

ReconcilingWorks!

Lutherans Concerned/North America becomes ReconcilingWorks

Indeed, it does! And that is one of the reasons it is the new name for Lutherans Concerned/North America. On June 12, 2012, we officially became ReconcilingWorks in order to better reflect the mission, values and goals of our organization, our movement, of Lutheranism, and Christianity.

Ultimately we are all called to spread the good word of the saving grace of the love of God expressed by Jesus of Nazareth for all of us, all of us without regard to race, ethnicity, skin color, gender, economy status, gender identity, sexual orientation, height, or any of

In that sense, like a waterworks or millworks, we are a “reconcilingworks,” that is, a place where reconciling happens. Hence, there is no space between the words. The word reconciling is a gerundive, an adjective formed from a verb indicating a process, not a stasis.

Christianity, the church, represented by the fish symbol. The diversity of the world, our church, our organization is reflected in the varied colors of the stained glass-like panels in the heart. Green and blue in the lower two panels remind us of land and sea. Arcs cross and form the sections of the heart indicating the multifaceted intersection of oppressions that diminish our world, even the church, which has been itself a source of oppression and discrimination. The heart is the key to reconciliation, beating with the fervor of our faith, with the love of God and with life borne of reconciliation in Christ.

Welcome to ReconcilingWorks!! See other articles in this edition of Concord for

RECONCILINGWORKS

LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION



the other measures, characteristics, differentiations that have been used to privilege one group over another on the basis of difference.

The name that served us so well from our founding has become increasingly less descriptive of the ministry we have developed across time from the courageous beginning of the founders in 1974 through the beginnings of the RIC program in 1983 and on to the addition of faith-based community organizing and training leading to policy change and response to the emerging issues of today. We are not only Lutherans concerned about LGBT inclusion; we are Lutherans working for full participation through a ministry of reconciliation. We are not just worried Lutherans anymore. We are Lutherans working at the intersection of oppressions to build power to create the change we seek.

ReconcilingWorks as a name describes us on several levels. First, reconciling really does work. Reconciling prevents disagreements from growing into permanent separation one from another. Reconciling is what Paul says in the epistles we are all called to do. Secondly, reconciliation is what we do.

The name evokes motion, a dynamic nature.

The logo includes the phrase “Lutherans for full participation.” Our mission statement says we work at the intersection of oppressions, seeking to eliminate them and discrimination, first regarding LGBT people as children of God, but at the same time viewing all other oppressions in the same light, seeing them for what they really are: related denials of the equality of children of God, devaluations of the intended wondrous diversity of creation and antithetical to following Christ. Racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, patriarchy, heterosexism, homophobia and all the other artificial distinctions that seek to raise one group into privilege and preference over another are creations of the same sin.

We are, as the logo connotes reading from top to bottom instead of left to right, reconciling Lutherans, working for full participation, of everyone.

The previous heart symbol of the Reconciling in Christ program morphs into the more nuanced, expressive, and integrated ReconcilingWorks heart, reflecting at the same time the hopeful nature of our work grounded in Scripture and the challenges of the world as we find it. At the heart’s center is

explanation of the evolution of the logo and a brief history of the organization.

At Reconciling Works 2012, our assembly from July 6–10, we will all celebrate this renewal of our identity, this commitment to make the heart of the church beat with the full inclusion of all God’s children on an equal basis, hearing the message of reconciliation inherent in our mission of advocacy with grace. ■

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All Good Things Do Come to an End

DALE TRUSCOTT

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new... To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life." *Revelation 21: 5-6 NRSV*

In September of 2001, I accepted the request from the Board of Directors of ReconcilingWorks to serve as editor for *Concord*. It has been a labor of love for these eleven years. Sometimes I have relished the prospect of another issue to review; other times it seemed to start out as drudgery only to become a creation of which I could be proud and excited. During the last several years my job has been made more pleasant by my close working relationship with our Communications Director, Phil Soucy. I believe we have been a good team along with Tim Fisher, ReconcilingWorks' Legislative and Communications Assistant, Carol Dunn, our Assistant Editor, and Jim Gerhard, our Designer. As well it has been a privilege to work with the Executive Director and a number of officers, board members and committee chairs of ReconcilingWorks, and a team of volunteer writers upon whom I could call at a moment's notice to contribute excellent articles.

While it seems a cliché, "all good things do come to an end." This is the last issue of *Concord* for which I will be the editor. I want to thank all the members of ReconcilingWorks for your faithfulness. You have meant and will continue to mean more to me than you know. But, that is something we can all say about one another for our roots go very deep in this movement.

I found Lutherans Concerned in 1989 when it was time for me to begin a journey out of my cocoon. And what a great emergence it has been. I found friends in the Ann Arbor chapter and made my way to my first assembly in Philadelphia. I helped found a new chapter in Toledo, Ohio. And I served as Secretary of the LC/NA Board before the editor's position came my way.

Now I want to lend my cheers of support for ReconcilingWorks as we are reborn under a new name. "See, I am making all things new." That is what God does, not always on our timelines but always in God's good time. Our Churches in the United States and Canada have affirmed LGBT people and our committed relationships, including mine. And, now, finally, the United States President has "seen the light." The voices of discontent over these courageous and faithful moves only echo the truth of inclusivity and full participation and equal rights that God has promised by assuring us that God makes all

things new.

God gives water to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life. What a tremendous metaphor. Throughout the scriptures water is affirmed as the source of life. We are conceived in it, born from it, reborn from it in Baptism, sprinkled with it and returned to it. We even

use it as the marker by which we judge whether life might be possible on newly discovered planets in God's universe. God gives the water and life emerges from the waters. In so many of our ReconcilingWorks worship experiences, we have created fonts of water, lots of water, and we have splashed it around in many, many ways. What a joy!

