

## INSIDE

From the Editor . . . . .	2
From the Executive Director . . . . .	3
RIC Pages . . . . .	4-6
From the Vice-Chair . . . . .	7
How Could This Be? . . . . .	8
Synod Assembly Season 2010 . . . . .	10
First Resolved: . . . . .	11
ELCIC Sexuality Study . . . . .	12
U.S. Census Bureau will report LGBT couples . . . . .	13
Why Report on Secular Issues? . . . . .	14
Let Justice Roll Down . . . . .	15
LC/NA Leadership Retreat . . . . .	16

### 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.

## In this Issue

In this issue of *Concord* find news of the growing response to the mission of the church as congregations increase their benevolence to counter those who withhold because they are against full inclusion. Find good news from RIC, good news that the Census Bureau is going to report the number of LGBT couples who consider themselves spouses, and a thoughtful reflection on the actions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly from Pastor John Stendahl that you will want to save to read again – and pass on to friends.

## Call to Support the Church

An email message received from **Herbert W. Chilstrom** and **H. George Anderson**

Dear friends in Christ and brothers and sisters in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: We write today to invite you to join us in prayer and action for the mission and ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Like you, we became children of God in the waters of Baptism. And, like you, we have found our primary identity with this church through local congregations, including the ones to which we now belong. This is where we receive Word and Sacrament that keep faith alive. We have also been blessed through the other two expressions of this church: our synods and the churchwide organization of the ELCA. All are gifts from God. Through them:

Our faith was nourished in Sunday church school.

Our gifts for leadership were nurtured in youth ministry.

Our education at our colleges and seminaries enhanced our witness and service.



Our vocations to serve Jesus Christ as pastors and leaders have been opened for us.

Our call to minister to the poor and hungry and those treated unjustly is fulfilled.

Our connection to believers in companion churches around the

world has enriched us.

All of this and much more have happened because we have been part of the ELCA, a church whose roots reach all the way back to the beginning of Lutheranism in this country.

In recent months, our society and this church have been sailing through rough waters. Personal income is down for many; some are unemployed. We recognize that some sisters and brothers in Christ were disappointed in the decisions

*continued on page 10*

# The Editor

DALE TRUSCOTT



...continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven — COLOSSIANS 1:23

In this issue of *Concord*, there is an article entitled “First Resolved: Loving the Neighbor, Bearing One Another’s Burdens.” It is an initiative that calls upon

all who are grateful for the actions of the ELCA at its Biennial Assembly last August to reach out to at least two people. This is exemplary of the task before us as an organization with the Lutheran Churches of North America and as individual

the Heart of Florida Cluster of the Florida-Bahamas Synod since August. Both were titled, “some help that may be helpful.” In them I simply relayed to pastors in my metropolitan area lists of the resources available to them to help them communicate

*There is something exhilarating, fearful and energizing about being a persecuted minority*

Christians. When the tide begins to turn, the task turns as well.

There is something exhilarating, fearful and energizing about being a persecuted minority, and about the challenge of organizing to undo the wrongs being done, of confronting institutional persecution. The work can be daunting, exhausting to be sure, but the goal looms ahead of us and pulls us forward. As the goal becomes accomplished, goals leading to future goals, the challenge changes a bit. Now we must learn to consolidate our gains and communicate a positive and reinforcing message to a wider audience. The task broadens like a great river that has reached the lowlands. The work goes on but changes in character.

I have written two emails to

a positive message and to provide education to their congregations as they wake up to a new church with a new understanding of a timeless gospel.

I believe that the ELCA is ill-equipped and ill-prepared to provide the immediate resources and simple, loving care that is needed in the average congregations across our land. Pastors and lay leaders, most of whom are supportive or willing to be, are, I believe, a bit caught off guard. We might wonder why they did not see this decision coming, but that question is no longer appropriate. We need to be there reaching out with a word of reassurance and with tangible, clear, repeatable information that they can use to do ministry among their people. Did a study-guide or action help

come out immediately in *The Lutheran* following the assembly? No! Is it coming? I have no idea. But I do know that in my synod, the bishop quickly added a page to the website referring pastors and congregations who need help to our six Reconciling in Christ congregations. Was that the right thing to do? Yes and no! But it indicates the strategic position RIC congregations and members of Lutherans Concerned and Reconciling Lutherans are in as people turn to us finally to say, “Help us understand you and what you stand for and how we can implement such understanding in our places.”

Many of us have been trained in story-telling – how to share our perspective on LGBT issues in non-threatening ways. Many more of us will just need to do it before we have the luxury of getting training. I have said in my emails to area pastors that I’m willing to share my story and my perspective and suggestions. But I have made it clear that I’m not willing to enter into debate or to be subjected to “40 questions” to justify myself. That kind of “dialog” is not helpful. Story-sharing, non-anxious presence, building relationships: these efforts are helpful.

The task is long from being over. The tide has turned, however, and the challenge has changed in character. But, we have not shifted “from the hope promised by the gospel.” ▼

## Publication Information

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# Executive Director

EMILY EASTWOOD



Off and on over the last few weeks, Jan and I have been working with our Advent... Christmas...

Epiphany lights. About ten years ago Jan purchased one of those funky spiral trees with tiny lights and a star on top. Last year, its illumination was unpredictable at best. Then, after a big snow, something tripped the ground fault protection on

**Restoration and reconciliation take time and the process must be care-filled.**

the outlet in the carport and the tree went dark. Still, after Ash Wednesday, Jan dutifully brought it in and put it carefully away, blackened bulbs and all.

This year when the time came, the spiral tree emerged from storage, seemingly much worse for wear. It refused illumination, even after rather incessant shaking accompanied by words of encouragement in the language ascribed to certain truck drivers. There were choices to be made: to release (perhaps with ceremony for distinguished service), to recycle (with a greener conscience), to replace or to restore. Because Jan so loves the whimsical light in the darkness, because she smiles every time she sees it, because my love for her sometimes outshines reason, and, finally, because the framework is still intact, I chose restoration.

It's painstaking work, tedious, section by section, sometimes, bulb by bulb. As sections I had already restored began to flicker and sometimes go out, I began to question my sanity. The specifics varied, but the underlying issue was always the same—an incomplete circuit—a separation requiring restoration.

What we are experiencing now in our ministry with and on behalf of LGBT people as well as our work within the Lutheran church and beyond is proving just as challenging at every level. There is no easy fix; no incessant shaking or words of encouragement (in any language) will speed the process. Restoration and reconciliation take time and the process must be care-filled.

The meeting on December 7th with representatives of LC/NA, pastors and candidates from Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries, and high level ELCA leaders including Bishop Mark Hanson proved historic, painful, hopeful, and frustrating, all at the same time. I was deeply moved by the stories of the ELM ministers who spoke to the joy of their ministry, their calls to serve, all juxtaposed with the recounting of the heartless oppression perpetrated on them by the church, not in the name of God, but in the name of the institution.

