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ELCA Churchwide Assembly 2011

Freed in Christ to Serve

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.

Anti-Bullying Front and Center

“Bullying is a big part of people’s lives today. I once was a victim of bullying.” David Bukowy, Jr, New England Synod, was the first voting member to a microphone, speaking in



favor of the anti-bullying memorial before the 2011 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). David said that he had been bullied at school, called names like “Big Nose” and “Crooked Mouth,” things he could not change and for which he was faultless. That bullying culminated in the 5th grade when

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ELCIC in a Quadrafecta

Quadrafecta – **coming in first**, second, third, and fourth

The National Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) was busy, to say the least. Assembled in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, July 13–18, the delegates passed a prophetic Social Statement on Human Sexuality, agreed to live together in the midst of disagreement, will now allow pastors and congregations to marry people in same-gender relationships, and removed homosexuality as a barrier to ordination or consecration to service within the church. Clearly, the Holy Spirit joined in the mighty work of those laboring so hard and well before and during the convention that led to this “quadrafecta.”

Many people, clergy and laity, across Canada worked diligently and prayerfully in hope for these outcomes. Even more people across North America prayed and lent their support and hopes to the work of this convention and the advocates who stood to speak at it so passionately from their hearts and from Scripture.

Pastor Dawn Hutchings, Holy Cross

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The Editor

DALE TRUSCOTT



Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us? —ROMANS 5:1–5 NRSV

Jamey Rodemeyer, 14 years old, killed himself this month after posting an online farewell. He had been tormented for a year in school and by cyberbullies.

Even his sister was taunted when she spoke about his death. This tragic event comes just a year after Tyler Clementi jumped off the George Washington Bridge after his college roommate spied on his same-sex relationship with a webcam.

A gay soldier stood up this month at a Republican

I am saddened by the deaths caused by bullying and homophobia.

presidential candidate debate, revealed his sexual orientation and asked if the candidates would preserve the policies regarding service to the country now in effect. He was booed by the crowd, and **not one** of the candidates had the courage to speak up about the inappropriateness of the catcalls.

A friend of mine emailed me in response to the LC/NA worship at the ELCA Assembly saying that our organization was acting like old “vets” reminiscing about the good old days of World War II, and saying that, in his opinion, the struggle for LGBT freedom is won and over and we should move on.

I am saddened by the deaths caused by bullying and homophobia and angered that a respected friend could possibly consider the struggle over.

But I come to the writing of this editorial elated by what Phil Soucy calls the “Quadracta” that happened by the grace of God at the ELCIC Convention in Saskatoon and by the

overwhelming support of the ELCA for our anti-bullying initiative. At the same time, I am aware and saddened by reports that some so-called conservative Christians are calling anti-bullying efforts a “gay agenda.” That’s like saying that the achievement of peace is unpatriotic!

The times we live in are tumultuous, to say the least. Our churches and the United States are deeply polarized between the “left” and the “right.” Our congresspeople seem unable to speak to one another, let alone come to workable compromises. The ELCA has quite unequally

divided, with a small minority of congregations and pastors going off to continue their mistaken understanding of Jesus and Scripture. And, yet, at the same time, more and more states are affirming lesbian and gay marriages and civil unions, more and more cities are creating registries for LGBT persons to affirm their partnerships. (My Orlando is trying to get one passed.) And more and more communities are finding ways to protect bisexual and transgender people. Congregations continue to become RIC each month, and those churches are growing! One day I’m frightened and angry and the next I am elated and buoyed up with hope.

And isn’t that just the way life is? Yes! Perhaps not always as exaggerated as we are experiencing the dichotomies today, but always to some extent polarized, divided, striving and struggling. What is at the root of this human angst? With my existentialist philosopher’s hat on, I suspect it is that deep fear and foreboding that Søren Kierkegaard wrote about in the 19th century. His only solution was for us to take the leap of faith into our own radical subjectivity, the awareness that life is totally up to us to live, and there to find God waiting for us to live with full integrity and holding us up as we do.

I am so deeply grateful today for twenty-two years of Lutherans Concerned/North America in my life and especially for the years I have spent in leadership of one sort or another. It has been a pathway for me to discover me, for me to find the love of my life, for me to continue to serve an ambivalent church, now finally affirming **in my lifetime!** And, if some of us get together, like old World War II veterans, well and good for us. For we know that we are being followed by generations of youth that are ever so much more ready and

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Co-Chairs



NICOLE GARCÍA



REV. CHRIS BERRY

The 2011 ECLA Churchwide Assembly was an intense week that included the exhilaration of worship with a

thousand people as well as the tedium of parliamentary procedure which is essential for the smooth operation of a plenary session. The hard work of the membership and supporters of Lutherans Concerned/North America was realized when 97% of the voting members adopted the anti-bullying resolution passed by 37 synod assemblies. It was your dedication to the youth of the church that made real this overwhelming adoption of this crucial legislation. We must keep in mind, however, this is but a first step in recognizing the nature of

It is up to us to ensure that every person who seeks community in an ELCA congregation feels Christ's welcome.

bullying and harassing behavior rampant in our society. The church must take the lead, because our Lord, Jesus Christ, preached peace and love. We as Christians must live the message of the Gospel every day.

As the co-chairs of the board of directors, we welcome three new members. Charlette Beckler joined the board as the youth representative; Dr. Laura Lazar has accepted the position of treasurer; and the Rev. Katrina Foster has consented to be our chaplain. We invite you to read their biographies on the LC/NA website at www.lcna.org/lcna/about-lcna/board-of-directors. Suffice it to say, each of these incredible individuals brings the talent and energy that is needed to propel LC/NA into a bright future.

We must take a moment to recognize the commitment of former board members. Len Weiser joined the board of directors in 2002 after serving as a regional director. Len was the co-chair of the board of directors for five years. Len's dedication to full inclusion is unwavering and we gratefully

acknowledge his service to this organization. Karen Jolly served as regional coordinator in Region 1 from 2004 to 2010 and served on the board of directors from July 2010 to May 2011. Karen's tireless advocacy for the LGBT community is greatly appreciated. The Rev. Rachel Mithelman was chaplain to the board from 2008 to 2011. Her devotion to the Lord was evident in the truly inspirational prayers and worship she led at our board meetings. There are three former members of the board who served for about a year, Jim Morrell, Jane Austin, and Rachel Nelson. Jim, Jane, and Rachel each brought unique gifts to the board and their service is recognized and appreciated.

We live in uncertain times. The forces of nature, earthquakes, and hurricanes, bring forth the soothsayers who foretell the end of days. The legal recognition of same gender marriage in New York acknowledges the love that exists between two people. We are moving ever closer to the elections of 2012 and countless commercials that claim to educate the voting public, but in reality, annoy viewers and undermine confidence in the political system.

What is certain is our belief that Jesus is the risen Lord and our commitment to proclaim that all God's children are welcome at the table. The ELCA has adopted social statements and resolutions, but it is the people in the pews that make those ideals a reality. Our task from now on is simple—implementation. It is up to us to ensure that every person who seeks community in an ELCA congregation feels Christ's welcome. It is up to us to ensure that every person who is called to seek ordination has that opportunity. We must strive to create a world where every child can grow up without the fear of harassment. We have our work cut out for us, but Jesus has given us the tools of love, patience, and understanding.

The peace of Christ be with you.
Chris and Nicole ▼

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!

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Executive Director



EMILY EASTWOOD

I'd like to say that the events of this summer covered in this issue of *Concord* have settled things, once and for all: about Lutheran marriage in Canada, the inclusion of ministers in same-gender relationships in the ELCIC and the ELCA, and the embrace of anti-bullying as a culture within our church. But I can't. Are we making progress? Yes. Is it enough? Definitely not!

We've come this far by **faith**. Just **not far enough** yet.

It took less than a month after the historic votes in Canada for email chatter to begin with pastors ready to do marriages and congregations lagging behind, or vice-versa. Similarly, the internal stirring of deeply closeted pastors wondering about how to come out, now that policy change has occurred, has become a topic of discussion in quiet gatherings in both denominations. In the ELCA, LGBT seminary students are being processed by candidacy committees, but, as another class approaches graduation, there is clear evidence that some synod bishops are not yet ready to take on placement of these LGBT candidates within their synods. Bound

conscience and fear of retribution by congregations still on the bubble following policy change remain in play at various levels of the church.

I encountered a couple of post-policy-change scenarios during a recent Building an Inclusive Church training. Teams were present from several congregations dealing with the usual questions: "Why isn't 'ALL are welcome' good enough?" "Are you sure we need to say something publicly; after all, we are already very welcoming?" Answers to these questions flow easily after years of practice. Then there was the congregation whose youth director had come out as a lesbian and was with child. The lesbian part seemed more minor than the pregnant part for some congregants. This congregation was not yet RIC, swimming at best or feverishly treading water in the deep end without essential preparation. Another church had called an openly gay pastor but had not had the conversation as a community about LGBT inclusion or welcoming. Neither congregation was having a particularly easy go of it. The only way out was right through the middle. Prepared or not, the baby is coming, and the pastor is gay.

While we knew that policy to practice would take a long time, what struck me was that the lives and livelihoods of LGBT folks, whether youth and young adults or elders and everyone in between, are still in jeopardy.

The openly gay pastor asked what he could do to help congregation members come to acceptance and beyond. Seminary students—young, exceedingly bright, and ready to do ministry—were visibly wounded by the lack of courage among certain bishops despite encouragement from the faculty and staff of their seminary. How long will they wait for a call? Will they ever get a call in this church? How good do they have to be, anyway?

