



Marriage Equality Furthered in Four States

ReconcilingWorks helps usher in a time of change

We have delightful news to report: marriage equality won! Maine, Maryland, and Washington legalized marriage for same-gender couples, and Minnesota refused to increase discrimination. For the first time in U.S. history, marriage equality for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities was furthered by popular ballot, not by acts of the legislature or the courts. Voters in these four states spoke as directly as our democratic system allows. We are thankful that they said the right thing.

We are rejoicing at what happened on Election Day. Discrimination was turned back in four states where nearly 20 million people live. We thank God not only for these results but also for how we have learned new pathways for graceful engagement with our neighbor. We know, better than

before, how reconciliation works.

And we know our work is not yet done. Voters decided in favor of marriage equality by only relatively slim margins, between 52% and 53% in each of the four states. And many LGBT people and allies still harbor a deep distrust of the church.

More than ever, the world needs to hear the witness of people of faith who speak for reconciliation, proclaiming the love of God in Christ Jesus is for all.

Following are reactions from ReconcilingWorks staff and volunteers on the votes for marriage equality in four states.

From Emily Eastwood:

“Ground gained in the last four years for equality for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities is more secure than ever before,” said Emily Eastwood. “That three states would approve marriage for same-gender couples and another would defeat an anti-gay constitutional amendment sends a strong message that marriage is coming to a neighborhood near all of us.”

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European Forum Brings Together LGBT Christian Groups from Many Countries

Reconciling is working in Europe **BY MARTI SCHEEL**

With apologies to Emily Eastwood and probably a lot of others, I believe I have the best job in ReconcilingWorks. Okay, so it doesn't pay well – I pay to do it – but it gets me to Europe each spring to visit friends and relatives, to ride my bicycle, and, more to the point, to represent ReconcilingWorks and its International Program Committee (IPC) as an official observer at the annual meeting of the European Forum of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Christian Groups.

The forum is an umbrella organization working for equality for LGBT people within and through the churches of Europe. The forum brings together over forty LGBT-inclusive Christian groups from more than twenty European countries, reaching as far east as parts of the former Soviet Union. The organization celebrated its thirtieth anniversary at the meeting held this past May in Amsterdam.

Since 2007, I've been attending forum

meetings, and the IPC has been able to bring forum representatives to participate in our biennial assemblies. Thanks to a memorandum of understanding that the IPC developed with the forum in 2008, ReconcilingWorks has an official relationship with the forum.

Due to the differences in church structures between North America and most European countries, the forty-plus forum member organizations are not so



much denominationally based as they are directed toward addressing practices in the “state” churches in a particular country. In countries where one “flavor” of Christianity is dominant, be it Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox, there is often only one LGBT Christian group. In more diverse countries there are often many groups, sometimes differentiated not only by “flavor” but also by the roles of the groups’ members in church life (i.e., laypeople, clergy, academic) or by gender. The individual member groups vary in scope from national, with many hundreds of members, to small “house-church” communities that keep

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EMILY EASTWOOD

Harvest Has Been Plentiful, But Far from Complete

On the day after the election and victories for marriage equality in four states, the staff came in just before lunch. I was beyond tired, feeling spent both emotionally and physically. We'd been together the night before at the Minnesotans United for All Families Campaign event. We cheered for our favorite candidates and for Maine and Maryland as their votes were called in favor of marriage equality. We watched as the Minnesota numbers started well but then fell slightly. We heard of precincts with long lines and failed counting machines. We stayed, too excited with the progress in the east to leave. Finally at 1:45 a.m. the announcement was made that the anti-gay marriage amendment in Minnesota had been defeated. The applause, tears, laughter, bouncing up and down, and general merriment went on for quite a while.

The day after, only the young extroverts on our staff had any bounce left. We did cheer when Regional Director, Kari Lipke, posted that the vote in Washington state had been called for marriage equality. It was a short cheer, more a chirp really. We needed a week's worth of nap and food. Our resident chief cook thoughtfully made mac and cheese—two kinds, homemade and boxed—for our lunch. That evening, we lit candles and sang Holden Evening Prayer, musical comfort food proclaiming and calling the Light of Christ while our prayers rose as incense.

I had had about 30 minutes to prepare what I would say during the Holden service. I had opened my tiny travel Bible to find a

text in the only lull between phone calls. I came to Luke 10 and began to read the familiar words, the appointing of the seventy to go out two by two, carrying no luggage, the Good News their only provisions. The trip would be dangerous.

They should not get sidetracked by idle conversation on the road. Jesus said the harvest would be plentiful, but the laborers were few, so the seventy were to pray that more workers would be sent. And as they

RIC Settings Added to the Roster since last issue

- Ascension Lutheran Church, Kentwood, Michigan
- Bread of Life Lutheran Church, Regina, Saskatchewan
- Cross of Glory Lutheran Church, Homer Glen, Illinois
- Lutheran Church of the Incarnate Word, Rochester, New York
- Luther Memorial Lutheran Church, Seattle, Washington
- Our Savior Lutheran Community, Boerne, Texas
- Salem Lutheran Church, Spokane, Washington
- Trinity Fellowship ELCA, Rushford, Minnesota

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

entered a house, they were first to say, "Peace to this house!"

