they could find.

thousand cyclists used the valet parking and thousands more just locked their bikes to anything they could find.

The grounds were packed shoulder to shoulder, even where we located ourselves at the World War II Memorial. Cell phone access was also very spotty, which made meeting up with our group of friends quite a challenge. In the crowd there was great anticipation and enthusiasm and where we were, we had a great

Above right: pride flag shown during Rick Warren's prayer.
Below: kindred spirits.



view of a jumbo screen. The temperature was only in the 20s, so it was a chilly day to be standing around for hours. A group on the other side of the memorial waved a large rainbow flag and afterwards we encountered some kindred spirits with a heart-shaped placard, which read "Change Means Marriage Equality For All."

Between the inauguration and the parade we made our way into the Air and Space Museum to rest and warm up, but getting there through the massive crowd was a formidable experience. At one point I thought some folks were going to get crushed. Once inside we encountered quite a bizarre sight... it appeared as though bedraggled war zone refugees were sprawled out on the floor all over the museum.

We caught the start of the parade and then before sunset, I cycled back home, showered, ate dinner and headed back in on the subway to meet up with some friends at an unofficial inaugural ball. It ended up being a very long day, but an exhilarating and memorable one to be sure. ▼

Save the Dates

2010 Lutherans Concerned Assembly "Let Justice Roll Down"

Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minn.

July 8-11, 2010

(Responding to current economic realities, assembly in Washington, D.C., will now be in 2012)

Plan now to be there!

This assembly will be a kairos time, "in the fullness of time."

Your presence will make the assembly a kairos event!

You NEED to be at "Let Justice Roll Down."

"But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

—AMOS 5:24



NEWSFRONTS

Sweden Sees the Light

Sweden's Prime Minister Frederik Reinfeldt announced in November 2008 that a gay marriage legalization would undoubtedly come into law by May 2009. The bill was introduced to parliament in late January 2009, and is likely to pass. This will make Sweden the seventh country to grant the right to marry to lesbian and gay persons.

Civil unions have been legal there since 1995. A poll conducted early in 2009 indicates that 71% of Swedes approve of this measure. While the law would allow pastors to opt out of performing same-gender weddings, the Lutheran Church has been blessing such unions since 2007.

Prime Minister Reinfeldt noted in a statement that, "The main proposal in the motion is that... a person's gender will no longer have any bearing on whether they can marry. The marriage law and other laws concerning spouses will be rendered gender-neutral according to the proposal."

Another poll conducted recently in Sweden indicates that 68% of 1700 pastors surveyed responded that they would be willing to officiate at gay marriages performed in churches.

"There's a very clear majority that is open to this. And having so many pastors on board clearly makes it easier for the Church of Sweden to take such a decision," said Archbishop Anders Wejryd to Sveriges Television.

Sources: On the Top Magazine Staff; 365 Gay Newscenter

Amalia Vagts, ELM's First Executive Director

Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries (ELM) (www.elm.org) appointed Amalia Vagts as the organization's first Executive Director. Amalia had been working as Development Director for ELM and its predecessor organization since October 2006.

In her new role, Amalia will continue to focus primarily on development, as well as manage the

communications and coalition work for ELM. In October 2008, ELM relocated its office to Chicago, Illinois, and hired a part-time Operations Coordinator. Amalia supervises this staff person. The executive



leadership of ELM will continue to be the Covenant Circle, reflecting the broad base of leadership and commitment that is at the heart of their organizational vision.

"Our goal is to make it well known that there is a vibrant movement in the Lutheran church to support openly gay and transgender people—not just in the pews of our churches, but also in the pulpits, serving as pastors," said ELM Co-chair, Rev. Erik Christensen.

Amalia resides and works in Decorah, Iowa. She is a member of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, ELCA, a Reconciling in Christ congregation.

ELM credentials and rosters qualified candidates of all sexual orientations and gender identities for ministry; supports these pastors by connecting them with congregations and ministries that are committed to the full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in Lutheran life and ministry; provides mission grants to support the ministry of its roster members; and provides a network of support to congregations and pastors. ELM has clergy placements throughout the United States, in Canada and South Africa.