Now Lutherans Concerned becomes ReconcilingWorks. I must echo what you will read elsewhere in this issue that, of late, I have wondered whether our old name was understandable to others. "Lutherans concerned about what?" It had become "in group" language. But ReconcilingWorks speaks the truth of the Gospel. And it has a fascinating double entendre. Reconciliation does work, and we are the ReconcilingWorks, the Reconciling factory where reconciliation is made and delivered. We serve the ELCA,

"I want to thank all the members of ReconcilingWorks for your faithfulness. You have meant and will continue to mean more to me than you know."

the ELCIC and the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church from within now, as partners in ministry. And we have so much to offer!

I wish ReconcilingWorks well. I remain available and willing to help when and where I am able. I just won't be reading all these articles over and over and over again. Blessings upon those who carry on this work of love. ■

Publication Information

CONCORD is published quarterly by ReconcilingWorks www.ReconcilingWorks.org. Subscriptions are included with membership or are available separately: \$25 a year to non-members. First class or foreign postage is extra. Write if you have special mailing requirements. Requests for past issues, along with payment of \$5 per issue, should be sent to CONCORD Copies, PO Box 4707, Saint Paul, MN 55104-0707.

Submissions should be directed to: CONCORD Editor, PO Box 4707, Saint Paul, MN 55104-0707 or via e-mail to: concord@ReconcilingWorks.org. Appearance of names of individuals in this newsletter, or membership in ReconcilingWorks does not constitute a definition of sexual orientation. The membership list of ReconcilingWorks and the subscription list to CONCORD are strictly confidential. Send changes of address to address above.

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Printed on recycled paper

ISSN 0741-98 72



Who Supports ReconcilingWorks and Why... continued

JEANNINE JANSON

Contacting folks to thank them for their support is still my favorite thing to do as Vice Chair of Development. I continue to ask people if they would be willing to provide a quote for my *Concord* article. Their responses are amazing. I couldn't do any better for this column than share their remarks with you.

inclusiveness of God's love for all people, that no one should be made to feel unwelcome in Christ's church, and that ReconcilingWorks has been and continues to be a respectful and a faithful advocate for justice and inclusiveness."

Bishop Dave and Gretchen Brauer-Rieke, Milwaukie, Oregon: "We are pleased to

There are miles to go before we all understand the full implications of what it means to be a diverse community.

Rev. Richard Anderson, Stanchfield, Minnesota: "I am so very much aware these days of the important work of ReconcilingWorks. My call from the St. Paul Area Synod to Lutheran Social Services would not be happening were it not for the work of ReconcilingWorks. I am very, very grateful for the years of dedicated work of the leaders of ReconcilingWorks. My life has been transformed by the results of their efforts. Thank you."

Rev. David and Gloria Baker, Penn Valley, California: "We support the ministry of ReconcilingWorks because we believe in the

support the work of ReconcilingWorks with both our time and our money. The work of simple acceptance, equality and understanding for those who are LGBTQ is ongoing. Thank you for leading the way! Our lives, personally, have been deeply enriched by those LGBTQ brothers and sisters who have shared their journey with us and risk living in the integrity of their God-given self. Would that we were all so courageous and clear. We are here to help with this wonderful work in whatever way we can."

Rev. Kenneth J. Dale, Claremont, California: "I enjoy reading the *Concord*, and

appreciate the work of ReconcilingWorks in general, mainly because I think you are sincere in keeping your message of fairness toward all human beings grounded in Christian faith and values. I think it is this grounding that makes your voice effective within the Lutheran Church. Surely the advancement of the cause of equal treatment for people of all sexual orientations among Lutherans owes a great deal to your holistic message and tireless leadership."

Rev. Sue (and Rev. Tim) Gamelin, Jamestown, North Carolina: "Tim and I are deeply grateful for the part that ReconcilingWorks has played, and continues to play in the ELCA. ReconcilingWorks' gracious, informed, and patient leadership was vital, absolutely vital, in moving the ELCA to the vote in Minneapolis in 2009. I wept and wept that night in Minneapolis. I wept tears of joy and tears of sadness. Sadness? Why sadness? Because it took so many years to reach that vote. The ministry of ReconcilingWorks is still necessary. There are miles to go before we all understand the full implications of what it means to be a diverse community, yet one in Christ. That's why Tim and I continue to support ReconcilingWorks and thank God for the work of this remarkable organization. Our love and prayers continue, too." ■

Editor Dale Truscott leaves the *Concord*

Dale, that is, the Rev. Dale Truscott, editor of the *Concord* for the last eleven years, is retiring from that position effective with this issue. Dale has edited *Concord*, written his wondrous sermon-editorials faithfully across those years, and helped shepherd the issues through on the way to your mailboxes.

We are grateful for Dale's witness and work for the cause of full inclusion, his commitment to the mission and message of advocacy of this organization, all with unflagging good humor.

Dale began as editor in September 2001, and since then, across the decade-plus, there have been more than 40 issues of *Concord* that informed the membership of news,

events, information, and thought-provoking essays, including the banner year of 2009 and its history-making churchwide assembly.

A partnered pastor with 42 years ordained experience in congregational work, Dale has ministered to Lutherans in Saline, Michigan; interim ministries for the Southeast Michigan synod; Sylvania, Ohio; West Milton, Ohio; and Dayton, Ohio, having

begun his ordained ministry as a Lutheran Church in America missionary working in Jerusalem.

For the last five and half years, Dale has lived with his partner of thirteen years in Orlando, Florida, teaching comparative religion, philosophy and humanities at the University of Central Florida and at Valencia College.