The ministers dreamed aloud of their highest hopes that the ELCA would welcome them compassionately and quickly, with apology. As Bishop Hanson reflected on their stories, he marveled at the strength of their calling and their joy in ministry, in spite of everything. I was amazed that, by even attending this meeting, these wounded healers put themselves at risk once again, for the sake of the Gospel. Their lights, consistent and persistent, shone uninterrupted. I was honored to be present with them.

The new light of policy change still shines reassuringly, but the implementation plan is palpably "in process." The "fine print" changing the critical documents of the ELCA is not yet ready for prime time, but the timeline remains fixed for approval at the April 2010 ELCA Church Council meeting. But we know that day, which cannot come soon enough, will be just one more beginning in the journey to full inclusion.

Our spiral tree is lit again by the carport, the work of its restoration an ongoing task. We had it all working in the house, but in the wind and sub-zero cold its light is even funkier, some sections shining brightly, others obviously needing more attention. The star on the top is definitely not lit, appropriate now for Advent. But we'll wait for a still-wind day, well above zero, to give it another try. After all, isn't that our collective job, not just in this season of Holy Days or when the "weather" is optimal, but throughout our lives: to bear witness to the light. We must be vigilant, relentless, and constant in our presence, our patience and our purpose. For God so loved the world, beyond reason and budget and oppression, that God gave us Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, that we might be redeemed, released, reconciled and restored. Even when our work is bulb by bulb, heart by heart, congregation by congregation, we are called to let the light of Christ shine. Amen. Let it be so. ▼

## RIC Settings

*Added to the Roster since last issue*

House for All Sinners and Saints, Denver, Colorado

Lutheran Campus Ministry, Madison, Wisconsin

Luther Memorial Church, Madison, Wisconsin

St. Luke Lutheran Church, Woodland Hills, California

The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Olympia, Washington

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

*continued on page 6*



# Movement in St. Louis!

## Building an **Inclusive Church**

**B**ethel Lutheran Church and the neighboring Campus Ministry is the only RIC setting in the St. Louis area. The Gateway/St. Louis Chapter of LC/NA had fallen into



**RIC:**  
It's about being church.

inactivity. Things have been quiet. But movement is afoot in St. Louis.

In February, Bethel Vicar and Region 4 Coordinator, Todd Koch, brought six members of Bethel Lutheran Church to a training session on Building an Inclusive Church held in Tallahassee, FL. While in Tallahassee, the Bethel community learned about the value of framing, the art of the one-on-one, and the technique of storytelling. These members were so inspired by what they learned that they wanted to hold another training session for the people in their own area.

Bethel Lutheran Church hosted the training October 9–11, 2009. In addition to hosting, eight more Bethel members attended the event. This makes Bethel the most well-equipped congregation in the area. The goal is clear: to create a network of welcoming congregations in the St. Louis area.

Their organization and activity are paying off. They have reactivated the Gateway/St. Louis Chapter of LC/NA. The chapter has been holding its meetings at various churches around the area, giving congregations a chance to interact with Lutherans Concerned folks. There are a handful of other congregations who are now actively working on welcoming statements for RIC, as well as several other prospective RIC congregations.



JIM BALOGH/IMAKEPIX.COM

- “I Love to Tell the Story:” Learn skills to tell your personal story effectively and efficiently for the greatest impact.
- Education on bisexual orientation and transgender identity: Gain understanding of and learn how to advocate for the often misunderstood B&T of “LGBT”.
- Discernment processes and resources: Learn how to use a variety of resources for facilitating a successful process of discernment.
- Anti-racism training: LC/NA is committed to anti-racism as an organization, so all aspects of this training attempt to incorporate these concepts

Visit [www.lcna.org](http://www.lcna.org) for more information on upcoming Building an Inclusive Church training sessions. If you would like to host a training session in your area, please contact Ross Murray at 651-665-0861 or [rossm@lcna.org](mailto:rossm@lcna.org). ▼

*This makes **Bethel** the most **well-equipped congregation** in the area.*

Building an Inclusive Church is an intense 3-day+, hands-on workshop intended to give participants the tools and knowledge base to build local or regional teams equipped to work effectively to foster the expansion of the RIC Program or other denominational welcoming church programs within area congregations. The training areas of focus include:

- Faith-based community organizing: Build skills to assist groups of people to become better organized, to raise and manage financial resources and to learn processes for building an advocacy team. Scripture engagement: How to talk about scripture and to find in scripture the tools for full participation

### Upcoming Trainings on Building an Inclusive Church

**February 26-28, 2010**

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Charlotte, North Carolina

**March 12-14, 2010**

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church  
Birmingham, Alabama

**April 16-18, 2010**

St. Paul Lutheran Church  
Denver, Colorado

**May 1, 2010**

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church  
Duluth, Minnesota

Visit [www.lcna.org](http://www.lcna.org) for more information on upcoming trainings. If you would like to host a training in your area, please contact Ross Murray at 651-665-0861 or [rossm@lcna.org](mailto:rossm@lcna.org).

## R I C C O R N E R

# Abiding Savior Lutheran, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida – Small, Faithful, Missional



Under sanctions, **increases support**

**A**biding Savior Lutheran, Fort Lauderdale, Florida is small, with just 57 members, and has been “struggling” for years to find an identity, mission, and ministry in a rapidly changing world. In recent months the congregation affirmed its mission “to seek daily to know and do God’s will for our ministry and this place and, through the greater church, in all of the world.” This affirmation is lived out in local ministry opportunities that include support for Broward House, an HIV community service provider; Broward County Food Bank; and active partnerships with local schools as well as participation in the Florida-Bahamas Synod’s

*This is the **little church** that does things in a **big way**.*

recent “Together in Mission” initiative. Additionally, the congregation partners with Lutheran and non-Lutheran congregations throughout the Northeast to share in mission and ministry projects that support the fine and performing arts and excellence in worship. Recently, they have become participating



sponsors in The International Village of Hope educational ministry in Haiti. The congregation also looks forward to discovering ways to do ministry with the increasing number of Hispanic families in the area.

Abiding Savior has been under sanctions by the synod for calling a non-rostered clergyperson to serve as their pastor. In spite of this, and accepting the consequences for their choices, the congregation’s support for the ministry of the greater church has not diminished. They continue to remit benevolence dollars in support of the many needs met around the world by the ELCA through its ministries. This congregation understands that it is essential to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God” at all times, not only when we are happy with the organization.

After the decisions of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, which will impact the ministry of Abiding Savior in many ways different than most congregations, it became clear that support for the ministry of the ELCA would be a tool used by some to express their dissatisfaction with those decisions. This small congregation acted immediately to provide additional support through their benevolence giving and actively solicited others to do the same.

The Rev. William H. Knott, pastor at Abiding Savior Church since 2002, said, “There was some conversation but no debate as the need was clear. Withholding of financial support would not change the decisions made by the CWA, but it would hurt people in need every place the church touches others through its mission and ministry. The congregation voted to immediately provide an increase in benevolence support and will act further at its Annual Meeting in January to address this issue.”

Pastor Knott explained, “Abiding Savior Church may only be able to do a little to address this situation. It has been sad to hear larger congregations say they simply could do nothing more at this time. The Chinese say ‘Many hands make light work.’ The ELCA says ‘Our hands (*all of our hands*), God’s work.’”