Lutherans Concerned Staffing Restructured

Responding to current economic realities and staffing recommendations from advisors and partners, Lutherans Concerned has restructured its staffing to better meet its strategic needs and goals.

Effective February 1, 2009, Thomas VandenBosch accepted a position as Development Director for Lutheran Campus Ministries of Minnesota. He continues to serve as Development Director for LC/NA on a volunteer basis.

The LC/NA Development Team will take up the responsibility for day-to-day development work. Jerry Vagts will transition into the role of Development Associate as part of the Development Team, which includes Executive Director Emily Eastwood, Rev. Richard Andersen, Board Vice-chair for Development and Tom VandenBosch in his role as volunteer Development Director. Jerry can be contacted via email at JerryV@lcna.org.

Additionally, a new Development Committee composed of LC/NA members from across North America has been formed.

Emily Eastwood said, "Richard and Jerry bring to Lutherans Concerned a wealth of relationships within the ELCA and beyond."

To allow Emily to focus more of her time and effort on grant cultivation, development efforts, ecumenical movement-building, strategic planning, and denominational advocacy, a new position of Associate Director has been created. The Associate Director will be responsible for the day-to-day programmatic operations of the organization including RIC coordination and event management.

LC/NA has hired Ross Murray as Interim Associate Director. Ross has an MA in Christian Education and Congregational Leadership from Luther Seminary, Saint Paul; will receive an MBA in June from Augsburg College, Minneapolis; and has been employed by Augsburg College for the past six years.



Those of you who attended the 2004 LC/NA biennial assembly, *Gather Us In*, or the 2008 assembly, *Hearts on Fire*, will remember Ross as the event coordinator for both. He is also a co-founder and the Program Director for The Naming Project.

Of Ross, Emily Eastwood said, "Ross has a proven track record of energy, passionate commitment, and organizational skills that ensure success in every task."

Ross will assume responsibility for the coordination of support of the Regional Coordinators, the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) program, and the Welcoming (RIC) Program Training events. He will also be responsible for major event planning including the upcoming LC/NA activities in conjunction with the 2009 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada national convention, the 2009 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Lutheran Youth Gathering, the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, and the 2010 LC/NA biennial assembly. Ross will also continue to lead LC/NA's youth, young adult and family ministries. Ross can be contacted via email at RossM@lcna.org. ▼

Goodsoil's Guide to the Recommended Proposed Social Statement and Rostering Recommendation on Ministry Policies

Frequently Asked Questions

(CWA = Churchwide Assembly; SSHS = Social Statement on Human Sexuality; Church Council = ELCA Church Council)

Goodsoil's stance?

- The time has come for both those in this church who support publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous same-gender relationships and those who oppose them to join together in creating a means to continue living together faithfully in the midst of disagreement.
- The CWA should adopt the proposed SSHS and its implementing resolutions.
- The CWA should adopt the four parts of the proposed Recommendation on Ministry Policies.
- The SSHS extolls the unique benefits of committed relationships to couples, church, and society, but fails to proffer a means of public recognition of same-gender relationships, no rite of blessing or marriage. The CWA should adopt this additional Implementing Resolution of the SSHS: "To direct appropriate churchwide units to develop, in consultation with those most affected, resources for congregations or faith-communities and ministers that choose to do so to support same-gender relationships by holding them publicly accountable in the exchange of promises of lifelong love and fidelity."

Rules recommended to the CWA by the Church Council?

- The council voted, (10y-21n), again rejecting the imposition of a two-thirds majority for anything related to sexuality study, confirming its previous decision, and recommending a simple majority (50% + one) to pass any matter, except where the constitution says otherwise.

Rules recommended to the CWA by the Church Council mean what?

- The SSHS requires a two-thirds majority to pass, by the ELCA constitution.
- Implementing Resolutions require a simple majority to pass, but only if the SSHS passes.
- The Recommendation on Ministry Policies, rostering, including policy change regarding ministers in same-gender relationships, is separate from the SSHS, does not require SSHS passage to be considered, and requires a simple majority (50% +one) to pass.
- Recommended rules are based on Roberts Rules plus the ELCA constitution and other governing documents.
- The CWA can change these simple majority rules but only if two-thirds agree to the change.