Editor duties for the *Concord* will be taken up by Tim Fisher, Legislative and Communications Assistant, in the St. Paul, Minnesota, headquarters of ReconcilingWorks. ■



EMILY EASTWOOD

Holy Conversations

You know you are a true church geek when you love synod assemblies. I confess: that’s me. This assembly season, ReconcilingWorks staff and volunteers deployed to conventions from coast to coast to carry the good news of reconciliation.

In May I was in the Southwest Washington Synod with Regional Coordinator, Paul Jolly and synodical coordinators, Karen Jolly (Oregon) and Rick and MaryAnn Nelson (Southwest Washington). The ReconcilingWorks display table was shared with the Women of the ELCA’s synodical organization. Sitting right between the free Starbucks coffee and the restrooms, we had nearly perfect placement for “walk-by” conversations. Rainbow beads and “Proud to Be ELCA” rainbow pins were big hits with supportive voting members. The evening hospitality suite was packed, a hotel room turned into a late-night gathering place of allies and advocates. As always in such “upper room” gatherings, stories were told, tears shed, hugs shared, connections made, and actions planned for individual and congregational reconciling work. Our thanks are due to every team of reconcilers working at synod assembly events. Our movement grows because of the relationships built and renewed at such gatherings.

The day had begun with a remarkable keynote presentation featuring a dialogue between Washington Governor Christine Gregoire and Bishop Rob Hofstad on the topic of vocation. You may recall that Governor Gregoire signed the bill passed by the state’s legislature securing marriage equality for same-gender couples. The

Governor and the Bishop were a study in contrast. She, the feisty intense highly-principled liberal politician. He, the quiet, pastoral administrator called as bishop to a certain form of specialized ministry (his words, not mine). Imagine Hillary Clinton being interviewed by Mr. Rogers in black clerics without the tennis shoes. No slam intended here. I liked Mr. Rogers, a slight man with a gentle, loving spirit, who was, in real life, a pastor.

The work of **reconciliation** is hardly ever quick and requires **intentionality**, persistence, and relentless love.

The bishop and the governor sat in large armchairs with wireless microphones and spoke mostly to each other. We listened in. Theirs was an uncommon conversation, not the usual political or Lutheran assembly fare; no stump speech or sermon but a one-to-one visit in a very large fishbowl. More than an hour, the dialogue provided the assembly with an intimate glimpse of the values and sense of calling that drive their state’s chief executive officer and, through the questions asked, a deeper understanding of the synod’s chief executive. The whole dialogue could have been a collision of politics and religion, but none of that potential tension was in evidence. Rather, the interweaving of

question and answer demonstrated the art of reconciliation between unlikely partners toward a combined mission for the greater good of all people.

The bishop asked most of the questions, the governor responded with stories filled with emotion about real people in her life from her days as a clerk typist, a case worker, an attorney, then attorney general, and now as governor. Trained as a teacher, she never held that job, but there is no doubt that she has been a life-long educator. This extraordinary person, who came of age during the Vietnam era, spoke of her calling in terms of servant leadership.

She isn’t Lutheran, rather Roman Catholic. She spoke of the tension between her faith and her role as a public servant in only two areas: application of the death penalty and marriage. The framing of her words about the marriage equality bill was careful, acknowledging that this crowd of Lutherans might not be of one mind on the issue. She used only the word marriage,

never adding the words gay, same-sex, or same-gender. She spoke of marriage for our people in the context of marriage for all people, the role of the state to issue licenses, and the role of faith communities and faith traditions to discern their own paths regarding which relationships to bless and whom to marry. Her values were clear: separation of church and state by law and the equal protection of all families under the law. Rather unwittingly or by plan, the governor laid the groundwork for the later discussion regarding the synod’s position on legal protection of same-gender couples and their families. The vote, finally taken in the closing minutes of the assembly, was overwhelmingly in favor of welcome and support of those same families, with the floor debate and a statement from ELCA Secretary David Swartling clarifying the position of the ELCA that marriage is at the discretion of pastors and congregations in states where legal.

At the Southwest Washington Synod Assembly, as at many assemblies this spring, the process of graceful engagement and strong legislative strategy worked well together for incremental change within the latitude granted by the ELCA social statement on human sexuality.

RIC Settings Added to the Roster since last issue

- Abiding Savior Lutheran Church, Fairview, North Carolina
- Adoration Lutheran Church, Greenfield, Wisconsin
- All Saints Lutheran Church, Sun Valley, California
- Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Baldwin, New York
- Celebration Church, Cypress, Texas
- Christ the King Lutheran Church, Phoenix, Arizona
- Emmaus Lutheran Community, Idaho Falls, Idaho
- Faith Lutheran Church, Junction City, Oregon
- Grace of God Lutheran Church, Millsboro, Delaware
- Grace Lutheran Church, Gidding, Texas

- Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity, Vallejo, California
- Redeemer Lutheran Church, Bangor, Maine
- St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, New York, New York
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Park Forest, Illinois
- Zion Lutheran Church, Everett, Washington
- Zion United Lutheran Church, Brodheads ville, Pennsylvania

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

Reconciliation is underway at a pace that we could not have imagined even two years ago.

As we rebrand our organization to ReconcilingWorks, we believe that our calling is the ministry of reconciliation, gifted to us by a gracious and loving God and modeled for us in the life and words of our savior Jesus Christ who gave himself for the sake of the world. The work of reconciliation is hardly ever quick and requires intentionality, persistence, and relentless love. Reconciliation comes one heart and mind, one congregation, one synod at a time. We reach out in love, sometimes as the wounded healer opening hand and heart, bringing our true selves in witness, love, and clarity, to those persons and systems which have done the wounding. If we believe that we are indeed reconciled to God once and for all time through our baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus, then none can separate us from the love of that same God. We are made bold by our faith and the imagining of the church and the world as they could be, whole and holy in God's sight.