In a moment of clarity, I realized for the first time that this text is precisely what ReconcilingWorks has been doing for the last ten-plus years. Through prayer, word of mouth, the Internet, Facebook, and Twitter, thousands of people have heard the Good

I realized for the first time that **Luke 10 is precisely what ReconcilingWorks has been doing for the last ten-plus years.**

News that God's love is for all, including people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Many of those folks have become laborers for the harvest. Our trainings have prepared people to leave their baggage behind before having faithful conversations, which help others unpack their baggage. Graceful engagement is about meeting others where they are, being in dialogue with respect, peace, and love in our hearts. The Holy Spirit creates change; we are simply the facilitators.

This year marked our first big foray into "change the church to change the world to change the church." Because of their faith, not in spite of it, our members and allies from many congregations, some not yet RIC, took their Lutheran voices to Congress, to their neighbors, their friends, their relatives, by phone, by email, and from house to house spreading the Good News. How counter to Lutheran culture is that? In some cases the work was dangerous, but the volunteers were undeterred, trusting that the harvest would be bountiful, if not now

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ReconcilingWorks staff gather in downtown St. Paul with Minnesotans United for all Families supporters on Election Night.





Working for the Reconciliation of God's Children

DARRYL KIEHL

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18)

For the past couple of months, I've watched my congregation begin to shake itself apart. The shaking is due likely to the stress of the national election, combined with a decline in giving, and widely different views about priorities for ministry. I say this not to ask for sympathy. I'm sure this situation is familiar to many, if not all, of you.

Everyone who has worked for full inclusion has witnessed this shaking in their own context. We've seen it in our congregations and across the ELCA and its predecessor bodies. It has been a part of church life as long as I've been involved in the church. It may have been over segregation, the Vietnam War, nuclear weapons, poverty, ordination of women,

because I've been so impressed with the organization's work to build an inclusive church. I benefit now personally from the work that so many of you have done for years. I am also involved because I believe that the ministry of "graceful engagement" emphasized in our ministry is essential to the life of the church and its congregations, no matter what the issue. What better gift

I believe that the ministry of "graceful engagement" is essential to the life of the church and its congregations

Palestine, Iraq, or sexuality. In some cases, it just seems to have been about carpet/no carpet in the sanctuary (and that is no joke). Sometimes it doesn't take much. I believe we are so shaky because we care so little about the admonition of Matthew 5:24 to "First be reconciled to your brother or sister..."

I'm involved in ReconcilingWorks

for us to give the church than to demonstrate clearly that reconciling works? The church needs what we can bring, a ministry of reconciliation.

For those of you who are Bible students, I know the 2 Corinthians 5 quote is about God reconciling the world to God's self. However, if God is reconciling the world to God's self in Christ, and we are the Body of

now: while we have a very long way to go, we now know that the strategies we put in place to mobilize, equip, and inspire volunteers to action toward policy change in the ELCA and ELCIC work just as well in society. As a result, anti-gay religious bias is no longer the most compelling faith voice in at least four more states.

The harvest has been plentiful, but it is far from complete. Sometimes we still struggle with our own baggage. If we but let it go and take a risk in faith, miracles can occur. On November 6, for some of us, they did. Thanks to all of you who volunteered, prayed, and gave to this effort. Thanks be to God for the gifts of grace and for the call to labor for the harvest. ■

Executive Director

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then soon.

So here we are, so soon after stunning success, still learning what this means for us. What does it mean for the ELCA with another Churchwide Assembly coming in August 2013? What does it mean for pastors and laypeople in the states where marriage is now legal who are in committed same-gender relationships? What does it mean for members of congregations not yet RIC who have seen what graceful engagement can do?

We will be cataloguing lessons learned for months to come even as new campaigns are planned. This, however, is clear right

Christ, then we are to work for the reconciliation of God's children to one another. Though it can be frustrating work, it will be fruitful.

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Peace be with you. ■

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ReconcilingWorks Staff

Executive Director: Emily Eastwood
exec@ReconcilingWorks.org

LVC Intern: Britt Barkholtz
BBarkholtz@ReconcilingWorks.org

Deputy Director of Operations: Brett Bowman
BrettB@ReconcilingWorks.org

Grassroots Organizing and Training Coordinator: Tim Feiertag
grassroots@ReconcilingWorks.org

Communications/Legislative Assistant: Tim Fisher
TFisher@ReconcilingWorks.org

Regional Director for Region 3 and Co-Director of Committee Working at the Intersection of Oppressions: Rev. Anita Hill
AnitaH@ReconcilingWorks.org

Regional Director for Region 1: Kari Lipke,
KLipke@ReconcilingWorks.org

Executive Assistant: Ben Masters,
BMasters@ReconcilingWorks.org

Operations Manager: Kurt Neumann
KurtN@ReconcilingWorks.org

ReconcilingWorks Board of Directors

Co-Chair: Nicole Garcia co-chairs@ReconcilingWorks.org

Co-Chair: Rev. Darryl Kiehl co-chairs@ReconcilingWorks.org

Vice Chair: Jeannine Janson
vicechair@ReconcilingWorks.org

Secretary: John Carter secretary@ReconcilingWorks.org

Treasurer: Laura Lazar treasurer@ReconcilingWorks.org

Director of Communications: Stephen Padre
communications@ReconcilingWorks.org

Co-Director of Committee Working at the Intersection of Oppressions: Michael Cobbler
intersections@ReconcilingWorks.org