At the same time, a church council in a rural town longed for the passage of an affirmation of welcome and wanted to make sure the vote did not divide the congregation. The council, perhaps not considering all the possible implications, made a recommendation to the annual meeting that a margin of 90-percent should be required for passage of an affirmation of welcome that would qualify the church for the Reconciling in Christ program. The request for a 90-percent margin was upheld by a two-thirds vote of the congregation. The stories told during the debate were moving, very moving. Several folks remarked that they changed their votes from "no" to "yes" as a result.

After a prayer, the vote was taken. Seventy-five percent of the congregation approved of the welcome statement. Fifteen people did not. The resolution failed. Almost no one was truly happy. Nearly everyone was sad, frustrated or resigned: many not feeling particularly welcome no matter how they voted, some unhappy to discover how small a minority they were, others disappointed by lack of success. Some allies of RIC felt as if the congregation were being held hostage by a small

In Memoriam

Diane Nelson DeLange died peacefully at 7:00 p.m. PDT, September 30, 2011, with her husband, Jim, and son, Matt, present. Her daughter, Adrienne, was still in hospital following the birth of Diane's second grandson Glenn on September 28. Diane was 67 years old, having been born on July 7, 1944.

Emily Eastwood, Executive Director, Lutherans Concerned, said, "Diane and Jim met in the hospitality suite of the LC/San Francisco Chapter during the 1991 Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly. While Jim was long in the vanguard of the Lutheran movement for full participation and a recipient of the LC/NA Siefkes Award in 2000, many of us knew that Diane supported and enriched our efforts with her gifts for hospitality and culinary delights. Over the years, Diane and Jim hosted a wide variety of movement-related gatherings in their home. Diane made a difference in the lives of countless people, welcoming, serving, comforting and rejoicing, all with a spirit of grace. I thank God for her life and her gifts abundantly shared with me and so many others in this ministry we share."

Diane's funeral was held on Saturday, October 29, at St. Francis Lutheran Church, San Francisco, California.

Lutherans Concerned extends our condolences to Diane's family and friends and joins with them in celebrating her life, talents and the lasting gift of her hospitality.



CHARLOTTE FLORITO

minority. That minority felt that, although they may have won the day, the handwriting was on the wall: their church was changing. And this was on New Member Sunday, to boot. The potluck afterward must have been particularly interesting, as some may have been reevaluating their decision to join.

So, all of this being said, where are we two years past policy change in the ELCA and two months since the historic votes in the ELCIC? We are still a work in progress. Yes, a work. Now, don't go all Lutheran postal on me for talking about works. This reconciling business is work, hard work, sometimes frustrating work. Some days I just want it all done. I don't want to have to say to the openly gay pastor just called to a church not quite ready for him, "Your first job is to love the people of your congregation, listen to their stories, be curious about them, invite them to coffee away from Sunday morning. Look at their family pictures, ask questions, learn to milk their cows, drive their tractors, invest in them. Love them. Love them. Love them. Even when they are not very loving in return." Being Christian, being Lutheran, being LGBT or ally advocates in the church is work, real work. If we accept Christ's call on our lives to spread the good news that God loves all, and all means all, that Jesus came for all, we still have work to do.

Let us pray for the seminarians, the candidates, the congregations, the youth director expecting a child. For the gay pastor called by God and a congregation who needed him in so many ways. For the 100% of that rural congregation and its pastor. Let us pray courage for the bishops. Pray peace for the new members made to feel unwelcome, or worse, by a well-meaning margin set too high—probably too high, even, to produce a win on a proposed color of carpet for the sanctuary. Let us pray. Let us work. Let us sing. Let us lament. Let us rejoice. Reconciliation is possible. With Christ, all things are possible. We've come this far by faith. Just not far enough yet. ▼

RIC Settings

Added to the Roster since last issue

Arndt's Lutheran Church, Easton, Pennsylvania
Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church, Chicago, Illinois
Columbia City Church of Hope, Seattle, Washington
Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Saint Louis, Missouri
Lutheran Episcopal Campus Ministry at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan
Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Lafayette, California

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

Save the Date!

Reconciling Works, the biennial assembly of Lutherans Concerned/North America and Reconciling in Christ conference, will be held July 6–10, 2012, in Washington, DC. Will include "Lutheran Day on the Hill."

"In Honor of..."

In Honor of...		Honored by...
Rev. Kirk Anderson & Sheri Brown	In honor of the witness and ministry of Rev. Kirk Anderson & Sheri Brown	Allen & Marie Harper
Allen Blaich, Diane Fraser, Jim Lokken, Marie Kent, & Howard Erickson	In honor of Allen Blaich and Diane Fraser and in memory of Jim Lokken, Marie Kent, and Howard Erickson, the founders of Lutherans Concerned for Gay People	Jeannine Janson
Adam Bost	In honor of Adam Bost, a great son and friend	Sharon & John Bost
Sheri Brown	To God's Spirit moving within Sheri Brown	Rev. Kirk E. Anderson
Joe Brown	In memory of Joe Brown	Mike Crandall
Dennis Douglas	In honor of the work of Dennis Douglas, Director of Music Ministries, St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, Monona, WI	Members of the Sanctuary Choir at St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, Monona, Wis.
Robert Matthew Eastwood	In memory of Robert Matthew Eastwood	Bob & Martha Eastwood, Deanna Eichler & Leslee Froehlich; Deborah Wilson
Joanne Engquist & Kari Lipke	In honor of the wedding of Joanne Engquist & Kari Lipke	Joel Abrahamson & Dorea Ruggles; Janet Jensen; Chris Pollari & Ann Fereatz; and 14 anonymous
Roberto Flores	In honor of Father Roberto Flores	Kenneth E. Rozek
Daniel Fujimoto	In memory of Daniel Fujimoto	Deanna, Bennie, Kevin, and Kathie Badgett
James Goodyear	In honor of the ordination of James Goodyear	Barbara & Michael Wagner
Rev. Ginger Georgulas	In memory of Rev. Ginger Georgulas	Bob & Martha Eastwood, Fred & A.M. Krueger
Rev. Anita Hill	In honor of Rev. Anita Hill's 60th birthday	Dan Ranum
Bill Host, Leo Treadway, Anita Hill	In honor of Bill Host, Leo Treadway, & Anita Hill—early LC/NA leaders	Jeannine Janson & Mari Irvin
Paul & Karen Jolly	In honor of Paul & Karen Jolly for their faithful work on behalf of LC/NA	Jeannine Janson & Mari Irvin
Marie Kent	In memory of Marie Kent, one of the founders of Lutherans Concerned	Rev. Barbara Lundblad & Nicole Johnson
Doyle Morris	In memory of Doyle Morris	Wayne Morris
Rev. Jim Siefkes	In honor of Rev. Jim Siefkes, our amazing ally who made possible the meeting in Minneapolis in June of 1974 that resulted in the founding of Lutherans Concerned for Gay People	Jeannine Janson
Dale Truscott and 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
	In honor of the ELCA community in Idaho Falls, Idaho	Wayne & Cherie Stevens

Welcoming and Saying So

By Carol M. Dunn

Out near the eastern end of Long Island, New York, the ELCA has two congregations: Incarnation and St. Michael's. Both are small and in the rebuilding stage; the Rev. Dr. Katrina

Foster is pastor to both. Incarnation is one of the newest RIC congregations; St. Michael's may begin its study in a few months.

Incarnation, in Bridgehampton, experienced a period where attendance was as low as two. Today it regularly sees a dozen or more in worship, including two WWII vets, homemakers, people in a variety of careers, and the 16-year old organist. Some members are homebound, and, at the time of the interviews for this article, Pr. Foster was checking to be sure everyone had supplies for the approaching Hurricane Irene.

Pr. Foster, who received her call there in July of 2010, said that the congregation was already committed to social justice issues, among which they count inclusion. In fact, the call committee told her in interviews that they were pleased with the 2009 Churchwide Assembly decisions and that they believed God was calling them to minister to a broader base, including LGBT people.

After self-study and decision, Incarnation's congregation received RIC status in April of this year. The Rev. Robert Rimbo, Bishop of the Metropolitan New York Synod, sent a letter congratulating the members on their decision. The letter is posted in the church. The congregation recognized that the reason to become RIC is Gospel justice. If growth should



occur, that would be good, but that is not the reason for the decision. In this early period, the congregation has begun making its status clear, including linking with East End Gay Organization, a more than 30-year-old Long Island non-profit dedicated to LGBT advocacy, to plan a September picnic for gay families, to be held on the church great lawn.

Karl Horlitz is one of the WWII vets at Incarnation, and remembers being part of a group of four who sat in the chancel week after week, comprising the entire worshipping congregation. The pastor at the time read from the altar and the quartet carried on until they went down for coffee. After some months of that, a few more began coming. He said there were often a few silent ones in the back, and some unable to travel. Karl and a friend continue to offer coffee and cake every week with what he described as "excellent fellowship and lots of banter." He stressed that fellowship is important and that friendly members welcome all who come to worship. Karl has been at Incarnation since the 1990s, starting there at the urging of his son who comes down from Massachusetts to visit from time to time.

Andrea Abbate is the congregation's organist, and has been playing for Incarnation for four years. As a non-member, she was not part of the RIC study process, but she was emphatic that at Sunday morning fellowship over the course of the study period, it was the "hot topic." Members were receptive and enthusiastic, with no noticeable resistance. Andrea suggested that Pastor Katrina had opened up everyone's mind, making them even friendlier and more welcoming than they already were. She said members of the congregation, proud of their pastoral family, brag about the pastor's wife and child. Pr. Foster was the focus of Karl's comments also, calling her "outgoing" with a really good following of people who know her.