Now Abiding Savior and Pastor Knott look forward to the real possibility of sanctions being removed from the congregation and to a process for re-admission to the roster of clergy for the pastor.

They even enjoy visits occasionally by an elderly Jewish woman with connections to church members who boasts, “This is the little church that does things in a big way.” Abiding Savior Church is confident that the commitment and care of God’s faithful servants will help to get this job done. ▼



# Caring, Outreaching, Welcoming

**Holy Trinity Lutheran** Increases  
Benevolence In Response to Decisions  
by Others to Withhold

**H**oly Trinity Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minnesota, is a caring, outreaching, welcoming congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). It is a church that sees harm done by or to others, wrongs that need righting, and does what it can to provide relief. Its mission in outreach to assuage the ills caused by the actions or inactions of others includes a commitment to affordable housing. Some years ago,

Holy Trinity participates in Bread for the World, Lutheran World Relief, serving meals through Loaves and Fishes, and Habitat for Humanity, among many other outreach mission commitments to help others. Holy Trinity is a Reconciling in Christ congregation.

Therefore, when the congregation saw the withholding of benevolence by some congregations and individuals, angered by the decisions taken by the August 2009 Churchwide Assembly, it came as no surprise that the congregation would act to help relieve the wrongful harm done.

The subject came up at a congregational meeting, and a member of the Finance Committee suggested that the congregation increase its benevolence to the ELCA to provide both a response and some relief.

The Rev. Jay Carlson, Lead Pastor at Holy Trinity, said, "The Finance Committee announced their intention at our annual stewardship breakfast on Sunday morning, saying that it could be both an opportunity to show our support for the August vote and to help with the financial challenges that the

*Holy Trinity has a long **history** of generous **mission** support*

Holy Trinity built 120 project-based Section 8 units. With a recent addition, there are now a total of 144 units on the Holy Trinity campus.



synod is now facing. Immediately, the speaker was interrupted by a hearty round of applause. I knew that Holy Trinity members were generally supportive of the decision, but I was surprised by how eager they were to increase their financial support in response."

The congregation will vote on its budget in January, at which time the size of the increase will be decided.

Pastor Carlson continued, "Holy Trinity has a long history of generous mission support, and this decision to increase their giving reflects the extent to which the congregation values the breadth of mission we can do together, locally and globally, through the larger church." ▼

## LC/NA blog launched

LC/NA has a blog! Go to  
<http://lutheransconcerned.blogspot.com>.

LC/NA will be posting to the blog periodically with items of interest to the movement for full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the life of the church. These items will include notes and updates from the LC/NA staff and board, reflections, personal stories, photos, videos, and other relevant news.



# FROM THE DESK OF THE Development Vice- Chair



RICHARD ANDERSON

## Completion

Are we complete? There is no doubt that what occurred at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in August was an important milestone. However, many are mistaking an important milestone event for an act of completion.

How will we recognize completion? The action taken at Churchwide Assembly allows for the possibility that those persons in same-gender, committed, life-long relationships be rostered to serve as pastors and lay ministers in the ELCA. The question we should ask ourselves is: "Does this possibility mean that the work of LC/NA is complete?"

Determining an answer to the question requires these considerations: "Have persons who qualify for ministry and are in same-gender, life-long,

Our **struggle** to include **all people** in the **church** will not be over as long as some are **denied** their **calling**.

committed relationships been added to the roster in your ELCA Synod since August? Are members of your congregation advocating for the inclusion of pastors from the Extraordinary Lutheran Ministry (ELM) roster?"

When will the work of LC/NA be complete? Our struggle to include all people in the church will not be over as long as some are denied their calling. The action required for completion is the full inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, including those who identify as

transgender and bisexual.

Do you know of people who have been denied their calling? Are you their advocate? Three of my advocates have recently passed away. These three allies did not see the completion of this struggle. One of my friends became a Reconciling Lutheran at the age of 92 shortly before his passing. All three of my friends supported LC/NA with annual contributions. And these friends encouraged me to become reinstated on the ELCA roster even though I am in a same-gender, life-long, committed relationship.

As of November 25, 2009, we have 4,598 Reconciling Lutherans, many of whom have worked tirelessly for the full inclusion of LGBT members in the ELCA. We rely on your gifts of time and money to sustain the on-going work which is not complete. As long as one person is waiting to be included, the work of LC/NA is not complete. Your investment in LC/NA is critical at this time and we are grateful for your support.

Some Reconciling Lutherans have chosen to contribute to LC/NA through our Evergreen Giving program, an automatic monthly bank draft through Simply Giving (a service of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.) Other LC/NA donors have chosen to remember LC/NA in their will or estate.

I invite you to take action to complete the work that still needs to be done. My friends who passed this year gave generously to the work of LC/NA and we will no longer receive their monthly contributions. I invite you to give a gift to LC/NA following the example of all those who have given so generously. Here are a few ways to make a gift to LC/NA:

**Go to:** [http://www.lcna.org/lcna\\_downloads/evergreen\\_giving\\_form.pdf](http://www.lcna.org/lcna_downloads/evergreen_giving_form.pdf)

**Call me:** Richard Andersen 612 810-0530

**Call LC/NA Office:** 651 665-0861

**Mail to:**  
LC/NA, PO Box 4707, St. Paul, MN 55104-0707 ▼

## 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](mailto:database@lcna.org).



# How Could This Be?

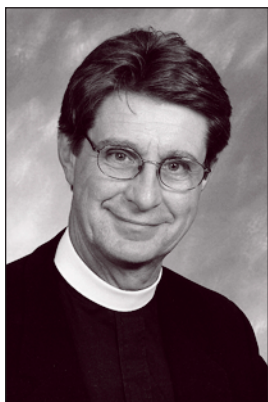
Some thoughts from our recent assembly by  
**Pr. John Stendahl**, Lutheran Church of the  
Newtons, Newton, Mass.

[Editor's Note: Pastor Stendahl rose to speak during the debate in the assembly. Describing what led him to want to speak, he says, "Advocates for change had been described as standing against the Word on the basis of selfish desire or self-centered experience, and I had wanted to provide some counterword that would explain how it could be that some among us understood, or believed, themselves actually to be faithful to the Scriptures rather than in defiance of them when they argued for the possibility of same gender relationships within the pale of Christian ethics. As one of those who so believed, I wanted to try to make that position understood and respected even if unshared and rejected."

As he stood in the line, he says he realized two minutes was not anything like enough time and that "the time for thoughtful and patient conversation over complexities of interpretation had passed."

What you read here is his expanded version of what he wanted to say to the assembly.]

In this assembly, in this church, and in many of our partner churches, there are many who find it a conclusive argument, or simply an insurmountable obstacle to change, that there is no



endorsement of same-gender intimacy to be found anywhere in Scripture. We who argue the other side of this issue neither deny that fact nor find it surprising. Neither do we pretend that there are not several biblical passages that have classically been understood to condemn such relations as abominable and sinful and are considered to do so by the majority of Christian churches around the world. And yet we too love the Bible—the whole Bible and not just parts of it—and attend to its authority. How can this be? How can we indeed even claim, as we do, that the Bible itself drives and draws us to the stand that we are taking here?