Director of International Programs: Philip Moeller
international@ReconcilingWorks.org

Canada Representative: Everett Freeman
canada@ReconcilingWorks.org

Bisexual Representative: Margaret Charmoli
bi@ReconcilingWorks.org

Transgender Representative: JamieAnn Meyers
trans@ReconcilingWorks.org

Youth, Young Adult Representatives: Charlette Beckler
youthrep@ReconcilingWorks.org
Travis Van Horn, TravisVH@ReconcilingWorks.org

Chaplain: Rev. Dr. Katrina Foster
chaplain@ReconcilingWorks.org

Editorial

Editorial Director: Tim Fisher
TFisher@ReconcilingWorks.org

Associate Editor: Carol M. Dunn
concordRIC@ReconcilingWorks.org

Design: Jim Gerhard jeherhard@verizon.net

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Representative of Emmaus Lutheran Worshipping Community (left) receives RIC certificate from Regional Coordinators Karen and Paul Jolly.

RECONCILING IN CHRIST **CORNER**

Emmaus Lutheran Worshipping Community, Idaho Falls

From the End to the Beginning **BY KAREN JOLLY**

It started long before the ELCA changed its policy in 2009, but that change was really both an end and a beginning for some in Idaho Falls, Idaho. Idaho Falls is a medium-sized town in southeastern Idaho, a community of Christians, mostly conservative and heavily Mormon. There are only a few worshipping communities supporting full inclusion and participation. The sole ELCA church, a large congregation (by Idaho standards), had wonderful music, education for all, and is known for its camping experiences. It was “my church” to ELCA Lutherans in Idaho Falls.

When the ELCA leadership asked that congregations participate in the *Journey Together Faithfully* studies, which dealt with issues of human sexuality, this congregation did that. At the synod assembly in 2008, the Reconciling Works Regional Coordinators from Region 1, along with members of the congregation, set up a display and encouraged full participation for all. The next year, a member of the synod council from the Idaho Falls congregation sponsored the memorial for ordination of all. But not all, including the lead pastor, were supportive.

Even before the vote was taken at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly, it was evident that this congregation would be led out of the ELCA. In several meetings, the few

These Lutherans wanted Lutheran worship and wanted to support the policy changes.

supportive members were out-talked, ignored, or yelled quiet. Supportive people spoke to congregation members and sent letters stating their position, but that did not stop the attacks. In October 2009 there was a first vote to leave the ELCA; eleven months later, there was a second vote. With that vote, the only ELCA church in Idaho Falls joined Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC).

While there had been supportive people sprinkled throughout the old congregation, they found it hard to organize, having been purposefully isolated from others who

agreed. After the vote, one family invited those opposed to leaving the ELCA to attend a barbecue. And here the seeds were planted for **The Beginning**.

This small group of ELCA Lutherans met often to chart their new path. They mourned the loss of their beloved congregation; there was much healing to do and many decisions to make. Through this trying time, the group of about thirty people bonded as they agreed it was time to explore another way to be an ELCA community.

Remaining in the ELCA was the top priority. It was suggested they worship with other denominations, but these Lutherans wanted Lutheran worship and wanted to support the policy changes. They began discussions about forming a new congregation. The Rev. Barbara Harrison Condon, on leave from call, volunteered to lead worship. Only two months after the previous congregation voted to leave the ELCA, the group began to worship together.

In the spring of 2011, Emmaus Lutheran Worshipping Community was born. At the 2011 assembly of the Eastern Washington–Idaho Synod, Bishop Martin Wells welcomed Emmaus Worshipping Community into the ELCA as a “synodically authorized worshipping community” (SAWC). Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson honored Emmaus Lutheran in his presentation at the churchwide assembly later that summer.

In the fall of 2011, Emmaus invited Regional Coordinators Paul and Karen Jolly

to lead a workshop on becoming an RIC congregation. About 20 people attended the workshop and left equipped with a process for congregational discussion and discernment. Because this group had left their previous congregation primarily because of discrimination, they quickly made the decision to write a welcome statement and become an RIC congregation.

The Regional Coordinators presented its RIC certificate in May 2012. And so it **begins**. The new ELCA congregation in Idaho Falls welcomes and accepts all. Pastor Condon

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Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Holmes Beach, Florida

Careful RIC process resulted in unanimous vote **BY CAROL M. DUNN**

“Blessed by God, who loves all creation!” the pastor said. The congregation responded: “God’s love has no exceptions; Alleluia!” “None of us can say to another, ‘I have no need of you.’ For only together can we find wholeness.”

Thus began the litany opening the October 14 worship at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Holmes Beach, Florida, on Anna Maria Island.

Wayne Morris, Regional Coordinator for Region 9, reviewed some painful facts as he presented the Reconciling in Christ certificate to the Rev. Rosemary Backer and the congregation. He reminded us that while most congregations believe themselves to be welcoming, often claiming to welcome “all,” a significantly smaller number translate that into an intentionally inclusive policy where LGBT and other marginalized people are included in all aspects of the life of the church. Gloria Dei

At the close of this celebratory worship service, several members of the congregation were seen with tears in their eyes. Among them was a new member, the parent of gay children and someone who intentionally sought an inclusive congregation. There was also a longtime member who had for some time been an irregular attendee until the “welcome talk” became reality. Others were visitors attending to celebrate the RIC status of Gloria Dei.