Social Statement on Human Sexuality decision by the Church Council?

- The ELCA Church Council voted by an overwhelming margin to recommend to the 2009 CWA the proposed SSHS, for the CWA to decide whether or not to adopt the statement.

Social Statement on Human Sexuality decision by the Church Council means what?

- If approved by the churchwide assembly, the proposed social statement will define social policy for the ELCA. The ELCA provides a wealth of helpful information here:

<http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements-in-Process/JTF-Human-Sexuality/Proposed-Social-Statement/FAQs.aspx>

Social Statement on Human Sexuality passage means what for full inclusion?

- The proposed social statement neither affirms nor precludes same-gender marriage or blessings. Congregations and pastors would decide whether or not to marry or bless.
- The statement encourages congregations to support LGBT families.
- The statement commits the church to work for the equal protection, opportunities, and responsibilities under the law and just treatment for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

Recommendation on Ministry Policies decision by Church Council?

Church Council overwhelmingly voted to recommend the proposed Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies containing rostering recommendations to the CWA, .

Recommendation on Ministry Policies decision by Church Council means what?

When approved, prohibitions against the rostered service of those in committed same-gender relationships will be removed. Congregations and other calling bodies can act according to their conscience to call or not call an otherwise-qualified person living or contemplating living in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship.

Structured Flexibility?

Stan Olson, executive director of the ELCA's Vocation and Education unit, says the term "structured flexibility" is a "shorthand phrase intended to describe the way the ELCA already does candidacy and call." The recommendation is for flexibility within existing structures and practices of this church to allow people in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to be approved for professional service in the ELCA.

Publicly accountable relationship?

As stated in SSHS, a publicly accountable relationship is one that "signals to the community" a couple's "intention to live a peaceful and mutually fulfilling life, even as they endeavor to strengthen the community in which they live." Such public promises of commitment "protect the community by holding people accountable to their vows." Same-gender couples thus commit before their faith-community to a standard of mutual fidelity, love, trust, honesty, and accountability, by means of the highest form of legal recognition available in their locality. Depending on local laws, legal recognition takes the form of marriage, civil union, or domestic partnership. Public accountability for same-gender relationships would be taken into consideration by those who presently have decision-making responsibility in candidacy and call.

Structured Flexibility means two or more rosters?

No. The Recommendation on Ministry Policies maintains a uniform standard and process for candidacy and call throughout this church while respecting the bound consciences of all. The ELCA will continue to trust its established processes and those given the responsibility to discern who should and should not be rostered or called to public ministry. There would not be multiple rosters, just as there is not a roster for men and another for women.

Role of synodical bishops?

No change in the role of bishops. Bishops will not be required to act in violation of their convictions regarding the approval or calling of any candidate or rostered minister. If, out of bound conscience, a bishop feels she or he cannot attest to a candidacy process, cannot sign a letter of call, or cannot ordain, provision will be made for the candidate or minister to transfer to another process. No one is required to act against conscience.

Role of candidacy committees?

No change in the candidacy committee's role. Committees cannot be required to act in violation of their convictions regarding the approval of any candidate. If an individual committee member is bound by conscience against approval, he or she will likely have to abstain. If a majority of a candidacy committee must abstain to avoid violating their consciences, provision will be made for the candidate to transfer to another candidacy committee. No one is required to act against conscience.

Role of synods?

No change in the role of synods or synod councils. When a synod acts as a calling body, it can either call or not call any qualified candidate or minister—just as a congregation can. When a synod acts as a legislative body, as do synod assemblies and synod councils, they do not have the authority to establish new rostering standards.

Recommendation on Ministry Policies: 4 “Resolveds” considered as separate resolutions?

Yes, unless the CWA passes a special rule to bundle them, which would take a vote of two-thirds.

Recommendation on Ministry Policies: 4 “Resolveds” considered as “stairsteps”?