Ours is the work of holy conversation, listening deeply and reflectively, responding to injustice by working for systemic change through the building of relationships across ideological and affinity group lines. To be about reconciling work we choose graceful engagement from within, seeking the face of Christ in each face, meeting others where they are and walking with them for a time in respect and conversation. We strive to be a clear, peaceful, grace-filled presence in the face of discrimination and oppression. We work for the reconciliation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities to the church and the church to them. We bring our Lutheran witness to society, moved by the Holy Spirit from the pews to the workplace to the statehouse and beyond, even to the halls of Congress. The ministry of reconciliation is not easy, but, if consistent and continuous, can be both life- and system-changing.

The Governor may be Catholic, but in the best of who we are as ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation, we would

Upcoming "Becoming an Inclusive Church" Trainings

September 13–15, 2012
Oakland, New Jersey

October 25–27, 2012
Grand Rapids, Michigan

November 8–10, 2012
Pella, Iowa

gladly welcome her as an honorary Reconciling Lutheran. Empowered by her faith, she is a public servant leader, a living example of vocation in action for the sake of the world. May we embrace our vocation as boldly. ■

A bit of history... about Assembly '78

The Very First Assembly BY JEANNINE JANSON

The first Lutherans Concerned Assembly was held July 7–9, 1978, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The gathering was grounded in worship, featured a keynote speaker, offered workshops, and included a business session. The keynote speaker was Dr. Elizabeth Ann Bettenhausen, Secretary for Social Concerns at National Headquarters for the Lutheran Church in America (LCA).

Leo Treadway, a ReconcilingWorks Pioneer who attended Assembly '78, recalls that "Dr. Bettenhausen was identified as a feminist Lutheran theologian who actively supported LGBT folks ('gay and lesbian' as we would have said then). We were concerned that we hear from someone "with church

credentials." She was a great choice for our keynoter."

The preacher at the Festival Eucharist Service, held Saturday night at Lake Park LCA Church, was Rev. Charles (Chuck) Lewis. The Rev. Chuck Lewis is a (Lutheran) pioneer in what started as the "gay liberation movement."

Chuck is also a ReconcilingWorks pioneer. He organized the San Francisco Chapter of Lutherans Concerned in 1974 and continues to serve the chapter today. (You can read more about Chuck Lewis, at www.lgbtran.org/Profile.aspx?ID=126.)

Below are excerpts from the articles on "Assembly '78" that appeared in the Lutherans Concerned newsletter, *The Gay Lutheran*. ■

ASSEMBLY 78, the first national meeting of our members since we organized in 1974, was planned as a truly national meeting, drawing on talents from all across the country. Attendance was close to 60 gay and non-gay participants, speakers and leaders.

Workshop leaders came from Michigan, Georgia, California, Minnesota and New York, while lay and clergy participants came from the LCA, ALC, AELC, Missouri and Wisconsin synods.

Workshops focused on public speaking before non-gay audiences, ministry to the church, our own group's structure, identifying theological resources, probing ethical issues facing gay men and women, and on building chapters' programs and

effectiveness—the last one so engrossing that it resumed later, during a rest period.

The Assembly opened and closed with a Folk Eucharist. Both Folk Eucharists made careful but unobtrusive use of both language and imagery that is inclusive of both genders. The non-inclusive language of the liturgy and hymns of the Festival Eucharist Saturday night were in stark contrast to the Folk Eucharists, prompting lively discussion and a learning experience for many.

Comments from attendees...

"It was worth every penny." — LCA, Pennsylvania

"It was a very fine and spiritual gathering of men and women concerned for the witness of the Gospel. I am really excited about LUTHERANS CONCERNED and want to get more deeply involved. So if you need me, just tell me and I'll do it!" — AELC, Texas

"The whole thing was very meaningful to me. I could really feel God's presence as we worshipped. One by-product I did not expect: on Tuesday, July 11, I told my folks I am gay." — LC/MS, Missouri

"We accomplished much... We have much to do, and now we have a beginning!" — ALC, Indiana.



RECONCILING IN CHRIST CORNER

The Significance of Luther Place Memorial, Washington D.C.

Assembly Host Has Long Welcoming History BY CAROL M. DUNN

Imagine Martin Luther presiding over a rainbow-themed “junk art” garden, ready to greet the finishers of the Washington, D.C. Pride Parade. After your surprise, remember both his sense of humor and his emphasis on Grace for all.

Luther Place Memorial has occasionally decorated their outdoor Martin Luther statue for Pride. They regularly use the rainbow heart, put the “all are welcome” statement on their website, prepare an RIC Sunday service in January, display rainbow-themed recycled art in their Sacred Commons space, take part in the Pride parade in D.C., and serve as a welcome-station at the end of the parade, with glorious brownies, lemonade and water.

Even more important, however, is the fact that the congregation is a grace-filled home for people who have been seeking a congregation for themselves or in their solidarity with a loved one. Senior Pastor Karen Brau says, “We have learned not to underestimate the level of pain and hurt that people have experienced in church, so we have learned to welcome carefully, as we may be the first contact someone has had with a church in a long time.”

This congregation in Washington D.C., the host congregation for our July 2012 ReconcilingWorks assembly, has a long history of outreach and advocacy. It provides

for a social justice and interfaith ministry, Shalom House, which includes a hostel service and learning ministry. An adjacent non-profit called N Street Village, founded by Luther Place, empowers homeless and low-income women, offering services and

advocacy in a dignified atmosphere. Lutheran Volunteer Corps, also founded by Luther Place Memorial, has grown so that it now has more than 120 volunteers serving social justice agencies in sixteen cities across the country. Rev. Brau was part of the steering group of D.C. Marriage Equality, organizing for the effective passing of legal marriage for LGBT couples in the District. Internationally, the congregation has supported the efforts of LGBTQ rights in Uganda and Rwanda.