The Florida-Bahamas Synod (ELCA) officially welcomes all people “without regard to racial or ethnic distinction, family status, age, economic status, gender, sexual



Regional Coordinator Wayne Morris presents RIC certificate to the Rev. Rosemary Backer, pastor of Gloria Dei Lutheran, Holmes Beach.

orientation, or differing abilities.” But fewer than four percent of the synod’s congregations have made the RIC commitment to publicly welcome all. Gloria Dei is now the sixth congregation in the synod to do so, joining congregations in Ft. Lauderdale, Ft. Meyers, Clearwater, and Tallahassee.

At the close of this celebratory worship service, several members of the congregation were seen with tears in their eyes.

joins this list—which, thankfully, is growing steadily, in no small part as a result of building relationships through loving and graceful engagement.

Susan Bonser hangs the 2012 Assembly banner donated by Jean Etsinger to Gloria Dei.



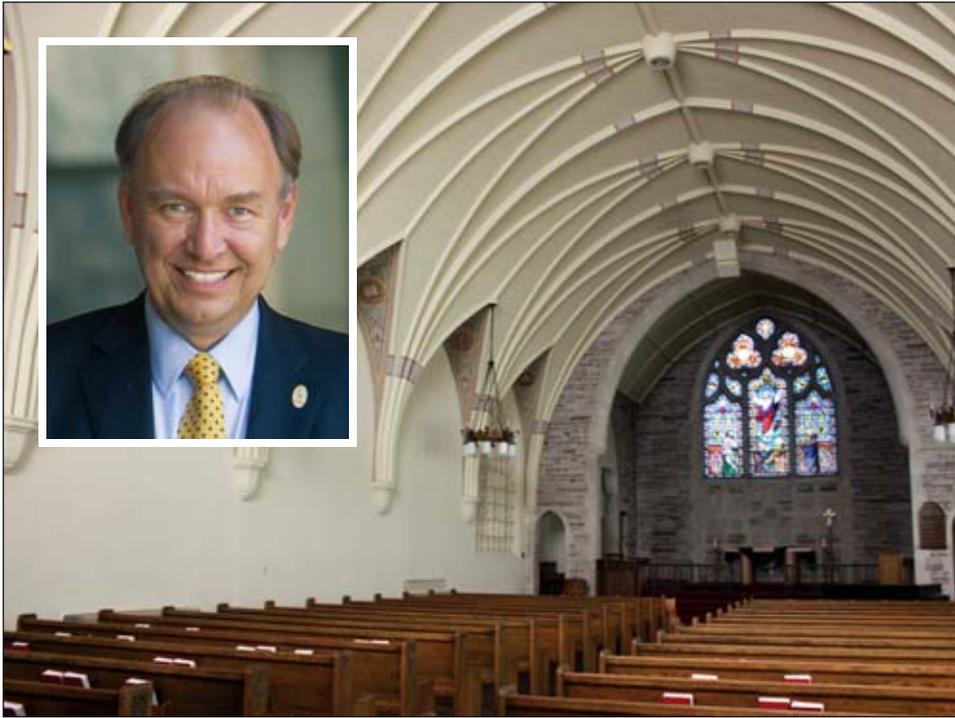
Gloria Dei is a splendid building, with a soaring roof, rich wood timbering, stained glass church symbols above and behind the altar, and a large sculpture of the Triumphant Christ suspended over the altar. A new baptismal font, a gift from All Island Denominations, stands in memory of Pastor John Bonser. Congregation member Jay Poppe designed the stand so that a shell appears to sit on the waters of baptism by floating in the reflection of the glass. The shell motif, traditional for baptism, is particularly appropriate for the beach setting of Gloria Dei. The church’s music ministry includes choirs, chimes, and a hybrid pipe and digital organ. On one wall

behind the altar hangs the banner from July’s *Reconciling Works 2012* Assembly, donated by Gloria Dei member Jean Etsinger. The RIC process at Gloria Dei was steady and deliberate. It began when Pastor Rosemary offered a discussion class on the question of congregational inclusiveness. A similar discussion had been proposed several years ago when the study guide series *Journey Together Faithfully* was published, but so few signed up for it that it was not held. This time, however, the response was better. The group discussed, considered, heard speakers, studied Scripture, and went on to propose to the council that the congregation declare itself fully welcoming. The council agreed, and the congregation as a whole was invited into the conversation. The result? A unanimous vote in the summer of 2012. The whole process took about 18 months.

Birgit Quam, member of the congregation since 1997, explains why she returned to active membership: “As I drove past the church soon after the new pastor was called, there was a new sign outside in bold letters: ALL ARE WELCOME HERE. I made an appointment to speak with Pastor Rosemary. It was a heart-warming discussion, and I left the church happy for the first time in years.”