No. In its report on rostering the Task Force described the process of the four “Resolved” parts in a stairstep manner, where each successive Resolved could only be considered if all the preceding Resolveds had passed. But neither the Task Force nor the Church Council can bind the assembly to such a process. If the CWA wants to follow the stairstep approach, it has to pass a special rule for itself, which requires a two-thirds majority to agree to the special rule.

Source of further information about Goodsoil’s work for the full inclusion?

Contact the Lutherans Concerned Regional Coordinator (RC) for your region. The RC can help you organize for your Synod Assembly and coordinate your efforts with others. Go to <http://www.lcna.org/contact.shtm>, scroll down to find your RC. If unable to reach your RC, contact Lutherans Concerned/North America at admin@lcna.org or 651-665-0861.

Two-Thirds Supermajority: Talking Points In Opposition To

- **The ministry policy recommendations are not equivalent to Social Statement implementing resolutions; the right comparison is to other policy-documents.** The ministry policies are not implementing resolutions of the Social Statement; they are recommendations tied to policies that are directly provided for in the governing documents. The correct comparison is between these recommendations and, for example, policies on campus ministry or missionary activities, or policies allowing ministers to not participate in the **historic episcopate**.
- **No special rules were imposed on the equally contentious issue of full communion with the Episcopal Church.** If it only took a simple majority *then* to pass policies for opting-out of the **historic episcopate**, it should only take a simple majority now to pass policies for opting-in to rostering ministers in a same-gender relationship. The major agreement (*Called to Common Mission*) required a two-thirds supermajority by the governing documents. The ministry policies made necessary by the new relationship appropriately then followed the path of policy documents, enacted by a simple majority. Ministry policies are policy documents and require a simple majority to be enacted.
- **The policies concerning ministry standards have never required a two-thirds supermajority.** These policy-documents have been voted on four times; all of those acts were by the Church Council. None of those votes required a two-thirds vote. Some will remember the 2005 Churchwide Assembly where a two-thirds majority was required. In that case, two-thirds was needed because the resolution before the assembly would have amended the constitution and bylaws, which always requires a two-thirds supermajority. So, if this assembly were to require a two-thirds majority, this would be the first time in the history of the policy that a two-thirds requirement would be required, separate from amendments to the governing documents. It took a simple majority to impose the prohibitions; a simple majority ought to be able to remove it.
- **How can we require a two-thirds supermajority to pass recommendations whose central point is that there is no consensus on this matter?** The explicit intent of the

- recommendations is to allow for “structured flexibility” given that there is persisting disagreement in this church. If the Task Force, after 8 years of deep study and engagement together, could not come to consensus, how can we expect the Assembly to do so after 1 week of deliberation?
- **What drives young people away from the church is not lack of consensus on this issue; what drives them away is our unwillingness to move on and allow differing points of view to coexist in one church.** Our young people are not looking for the church to express a “clear will” or a strong consensus. What they want us to show them is how to live together when there isn’t consensus.
 - **Some have argued that we should not allow a slim majority to decide the issue for the whole church. But it would be even worse if a majority voted to pass the recommendation but their will was thwarted by an artificial requirement that two-thirds had to vote for passage.** In that case, a clear minority would have the power to overrule a clear majority. Would it be better to allow 33% of the Assembly to block a majority, or to require at least 50% to block a majority? How much strife and ill-will would occur if only 33% can block the will of the majority? The result would only be continuing conflict.
 - **Women’s ordination did not pass by two-thirds in all parts of the church.** In the ALC, it passed by only 57%.
 - **A healthy consensus is something that must be built, it must be led into.** If we wait for there to be an overwhelming consensus before we make a decision on this important matter, then we weaken our ability to build consensus now. Healthy consensus can only be built after everyone has been allowed a place at the table.
 - **The principal reason stated for raising the bar to two-thirds is that it will demonstrate consensus. But those opposed to full inclusion, who want to raise the bar, have stated that they cannot accept full inclusion regardless of how many people vote for it.** Therefore, this is no reason to change our long-standing process for these policies. No reason at all.

For an expanded version of these talking points, go to www.goodsoil.org/legislation.html