To answer, I bid you begin by thinking about a central and recurrent pattern that we find in the Scriptures: again and again some new, unforeseen reality arises to challenge God's people—Israel, the Church, and humankind as a whole—to new faithfulness. What had seemed settled and sure gave

of us recall from our childhoods (#547 in the *Lutheran Service Book and Hymnal*). But not only did old assumptions about what was right give way: what had once seemed clearly scandalous in dress or behavior or thought sometimes turned out to seem quite compatible with or even faithful to the will of God. This is not to say that every new notion is acceptable, for some indeed are evil and destructive, but it is to remember both that we have been confronted by difficult and divisive challenges to ancient assumptions before, and that, when we have, we have sometimes discovered in Scripture's inspired words inspiring and fresh meaning.

Within my own lifetime, the Church has again been confronted with what has seemed a novum, an unanticipated new thing, confronting us with the challenge of rereading and rethinking for the sake of faithfulness. People, brothers and sisters in Christ, began to stand up and say, often at considerable risk and with painful consequence, words to this effect: *I am as those in Romans 1, a person who has desire for those of my own sex. Yet I do not see myself in those words of Paul. I have not "exchanged the natural for the unnatural;" this is my nature. I do not worship creatures and idols (except as you can say all of us do), but I love and seek to serve my creator and living God. And like you I yearn for companionship and love, not just kicks and promiscuous pleasure. I am like you.*

For me and for so many others, this came as a novum. I had never imagined it or thought of it when I was a child and a youth, though of course in time I recognized how the underlying realities had been there all along, pressed down and hidden in so many closeted or shamed lives in the world around me. But now, confronted with these words and this discovery, I recognized anew what the Bible itself had taught me about the potential of such challenge and about my obligation to attend to the surprising stranger. Shaped by Scripture's story and by Christian tradition's encouragement, I went back to look again at what I had assumed I already understood. I studied Paul's words in Romans 1, asking the

... the **Bible** itself drives and **draws us** to the stand that we are taking here...

way and God gave new meaning to ancient promises. Such was a pattern and paradigm for biblical Israel, and so it was also for the New Testament Church pushed by its Lord to the inclusion of gentiles and to the breaching of long-sanctified dividing walls.

And so it has also been, again and again, for the Church in our nearly two thousand years of living in attempted faithfulness to the Word: challenges have come along to confront our communal assumptions, backed up by Biblical texts, about the naturalness of slavery, the divine right of kings, the centrality of the earth relative to the sun, the proper and submissive role of women, and many other issues. The examples abound, in matters both great and trivial. "New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good uncouth" was how it was put in a hymn some

Lutheran catechetical *Was ist das?*—What does this mean? What is at stake here? What is this really about?—and I was struck how differently Paul's Greek word *physike* meant from what we today hear when we translate it as "natural," and I examined more fully the theory and rhetoric of the Pharisaic Jewish views of gentiles that Paul is using to further his underlying argument in this section, and I wondered as well about the distinction between the arguments that form the rhetoric for a vital point and that point itself.

Among examples of such apostolic argument, i.e. of a rhetoric whose factuality we might question even as we owe allegiance to the underlying point it serves, is the passing assertion in Titus 1:12–16 that all Cretans are liars, beasts, and lazy gluttons. A



possibly more pertinent one is the assertion in I Cor. 11:13–16 that long hair is shameful on a man but a glory to a woman. There is an intriguing possibility that Paul's argument there is grounded in a Greek theory of reproductive physiology that had the seed of life generated in the male brain and then drawn down out and up into the female womb where it would develop. Hairs were believed to exert an attractive force on the seed and were thus thought part of the reproductive system. I do not know for sure whether Paul subscribed to that theory—I do not argue that he did and am necessarily agnostic on that question—but I appreciate the humbling reminder that we do not automatically understand the world of our fathers and mothers in the faith. The past, as has been said, is another country. That cautionary truth does *not* cancel the inspiration and truth-bearing of Scripture for us; it does, however, bid us be less

to the meaning—the “*Was ist das?*”—of the text.

It was of course not only to Romans 1 but also to several other passages of Scripture that I was driven back by the *novum* of a sexuality I had not understood. I had to go back and reread the story of those divine strangers who came to Abraham at Mamre and then to Lot in Sodom, that cruel and unjust city, as Ezekiel 16:49 describes it. Suddenly it seemed so striking that God had tested the city by coming to it in the form of alien and vulnerable outsiders. These angels, as they come to be described, were of course strangers, queer beings. I hope it's obvious that I use that provocative adjective not to argue anything about the sexuality of the visitors but rather in reference to the old-fashioned meaning of the word, pointing out the social “otherness” of these visitors. (The Epistle of Jude uses the mysterious

people would agree and not as necessary condemnations of homosexuality itself. Moreover, I found myself more and more dissatisfied with that modern word “homosexuality,” though I use it as a stylistic convenience here: that non-biblical term, and possibly, or arguably, that particular reification, is barely 100 years old and seems to me to oversimplify and distort what it purports to describe. Faithful to my reading of Holy Scripture, therefore, I could not feel compelled, nor compel others, to the condemnation of any and all same-gender sexual relations as inherently sinful. Of course many disagree with me on that, and I have explicitly pledged to respect their bound consciences, even as I pray they will respect mine.

(That I had also become painfully aware of the personal harm and tragedies to which the Church's condemnation and ostracism had often contributed was

## ... *seeking* what it was that I was now meant to understand from **Paul's words**...

cocksure in our own assumptions.

Moreover, now knowing homosexual men and women whose lives seemed neither adequately described nor convincingly explained by those oft-cited verses in Romans 1, did I not at the very least have to consider the possibility that Paul's words there, written as part of a larger argument and contention for an urgent truth, were making a point that (a) did not necessarily apply to *every* single person of homosexual orientation or in a homosexual relationship, and (b) should not be taken as a definitive and comprehensive description of the genesis and dynamics of *all* homosexual love?

In thinking about these things, I was neither devaluing the Scriptures nor reading them with a “cafeteria-style” selectivity. I was reading faithfully, seeking what it was that I was now meant to understand from Paul's words, from his classic Pharisaic linkage of gentile idolatry with sexual excess and incontinence, and even his use, at the end of verse 27, of a flourish of physical revulsion. Understanding this passage not as prescriptive for our present understanding of the lives of all gay and lesbian persons—a function for which it seems ill-suited—but instead as Paul's passionate argumentation for the principle of a universal responsibility and relationship to the living God, a principle and a passion to which we too are bound, seems to me a much more faithful (and faithfully Lutheran) attention

and interesting term “strange flesh” [*sarx hetera*] when describing the Sodom story.) And the classic story of judgment then unfolds: they sought welcome and instead the mob gathered before the gate of Lot's house to abuse and rape them. This was clearly not the story of people falling in love with members of their own sex. Rather, here was a story much akin to what I had come to learn about, the violence and contempt so often directed against the vulnerable and alien. It was the gay-basher, not his victim, who committed the biblical sin of Sodom. So it seemed to me, and so it seems still as I consider the many other instances of abuse directed at the vulnerably different in human communities.