Parishioner Monica Fitzgerald explained

her membership at Luther Place. She and her partner joined at the urging of friends who were members. “Our friends described it as an incredibly welcoming place—and they were right. I’d never heard of Reconciling in Christ before. But with Luther Place I knew we’d picked a place we could call home.” She and her partner, now spouse, were the first gay couple to be married under the auspices of Luther Place. Fitzgerald continues, “Since we’d already had a commitment ceremony years earlier, we opted to have Pastor Brau come to our home to marry us under D.C. law.” In fact, Reverend Brau has officiated at seven such weddings (same-gender marriage is legal in D.C.) and has two more coming in the fall.

Fitzgerald is a leader in the Families and Friends group, made up of lesbian, gay, and straight couples with children, as well as couples without children. She believes the opportunity for children in families with LGBT parents to learn about the amazing love of God is invaluable. She continues, “We love that we are not the only family there with same-gender parents. It helps our kids to see that they are not the only kids with two moms or dads.”

Prior to becoming an RIC congregation, the congregational leadership was reluctant to take open action towards becoming more officially welcoming. The usual explanation was offered: Luther Place already had an “everyone is welcome” policy, and declaring a special welcome “wasn’t necessary.”

Member Susan Boyle, who described the old way as a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, said several members urged an RIC process forward during leadership changes. Once begun, some congregations move through the process toward becoming RIC in a year, or

We have learned not to underestimate the level of pain and hurt that people have experienced in church, so we have learned to welcome carefully.

occasionally race through in fewer months. Luther Place members and staff spent several years in very careful preparation. It was not easy, but it allowed everyone to give input and hear ideas. Associate Pastor Susanne Blume, who was a lay member at the time, explains that the congregation went through a series of education opportunities and discussions. The fact that the council voted positively early in the process helped take it toward a congregational vote. Boyle remembers that in 1998, newly-installed

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COURTESY OF LUTHER PLACE MEMORIAL

St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Port Jervis, New York

Church in Central Location for Welcoming **BY CAROL M. DUNN**

The Rev. Patt Kauffmann, pastor at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Port Jervis, New York, "had a vision of a congregation (we) did not know could exist." This is how Dave and Linda Musto describe the refreshing wind that blew through the congregation four years ago, and continues there today. The vision is one of Gospel inclusivity, of intentional welcome to all people, including, though certainly not limited to, LGBT people and their families.

The wind cost the congregation one family, but on its breezes came others, some from as much as thirty miles away, who are part of St. Peter's because they value the concepts and the acceptance. Dave says that the church is like "one family where you can come and worship, gather, and socialize, and be totally comfortable." The congregation declared its position with an RIC statement in 2010.

Their website proclaims that "All who seek God are welcome at Holy Communion," and that at St. Peter's "we recognize as sacred and holy same-sex and heterosexual couples' desire to marry and solemnize marriages for all who are seeking to live out their baptism in an ethical and loving relationship." This year, New York became one of the states that permit and recognize same-sex marriages. The Rev. Kauffman points out that the communion welcome statement does not

require baptism, but only a sincere desire to seek for God at the Lord's Table.

Kevin Greaves has been at St. Peter's for 13 years, well before their RIC declaration. Back then, he said, most people didn't seem to be aware of the need to be public about welcoming LGBT people, but the new pastor and her husband, who came to St. Peter in 2008 brought the idea with them and

The pastor had a **vision of a congregation** we did not know could exist.

encouraged it. The congregation, he says, now seems "reinvigorated." Bill Kauffmann, the pastor's husband, is a fine-arts photographer and serves as the artist-in-residence for the congregation. Some of his photos are on the website (www.stpetersportjervis.org) and one

illustrates this article. Among the outreach and social ministry projects at St. Peter's are participation in the ELCA Hunger Appeal, the Heifer Project, the local food pantry, a crop walk, and an active prayer chain.

New member Angela Urbina is looking with joy toward the day in December when Rev. Kauffmann will preside at a marriage ceremony for her and her partner. Her partner learned about St. Peter's when reading a letter to the editor written by the pastor, and since then they have found pride and gratitude in joining and serving in the congregation.

The "idea of 'love everyone, except...' is the antithesis of God's teachings," says Laurie Schneider. She goes on to explain that her son's godfather is gay and she knew she needed a congregation that reflected her family's love of the godfather. The denomination to which she then belonged did not fit that description. A meeting with St. Peter's pastor turned her "struggle with faith and guiding her son into excitement to join a

new church." The Port Jervis area has a large concentration of LGBT families, according to Rev. Patt, and St. Peter's makes a point of welcoming and including all who wish to be part of the congregation's life.

Port Jervis is located on the Delaware River, where New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania are virtually contiguous, putting the congregation in a pivotal spot for people in three states seeking a congregation which proclaims its welcome. And the Metro New York Synod, together with the ELCA nationally, has recognized that by awarding to St. Peter's an unusual joint three-year grant to support and encourage their work and outreach to the LGBTQ community. The focus of St. Peter's work will be on education, outreach, and support staff. There are slightly more than 200 ELCA congregations across New York City, Long Island, and the seven upstate counties. About a tenth of those congregations are RIC. The Rev. Dr. Robert Rimbo serves as bishop of the synod. ■

Rev. Patt Kauffmann, pastor of St. Peter's Lutheran, Port Jervis, New York, during the Easter service.



WILLIAM KAUFFMAN, ST. PETER'S, PORT JERVIS

ReconcilingWorks Board Sets Strategic Plan

At its March 2012 meeting, the Board of Directors adopted a final draft of a long-range strategic plan, including a set of guiding principles, key organizing criteria, and strategic directions. The drafting of the plan was the result of a year-long process, with careful discussion, writing, and prayer.