Careful use of media, such as local radio commercials, newspaper stories, and a public access TV interview stressing that marriage is a civil-rights issue, have all made Incarnation and its intentional inclusivity known in the community. Incarnation's website, ilcbh.com, is also a major means of

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Below: Palm Sunday at Incarnation Lutheran Church. Above right: Pr. Foster with her wife, Pamela Kallimanis and their daughter Zoia.



Report from Region 3

There's a lot happening in Region 3. Here are a few highlights:

■ Minnesota is gearing up to defeat a constitutional amendment in November 2012 that would define marriage as between one man and one woman. Considering how many Lutherans live in Minnesota, whether the amendment is adopted or rejected could have major implications for the ELCA. Groups opposing the amendment held a large faith-organizing kickoff event on September 19, where over 550 people of faith gathered to discuss the role of religious people in defeating the amendment. LC/NA Executive Director Emily Eastwood convened the Lutherans at this event and planned a Lutheran strategy for engaging the campaign.

■ The Anoka-Hennepin School District, located in the Minneapolis Area Synod, has been in the national spotlight as a result of a lawsuit brought against the district by the Southern Poverty Law Center and the National Center for Lesbian Rights. Several students in the district have committed suicide in recent years. The school district has been criticized for its "neutrality" policy around bullying, which, in effect, discourages teachers and staff from supporting LGBT students enduring harassment. Since the passage of Goodsoil's anti-bullying memorial at the Minneapolis Area Synod assembly, the synod's Partnership Table has begun discussing how to implement the charge to "speak and act" against bullying, which is especially urgent in this synod because of what's happening in the Anoka-Hennepin district.

■ In July, Minneapolis Area Synod Bishop Craig Johnson resigned to become the interim senior pastor at Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, the largest ELCA congregation in the country. The announcement came following the death of Mount Olivet's senior pastor, Paul Youngdahl. The Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly has been moved up to February, to facilitate the timely election of a new bishop. With the 14-month constitutional amendment campaign ahead of us in Minnesota, we hope the synod will elect a bishop who is willing to speak publicly in opposition to the amendment.

■ Lastly, hats off to all-star LC/NA members Judy and Burt Will, whose efforts



About 550 people of faith attended the kickoff of the "defeat the anti-LGBT marriage amendment" campaign in Minnesota.

in Red Wing in the Southeastern Minnesota Synod have made a huge impact over the years. Most recently, on September 24, the Wills and others in Red Wing organized a "Walking the Talk of Welcome" workshop for the entire community. Fellow LC/NA member and author David Weiss delivered a keynote speech. The workshop is based on one developed by the Lutherans Concerned/Twin Cities chapter to help congregations live into their commitment to welcome; Red Wing's workshop is intended for a broader audience, equipping the entire community to embrace diversity.

—Javen Swanson, LC/NA Region 3 Coordinator

Abiding Savior, Ft. Lauderdale, to Install Pastor Serving Since 2002



On Sunday, Oct. 23, Bishop Edward Benoway of the Florida-Bahamas Synod (ELCA) will travel to Abiding Savior Lutheran Church in Fort Lauderdale to install the pastor who has been serving the congregation since 2002.

The action comes 18 months after the bishop lifted the censure he had imposed on the congregation in 2002 for calling the Rev. William H. Knott as its pastor. Pastor Bill, ordained in 1979, previously served congregations in Pennsylvania, the Washington, D.C. area and West Virginia. He has been in a committed relationship with Ted Carter for 15 years. Having voluntarily removed himself from the ELCA roster, he served as minister of music at Abiding Savior before being called to serve as its pastor.

In an article last year, a reporter for the

Fort Lauderdale *Sun Sentinel* described the lifting of censure as "a bureaucratic blip." The installation in October could, in some ways, be considered the same, since, from the congregation's perspective, nothing changed in 2002 when Benoway imposed censure. In a letter to the bishop following the censure, Barbara Meade, the president of the congregation, wrote: "Under the circumstances, we feel that you have done what you must while leaving an open door for our shared ministry and future dialogue. Our policy is that we are a member congregation of the ELCA and will continue to conduct ourselves as such to the extent the ELCA permits."

As reported in the Winter 2009 *Concord*, Abiding Savior continued to provide mission support to the ELCA and participated in the synod's "Together in Mission" initiative. Seeing that some congregations opposed to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly actions were withholding their giving, Abiding Savior increased its support.

The congregation is small, fewer than a hundred members, and Pastor Bill has kept his day job as music teacher at a local high school. Recently, he served as assisting minister for the Goodsoil worship service at the 2011 Churchwide Assembly.

In censuring the congregation in 2002, Bishop Benoway noted that its members were acting according to their consciences and that the ELCA was engaging in a study of sexuality and rostering issues. In announcing the lifting of censure last year, he wrote: "It is my great joy to be removing this censure and renewing the welcome of members of this congregation to full participation in all aspects of our life together... You remained always a witness to this church of what you believe was right and consistent with our Lord's teaching." He added that he anticipated "in the very near future" sharing with Pastor Bill the process of becoming reinstated to the ELCA roster.

A year and a half later, the story is coming full circle. At Pastor Bill's installation in 2002, the preacher was a long-standing friend, the Rev. Rosemary W. Backer, then pastor of a congregation in Virginia. Pastor Rosemary, now serving a congregation in the Tampa Bay area of Florida, will again be present.

As Abiding Savior was considering

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ELCA Churchwide Assembly

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one of the bullies broke his jaw. Incredibly, the school's reaction to David being hospitalized was to suggest he see a psychiatrist and that he be home-schooled for the rest of the year "for his own safety."

Travis Van Horn, Oregon Synod, told of realizing that he was gay during high school, of trying to hide it so he would fit in, be a part of the group. Then when he decided to stand up for who he was, as his church had taught him, he was reviled by his group, rejected by most of his friends, resulting in depression and thoughts of suicide. He said he did not want other youth to feel the isolation and rejection he felt, rather that the ELCA "will work to end bullying, harassment and related violence whenever and wherever it occurs."



Amy Catalino, South Carolina Synod, spoke of the confusion that most kids feel, knowing that harassment and bullying is wrong, but not knowing how to step in and stop it when they see them used against one of their peers. She said high school and college were tough times, because most young people want to fit in, and raising your voice or interfering when bullying was going on was fearful. Doing so might make you a target. She spoke in favor of programs that taught not only that bullying was wrong but also how to stand up for your peers when you saw it.

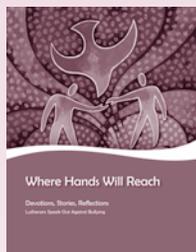


Erica Staab, Southeastern Minnesota Synod, rose to speak against violence, bullying gone to a predictable extreme. She spoke of losing her friend, Julie, to violence, and that loss propelling her



Anti-Bullying Resources Now Available

LCNA is excited to announce that two great new resources—a devotional booklet and a curriculum—are now available to support work in church and society against bullying, harassment, and related violence. They can be used either separately or as companion pieces. Both pieces are available free in pdf form on the LCNA website, www.lcna.org, under the Resources/Anti-Bullying Resources tab.



Devotional Booklet: *Where Hands Will Reach*

Lutherans Concerned/North America's new anti-bullying resource booklet, "Where Hands Will Reach," is now available. The booklet contains devotions, stories and theological

reflections from pastors, parents, ELCA teaching theologians and others. This collection of short piece is part of the ongoing testimony in religious and secular arenas that something must be done to reduce and eliminate bullying from our schools, churches, and society. The theology of Christianity is opposed to bullying, in any form, directed against anyone. What is needed is work to eliminate bullying, not just talk about it.

The booklet is part of the effort to galvanize people of faith into action, collaborative action, in opposition to an oppression that hurts all: victims, perpetrators, those who stand by doing nothing. Ultimately, bullying harms the fabric of both our whole lives, spiritual, emotional and physical, as well as the fabric of our civil society.

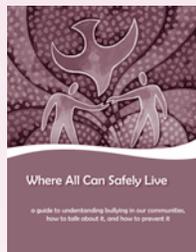
Physical, verbal and cyber-bullying cut across and affect all communities. Issues of race and ethnicity, socio-economic status, perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, body shape, age and physical/mental abilities intersect in a multi-faceted and complex "cocktail" of oppression directed against

especially those at highest risk. The result, combined with the influence of electronic social media, can overwhelm the ability of people—particularly young people—to cope, with sometimes horrific consequences.

The devotions in the booklet help inculcate the stories and theological reflections into our spiritual lives. They are the offering of Pastor David Eck, Abiding Savior Lutheran Church in Fairview, North Carolina.

Along with free pdf downloads, the booklet is available for purchase in quantity and at low cost in a beautiful, hardcopy format—perfect for use with book clubs, bible-study groups, or for individual devotional and study use. We encourage congregations to buy multiple copies for church libraries and other congregational use. Also, these booklets will make great Christmas gifts!

The version of the booklet handed out to voting members and visitors who attended the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Orlando contained information about our activities at assembly, but was otherwise the same.



Anti-Bullying Curriculum: *Where All Can Safely Live*

"Where All Can Safely Live," a curriculum for intergenerational anti-bullying education, is now available from Lutherans Concerned/North America. Drawn from material provided

by the United States Government, the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), and the Pacific Violence Prevention Institute (PVPI), the four one-hour long sessions are ideal for small or large educational sessions or current issues forums to include everyone from youth to elders.

Each session takes an hour to 75 minutes to complete, including breaks, and was designed

for use in congregations. It's suitable for use in adult forums or education sessions on Sundays, or for a separately scheduled workshop series, or for synod-sponsored events. Feel free to team up with other local congregations and/or community groups when you use it.