Likewise did I now look more closely at the few other Old Testament passages that had seemed to back up our centuries-old teaching on homosexuality, only to find again that what these verses concerned or entailed was not necessarily what we had assumed. Issues of power, gender, procreation, identity, community, ritual, idolatry all seemed either present or suggested, important issues that indeed needed thought and care, for ancient Israel and for us, but the unequivocal condemnation of all same-sex intimacy once seen in those few verses no longer seemed anywhere near evident. Similarly, the condemnations of pederasty and homosexual exploitation found in the New Testament now appeared as straightforward moral teaching with which also most gay

obviously a factor in my thinking hard about this—I am one who believes that our ethics should inform and challenge our theology and not just the other way around—but that reality is not a necessary part of the logical argument I am offering at the moment.)

There is, incidentally, a further so-called scriptural argument that has been put forward by some for the condemnation of homosexual relations, namely the paradigm of male-and-female creation described in Genesis 1 and again, albeit somewhat differently, in Genesis 2, the paradigm cited by Jesus when questioned about the legal permissibility of divorce in Mark 10 and Matthew 19. Yet even though I love and apply that paradigm (and those texts) quite often I find it both utterly unconvincing and perversely unrealistic to claim that there is the single and absolute basis for all sexual identity and morality. Indeed in Matthew 19:10–12 Jesus himself acknowledges, without condemnation, that some exist outside the norm he had cited from Genesis 2:24. The exegesis of these passages in Matthew and Mark raise several important and relevant issues tempting to discuss, but the immediate point is that extrapolation from them to a condemnation of sexual minorities seems neither logical nor wise.

Please understand that none of the above denies the reality of sexual sins. It is a slander and an insult to suggest that a

*continued on page 14*

# Synod Assembly Season 2010

**T**he actions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly will be part of the life of the Church over the coming months and years. In November 2009, the Church Council took the first tangible step to implement the decisions of the assembly when it approved a waiver to the 5-year waiting period required for those removed from the roster of ministers of the church.

The waiver applied only to those who were removed or resigned from the roster solely because they were in a committed, same-gender relationship.

## **Full inclusion** also carries a **call** to **actively participate**

Those persons can now apply to begin the reinstatement process immediately if they wish. The process can take up to a year, and proceeds on an individual-case basis.

Incredibly, when the motion to approve the waiver came up at the Church Council meeting, there was an attempt by those opposed to the actions of the assembly in August to amend it to equate those in a committed, same-gender relationship with adulterers and thieves by requiring a two-thirds vote of the Synod Council Executive Committee approving. This instead of noticing that the waiver itself and the actions of the assembly said that being in a committed, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship is not a fault or a subject for any discipline at all. Quite the contrary, the assembly said that the ELCA will find ways “to allow congregations that choose to do so to recognize, support and hold publicly accountable” such relationships.

The church nationally, synods and congregations locally, and all the institutions of the church are moving towards full inclusion. Full inclusion frees the church to better model the Gospel life of the Body of Christ by recognizing that LGBT people are part of God’s wondrous creation, and always have been. Full inclusion holds all equally to the same high standards for right living and for carrying out the injunction to care for others as Christ would have us do.

Full inclusion also carries a call to actively participate, which many of us already do and more of us should do. Service in the church, service for others in Christ, responds directly to God’s grace, is fulfilling and presents opportunities to further the understanding and implementation of full inclusion.

This season of synod assemblies will see the selection of voting members to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly. Being selected to be a voting member is both an honor and an opportunity to continue the work of full inclusion and social justice. We strongly encourage everyone who feels so called to submit their name as a candidate for voting member. The ancient precept applies here: bad things can happen if the people who would do good things instead do nothing.

Undoubtedly there will be attempts to reverse, block, delay, or circumscribe the implementation of the decisions of 2009. That there are voting members who are supportive of full inclusion means that the courage of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly voting members to follow the leads of the Holy Spirit and their understanding of the message of Christ will be upheld and furthered. ▼

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## **Call to Support**

*continued from page 1*

regarding human sexuality at the churchwide assembly, although we believe they were the right decisions. As a result, some have withdrawn or reduced support for our mission. The consequences of these events are painful. This church’s mission and ministry have been diminished.

Our troubled world needs the Good News of the Gospel and all that flows from it. Our differences must not divide us at a time like this. We are absolutely certain that we can continue to live together and serve as one family in the ELCA.

This is why we are calling on you, our brothers and sisters in the faith, to pray daily for the unity of this church and its mission.

We ask you to join us as we step up our support of the ELCA with a generous gift. You may wish to do so before the end of the year and on occasion in the months to come. You may make your gift to the ELCA’s Vision for Mission in one of three ways:

- **Online at**  
<http://www.elca.org/supporttheelca>
- **By check** made payable to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and sent to:

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
PO Box 71764  
Chicago, IL 60694-1764

- **By credit or debit card** by calling 800-638-3522.

This effort is entirely through the Internet. We urge you to carry this message to your friends who share our concern for this church.

Sincerely in Christ,  
Herbert W. Chilstrom ELCA presiding bishop, 1987–1995  
H. George Anderson ELCA presiding bishop, 1995–2001 ▼

# First Resolved:

## Loving the Neighbor, **Bearing One Another's Burdens**

In early November 2009, LC/NA announced a new initiative called *First Resolved: Loving the Neighbor, Bearing One Another's Burdens*. The *First Resolved* campaign calls upon all members to reach out to at least two people regarding the decisions made at the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

The first of the four “resolveds” of the policy recommendations adopted by the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly (CWA09) was the most important: to “love the neighbor” and “bear one another’s burdens.” Overwhelmingly, the church has agreed to stay in relationship, to live together faithfully amidst our disagreements, and to work for reconciliation.

The work of reconciliation is at the core of the mission of LC/NA. In the months after the close of the assembly, there are some who are unsure about their involvement with the ELCA. In some cases,

We should **resolve** to reach out to others in **love and grace**

misunderstandings or hard feelings about the CWA09 decisions may be tempting some to disengage. In other cases, the CWA decisions present an “open door” for LGBT people and their families for the first time - even though it may seem like the door is still not open wide enough. In all cases, we should resolve to reach out to others in love and grace, listening to their stories and telling our own so that we may come to renewed understanding together as the Body of Christ, overcoming estrangement and discord no matter what their sources may be.

### **Resolve to Reach Out**

There is much work to be done in congregations, at workplaces, at school, and among your extended networks of family and friends. LC/NA calls on all members to commit to personally contacting at least two people with whom you have already some relationship, including:

1. someone whom you know has felt confused or hurt by the actions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly; and
2. someone who has been made to feel alienated, in one way or the other, by the church's previous exclusionary policies and teachings.

These people could be family members, members of your congregation, co-workers, classmates, whomever. The method of contact can take any form

that allows for conversation: face-to-face visit, phone call, email, social networking (Facebook, etc...).