Social-change organizations like ReconcilingWorks typically engage in a process of long-range strategic planning every three to five years. Successful strategic planning requires a fine-tuned sense of the complex and constantly changing context in which our organization does its work, so that everything we do is directed toward realizing our core mission. (See below for details about that context.) ReconcilingWorks is working to

Successful strategic planning requires a fine-tuned sense of the complex and constantly changing context.

build a movement within the Lutheran church, but in that work we are part of multiple movements, both faith-based and secular, each with its own goals. The

challenge is to keep multiple contexts and perspectives in mind simultaneously, balancing the needs of faith, Lutheranism, politics, and power.

The process began in April 2011 with the board reaffirming ReconcilingWorks' vision and mission statements. At that same meeting, the board and staff participated in a focused brainstorming exercise, generating a

list of twenty-four values and principles. The vision and mission statements and the list of twenty-four values and principles were then forwarded to a special meeting—dubbed,

Mission Statement

Working at the intersection of oppressions, ReconcilingWorks embodies, inspires, advocates and organizes for the acceptance and full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities within the Lutheran communion and its ecumenical and global partners.

Values

We believe that God values and embraces each person as a beloved child, that the Spirit gives a diversity of gifts for the common good, and that Jesus Christ calls us to work for justice. The ministries of ReconcilingWorks embody, inspire, and support the acceptance and full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, their families, friends and allies, within the Lutheran communion and its ecumenical and global partners.

Through our Reconciling in Christ Program, ministries, resources, events and alliances, ReconcilingWorks: builds community for worship, education and support; fosters welcome and acceptance in all Lutheran settings; advocates for the ecclesial changes necessary to ensure full participation in all rites, sacraments, and ministries of the Church; and invites all people into Gospel lives of authenticity, integrity and wholeness.

History and Context

Founded in 1974, ReconcilingWorks is a pan Lutheran membership organization committed to ministry with and on behalf of LGBT Lutherans. The Reconciling in Christ program was started in 1983 as a means for identifying congregations willing to "come out of the closet" about their unconditional welcome of first gay, then gay and lesbian, and now people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Even in its early days ReconcilingWorks worked to provide both a safe sanctuary and a ministry of education and advocacy toward moving the Lutheran church to be a more welcoming place.

In 2002 ReconcilingWorks made a conscious shift to faith-based community organizing as the vehicle to organize people and money to create change within the Lutheran church, its ecumenical and global partners. Reconciling in Christ trainings began in the fall of 2003 with a goal of recruiting, training and

activating RIC teams in every synod of the ELCA to actively promote the expansion of the RIC program.

With collaborative partners, Wingspan Ministry and Lutheran Lesbian and Gay Ministries (now Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries) ReconcilingWorks led a joint major donor campaign from 2002–2006 raising \$1.6 million in pledges and gifts for the ministry. The gifts received from the campaign and the commitment of several foundations for ongoing support allowed ReconcilingWorks to ramp up its infrastructure, training and legislative programming to meet the timeline for decisions within the ELCA and ELCIC regarding social statements on human sexuality including recommendations for policy change.

ReconcilingWorks responded to the stresses of the recession of 2008 and 2009 by downsizing both its budget and infrastructure. Despite these shifts and staffing changes associated with the protracted illness of its executive director, the organization continued its mission utilizing increased numbers of volunteers.

In 2009 the ELCA passed an inclusive social statement and eliminated its policies which excluded "practicing homosexuals" from rostered service. In 2011 the ELCIC also passed an inclusive social statement, eliminated its discriminatory policies and further allowed for the marriage of same-gender couples within the congregational context. While the ELCA social statement described same-gender marriage, it did not preclude nor endorse it.

In 2011 ReconcilingWorks ran a successful anti-bullying campaign, which expanded its base of support and moved the organization from a "recognized independent Lutheran organization" to an "endorsed ministry partner of the ELCA."

Strategies related to the legal marriage or lack thereof of same-gender partners in church and state have come to the fore as catalyzing moments to reactivate and grow the organization's base of support affording opportunities for expansion and deepening of the RIC program both down to the threshold level of anti-bullying and up to the more potentially divisive level of congregational support for marriage equality.

ReconcilingWorks has grown exponentially in budget, size, reach, and success since 2002 achieving

many of its interim goals. With the passage of this strategic plan the organization will embrace the shifts necessary to turn policy into practice and respond to the evolving landscape of domestic and international opportunities to work for increased equality both in church and society in the next five to seven years.

Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles are those convictions that the organization believes should never be compromised. ReconcilingWorks commits to the following Guiding Principles, which are drawn from our core values:

Christ Centered/Gospel Driven

The ministry of ReconcilingWorks is centered on the good news of Jesus Christ, our redeemer, who taught us by his words and work the way of love, joy, justice, reconciliation, and grace. Our ministry is compelled by the call of God in our lives to witness to the reconciling love of Jesus and to work for justice. *"Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.... For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law."* (Romans 3:23–24, 28 NRSV)

Reconciliation

In the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, God reconciled us to our creator. Jesus has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Our work is to build relationships in love and grace, speaking the truth, so that we may come to new or renewed understanding as the Body of Christ, overcoming estrangement, discord and division on the basis of real or perceived differences. *"All this is from God, who reconciled us through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation."* (2 Corinthians 5:18 NRSV)

Sanctuary

ReconcilingWorks respects and honors the need of some for safe space and sanctuary due to fear of oppression for who they are or because of whom they love. Those subscribing to ReconcilingWorks publications, asking for information, or joining ReconcilingWorks are assured that ReconcilingWorks honors this need. Some activities conducted by or participated in by ReconcilingWorks are by their

appropriately enough, the “Strategic Planning Meeting”—held in July 2011. The July meeting included board members, regional coordinators, and staff and was facilitated by a professional organizational consultant. A draft was drawn up and sent on again to the board, who worked on language at their September 2011 meeting.