Emily Eastwood, Executive Director, Lutherans Concerned/North America, said, "Bullying is a type of oppression, a danger to all because of the consequences to the lives of young people within our churches and our society. Bullying is completely antithetical to everything Christ taught and we as Christians believe. Bullying for any reason should not be tolerated. This curriculum can help educate youth and adults on how to deal with it and eventually prevent its occurrence."

Research clearly shows that bullying can have very serious consequences alike for the victims, perpetrators, those who stand idly by, and indeed for the fabric of our church and society.

Grounded in Scripture, the sessions are intended to create a shared understanding that debunks common myths about bullying, develops a common language about the subject, and leads to learning techniques to combat bullying when it occurs. The sessions draw on the direct or indirect experiences of bullying from those participating in the sessions. The goal is to make bullying less prevalent in the future by finding ways of creating systematic change, one component of which is a shared and pervasive dedication to working against bullying.

The sessions lay out the essentials of bullying information for people of faith. Included are sessions on bullying intervention and prevention. The final session is all about action-planning—that is, what can be done in and by congregations and members of congregations in their own communities.

The Anti-Bullying Curriculum is available for download under the Resources tab on www.lcna.org.

into a career of mitigating and dealing with violence. She said that people needed to go out of their way to help others feel that they mattered, that “you are beautiful, you are treasured, you are sacred and you are his,” as we are supposed to do as Christians.

These young people were speaking in favor of the motion put forward to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly by 37 synod assemblies, one synod council, and passed as a resolution at another synod assembly. Youth and young adults constituted 13% of the voting members present at the assembly—their voices were heard on every subject before the assembly and their presence felt.

The motion encouraged the formation of new partnerships among the ELCA churchwide organization, its synods and congregations, campus and outdoor ministries, the Lutheran School Associations, LC/NA, Lutheran Social Services organizations, public schools, counseling centers, and other governmental organizations to support the prevention of bullying, harassment, and other related violence.

These new partnerships were further encouraged to create or find and join existing preventative programs that utilize “positive, inclusive, empowering and developmentally-appropriate materials” that raise participants’ awareness about bullying. The focus sought is prevention. These programs were to seek to change bystander behavior into behavior allied to the bullied and harassed.

The programs these new partnerships created or joined must be intergenerational, involving youth and adults, and they must address the uses and abuses of social media to bully and harass others.

Funding for these new partnerships would come from existing or new funding sources not otherwise accessible by the individual parts of the partnerships. These included foundation grants, synod and other Lutheran organizational grants, as well as private and governmental funding sources.

The assembly passed the motion, 932-23.

By passing, the assembly referred the motion to the ELCA’s Congregational and Synodical Mission



Above: 1017 Voting Members gathered in assembly. Below left: Devotional booklet distribution by Wayne Morris and Marti Scheel.

Unit (CSM) to facilitate and communicate the efforts, collaborating with the Office of the Presiding Bishop, Women of the ELCA, Lutheran Men in Mission, and Lutheran Services in America. The assembly asked that ELCA-related educational, social service, and youth and young adult networks expand their ministries to prevent bullying, harassment, and related forms of violence. The assembly also requested that such efforts be supported and publicized throughout the church. CSM is to report on the matters to the ELCA Church Council at their November 2012 meeting.

Emily Eastwood, Executive Director, LC/NA, said, “The youth and young adults who led our legislative effort on the floor of the assembly gave stunning speeches from their own experiences. Their stories riveted the assembly. That the measure passed by over 97% with no one speaking against brought the assembly together in ways we have never before experienced when considering anything even remotely connected with sexual orientation and gender identity. Thanks be to God for these young leaders who represent not only the future of this church, but its present, right now.”

The Assembly

The 2011 Churchwide Assembly was held in Orlando, Florida, August 15-19, at the same site as the 2005 assembly. The five-day assembly took up many subjects, some more controversial than others, in an agenda packed with work that belied the popular impression that Florida was a place for amusements, recreation, and golf. The theme of the assembly was “Freed in Christ to Serve.” Day-by-day blogs from the assembly can be found on the LC/NA website under News/Events.

The Presiding Bishop on “Freed in Christ to Serve”

Bishop Mark Hanson said that living out Lutheranism means having clarity about who we are and where God is leading us.



“We are Lutherans; that means that at the heart of who we are is the good news that in Christ we are free.” He continued, “Free from bondage to sin and guilt, free from the power of death and evil.” He said we are free of fear: “fear of the stranger, fear of failure, and fear of discord, disease, and disaster... and, for some, fear of deportation.” He said that we are free to be bound, bound to the world as peacemakers

This is **Christ’s church**; there is a place for you here...

and justice seekers. “We are freed to live as everyday evangelists.”

He said we were living out being Lutherans in a world where lines were being drawn, increasingly cast in concrete: lines that divide, exclude, and demean. To live Lutheran in that context means to embody reconciliation in Christ. For Lutherans living in this context means, as Luther said, living “in service to the neighbor.”

Christ was nailed to a cross “for having the audacity to cross the lines that are drawn by the protectors of religious purity and political power.” He said that this church should be known not just for serving the poor, but for tirelessly striving to end poverty.

“The good news is that this is Christ’s church; there is a place for you here.” We welcome the stranger including the new immigrants in our communities. He said this assembly could continue the work of the previous assembly for fair and just immigration by calling on Congress to pass the Dream Act.

Then he said, “This is Christ’s church;

there is a place for you here. What a powerful witness this assembly can make, by joining our collective voice to that of 39 synods by saying to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and all who are verbally battered by the bitter winds of bullying, ‘Not in this church... for there is a place for you here, Child of God.’ There’s a place for you here, Child of God, a place of respect and dignity and welcome, where the

winds of the Holy Spirit blow, bringing healing and hope. There’s a place for you here...”

Lutherans Concerned at the Assembly

LC/NA presence at the assembly was organized under the banner of Goodsoil, as it has been for churchwide assemblies since 2005. LC/NA’s activities revolved around Goodsoil Central, a collection of rooms linked to each other in the East Tower of the conference facility where the assembly was. Those activities included fellowship in Goodsoil Central, information, receptions, voting member information and meetings, storytelling training, legislative meetings, devotional booklet distribution and worship. Goodsoil Central also turned out to be a pretty good venue from which to watch the fireworks set off not far away by Disney each night.

Legislative Action

LC/NA’s principal effort at this churchwide assembly was to move the issue of anti-

bullying to the front of the mind and efforts of the church, and through that to affect the way society views this oppressive and potentially deadly social interaction, so that all move towards trying to eliminate this pervasive harm from the lives of all in our society, communities, and churches.

In addition to the floor action on the memorials sent in by 37 synods, LC/NA distributed devotional booklets with information, personal stories, and theological reflections on bullying. That resource is discussed elsewhere in this issue of Concord, and can be downloaded in pdf format from the LC/NA website. Printed copies are available for purchase from LC/NA. LC/NA also released a curriculum on anti-bullying designed for intergenerational sessions in a congregational setting at education or issues forums. That is also discussed elsewhere in the issue and is available for download on the LC/NA website.

Worship

On Wednesday, Goodsoil held a worship service in the assembly conference center, celebrated by Bishop Richard Graham, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod, with Rev. Dr. Shauna Hannan, Assistant Professor of Homiletics, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, preaching. Pastor Bill Knott, Abiding Savior, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida; Cheryl Stuart, Vice President, Florida-Bahamas Synod; Nicole Garcia, Co-chair, Lutherans Concerned/North America were Assisting Ministers. Dr. Joseph Holt directed the music; Paul Gibson was the cantor.

A glorious service was had, with joyous music, from the Gathering Song, “All Are Welcome,” to the Sending Song, “Canticle of the Turning.” Much laughter and joy, respectful and inclusive prayer, harmonious singing marked this gathering of God’s people, Lutherans, spending part of their evening in worshipful fellowship.

The texts for the worship were the “dry bones” text in Ezekiel 37: 1–14, the “let us love one another” text from 1 John 4: 7–21, and the “death and resurrection of Lazarus” text from John 11: 32–44.

Shauna Hannan’s sermon text can be found on www.lcna.org in News and Events for August 17th.

Reflecting on the Ezekiel text, Shauna Hannan observed that getting dry bones to come together is going to involve making some noise. We know about making noise to get things together. “This process, this movement from death to life, from dry

Goodsoil worship; Bishop Richard Graham presiding





ELCA Churchwide Assembly gathered in worship

bones to living flesh, is exemplified in Jesus' journey to the cross, and then from the cross to the tomb; occupied, empty." But for Martha and Mary, the question was simple, and devoid of nuance or gracious salutations: if Jesus had come when called, their brother would not have died. Their complaint and confidence is evident at once, and resonates with our own questions in moments of loss, death, and suffering: you could have fixed this, where were you?

She said we know that Jesus "is the resurrection and the life" and yet still cry out in pain that he who could do so much seems sometimes not to be doing anything to end suffering. Rev Shauna pointed out that Lazarus was not the only one bound. His sisters were bound too, by their "only ifs." Others were bound too, perhaps by wanting to stay in power or by their limited faith in God's limitlessness. They could not free themselves from their bonds any more than Lazarus could free himself from death or his bindings.

Note, she said, Jesus raised Lazarus up, but instructed those there to unbind him: "Jesus raises up, but we unbind. Unbind him. Let her go." Helping someone see injustice around them unbinds them. In baptism Jesus raises us to new life. "In response to this, we declare that we will, with God's help, unbind those around us." How? She said by "feasting together, praying together." By resisting evil and repenting, seeking out "opportunities to love the neighbor, to strive for peace among not only those who are like us or those we perceive to be needier than we are, or those who can pay us back generously. We strive

for justice for all people. That is what unbinding looks like.