Susan Bonser, a member since 1981, pointed to the new and broader welcome that has been shining out in the past six years. She listed a few examples: letters to first-time visitors, letters to “snow birds”

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Ascension Chapel of Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Inset: Augustana President Steven C. Bahls

Illinois' Augustana College to Allow Same-Gender Ceremonies on Campus

Augustana one of the first major institutions of ELCA to welcome same-gender weddings and blessings

Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, announced in late November that it would allow same-gender weddings and blessings of unions on campus. In a letter sent to students, faculty and staff, the college's president, Steven Bahls, explained that a recommendation had come earlier in the fall from the college's chaplains, the Revs. Richard Priggie and Kristen Glass Perez, to consent to same-gender weddings on campus.

"The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), to which the college is

Bahls for taking a public and prophetic stance on marriage as one of the ELCA's

practice within the denomination.

Augustana became a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) institution in 2004 and is one of only two RIC colleges in the ELCA. Illinois has allowed civil unions – but not same-gender marriages – since 2011.

Bahls further explained his decision in his letter by saying it was a matter of non-discrimination. He added that, in 2003, the college extended its health insurance plans to cover same-gender couples.

"To make a life-long commitment of love and fidelity is an extraordinary act of faith," Bahls' letter concluded. "We need more of those commitments in this broken world, and I am proud of our campus chaplains for bringing this request forward." ■

Embraced in Holiness

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ministries, resources, events and alliances, [we work to] build community for worship, education and support; foster welcome and acceptance in all Lutheran settings; advocate for the ecclesial changes necessary to ensure full participation in all rites, sacraments, and ministries of the Church; and [like St. Francis Lutheran Church] invite all people into Gospel lives of authenticity, integrity and wholeness."

In short, I support and serve ReconcilingWorks so that everyone can have the St. Francis experience, so that every LGBT person who longs for it will be embraced in holiness and into wholeness by the Lutheran congregation of their choice. ■

Gloria Dei Lutheran

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who are leaving for the summer, and letters for those who are returning for the winter. These were ways of maintaining relationships and strengthening welcome that she and her late husband, the Rev. John Bonser, had experienced when they moved to Florida, and now these practices are being applied to all.

Pastor Rosemary commented on the certification of the congregation with a promise that it would not stop there. "This doesn't end our process of becoming inclusive, but it is a step as we continue to reach out in our welcome to all," she said. "I pray for God's guidance and discernment as we listen to His call." ■

ReconcilingWorks applauded Bahls for taking a public and prophetic stance on marriage.

related, permits same-gender weddings so long as the local congregation consents," Bahls wrote. "Because Augustana is a church-related institution and not a congregation, the Bishop of our Northern Illinois Synod of the ELCA [Gary Wollersheim] determined that it was up to me as President of the College to provide or not provide consent. I decided to consent."

Augustana is one of the first major institutions of the ELCA that is not a congregation to publicly welcome same-gender weddings and blessings within its jurisdiction. ReconcilingWorks applauded

leaders of higher education and for helping to put the ELCA's policy allowing same-gender ceremonies, enacted in 2009, into

Upcoming "Becoming an Inclusive Church" Trainings

March 1-2, 2013
 Fargo, North Dakota
 Morehead, Minnesota

April 5-6, 2013
 Salt Lake City, Utah

May 4, 2013
 Vancouver, Washington

Marriage Equality

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“Today I am proud to be a citizen of the United States. The democratic process has worked and the people have spoken for justice,” Eastwood said, but noted that the United States is still deeply divided. “Our reconciling work is far from complete. Celebration and rest are both appropriate. Then, we must turn our attention to what we do best: building relationships, engaging across affinity and ideological group lines, and bringing the lens of the Gospel and the love of God to every interaction.”

Eastwood said that this year’s votes marked progress toward a larger goal. “Our church and our world are turning toward justice, albeit more slowly than we like. Our mission remains unchanged, to create the change we seek, a church and a world that welcomes and includes,” she said.

Minnesota

Minnesota voters defeated the Minnesota Marriage Amendment, which would have amended the state’s constitution to define marriage as between one man and one woman.

Hill worked with **hundreds of congregations and religious institutions** to encourage Lutherans to vote against the amendment.

The Rev. Anita C. Hill, a Regional Director for ReconcilingWorks in an area that includes Minnesota, organized Lutherans United for All Families, part of the larger Minnesotans United for All Families campaign.



“I am delighted that the voters of Minnesota chose to leave the door open for the eventual inclusion of same-gender families in the privileges and protections of legal marriage,” Hill said.

She worked with hundreds of congregations and religious institutions to encourage Lutherans to vote against the amendment. “It has been my privilege to



Minnesotans United For All Families leadership team celebrates the defeat of the anti-LGBT marriage amendment.

work with people of faith across the state who engaged in tender and vulnerable conversations with their family members and friends about what marriage for same-gender couples means to them,” she said. “We will continue to work for the full

Fisher added, “As much as I felt the tension, I know many others experienced it even more acutely. I think about the next-door, best-friend playmate of my godchild, a fifth-grader blessed with two moms. One day he just couldn’t take it anymore and became very upset. ‘Why do so many people hate us?’ he asked. He knew the amendment was dangerous and was pointed directly at his family. I am exceedingly thankful my state defeated this.”

Fisher, Hill, and other staff members at ReconcilingWorks’ office in St. Paul worked day and night in both their paid and in volunteer jobs, having conversations in congregations, calling voters across Minnesota, and knocking on doors.