The document below on these pages is the result of that process. It begins with ReconcilingWorks’ vision, mission, and values, which continue unchanged. Following those items is a section relating the history and context from which flows the plan’s guiding principles, key organizing criteria, and strategic directions for the next three to five years. ■

nature public; individuals should judge for themselves whether or not to participate in those activities. *“In the shelter of your presence you hide them from human plots; you hold them safe under your shelter from contentious tongues.” (Psalm 31:20 NRSV)*

Welcoming and Inclusive

The ministries of ReconcilingWorks are welcoming and inclusive. We strive to mirror the change we seek in the world, working in ways that value hospitality, inclusion, diversity and the participation of all. We affirm with the apostle Paul that, in Christ, *“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28 NRSV)*

Theology of Abundance

The ministry of ReconcilingWorks flows from a theology of abundance. We believe all people have been miraculously loved into existence by God and that God has given us all the resources we need to realize God’s kin-dom on earth. *If God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? (Matthew 6:30 NRSV)*

Intersectional/Interrelated

ReconcilingWorks works at the intersection of oppressions. We recognize that oppression occurs within complex, interrelated combinations of social and cultural categories, such as class, race, age, body shape, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and mental and physical ability. We believe that the roots of oppression can best be identified, minimized and ultimately eliminated using this intersectional frame. *“None of us is free until all are free.” (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)*

Systemic Change

ReconcilingWorks works for systemic change in policy, practice, and culture. We are committed to the ecclesial, social, and legal changes necessary to realize and embody our vision of the church and the world, working to alleviate not only the painful symptoms of oppression but also to eliminate its root causes. *“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the*

International Program Committee (IPC) Updates

Transgender issues have become more heated in Asia, where acceptance of male to female transitioning is particularly culturally challenging because of inheritance issues and formal and informal issues of “family continuity.” Conflict, public abuse, and physical violence have increased, though some of the increase may be the result of better reporting.

From Karla, India, we are saddened to hear of the brutal murder in May of gender/transgender advocate Anil (Mariya) Sadanandan, whose advocacy had raised the ire of his neighbors and caused court claims against him (all of which he won). An investigation is ongoing.

To increase our appreciation of the complexities of asylum and immigration issues, IPC Director Philip Moeller participated in a special workshop in Philadelphia on June 3, 2012 – a social justice issue of increasing concern, an area where increased capacity and resource is called for.

At Reconciling Works 2012 in July in Washington, D.C., we will be presenting international workshops. One will look at the general issues of the intersection of oppressions in a global context; another will look at companion relationships.

Beginning on July 16th, a collaborative gathering of faith-based LGBT and AIDS advocates will attend the Ecumenical Pre-Conference sponsored by the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance based in Geneva. Following that they will attend the International AIDS Conference, July 22-27. In collaboration with the St. Paul’s Foundation for International Reconciliation, ReconcilingWorks is sponsoring participation in this inter-faith activity.

And, Marti Scheel again represented ReconcilingWorks at the European Forum of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Christian Groups meeting in Amsterdam in May, which will be reported on subsequently.

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

bonds of injustice, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?” (Isaiah 58:6 NRSV)

Key Organizing Criteria

Key Organizing Criteria describe how an organization will develop, promote, and disseminate a worldview; how it will build an infrastructure to carry out that work; and how it will achieve its *strategic directions* (see below). In executing its work, ReconcilingWorks is guided by the following Key Organizing Criteria:

Relationship building. We build relationships within church and society at all levels: grassroots, congregational, synodical/regional, denominational, ecumenical, international, and interfaith.

Graceful engagement from within. We are committed to accompanying others in respect and mutuality, walking alongside both those who agree and disagree with us as we discern future directions for shared mission. We avoid and do not value divisive rhetoric or actions.

Collaboration. We work toward common goals through engagement within our own organization and through building coalitions between ReconcilingWorks and other organizations.

Horizontal management. We practice team building and distributed leadership, whereby contributions from all levels of the organization (board, staff, and volunteers) are valued. All leaders share interdependent responsibility for the implementation of the vision and mission of ReconcilingWorks.

Advocacy. Through faith-based community organizing, we organize people and money to build power to bring about the change we seek. In articulating and disseminating the transformative nature of the Gospel, we hold individuals and groups accountable to the tension between their stated core values and their behaviors.

Movement-building. Through meetings, training events, workshops, and events such as the ReconcilingWorks triennial assembly, regional gatherings, and Lutheran denominational and synodical assemblies, we build and maintain missional and organizational momentum.

Strategic Directions

Strategic Directions are specific, focused targets for activity to realize an organization’s mission at a given time. In developing the organization’s programming priorities and budget, the following Strategic Directions will guide planning:

Expand and deepen our Reconciling programs.

We are committed to increasing the roster of Reconciling in Christ (RIC) settings and the number of Reconciling Lutherans. We will pay special attention to increasing the cultural competency of our Reconciling programs and to expanding and deepening our Reconciling programs in communities of color.

“Change the church, change the world, change the church.”

The church is not isolated from the world. Indeed, the church’s mission is to and in the world. Our faith compels us to speak out, bringing our Lutheran voice to bear on societal problems, exercising our faith through witness, education and persuasion. Examples include but are not limited to anti-bullying education and training, marriage equality education and training, story-telling trainings, local, synodical, regional, national and international presence and advocacy.

Policy to practice. Our work is about more than just policy change; it is also about changing the culture of the church so that more inclusive policies are lived out in practice. Depending on context, gaps in what the denominational leadership is willing and able to do given diminished financial capacity and may be filled by ReconcilingWorks as a ministry partner.