"To unbind is to stand up for the 'perceived outsiders,' for those most vulnerable, to act on behalf of those who face bullying and injustice. Unbind them. Let them go."

LC/NA is very grateful to Jean Etsinger, coordinator for the worship service, to Carole M. Dunn, Brett Bowman, and to the myriads of others who worked diligently, creatively, and productively to pull together the disparate pieces of this extraordinary worship service, to the honor and praise of God.

Other Matters Important to the Future Life of the Church

The assembly approved a budget for 2012 that totaled \$79.2 million and for 2013 \$80.4 million, each year including \$18.5 million for the world hunger program. The ELCA Church Council was authorized by the assembly to adjust the budget as real income figures became available. Although the budget for 2012 appears to be only a very modest decrease (0.13% or \$822,000) from the 2011 Budget Revised, the original 2011 spending budget was already 6.23% (\$4.2 million) lower than 2010 actual income receipts before it was revised. There is less money available.

Campus Ministry

The overall decrease in funding has had and continues to have impacts on structure and programs as cost savings have to be implemented. Among the cost cuts for 2012 and beyond was a 38% reduction in the

funding for campus ministry. The effects of this funding cut were debated extensively as memorials and resolutions were presented to mitigate the cuts or restore the funding to campus ministries, and to steady-state that funding forward for a number of years to allow those ministries ample time to create innovative and alternative funding streams.

Although significant structural changes were approved to provide direct access and consultation by youth and young adults and those who minister to them, no change was made to the reduced level of funding for campus ministry. Innovative and alternative funding will now have to become more the rule than the exception for what is arguably an extraordinarily important component for the future and current life of the church. Concerns about this should be communicated as clearly and directly to your and any other bishop, including the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA.

LIFT – Living Into the Future Together

The LIFT report and implementing resolutions were presented to the assembly and discussed at length, vigorously. The report and recommendations affect every aspect of the life of the church, following its mandate to completely review the fabric, structure, and polity of the church, laid down a generation ago, with a view "to recognize the evolving societal and economic changes of the twenty years since the formation of this church and to evaluate the organization, governance and interrelationships among this church's expressions in the light of those changes. The intended result of the Ecology Study Task Force's work is a report and recommendations that will position this church for the future and explore new possibilities for participating in God's mission," which is the stated purpose of the study, in the charter of the task force.

The LIFT report should be considered mandatory reading for Lutherans motivated by a future for the church and the work it does for others. LIFT, its report and recommendations as well as the process laid out for the near future can be found at www.elca.org.

A total of 11 LIFT Implementing Resolutions were considered. Four of those would amend ELCA governing documents; these four require approval at two sequential churchwide assemblies to go into effect:

continued on page 16

ELCIG National Convention

continued from page 1

Lutheran, Newmarket, said of the convention's actions, "Our church has heard the call of the Gospel and is now prepared to follow the Spirit into the 21st Century, with open arms. As we celebrate the promise of full inclusion for all our members, we must now take up the challenge of reconciliation, so that even those who were not able to vote yes to inclusivity can be embraced and loved. The reconciling work needs to kick into high gear so that together we can follow the Spirit into the world God loves." (For the full text of her statement to the Assembly, see sidebar, page 13.)

In the end it came down to the votes: Social Statement 213-134 (61%), Continue United Despite Disagreements 204-133 (61%), May Marry Same-gender Couples 192-132 (59%), and Sexual Orientation not Per Se a Barrier to service as ministers in the church 205-114 (64%). All of these votes stronger than the 50%-plus-one required by the rules in place. All attempts to change the rules to require a 2/3rds vote were defeated, as were attempts to water down the resolutions. The debate on all issues was passionate, heartfelt, respectful, and clearly engaged the entire house. Yet, when called upon by the national bishop, the Rev. Susan Johnson, to rise and sing while votes were counted, all rose and sang as one, in the musical harmony so characteristic of Lutherans gathered.

Emily Eastwood, Executive Director, LC/NA, said, "I was honored to be present when the historic votes were taken and to see the faces of old and new friends filled to overflowing with emotion as the dream of full inclusion by policy came true before our eyes. The rush of acceptance and freedom easily overtook the usually resolute demeanor of LGBT and allied delegates alike. Now, in a country where marriage for same-gender couples is the law of the land, a single standard of behavior for all ministers has become church policy. I pray that one day the US and the

Blanket exercise by KAIROS puts in sharp focus the treatment of indigenous peoples.



ELCA will join Canada and the ELCIC with such clear and prophetic witness."

On Human Sexuality

The Social Statement looked at the entire subject of human sexuality in the context of the church, Scripture, and Canadian society. Referred to repeatedly as a "living" document, one that will mature in the life of the church, the social statement upholds families of many diverse kinds, including those of single people. It holds that the good of society is maintained when Christians hold themselves and each other accountable for living up to the Gospel. It extols commitment, monogamy, right relationships, love and the support of the community of believers. It holds same-gender committed relationships as right before God. It provides a theological and ethical framework for sexuality in the lives of Christians.

On the Unity of the Church

The convention voted, by a ratio of 6 to 4, in favor of living together despite any disagreements, as Christians should. The resolution said, in part, "We affirm that the church ought not be divided because of disagreement over moral issues, no matter how distressing such disagreement might be. We believe that any attempt to divide the church because of disagreements over morals, polity or liturgy is an unacceptable confusion of law and gospel, which will lead inevitably to a distortion of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

On Allowing Pastors to Perform Legal Marriages of Same-Gender Couples

The convention passed, by a ratio of 6 to 4, a resolution that said, in part, that "rostered ministers may, according to the dictates of their consciences as informed by the Gospels, the Scriptures, the ecumenical creeds and the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, preside at or bless legal marriages according to the laws of the province within which they serve." Pastors are reminded by the resolution of the due diligence to be exercised in the preparation of any couple for marriage, and that ministry was done in consultation with their lay leaders with sensitivity to the culture surrounding the congregation.

On Ordination

The convention said that the policy of the ELCIC is that "sexual orientation is not in itself a factor which disqualifies a candidate for rostered ministry or a rostered minister seeking a call." By this policy, heterosexuality is not, by itself, a bar to being ordained; neither is homosexuality. Ministers and candidates for ministry are still called upon to adhere to the qualifications and standards set out by the ELCIC and its synods. "Synods and congregations are expected to evaluate candidates for ordination or consecration and rostered



ministers for call in accordance with a conscience informed by the Gospels, the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.” Pastor Hutchings rose to speak in favor of the resolution, eloquently declaring to the convention, and thereby the church, her love for and commitment to the church and the work of ministry to which she is called. She also announced that she was a lesbian and she was shortly going to marry the other love of her life. Incredibly moving, hers also turned out to be the last word on the subject, as debate ended and the vote that adopted the policy change ensued. That statement is adjacent to this article.

Everett Freeman, member of the board of Lutherans Concerned/North America, said, “I was honoured to be a steward at the convention, as well as representing Lutherans Concerned, present to see history made. The outcomes were more than I could have ever imagined and I was so grateful to be among people who have worked so hard in front of and behind the scenes to make this happen. It was an incredible gathering. The courage and grace of those who rose to speak in favor of full inclusion and the Social Statement were awesome.”

On Restructuring the ELCIC

Following a National-Synodical Officers consultation and an action by the National Church Council, the Structural Renewal Task Force was created in the Spring of 2009. That task force submitted its report to the 2011 National Convention. The task force recommendations were:

1. Creation of “Areas,” that is, groups of congregations led by an Area Leadership Team, these Areas replacing the existing “conferences”

2. Reduce the existing 5 synods to 3, and clarify the role of synods
3. Clarify the role of synod bishops
4. “Streamline” synodical governance and redirect resources to mission
5. Clarify the role of the national organization within the church
6. Clarify the role of the national bishop
7. “Streamline” the governance of the national organization and redirect resources to mission
8. Change the process by which congregations bring concerns to the national church
9. Establish Implementation Teams, one for the national organization and each of the existing synods

The convention took up debate of the report and its recommendations, as well as the suggested structural governance changes contained in the report. The convention voted to accept the recommendations “in principle” and to direct the National Church Council to move towards implementation through the formation of the implementation teams at national and synod levels, setting in motion research of the legal matters inherent and resultant from the re-structuring proposed, and causing the necessary constitutional changes to be drafted. The matters would come before the synod conventions in 2012 and 2014, and the National Conventions in

continued on page 15

Pastor Dawn Hutchings’ words at the microphone at the ELCIC Convention.

Pastor Dawn Hutchings. I have the honour of serving the good people of Holy Cross Lutheran in Newmarket, Ontario, in the Eastern Synod.



I rise to speak in favour of the motion. I do so giving thanks to our God for I am fearfully and wonderfully made, knit together in my mother’s womb, by our Creator who is so much more than I can even begin to imagine. God made me gay and I celebrate God’s gift. Through this church, God called me to the ministry of word and sacrament. This church has nurtured me and helped me to become the person that I am.

As I prepared myself to accept God’s call, nobody from this church ever asked me a single question about my sexuality—not my pastor, not my sponsors, not my professors, not the examining board, not the congregation that called and empowers me.

I was told that the church has been ordaining homosexuals since the church began ordaining priests, pastors, and bishops. The ELCIC church has continued to ordain gays and

lesbians, provided we remain celibate or silent. And so in my 12 years as a pastor, I have not spoken publicly about God’s gift of my sexuality.

I break my silence today, on behalf of my sisters and brothers who cannot speak, and for those who have given up trying to respond to God’s call in this church. Soon I will have the pleasure of marrying the love of my life and together we will continue to serve this church.