Washington

Voters in Washington approved Referendum 74 to legalize marriage equality.

Regional Director Kari Lipke, second from left, with phone bank volunteers working for the Approve 74 campaign in Washington state.



equality for all couples who wish to say their wedding vows before God, family and community, and to have their marriage legally recognized by our state.”

The Minnesota vote affects Hill personally. “My partner and I are ready for the day when our relationship of 19 years will become a legal marriage in our home state,” she said.

Tim Fisher, Legislative Assistant for ReconcilingWorks, worked with teams in all six ELCA synods in Minnesota. Five synod assemblies passed resolutions opposing the constitutional amendment, most by large majorities.

“The campaign in Minnesota felt more personal than I – a straight, married man – had expected,” said Fisher, a resident and voter in Minneapolis. “Perhaps it was because the question was brought forward as a referendum, which meant that my friends, neighbors, and fellow church-members would all be making a decision one way or the other.”

With support from ReconcilingWorks, Kari Lipke represented Lutherans on the Faith Cabinet for the Washington United for Marriage campaign, helping to connect supportive Lutheran congregations and individuals with campaign efforts to approve Referendum 74.

“My heart soars with gratitude for the Washington voters who have opted to stand firmly on the side of love, commitment, and freedom in regard to marriage equality,” Lipke said.

In her work, Lipke helped secure, train, and encourage Lutheran spokespersons for advertisements, press conferences, letters to the editor, friend/family conversations, phone banks, and canvassing.

“Going forward, this vote will stand as a beacon of hope for the whole country, lighting the way to a fair and equal future for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and opening the door of true religious freedom for churches, synagogues, and other communities of faith that long to celebrate marriage with all loving, committed couples,” Lipke said.



Members of Gethsemane Lutheran, Seattle, march for equality in Washington state.

Maryland

Maryland voters approved the Civil Marriage Protection Act, which went to voters after it was approved by the Maryland General Assembly in February 2012 and signed by Governor Martin O'Malley in March 2012.

“I am joyously celebrating that the citizens of Maryland have voted to keep the Civil Marriage Protection Act legislation in place by extending security and civil rights to LGBTQ couples and families,” said John Carter, Convener of the ReconcilingWorks

Maryland chapter and a member of the organization's national board. “This action verifies that Maryland is a progressive state and shows that our society is evolving toward a more mature and egalitarian society that embraces diversity and assures equal application of benefits to its constituents.

Maine

The majority of voters in Maine supported marriage equality for all loving, committed couples by affirming Question 1 on that state's ballot.

While ReconcilingWorks did not have a presence in the state in the months before the election to speak to voters on the question, it asked its members in other states to take part in a last-minute campaign. ReconcilingWorks members took part in a Mainers United campaign to phone Catholics to encourage them to remain committed to voting yes for same-sex marriage in that state. ■

International Program Committee (IPC) Updates

Criminalization: a distressing trend. There are 76 countries where homosexuality has been criminalized. For some countries, this legislation dates from the colonial period. Recent trends have tried to increase the penalties in some countries. The Obama administration has made major efforts to counter this trend through diplomatic channels. Public pressure does not always work well, and the State Department urges discrete and informal communication. Established advocacy groups can be better channels in certain cases, and threats of cutting aid only irritate.

In Uganda, for example, after an embarrassing public confrontation in Canada, the Ugandan speaker of parliament has promised that the anti-homosexuality law will be passed and made law there by the end of the year, calling it a “Christmas present” for Uganda. If passed, the law will broaden the criminalization of same-gender relationships by dividing homosexuality into two categories: “aggravated homosexuality” and the “offense of homosexuality.” “Aggravated homosexuality” is defined as gay acts committed by parents or authority figures, HIV-positive people, pedophiles, and repeat offenders. If convicted, they will face the death penalty. The “offense of homosexuality” includes same-gender sexual acts or simply being in a gay relationship, and will be prosecuted by life imprisonment. Please pray for all those affected and the global impact if this grossly misguided action takes place.

Uganda is not alone in the drama. Last fall, a bill was passed in the Nigerian Senate calling for jailing gays and those who support them. Thankfully, that bill died after 65,000 people

signed a petition on the *All Out* (www.allout.org) advocacy website, calling for an end of the bill. However, a similar bill has been introduced in the Nigerian Assembly. *All Out* has re-launched its efforts, calling upon the President of Nigeria to veto the bill should it pass the final reading later. Under this bill, anyone who organizes or becomes a member of a “gay club,” gay or straight, and anyone who financially supports a gay organization could also face jail time. Any public displays of affection, such as holding hands or even looking at each other affectionately, could result in a ten-year jail sentence. The bill would make it a crime for gays and lesbians to get married, to witness a gay marriage, or for affirming churches to perform a gay wedding. Gays and lesbians who marry will face 14 years in prison. To sign a petition calling for the defeat of this bill, go to www.allout.org/nigeria-veto.

IPC Strategic Plan. Following the adoption at the *Reconciling Works 2012* assembly of the “change the church, change the world, change the church” strategic direction, an IPC Strategic Plan has evolved. The IPC strategic plan outlines where we would like to go, but implementation of expanded international activities would require grant funding and require Board approval. The IPC Strategy makes special reference to our policies of accompaniment and placing issues in the context of the intersection of oppression. We gain great strength by being seen as partners rather than directors, and doors are more readily opened if we place LGBT issues in the context of overall social and economic needs. We will provide more comments on these issues and approaches in subsequent issues of the *Concord*.