### **The Purpose**

- To make personal connections and build on relationships. Strong relationships are the key to all social and spiritual change.
- To celebrate (when appropriate) the changes in the ELCA and the hopeful future they point toward.
- To alleviate possible anxiety about the decisions made at CWA.
- To provide clarity, as necessary, about what the changes mean and don't mean.

### **Conversation Starters**

Here are some questions to help start conversation. You should be prepared to answer these questions yourself.

- Do you have any questions about the decisions made at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly?
- Have the changes affected your faith life, either individually or with your congregation? If so, how?
- How do others in your congregation feel about the policy changes?

### **General Conversational Guidelines**

There is no particular script for these contacts, but here are some general guidelines:

- Express your care and concern for the other, listening to their stories of hurt or celebration
- Tell your own story about why you are thankful for the policy changes and what they mean for the future of the church.
- For those who are feeling angry or hurt because of the policy changes, don't try to convince them they are wrong or try to somehow apologize for the Churchwide decisions. Instead, simply share what you feel and believe.
- Be ready to provide clarity, as needed, about what the actions of the CWA mean and don't mean (see links to “Additional Resources” at [www.lcna.org/first\\_resolved.shtm](http://www.lcna.org/first_resolved.shtm)). If you don't know the answer to a question, don't worry. Just contact your LC/NA Regional Coordinator (RC). Your RC can help find an answer, which you can bring back to the person you contacted. (See the link provided above for a list of RC email addresses.)
- Express your commitment to living together faithfully in the ELCA.
- Depending on whom you are talking to and the individual circumstances, you may wish to say a few words about the Reconciling in Christ program.

*continued on page 12*



# ELCIC Sexuality Study Feedback Period Closing

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), there are but a few weeks left to offer feedback to the task force working on the ongoing Study of Human Sexuality. February 28, 2010, marks

the end of the comment period that began on October 1, 2009, with the release of the study for consultation to individuals and congregations across the Canadian church.

The study is on a path to the presentation of a social statement to the 2011 National Convention for debate and action, the whole process having been initiated by action of the National Church Council (NCC) in September 2006.

ELCIC National Bishop Susan C. Johnson strongly encourages individuals and congregations to get involved in the study, "The feedback individuals and congregations will provide is crucial to the success of the social statement process."

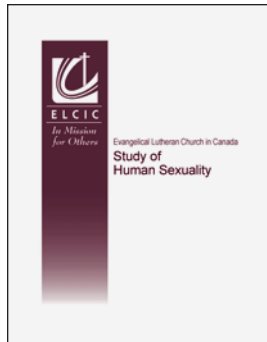
The study was released as a series of seven study

sessions, encouraging the submission of feedback by individuals or congregations as each session was completed. Congregations were encouraged to engage each other in prayerful study and conversation. Feedback can be on printed forms or submitted online, and can be anonymous. Since the time allotted to respond is relatively brief given the length and complexity of the study, various congregations and individuals are preparing responses to the document as a whole, rather than to each session. Sympathetic congregational members are also being encouraged to submit separate letters, rather than one letter signed by many, since numbers of letters will likely carry more weight than multiple signatories to a single letter.

The task force's primary role is to ensure wide consultation across the ELCIC in preparing the study document and draft social statements. From the present study and responses to it, the first draft of a social statement will be prepared by the task force. Again, feedback will be solicited from ELCIC Lutherans across Canada. A second draft of the social statement will be prepared for for the NCC's consideration. Following those deliberations, the NCC will submit the social statement for action by the June 2011 convention.

The oft-cited aphorism comes to mind in connection with the call for study and feedback: for bad things to happen it is sometimes sufficient that those who would do good do nothing. This is important work that will shape the ELCIC of the future as part of the body of Christ. We highly encourage ELCIC Lutherans to engage in this process as individuals and through participation in your congregation's process.

The study can be found at <http://elcic.ca/Human-Sexuality>. ▼



## Notes from the International Program Committee (IPC)

**What a Tangled Web:** Chinese officials in the PRC seem especially skilled at tangling issues in order to justify otherwise untenable actions. China decriminalized consensual same-sex acts in 1997 and removed homosexuality from its official list of mental disorders in 2001. Nevertheless, biased and misinformed policing still effectively criminalizes homosexuality and hampers effective AIDS-related activism and outreach. For example, three times already during 2009, the Guangzhou police have violated both Chinese and international law by arresting men suspected of being gay, as well as the HIV outreach workers providing education services to the men, and prevented them from accessing the Renmin Gongyuan People's Park. The excuse was that the gays were harassing straight people. No reason was given for arresting the safe sex outreach workers from the Chi Heng Foundation. The IPC has communicated its concerns

**Iraq:** Iraq may be a less tangled web, but the threat there is greater than just arrest. As if life were not fragile enough, there has been a continuance of gay targeted murders. Hoping to spotlight this violence, the Center for American Progress, the Human Rights Watch, and the Council for Global Equality held a joint panel discussion on October 14th in Washington, DC, to discuss the Human Rights Watch Report on the seemingly systematic murder campaign, in order to connect it to human rights in general and to raise the issue of the responsibility of the United States in dealing with this issue.

**When "word" is not the WORD:** When theologians write, their positions do not not rise to the status of Scripture. When pastors write, their writings are not always pastoral, especially when they say one thing and mean another. Case in point is the work of David Glesne, *Understanding Homosexuality*. The author claims the work is neither homophobic nor intolerant, just truly "Christian," but many would disagree, including LGBT readers. The danger increases when such books then get published in foreign languages, appearing as seemingly credible sources, which is about to happen in Poland.

—Philip Moeller, Director, IPC

## First Resolved

*continued from page 11*

- One of the simplest, yet most powerful ways to express your faith and convictions to another is to share your favorite Bible verse. Choose a passage or story that has particular meaning for you in your faith life. Incorporate that scriptural passage as you tell your story about why you are committed to the full inclusion of all people.

## Report Back

Afterwards, please report back to LC/NA ([admin@lcna.org](mailto:admin@lcna.org)) and let us know how many people you contacted and the type of relationship you have with them. Without mentioning names, please comment on how the conversation went: what were the joys and concerns you heard? What needs to happen for reconciliation to take root? Where appropriate, LC/NA will share some of your stories with its members (again, withholding all information that might identify individuals). ▼

# The U.S. Census Bureau Will Report LGBT Couples in the 2010 Census

For the first time, the Census Bureau will report the number of same-sex couples counted in the 2010 Census. This decision by the Census Bureau reverses a previous decision made during

the Bush/Cheney administration not to release the data.

This is an important development because the number of committed same-gender relationships reported has the potential to alter perceptions of the degree to which those relationships are among the substantial parts of the fabric of our society, and through that to influence policies and programs at the national, regional and local level. Yes, it is an imperfect measure. Yes, the mechanism of the forms (which were already printed in their millions) uses less than ideal language. No, the Census Bureau in 2010 still is not counting LGBT people directly by asking sexual orientation and gender identity

United States  
Census  
2010

*They do not have to have been **married** in one of the **jurisdictions** that allow **legal marriages** to indicate that they are **spouses**.*

questions. Yes, there are only male and female gender boxes. Take all that up with the Census Bureau and your congressional delegation for the 2020 census. But for this census, despite the limited picture of LGBT people in this society it creates, we strongly encourage you to participate as you feel comfortable doing so.