I implore this convention to pass this motion so that the gifted faithful gays and lesbians God is calling through this church can be embraced, empowered and sent.

I’ve served this church long enough to know that the passage of this motion will not lead to the full inclusion of gays and lesbians as pastors in this church. This motion does not compel congregations to call gays or lesbians; it merely frees those congregations who wish to call pastors who happen to be gay or lesbian to do so. I beg this convention to free its congregations to call pastors to serve regardless of their sexuality and to free its gay and lesbian members to respond to God’s call and serve openly.

May God’s loving Spirit move us to act with courage.



Board Sets Direction for the Future

The LC/NA Board of Directors met September 16–18 at the ARC Retreat Center near Stanchfield, Minnesota, to think, pray, worship, and strategize. At the end, the board had

reviewed the current position of LC/NA; the near and medium term goals, strategies, and directions; finances; and deepened its understanding of work at the intersections of oppression.

Final drafting of documents outlining LC/NA's goals, strategies, and directions is still in process. Reports will come in future issues of the *Concord*. Regarding working at the intersections of oppression, see the article on Transgender on page 18 of the current issue.

The board **deepened** its **understanding** of work at the intersections of **oppression**.

The board selected Jeannine Janson, Vice Chair for Development, to fill the vacancy on the Leadership Development Committee (LDC) created when Nicole Garcia became Co-Chair of Lutherans Concerned. Co-Chairs are not allowed to be members of the committee. The LDC is a standing committee of the board of directors, tasked with continually seeking candidates for leadership positions within LC/NA including potential members of the board, Regional Coordinators and Co-Coordinator, Grassroots Organizers, and other positions. That committee is comprised of 3 members of the board with more than one year experience as a board member, a Regional

Coordinator (RC) chosen by the RCs, an at-large member who is not currently either a board member or an RC, and the Executive Director of LC/NA, ex officio, as long as there are board members who also head operational functions of LC/NA that fall under the purview of the Executive Director. Respectively, the current members of the LDC are Jeannine Janson, Philip Moeller, Phil Soucy, Kathy Shattuck, Rev. Barbara Lundblad, and Emily Eastwood.

The board reviewed the financial position of LC/NA and renewed its commitment to the importance of everyone participating in development work. Donations, pledges, and grants, large and small, are essential to the continued work of LC/NA. The board will work as a group and individuals to get the message out that the decisions of 2009, impressive a change as they are, were not completion, not full inclusion by any stretch of the imagination, but were a significant step in the right direction. Blessing of relationships within the community of faith is still an unfulfilled goal. Deepening and broadening the RIC movement remains a significant piece of work, crucial in enlivening the church with the true spirit and value of diversity and full inclusion.

The board deepened its understanding of work at the intersections of oppression through an exercise that demonstrated the vast disparity in privilege prevalent in our current society and church because of the inherent historical structures of power and prestige. Recognizing that disparity is the beginning of effective work to undo the pernicious effects that form the basis for oppressions that interfere with the message of the Gospel in our lives and the lives of others, believers or not, and with the promises inherent in our society's goals for its citizens. The church lives, breathes and works in the society that surrounds it. It is only by engaging that society that changes can be made to better the lives of its citizens by tackling the artificial and systemic inequities that oppress so many. Working to do those changes in society also causes the church to review itself and change within itself where it finds human frailty and oppression in its own structure and policies. Rarely are individuals the victims of only one oppression; minorities of all stripes are usually disadvantaged by the confluence of multiple oppressive influences. Hence, this work takes on a central importance in the life of LC/NA. More on this to come.

The board also discussed the upcoming biennial assembly in July 2012, to be held in Washington, D.C., July 6–10. Hold those dates; plan to attend. It will be the most interesting, challenging, rewarding and educational assembly yet. Much more information will be coming out in the coming weeks about this spectacular, Spirit-filled event. ▼

Board meeting at ARC Retreat Center, September 2011.

LC/NA Board Positions Filled

In July, the Board of Directors of Lutherans Concerned/North America selected a Treasurer, Youth Representative, and Chaplain from among the candidates for those positions. These board members join the board for the 2010–2012 biennium.

As Treasurer, the board selected **Laura Lazar**, a professor teaching in the MBA program at Augsburg College, a resident of Minneapolis, Minnesota. An MBA and PhD graduate of Indiana University, majoring in accounting, Laura has 20 years experience teaching accounting and business and extensive experience working in non-profit organizations, having been the treasurer for the Groveland Food Shelf, the Minnesota Literacy Council, and the Lutheran Deaconess Conference. She is currently treasurer for the DIAKONIA World Federation.

As Youth Representative, the board selected **Charlette Beckler**. Charlette is an 18-year-old, first-year student at Mount Holyoke College in

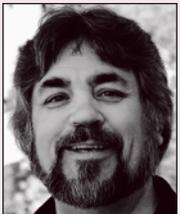
South Hadley, Massachusetts. A graduate of College Park High School, The Woodlands, Texas, Charlette is looking forward to the work of the board, wanting to make a difference for those who come after as we move to full inclusion.

As Chaplain, the board selected the **Rev. Dr. Katrina Foster**, the pastor of Incarnation Lutheran Church, Bridgehampton, and St. Michael Lutheran Church, Amagansett, both on Long Island, New York. She served Fordham Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bronx, New York, for 16 years prior to her current call. She earned her Master of Divinity from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, South Carolina, and her Doctor of Ministry, Stewardship and Luther's Theology of the Cross, from Lutheran Theological Seminary Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Pastor Foster and her family were featured in the 2009 Goodsoil documentary, *One Baptism, Many Gifts: the story of three Lutherans called to ministry*. Pastor Foster, her wife and daughter live in

Water Mill, New York, and go to the beach as often as possible.

The board welcomes these talented members, dedicated to the work for full inclusion, to full equality in the life of the Lutheran church and in the society in which both we as individuals, and the church, live and work.

Nicole García, Co-Chair of Lutherans Concerned, said, "I am delighted to welcome Charlette, Katrina and Laura to the Board of Directors. The renewal of our strategy for the coming five years on a rolling basis is progressing well and we are looking forward to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Orlando later this month. Our work for full inclusion continues unabated and we are pleased to have these board members join their talents, energy and full inclusion commitment to the work of our excellent board, staff, regional coordinators, volunteers, Reconciling Lutherans, and Reconciling in Christ organizations throughout North America."



Co-Chair
The Rev. Chris Berry



Co-Chair
Nicole García



Vice-Chair of Development
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Laura Lazar



Director of Communications
Phil Soucy



Director of International Programs
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Co-Director of Committee for Working at the Intersection of Oppressions
Judy A. Griffin



Co-Director of Committee for Working at the Intersection of Oppressions
The Rev. Darryl Kiehl



Bisexual Representative
Olivia-Beth Horak



Canadian Representative
Everett Freeman



Transgender Representative
JamieAnn Meyers



Youth Representative
Charlette Beckler



Chaplain
The Rev. Dr. Katrina Foster

ELCIC Convention

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2013 and 2015 for decisions. The purpose of this re-structuring is to create an organizational structure to advance the mission of God in the world.

Bishop Susan Johnson was elected on the second ballot to her second four-year term of office as National Bishop, to a standing ovation. Murray Walter was elected as Secretary of the ELCIC,



Bp. Susan Johnson

Don Storch, his predecessor, having decided not to serve another term of office. Kathy Martin, Allyn Langager,

Christopher Bishopp, Cindy Hoppe, Jeff Buhse, Matthew Diegel, Pat Lovell, Jeffrey Smith, and Heather Spencer were elected to the National Church Council.

The 2011 National Convention voted overwhelmingly in favor of a resolution regarding ethical investing; participated in a riveting exercise, The Blanket Exercise, led by Ed Bianchi from KAIROS, about the relationship of the aboriginal peoples in

Canada and the people who immigrated, a dramatization all about "right relationships;" voted to include a voting delegate to national conventions from each ELCIC seminary; required all future petitions to national conventions be submitted three months prior; voted on pension provisions; encouraged an commitment to continuing education for the leadership of the ELCIC at all levels; told the National Church Council to establish a task force to look at ways to renew the church as a whole and beyond just a focus on structure; and other matters that came before it.

It was, indeed, a very busy and productive national convention. ▼

LC/NA Attends WELCA Triennial

By **Emily Hamilton**, LVC Intern

On Thursday night we brought our boxes, bags, and display sets to the convention center in Spokane, Washington, to set up our space in Camp Dianoigo. “Dianoigo” comes from the Greek for “to open the mind,” and the exhibit hall was indeed teeming with people, activities, and displays to expand our knowledge of the world around us. We saw booths about domestic violence care, booksellers, intricate wares made by

The work done by women in the ELCA to include people of all sexual orientations and gender identities is both broad and deep.

women in Tanzania and Uganda, and we participated in laughter-yoga demonstrations. The camp-themed space was awash with opportunities for women (and a few others) to discover new ministry opportunities and methods to renew their spiritual lives.

During our days at “camp,” we gave away rainbow Mardi Gras beads and put a large number of

temporary RIC tattoos on women of all ages. While we handed out our gifts, we spoke with women about the Reconciling in Christ program, Reconciling Lutherans, and their experiences with welcoming movements in their own communities.

Camp Dianoigo: to open the mind. Our minds were certainly opened by the powerfully moving stories shared with us by visitors to Lutherans Concerned/North America’s booth. We were blessed with the stories of those touched by the work of welcome they’ve encountered, whether in the form of affirming words given by pastors or of acceptance by family members. Our conversations continued on Friday night at our hospitality suite in the Double Tree Hotel.