The IPC would like to see more members of ReconcilingWorks become involved in international concerns. The IPC proposes providing more internationally oriented articles in the *Concord*, encouraging chapters and individuals to contribute to the IPC program through budget or special fund-raising, sponsoring internationally focused activities at the chapter level, and encouraging members to join the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC).

One of the interests being advanced by IGLHRC is to ensure positive action by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) toward protecting LGBT people. Established in 1967, ASEAN is a regional organization composed of countries in Southern Asia. In 2009, ASEAN set up the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), which seeks to standardize all human rights declarations and legislation in the region. The IGLHRC is working with the LGBT community to press ASEAN to advance LGBT inclusivity in the language and consideration of all such documentation.

Military Relations. Having just marked Veterans Day, the role of the military as peace makers and peace keepers in international conflicts warrants IPC's consideration of LGBT issues in relation to the military. Most of you are aware of the work of the Service-Members Legal Defense Network (SLDN), but if you are not, check out their website at www.sldn.org.

—Philip W. Moeller, PhD., Director of International Programs



Worshippers mark the 30-year anniversary of the founding of the European Forum in Amsterdam, May 2012. Marti Scheel is at right in purple, “consensus waving.”

European Forum

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connected and reach out using social media such as Facebook.

A common characteristic is that the members of these groups identify as LGBT, not straight allies, and none of the member groups has a congregational or parish-related program similar to Reconciling in Christ. The forum’s six-member volunteer board does overall planning and conducts the business of the forum between annual

ecumenical partners. Civil laws are changing in the direction of allowing marriage equality, adoption, etc.... Progress in Catholic or Orthodox-dominated countries has generally not kept pace, and where civil laws have been liberalized (in Spain, for example), it has happened over the strong objections of the historically dominant church.

In a sense, the forum increasingly functions as a “mini-European Union,” speaking with a coordinated, pan-European

and eastern) European governments to enforce EU human rights laws and stop fueling the fire of reactionary, anti-gay religious rhetoric. The forum participates actively in World Council of Churches conferences and International LGBT Association (ILGA) meetings and is facilitating a workshop at the October 2012 ILGA-Europe meeting titled “Christian Churches and homophobic violence in Europe: Part of the problem or part of the solution?”

Like ReconcilingWorks, the forum is increasingly called to address issues of anti-LGBT rhetoric and violence induced by Christian groups in areas beyond the organization’s traditional geographical boundaries, particularly in Africa. The forum’s board is currently polling member groups and prioritizing how much of the forum’s resources should go to projects beyond Europe, as well as exploring funding options for these initiatives. By attending and reporting on each other’s meetings, ReconcilingWorks and the forum are increasing our understanding of each other’s issues and contributions. I’m honored and blessed to be able to play a part in this, on behalf of all the members and friends of ReconcilingWorks. ■

For more information on the European Forum, see www.euroforumlgbtchristians.eu.

The forum is increasingly called to address issues of anti-LGBT rhetoric and violence induced by Christian people.

meetings, which are a four-day mix of business, education, worship, and socializing. They’re held in English – not the first language for most attendees. Increasingly, forum business is being conducted via electronic mailing lists and Skype (internet webcam) meetings.

Where Reformation-based theology dominates, be it Anglican, Lutheran or Reformed (i.e., generally in the European north and west), the thirty years of the forum have seen increased acceptance of LGBT laity and clergy, similar to that achieved in the ELCA, ELCIC, and our

Christian voice to address injustices and violence perpetrated against LGBT persons, whether churched or not, by both religious and secular powers. And because most European countries are, or aspire to be, members of the European Union – which, at least in theory, has high standards for enactment and enforcement of human rights, including those of LGBT persons – the forum gains leverage by cultivating relationships with supportive EU human-rights commissions and staff. These commissions and staff can be called on to pressure non-compliant (mostly southern

ReconcilingWorks Welcomes Kari Lipke to Staff

Kari will serve as Regional Director for Region 1

Kari Lipke joined the ReconcilingWorks staff in late July to help organize Lutherans in support of the Washington United for Marriage Referendum 74 campaign. At the successful completion of that campaign to bring marriage equality (*praise be!*) to the state of Washington, Kari will continue part-time as the ReconcilingWorks Regional Director for Region 1, which includes Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and a tiny slice of Wyoming. She will work from Seattle.

Kari is an approved candidate for ordained ministry in the ELCA. She lives with her spouse, Joanne, and their dog, Stella, in Seattle. Kari grew up on a farm in Minnesota. She earned her BA at Gustavus Adolphus College in 1998, her M.Div. at Harvard Divinity School in 2011, and

Community Service Center. During these years, Kari volunteered extensively at First Lutheran Church in St. Peter, serving as a volunteer youth director, a member of the Christian Education team, council chairperson, and as part of the team that shepherded First Lutheran's successful



Kari is an approved candidate for ordained ministry in the ELCA.

completed her supervised congregational internship through Luther Seminary this past August.