No one is asked one's sexual orientation on the 2010 census. All are asked their age, sex, race/ethnicity, and relationship to each other. Those living with a spouse or a partner can indicate that by checking either "husband/wife" or "unmarried partner" on the form. The Census Bureau will, for the first time, report the number of same-sex spouse relationships reported.

The census form asks that one person be listed as owning or renting the home/residence/apartment. Then the form asks that all other persons living there be listed and how they are related to that "Person 1." The second member of the couple can be listed as spouse by checking "husband/wife" or as an "unmarried partner" if the couple desires.

The census is based on one's self-perception, as when indicating race/ethnicity. If the couple's self-perception is that they are spouses, they can so

indicate. They do not have to have been married in one of the jurisdictions that allow legal marriages to indicate that they are spouses.

The term "unmarried partner" is intended to reflect those living in a "close personal relationship" that they don't think of as being spouses or legally married. The Census Bureau says that they will report the number of same-sex couples that indicate "husband/wife" as their perceived status.

The Census Bureau has stated publicly that their count is not of legal marriages, heterosexual or same-gender. Their count is of those who perceive their relationship as committed in the sense of husband/wife. The Census Bureau expects to see thousands more relationships reported to be committed at the level of spouse than the actual number of legal marriages, heterosexual or same-gender.

The census taken in 1990 and 2000 gathered data about same-gender relationships but did not report the data because of the Bush/Cheney administration's interpretation of the Defense of Marriage Act. This summer the Obama administration reversed that administrative interpretation.

The Census Bureau in a recent report said of the 2000 raw data that some 253,000 of the same-sex couples reported indicated that they considered themselves to be married. In 2008 for the first time, the bureau in its annual survey, American Community Survey, reported 150,000 same-sex couples that identified one of the partners as husband/wife. Estimates about the number of legally married same-gender couples are around 35,000.

Two final notes:

1. All of the answers given to the Census Bureau are held in total confidence. The data is aggregated but no release is ever made of personally identified data. So, you may answer the questions accurately and confidently.
2. A note for transgender people: the census is based on the self-perception of the person responding. You may fill out the form confidently in accordance with your self-identification, choosing the box that best describes your identification. (Unfortunately, only two boxes will be available: "male" and "female".) The forms turned in to the Census Bureau are kept completely confidential.

Predictably, there are those who believe that this decision by the Census Bureau is contrary to the Defense of Marriage Act, which defines marriage for federal purposes as between a man and a woman and allows states to refuse to recognize same-gender marriages. The Family Research Council Action, which does legislative work for the Family Research Council, has said that it will take up the issue in Congress by going after the funding stream for the census. ▼

# Why Report on Secular Issues Like ENDA and Ballot Issues in Maine and Washington?

We occasionally are asked the reason we send you alerts and exhortations to take action regarding issues in the political and secular spheres.

The simple answer was expressed by John Donne, 17th century poet and clergyman who observed that no one is an island “free and entire unto itself.” We are all “a piece of the continent, a part of the main.”

Our **practice** of Christianity is inextricably tied up with the well-being and **salvation** of others

Our spiritual, physical, emotional, familial, and societal lives are all bound up together as a single whole, and our practice of Christianity is inextricably tied up with the well-being and salvation of others. We are not islands.

Quite the contrary, what happens in society is important. The expression of our gratitude for God’s

redemptive sacrifice is to lead lives as followers and imitators of Christ, spreading the Word, caring for others. That doesn’t just imply a relationship with society that is interwoven with curing its ills and ending its oppressions; it requires a head-first dive into bettering the lives of others.

So while we continue to advocate relentlessly and vigorously for full inclusion of LGBT people within the Lutheran church in all of its expressions, we also reach out to help others in their efforts to foster full inclusion within their lives. Recognition of value and rightness of the lives of LGBT people and their committed relationships in the larger society is part of the recognition sought within the ELCA and other Lutheran denominations - though they may be approached differently.

It also means that we as Christians are not “one-trick ponies.” That is, we are interested and working as individuals in all other aspects of righting wrongs, curing ills, lifting up those injured and downcast. Poverty matters, hunger matters, homelessness matters, racism matters, sexual abuse in any form matters.

We are none of us islands, particularly not if we work in Christ’s name. So we will continue to exhort you to be part of society, part of the solution for ills other than just our own.

We are often said to have and be part of an agenda, as if that was something nefarious and foreign. If wanting to live in peace as Christians, seeking to follow Christ as Lutherans, is an agenda, then we say “Bring it on!” ▼

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## How Could This Be?

*continued from page 9*

rethinking of the intrinsic sinfulness of same-gender relations means an abandonment of either a consciousness of sin or of a moral concern for human behavior. *Both* sides in this argument are driven by a deep sense of moral urgency (indeed occasionally in each case by an unhelpfully imperious moralism). This point is missed by those who describe the reform position as an obliteration of the Law in favor of some loosey-goosey reading of the Gospel. Abuse, rape, prostitution, exploitation, infidelity, betrayal, promiscuity are all among the many violations of the sacred that demand our response and resistance. Indeed, a part of the desire for a revision of our teaching and policy has been the urgency of confronting such sin in the context of same-gender relationships, calling for responsibility, care, and fidelity rather than ruling all such relationships by definition beyond the pale of morality. The *a priori* condemnation of

gay and lesbian relations in our traditional position has often had the sad effect of encouraging the very irresponsibility that was then used to justify that condemnation through lurid descriptions of a hedonistic subculture.

Confronting that reality may, incidentally, force us also to think about the culpability of our churches for the spread of AIDS in the 1980s, the guilt upon us for what happened in the shadows of our absolute clarities. But, again, that’s a topic for a later time in the conversation for whose continuation I am here pleading. My point is simply that the ELCA social statement on sexuality that we approved at the assembly needs to be read in its seriousness about the disfiguring power of sin and not caricatured as a denial of such dangerous and tragic reality.

Unfortunately, the mistaken critique of reform as wrong-headedness about Law and Gospel is abetted, and may seem momentarily valid, when advocates for change fall into arguing their position not from an attention to God’s passion for how

we should treat one another (*i.e.*, the Law) but only from the Gospel of God’s forgiveness or, worse yet, from the “tolerant” but careless characterization of “homosexuality” as merely one of the many sins by which we all fall short. That approach does indeed misunderstand both our Lutheran confessions and the issue itself. But that is not the approach I am arguing here.

The verb “caricature” used a moment ago reminded me of where I started, with the sense of both insult and sadness at being misunderstood and maligned. I had wanted to explain and defend myself. I had wanted, in the manner of human beings, to be understood, not just for my own pathetic sake but also for the sake of what I understood as true and right. *For Christ’s sake*, I might say, both in the theological sense and in the impatient colloquially exclamatory sense. And with the recognition of that motivation come at least two tempering thoughts: first a recognition that, in spite of my mind knowing better,

*continued on page 15*



# Let **Justice** Roll Down Like **Waters**

The **Biennial Assembly** of Lutherans  
Concerned/North America

and Reconciling in Christ Conference

**July 8-11, 2010** (with pre-events starting July 7)

Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minn.

"Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" —Amos 5:24

**T**he words of the prophet Amos ring in our ears. God is not calling for solemn festivals. God does not want to hear our whining about our own hang-ups. Instead, God calls forth



justice to flow over each and every one of us. Let the rushing waters of justice flow from God, through us, and out to the ends of the earth.

You are invited to participate in *Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters*, the biennial assembly of Lutherans Concerned/North America and Reconciling in Christ conference. Let Justice Roll will be held at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, Minnesota, July 8–11, 2010.

*Let Justice Roll* is more than a conference. It is an opportunity to explore and live out the work of reconciliation that we are called to do. Justice requires reconciliation, and reconciliation takes effort. Throughout our time together, we will work on justice issues from the intersection of oppressions (racism, sexism, ablism, etc...) and through the lens of full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the life of the Lutheran Church.

We'll worship together, using a rich variety of traditions of the worshipping community. We'll provide a blend of the familiar and the unique, drawing on our Lutheran heritage and the wealth of



Dr. Mary Lowe



Dr. Miguel de la Torre

liturgical practice in the area. We'll network with one another, hear stories of joy and frustration, and make decisions together about the future direction of Lutherans Concerned/North America and our Reconciling in Christ communities.

Special Opportunities Include:

- Optional Pre-Events July 7–8 that will help participants dive deeper into specific topics and connect with others: Storytelling Training, LGBT Ministerium, Youth & Young Adults, and Anti-Racism Training
- Keynote speakers Dr. Miguel de la Torre and Dr. Mary Lowe who will address justice, the intersection of oppressions, and our future together in the Lutheran Church
- Saturday night banquet and celebration at the Minneapolis Convention Center, site of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly
- Workshops and Affinity Gatherings to enlighten you and connect you more closely with a community
- Worship that will lift your spirit in Word, sacrament, and song
- Bible study that shows how justice can roll over us
- Business sessions that help to shape the direction and future of the organization ▼

## How Could This Be?

*continued from page 14*

my secret heart harbors the vanity that if only people "on the other side" understood me they would also agree with me, an arrogance that can blind me to the ways in which they also have felt caricatured and dismissed in these debates; and then a remembering that seeking to "justify ourselves," even theologically, does not lead to either our salvation or our ultimate unity but rather away from it. The way to which I am called is to the foot of the cross.

Still, ethically and responsibly, we *do*

have to contend for what we believe is faithful. Those of us who have advocated for both greater room and greater responsibility in this church for its sexual minorities do hope for understanding, but we know we cannot demand to be agreed with, nor even to be completely understood. Our arguments may be rejected and our interpretations challenged. We may indeed be wrong where we think we are right, and as Lutherans we are called to a fairly high doctrine of fallibility. Nonetheless, still we plead with you who dispute with us on this issue: if you hear us and still do disagree, let not our

disagreement define us. And even if we cannot fully understand each other, please let us respect each other. And even if you cannot now find a way fully to respect us, I pray you not to close the open hand of fellowship and go away. If you believe you have to, I shall defend your bound conscience also in that regard. But I beseech you to be slow, prayerful, and careful about it in that case, and talk not only with those with whom you agree. This issue matters, but please let it not keep us from perceiving the Body that we share, the Gospel that we proclaim, or the vital work we are called to do together. ▼

# Actions from the LC/NA Leadership Meetings and Retreat

**T**he Board of Directors and Regional Coordinators of Lutherans Concerned/North America met at a retreat house near Chicago, Illinois, September 24–26, 2009. Multi-tasking through the days, a

retreat was conducted, facilitated strategy formulation sessions were held, and the Board and Regional Coordinators held separate and joint meetings. All of this was in the context of the recent decisions on the Social Statement on Human Sexuality and the historic movement towards full inclusion, analyzing both the past and implications for the future.

Highlights:

■ **Strategic plan** – LC/NA will remain fully committed to advocacy for full inclusion. Momentous as the decisions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly were, much work remains to be done to move through policy change that removes the man-made barriers to full inclusion and from there to promoting full inclusion in the ordinary practice of the church. The education work that develops Reconciling in Christ congregations will need to be increased, with an ultimate goal of reconciling all congregations in a fully inclusive church. Obviously, that goal will take years, if not decades. Equally obvious, that does not mean pastors in committed same-gender relationships in every pulpit or anything close to that. It means that the understanding and discernment throughout the church becomes one that accepts and affirms LGBT people as part of

the wondrous creation of God.

■ **Associate Director** – the Board approved making the position of Associate Director permanent, reporting to the Executive Director. As part of that action, the Board removed “Interim” from the title of the position held by Ross Murray, and confirmed him in the newly re-designated permanent position.

■ **Governance Board of Directors** – LC/NA is moving from the current structure of the Board of Directors, comprised of the officers and volunteer directors with portfolios of responsibilities



Ross Murray

continuously seeking out candidates with the requisite skills and characteristics for potential service on the Board. The Board approved the creation of such a committee. This committee will achieve a diverse ongoing roster of potential candidates for the biennial nominating process and the occasional need to fill a position due to the unanticipated departure of a serving member of the Board. This committee will conduct the biennial recommendation of a slate for presentation to the Assembly. Provisions were approved for involvement

of the membership in that process, for ensuring that the submissions of alternate slates of candidates are incorporated, as well as for disseminating the committee’s slate to the membership 30 days prior to assembly. The first such committee is expected to take up its tasks in January 2010, looking towards the Summer 2010

assembly, *Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters*, and beyond.

■ The Board has been looking at the **name, logo, branding**, and other aspects of the identity of LC/NA for some time now.

**Momentous as the decisions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly were, much work remains**

for the day-to-day operation of functions of the organization, to one of a Board of Directors that sets strategy, monitors performance against the plan, and is an adjunct to the very important function of raising resources – with day-to-day operational functions performed by staff and committees, volunteer or paid. A necessary part of moving to the new model Board is the establishment of a permanent Nominating Committee, tasked with

That work continued at the September meeting, and will continue in the coming months. ▼

## “In Honor of... ”

### In Honor of...

### Honored by...

Joe Brown	In memory of Joe Brown	Mike Crandall, Dorothy Klefstad
Troy Buckaloo	In honor of Troy Buckaloo's 40th Birthday	Neal & Tiina Buckaloo
Bishop Ed Hansen	In memory of Bishop Ed Hansen (ALC) 1917–2009 — a Reconciling Lutheran in every way	Lee Anne Lack, Shirley Hansen, Linda Hansen
Paul Halvorson	In honor of Paul Halvorson's 55th Birthday	Rebecca Halvorson
Robert Joppa	In honor of Robert Joppa's MBA graduation	Marti Scheel
Steve Miller & Wayne Morris	In honor of the Blessing Service for Steve Miller & Wayne Morris	Doyle and Lucienne Morris
Ian Plowes	In memory of Ian Plowes	Richard Krug & William Gebauer
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