The work done by women in the ELCA to include people of all sexual orientations and gender identities is both broad and deep: from women who helped create the AIDS quilt, to women working to meet the needs of same-sex couples where marriage is not a legal option; from those walking with their congregations through writing a welcoming statement, to those who embrace their children *as they are* from the moment they come out.

We were blessed to spend time with them, to laugh and cry with them, and to continue to work with them into the future. ▼

ELCA Churchwide

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- recommendation moving from the current two-year to a three-year cycle for the churchwide assembly. Connected to this are recommendations to have other gatherings of a non-legislative nature in the interim years. The assembly approved this, 817-169. If approved by the 2013 assembly, the first three-year cycle churchwide assembly would occur in 2016.
 - recommendation expanding the size of the ELCA Church Council and adding the chair of the Conference of Bishops as a voting member of the Church Council. By 810-148, the assembly referred to ELCA Church Council changes to make 10% of Church Council voting members be under the age of 30 at time of election, of whom a minimum of 10% shall be persons of color; and, that the council review its size and composition and demographics. 757-223, the assembly approved that voting members of the ELCA Church Council shall consist of the four churchwide officers, the chair of the ELCA Conference of Bishops and at least 33 and not more than 45 other persons elected by the churchwide assembly.
 - recommendation eliminating program committees for the units of the churchwide organization and the development of other ways, other networks, to link the expressions and members of the ELCA, approved 890-69.
 - recommendation about this church’s interrelationships and networks. 852-81, the assembly approved recommendations on interrelationships and networks from the LIFT task force that would focus on strengthening the vitality of congregations in ways that also strengthen connections within and across the expressions and partners of this church.
- On social statements, another LIFT subject, by a vote of 880-58, the assembly authorized the ELCA Church Council, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and Communal Discernment Task Force, to establish a review process of

current procedures for the development and adoption of social statements, following consideration of “Genetics, Faith and Responsibility,” adopted at the 2011 Churchwide Assembly. This review is to be completed and brought to the fall 2012 Church Council meeting, with a report to the 2013 Churchwide Assembly. During this review, the ongoing process for developing the criminal justice and the justice for woman social statements may continue; the criminal justice social statement is due to be completed and reported to the 2013 assembly.

The assembly considered many other matters, about which information can be found at <http://blogs.elca.org/assemblynews/> or on the main ELCA website, www.elca.org. The next ELCA churchwide assembly will be held in Pittsburgh, August 12–18, 2013. ▼

The Naming Project 2011

By **Emily Hamilton**, LVC Intern

When Ross Murray asked last fall if I would be interested in helping out at The Naming Project for the summer of 2011, I answered “yes” quickly. I grew up attending church camp in Western New York, complete with singing songs around campfires, canoeing, leading trust-building activities and hikes in the woods. My years attending and working at this camp led me to believe I knew the power that a camp experience can have to form the lives of young people, both for the better or, sadly, sometimes for the worse. Until I volunteered at The Naming Project, I had no idea just how strong that impact could be.

*Every year, people support **LGBT** and allied youth in their **faith journeys** in this camping experience.*

With more than twenty campers, this is the biggest year of camp for The Naming Project so far. The camp was founded by Pastor Jay Wiesner, Pastor Brad Froslee, and Ross Murray to be a place for youth who want to discuss sexuality and gender as well as their faith journeys. This year the camp ran under the theme “Called As We Are” and centered on how we are called by God to live as God’s children, just as God created us.

It would be tempting for me to explain how the incredible volunteer staff of The Naming Project created a model experience for the youth who

attended, but what struck me more was not the programming but the atmosphere. Holding such a camp in an isolated environment – Bay Lake Camp is an island – means that negative outside influences are minimal. The campers are surrounded by a staff that affirms their journeys as people whose sexual orientations and gender identities are wonderful gifts, and can affirm for one another that they are incredible individuals. They meet peers who are exploring the same questions and who can support them in friendships that continue long after the end of the week.

Besides the truly remarkable way that these young people build one another up, I was struck by the generosity of so many who worked to make The Naming Project a continuing reality. When we drove up to Bay Lake Camp on Sunday, August 14th we stopped for dinner at a rural congregation along the way. Congregants from two churches joined together to cook us an elaborate meal to share before we finished the two-hour drive to the campground. These same congregants knitted a prayer scarf for every camper and staff person who attended, so they could take the love, support, and prayers of the congregation with them as they left. The sheer amount of time and, yes, monetary donations, that it takes to keep such a program afloat is daunting, but, more than that, it is encouraging. Every year, enough people decide to support LGBT and allied youth in their faith journeys that the camp is able to continue. Knowing that their prayers and gifts are there gives me hope for a future when campers can have this experience all over the country. Until that day, I keep these youth and others like them in my daily prayers, and say a prayer of thanks for projects like this one that bring them together. ▼

Want to learn more about The Naming Project? Visit <http://thenamingproject.org/> for more information.

From the Editor

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equipped to bring in a new dimension of equality and self-esteem in the church and in our countries.

I stood in front of a congregation in Michigan 14 years ago during a debate on sexual orientation where Sunday School children were seated in the balcony to watch a pastoral call meeting. And I said, “Three of those 60 children up there will end their lives before they are 30 years old because we have not affirmed their sexuality.” The room went silent. Two families packed their bags and left the church. And that congregation has continued to grow and to be one of the “flagships” of the synod and its pastor just became the Bishop of the Southeast Michigan Synod.

I read an article not long ago that

reported research that shows that organizations undergoing division over such issues as affirmation of sexual orientation and gender identity, among other similar issues, lose on average about 7% of their membership. Guess what! The ELCA is as average on this point as it can get.

I hope, as you read this issue of *Concord*, that you can also affirm your life’s journey and the great strides that have been made in your lifetime, however long or young your life is so far. And I hope that you will reminisce when you are an “old vet” about all your “stuff.” But I also hope that you will never stop working for full inclusion, for the sake of the Gospel, for the sake of humanity, for your sake and for those whom you love. ▼

RIG News

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calling Pastor Bill in 2002, he warned: “If the congregation acts to extend a call to me and if I should accept... the congregation would be subject to the discipline of the ELCA, as we discussed.” He added, “Frankly, I believe such a choice would benefit the congregation and the ELCA, whatever unpleasantness might follow.”

But now, on Oct. 23 the Holy Spirit and Abiding Savior’s spirit will be seeking, as Pastor Bill noted in a message marking the congregation’s 50th anniversary a few years ago, “to accomplish the only objective we set for ourselves as a congregation since I have been called as pastor: to seek to know and do God’s will in the community we are called to minister with.” —*Jean Etsinger* ▼

Transgender Invisibility and Intersections of Oppression

By **JamieAnn Meyers**, Transgender
Representative to the Board of LC/NA

Recently, I participated in a discussion of transgender people and intersections of oppression at a meeting of people working for justice in the LGBT community. I'm a transsexual woman and transitioned from male to female three years ago. Because I blend as a woman in society, my heterosexual gender-conforming wife and I have "passing privilege" and simply appear to be female friends to people with whom we are not well acquainted. But when we are in situations where we want to be our authentic selves, we come out as a married couple. Being authentic, however, is more complicated than it may seem. When we come out as

Marginalized people live at the intersections of systemic oppression and have to face that oppression consciously or subconsciously every day.

a couple and share our lives with other people, she and I have agreed that I will come out as a transwoman. In this way, she feels as if her heterosexual identity is preserved.

In order to illustrate some of the pain of transgender invisibility and the pain that can

accompany "coming out," I told the following story to the participants. Recently, my wife and I were playing golf with a male-female couple at our local golf course, and our conversation began to focus on personal relationships. Because we were likely to encounter this couple again, and because we wanted to be authentic about our life experiences, we "came out" to them as a married couple and I "came out" to them as a transwoman. Almost immediately, both of them said "that doesn't matter to us."

The intent of their statement was to be affirming to us, but the impact on me was profoundly different. While it's important to know that people respect and accept you, it's also important that they acknowledge the life-long struggle you have faced as a person whose birth-assigned sex and gender identity are not the same. By virtue of my physical birth, my body did not fit my internal sense of who I am, and that set in motion a life-long struggle that continues to this day. The struggle goes on in spite of my transition and my blending as a woman in society.

A more thoughtful and kinder response to my coming out would have been "Congratulations for being your whole selves! Your lives together are a truly wonderful and remarkable love story. We can't begin to imagine the struggles you both must have faced, but we applaud you for being who you are."

When my story ended, some of the participants at our meeting found it difficult to understand why my internal reaction to the statement "it doesn't matter to us" was negative. After all, aren't transgender people looking for acceptance? Aren't we longing for welcome and inclusion?

It was at this point when a friend of mine spoke out. She asked us to consider that when a person says "I don't see color," that they are deluding themselves. As an African-American woman, she knows that we all see color, that we all are racist as a consequence of our socialization, and that we have to fight against the oppression of racism throughout our lives. If someone were to say to my friend "I don't see color," they would have erased her history of oppression, slavery, the Jim Crow laws, the burgeoning gap in wealth between people of color and people who are white, and the huge disparity in the number of black people who are incarcerated when compared to white people. They would have erased the work of Dr. King and all of the struggles that took place during the fight for civil rights in our country during the 1950s and 1960s. They would have erased the presence of systemic oppression that affects everyone in society, because we are all part of those systems, oppressed and oppressors alike.

Marginalized people live at the intersections of systemic oppression and have to face that oppression consciously or subconsciously every day; have to overcome the barriers that have been placed in their way by society and the legal system; have to overcome the prejudice and ignorance that breeds bullying, transphobia, homophobia, biphobia, racism, classism, ableism, ageism, sexism, and on and on.