She worked at Gustavus from 1998 to 2008, first for two years as an AmeriCorps VISTA organizer, organizing literacy and tornado-recovery projects in the St. Peter community, and then for eight years as an administrator in the Chaplains' Office and

(and very thorough!) RIC process. Kari also taught yoga in St. Peter, both on campus and in the community, including a weekly group for offenders at a local juvenile facility.

In 2008, Kari entered candidacy in the ELCA and began formal theological education in Cambridge, Massachusetts. During her three years there, she worked

for University Lutheran Church as the Coordinator for Young Adults and Graduate Students. In the last two years, she also served as lead confirmation teacher.

On May 22, 2011, Kari and Joanne were married at University Lutheran. The two moved to Seattle that summer: Joanne to a new call as pastor of Gethsemane Lutheran Church and Kari to a seminary internship at St. John United Lutheran Church (both RIC). ■

Emmaus Lutheran

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preached the words of acceptance and welcome, saying, "All of you have been chosen by God. When a GLBT person hears the words, 'the church is for all,' they may wonder if that means they are welcome. I am here today to say it does!"

Members of the group report today that they knew each other in the original congregation, but had no idea they were in agreement regarding full inclusion. This is a joyful group of friends who enjoy their time together in Bible study and fellowship and whose welcome is felt by many, including frequent visitors.

This faithful group of believers ended their long-term relationship with their church, but have begun their journey together with their newly formed community. They share a worship space with another congregation, focus on

outreach to the local and world-wide community, and financially support their

The Rev. Barbara Harrison Condon, pastor of Emmaus Lutheran Worshipping Community, Idaho Falls.



synod. They are not planning to invest in their own building.

For this congregation, the change in the ELCA policy was a blessing. Each member can now be authentic in worship and fellowship with others. Praising God is their foundation for their life together. ■

Karen Jolly was Co-Regional Coordinator with her husband Paul for eight years. They walked with this congregation from the 2009 Synod Assembly, through the pain of the congregation's leaving the ELCA, to the joy of forming a new congregation. They made the 800-mile journey to Idaho Falls twice to assist this congregation in its work.

Save the Date!

Creating Change

National Conference on LGBT Equality
January 23-27, 2013
Atlanta, Georgia

2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly

August 12-18, 2013
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



The Revs. Fred Kinsey and Kim Beckmann believe reconciling works in Chicago.



The congregation of St. Peter Lutheran Church in Port Jervis, New York, believes reconciling works!



Michelle, Lauren, and Luke Morse-Wendt believe reconciling works in St. Paul.

I N H O N O R O F...

In Honor of...		Honored by...
Adam Bost	In honor of Adam Bost, a great son and friend	Sharon & John Bost
Joe Brown	In memory of Joe Brown	Mike Crandall
Sheri Brown	To God's Spirit moving within Sheri Brown	Rev. Kirk E. Anderson
Michael Crandall & Shawn Hudson	In honor of the wedding of Michael Crandall & Shawn Hudson	Herman & Mary Cage; Sumner Riddick & Douglas Carl; 10 anonymous
Dennis Douglas	In honor of the work of Dennis Douglas, Director of Music Ministries, St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, Monona, Wis.	Members of the Sanctuary Choir at St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, Monona, Wis.
Emily Eastwood	In honor of Emily Eastwood's commitment and hard work on behalf of ReconcilingWorks' mission	Rev. Vicki L Pedersen & Rev. Martha Lang
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	10 anonymous
First Lutheran, St. Peter, Minn.	In honor of the people of First Lutheran Church, St. Peter, Minn., a Reconciling in Christ congregation.	Joanne Engquist & Kari Lipke
Roberto Flores	In honor of Father Roberto Flores	Kenneth E. Rozek
René García	In honor of René García, friend of the family	Rev. Kirk E. Anderson & Sheri Brown
Rev. Ginger Georgulas	In memory of Rev. Ginger Georgulas	Bob & Martha Eastwood, Fred & A.M. Krueger, ReconcilingWorks/North Texas
Virginia Kay Georgulas	In loving memory of my wife, Ginger Georgulas	Fred Behrmann
Rev. Anita Hill	In honor of the work of Rev. Anita Hill	Marta & Ron Lettofsky
Rev. Anita Hill	In honor of Rev. Anita Hill's 60th birthday	Dan Ranum
Paul & Karen Jolly	In honor of Paul & Karen Jolly for their faithful work on behalf of ReconcilingWorks	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
Wayne Morris & Steve Miller	In honor of Wayne Morris & Steve Miller	Lucienne Morris
Jan Owen	In memory of Jan Owen	Bob & Martha Eastwood
Kurt Neumann	In honor of Kurt Neumann's Marathon for Marriage Equality	John Carter, Everett Freeman, Rev. Anita C. Hill, Christopher Magan & Miles Amen, JamieAnn Meyers, Dr. Karl & Dixie Neumann, Richmond Schmidt, Amy & Bill Scott, Kathy Shattuck, Jett Winders & Tim Turner
Rev. Glen Sea	In Honor of Rev. Glen Sea as a thankoffering for his participation in the promotion of Lieutenant Colonel Erik C. Backus	Erik Backus
Phil Soucy	In Honor of Phil Soucy as a thankoffering for his participation in the promotion of Lieutenant Colonel Erik C. Backus	Erik Backus