Resources

For detailed research on the pervasiveness of discrimination experienced by transgender people and their families, see "Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey" at www.thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/intds.

For issues related to homeless youth, see "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness" at www.thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/homeless_youth.

On racial and economic issues, see www.thetaskforce.org/issues/racial_and_economic_justice.

Queers for Economic Justice is a national New York-based organization that focuses on poverty and economic justice in GLBTQ communities. Their cross-community resources on why institutionalized poverty, racism, and ableism are GLBTQ issues are especially useful. See <http://lq4ej.org/resources/factsheets-and-reports>.

Southerners on New Ground is a source for a great variety of Justice Community building and educational materials and regional events for cross-issue anti-oppression community-building based in GLBTQ communities. Go to www.southernersonnewground.org.

Eli Clare's poetry and lecture/essay excerpts are based in the Queer Disabled community from an anti-oppression, anti-racism/classism perspective. See <http://eliclare.com/what-eli-offers/lectures>.

When I consider the work of our intersections of oppression committee of Lutheran's Concerned/North America, I see our efforts toward welcome and full inclusion in the church through the lens of social justice and anti-oppression. Having an anti-oppression foundation for our work means deconstructing the power dynamics in any community and lifting up the concerns of all people who are marginalized. The societal issues that we face as LGBT people are not issues that occur in isolation from other people. Heterosexism and genderism intersect with racism, classism, ableism, ageism, sexism, and all other "isms."

Wherever people are, oppression happens. If a woman has health problems and is living below the poverty level, she may not be able to access health care and is left behind. If a man has a learning disability or comes from a stigmatized cultural background—and on that basis is exploited by systems that never value his labor—then systemic oppression is at work to deny him a full life. If somebody is non-partnered in a partnered world, or "too old to be employable," or too young to have a voice, or not male-enough to escape violence, then all of this is oppression.

For me as a transgender person, all of these intersecting oppressions fill the space in which I live. Our transgender community is generally not well employed, many are homeless, including youth whose families have disowned them and we often struggle with medical expenses that gender-conforming people never face. Some medical expenses are related to gender transition, but many result from a variety of other issues, including transgender exclusions, which rule out basic health care, pervasive discrimination even in emergency-room settings, and more. And when transgender people live at the intersection of two or more oppressions, we are extremely vulnerable to not only marginalization but to emotional and physical violence.

The transgender experience and that of non-

Notes from the International Program Committee (IPC)

Going "Global"

LC/NA's intent to "change the church, change the world" is right in step with global events. On the one hand there is increased international awareness of LGBT issues and on the other hand there is the need to become increasingly active in addressing these issues. The Obama administration has clearly moved into the arena. LC/NA has expressed its appreciation for this stance and is participating as an identified faith-based group in consultations with the State Department.

In early August, the State Department and White House Staff briefed the **LGBT Equality Caucus** in the U.S. Congress on the foreign policy efforts of the administration to promote fundamental human rights for the LGBT community globally. The briefing was in response to a congressional letter of appreciation sent to Secretary Clinton in June to welcome her leadership in responding to human rights abuses targeting LGBT individuals. Reflective of the administration's proactive stance was the issuance of a Presidential Proclamation that bars entry into the U.S. of individuals who participate in or condone serious human rights violations, including those targeting LGBT communities worldwide.

Africa is in the spotlight for a whirl of struggles on LGBT rights issues. Much of this has been stimulated by behind the scenes agitation by off-continent-supported evangelical groups who have painted homosexuality as anti-African and a form of neo-colonization. A review of such activity and the consideration of a strategy to combat it will be the focus of a conference to be held in New York in October. The Executive Director and the Director of International Programs of LC/NA will be in attendance at this conference.

The fate of legislation in **Uganda** remains to be seen and is far from a dead issue. Arrests and persecution pop up in such countries as Zimbabwe and Cameroon. Concerns in Ghana have resulted in the established of a taskforce by human rights organizations called the Coalition against Homophobia in Ghana. Alternately, history was made in early August with the first black lesbian conference in South Africa.

—Philip Moeller, Director, IPC

heterosexual people is so laden with interlocking, oppressive dynamics that it will be difficult for the church to be truly welcoming and inclusive unless we build on a foundation of social justice and anti-oppression work. I believe that we must begin to make the connections between the needs of marginalized people and the "normativity" and privilege of those who control the power to make decisions that ultimately affect us all. ▼

RIC Corner

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publicizing their position. Part of the RIC statement quoted on the website reads, "We of Incarnation Lutheran Church seek to welcome and share the love of Christ with all, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation and history of imprisonment, addictions, abilities or any other condition that could divide us. We are a Reconciling in Christ Congregation and strive to know Christ as savior who welcomes all."

Explaining that "saying 'We welcome everyone' means all, so we are glad to see anyone who comes to church," Mr. Horlitz suggested that there was no resistance to

becoming RIC perhaps because members are more broad-minded than to restrict themselves. "Maybe traveling in the subways every day makes people understand differences better," he offered. His guess is that the congregation will have no difficulty accepting the June 2011 New York legislative decision to legalize LGBT marriages, though he personally is not so sure about it. Andrea also believes since members have already taken the step to declare themselves accepting of all people, without regard to race, sexuality or any other factors, they will be excited and happy for couples wishing to be married.

With such a welcoming atmosphere at Incarnation, it may seem odd that St.

Michael, just a bit further out on the island in the town of Amagansett, is not also RIC. When Pr. Katrina told the congregation in a sermon last spring that she could not say with confidence that St. Michael was truly welcoming since they had no intentional statement declaring so, members reacted with a bit of annoyance. Like many congregations, they considered themselves welcoming, but said they knew nothing about RIC until she told them. Now they plan to undertake the self-study as soon as the major low-income housing project they are embarked on is well underway. So in time, Pr. Katrina Foster may be leading two RIC congregations as they worship a loving and all-embracing God. ▼

BOOK REVIEW

A La Familia Una Conversación Sobre Nuestras Familias, la Biblia, la Orientación Sexual y la Identidad de Género

Una Reseña por René García, Coordinador de la Región 4

A La Familia es un recurso excelente para comenzar los diálogos con la comunidad latina acerca de las personas lesbianas, gays, bisexuales y transgénero (LGBT).

Escrito por el Rev. Dr. Miguel de la Torre, el Rev. Dr. Ignacio Castuera y Lisbeth Meléndez Rivera, A La Familia explora la realidad que las personas LGBT forman parte de los latinos e intenta de establecer una relación con el lector que no es ni LGBT ni aliado.

Una ventaja principal del libro es que no es un recurso escrito para un público anglo y luego traducido al español. Este libro es escrito para un público latino utilizando referencias e ilustraciones que están conectadas con la cultura.

Un aspecto fuerte del recurso es los testimonios de las personas que son lgbt Y latinas. (Incluye un testimonio de la co-presidenta de Luteranos Compasivos/Norteamérica Nicole García.) Estos testimonios son poderosos y vienen de personas de fe que han crecido dentro de la iglesia y se han revelado su orientación sexual o identidad de género a sus seres queridos.

A La Familia habla mucho en cuanto de la Biblia haciendo un paralelo que la Biblia es como nuestro álbum familiar – una agrupación de cuentos e historias de la gente de Dios. Se encuentran explicaciones fenomenales acerca de los versículos que condenan la homosexualidad las cuales exploran las perspectivas históricas de la época de cuando estos cuentos tomaron lugar. Aparte, hay referencias de cuando la Biblia habla de inclusión y los cambios de intergrar con las personas “sucias” y marginalizadas cuando las tradiciones mandaban de ni acercarse a esa clase de persona.

Al final el libro habla de los varios pasos que el lector y congregaciones pueden tomar para mostrar la comunidad LGBT en maneras positivas dentro y fuera de la iglesia.

Un recurso bilingüe patrocinado por Unid@s, el Human Rights Campaign (La Campaña de Derechos Humanos) y el National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (La Fuerza Operante Nacional de Gays y Lesbianas), A La Familia es un libro para la comunidad latina escrito por latinos. Se puede encontrar el libro en línea a <http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/a-la-familia>.

A La Familia A Conversation About Our Families, the Bible, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

A Review by René García, Region 4 Coordinator

A La Familia (To the Family) is an excellent resource to begin dialogues with the Latin@ community regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.

Written by the Rev. Dr. Miguel de la Torre, the Rev. Dr. Ignacio Castuera and Lisbeth Meléndez Rivera, A La Familia explores the reality that LGBT people are a part of the Latin@ community and attempts to establish a relationship with readers who are neither LGBT nor straight allies.

An important advantage of the book is that it is not a resource written for a White audience and then translated into Spanish. This book is written for a Latin@ audience using references and illustrations that are connected with the culture.

A major aspect of the book is the testimonies from people that are both LGBT *and* Latin@. (It includes a testimony from the Co-Chair of Lutherans Concerned/North America, Nicole García.) These testimonies are powerful and come from people of faith that have been raised in the church and have come out about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

A La Familia makes many references to the bible and making a parallel that it is like our family album — a grouping of stories and histories of the people of God. Phenomenal explanations are found referencing the verses that condemn homosexuality, exploring historical perspectives of the time when the biblical stories took place. There are also references to where the bible speaks of inclusion and changes to associate with “unclean” and marginalized people during a time when tradition prohibited such an encounter.

Finally, the book speaks of many ways that the reader and congregations can make references to the LGBT community in positive ways inside and outside of the church building.

A bilingual resource sponsored by Unid@s, the Human Rights Campaign and the National Gay and Lesbian Task, A La Familia is a book for the Latin@ community written by Latin@s. This book can be found online at <http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/a-la-familia>. ▼