Working at the intersection of oppressions.

ReconcilingWorks will focus particularly on work at the intersection of oppressions to increase awareness and inclusion of bisexual, transgender, and gender non-conforming persons as well as persons and congregations of color. Our advocacy will extend particularly to oppressions affecting these groups.

Organizational excellence.

ReconcilingWorks will enhance long-term success by emphasizing organizational excellence and financial stability. Leadership development and training, addition and documentation of needed policies as well as succession planning for staff, board and key volunteer positions will ensure the long term stability, viability and growth needed to accomplish our mission.



Intersection of Oppressions

Heart

Diversity Rainbow

RECONCILINGWORKS
LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION

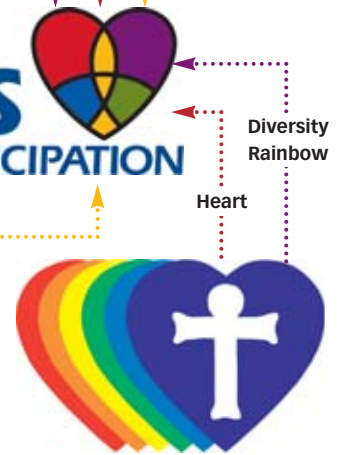


Font

Christian

Diversity Rainbow

Heart



So, where did the new logo come from?

In every case, where an organization re-brands itself, there should be an effort to preserve recognizable portions of the previous identity so that the new can be seen as transitional and as much of the value in the built-up credibility of the organization is brought into the new identity.

Such an effort went into the elements of the ReconcilingWorks logo.

Between each of our assemblies, a work of art is commissioned, containing elements depicting our concepts, values, work, and principles, from which entire discussions—sermons even—about us can be derived. The color palette from the artwork becomes the color palette used for publications and the color scheme on the website, for instance.

You see the current artwork depicted above on the left. In the past, the original artwork was auctioned off at our assembly to raise funds, which will happen this year in Washington in July. Some of the elements in this artwork are found in the new logo.

The font of the words “Lutherans Concerned” was preserved. **Eras** is a font with an excellent history of visually connoting strength through the solid perception of its letters by most who see it, as well as activity, movement, energy, and forward motion because of its 3% slant. We kept it.

The **heart**, seen as the symbol of the Reconciling In Christ program that sits at the center of what we do as advocacy and

outreach, was incorporated into the logo, enshrining the principles and never-ending work of reconciling into our new identity.

The **fish**, used as a symbol of Christianity from the beginnings of Christ’s church, found painted on ancient walls as graffiti denoting the presence of the early church and followers of Christ in the locale, was in our previous identity and was brought forward

into our new identity.

The **intersecting lines** in the artwork, reflecting the intersection of oppressions as the locus of our work, whether on full inclusion of LGBT people, on anti-racism, or any of the other-isms that beset people in society and the church, come into the logo in the intersecting lines in the heart. And yes, the Christian symbol is crossed by those lines because even the church is not exempt from being oppressive and discriminatory.

The diversity of colors in the new logo is reflective of the harmonious **rainbow** diversity we seek in the world, society, and the church.

This, then, is our new identity and symbol as ReconcilingWorks. ■

Regional News

Report from Region 5

In March, a one-day Building an Inclusive Church training took place at Messiah Lutheran in Washburn, Wisconsin. Trainers included Emily Eastwood, Tim Feiertag, and Vicki Wunsch with twenty-two participants coming from Messiah Lutheran in Marquette, Michigan, a group from Gloria Dei in Duluth, and one United Church of Christ member, hosted by Messiah. Messiah Lutheran is located in a rural area on the shores of Gitchi Gumi, also known as Lake Superior. Seeds sprouted for these two future RIC congregations, both named Messiah Lutheran.

Region 5 includes Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. I have served as a Regional Coordinator (RC) since the

fall of '07 and will retire at the end of the summer. Ruth Almen will start as the new RC for this region. Ruth’s home congregation is Messiah Lutheran in Marquette, Michigan, which I believe makes Ruth the first Yoooper to serve as a regional coordinator! Ruth is the perfect fit with her many contacts throughout Region 5 and the ELCA. More info about Ruth will come in the next issue of *Concord*.

Looking forward to attending Reconciling Works 2012 and seeing many of you in Washington D.C., July 6–10, where our Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson will be the keynote speaker!

—Kathy Shattuck, ReconcilingWorks Region 5 Coordinator



Board of Directors Meeting Actions

The Board of Directors of ReconcilingWorks met March 23–25, 2012, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In addition to the board’s business, reviewing finances and being updated on plans for the upcoming assembly (Reconciling Works 2012), other significant actions that came before the board included the following:

New Staff

The board was pleased to learn that Pastor Anita Hill of St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, would be coming to work full-time for ReconcilingWorks as the Regional Director for Region 3. Anita’s extensive contacts throughout the church and Minnesota, as well as her prodigious talents, will first be directed toward efforts to prevent the amendment of the Minnesota state constitution that would limit marriage as being only between a man and a woman. By board action, one of the two board positions for Co-Director of the Committee Working at the Intersection of Oppressions was moved from board to staff, to solidify the connection between staff and board in that important work. Anita is now a Co-Director of that committee.



Anita Hill

The board was also pleased that staff has been increased, lessening the load on prior staff and expanding the work that can be done. Brett Bowman has been promoted to Deputy



Kurt Neumann

Director, Operations from Operations Manager; Kurt Neumann has been hired as Operations Manager (requiring that he vacate the volunteer position of Secretary on the board—a position that Jeannine Janson, Vice Chair for Development, has agreed to take on additionally until the July election of a new board at the assembly); Tim Feiertag has been hired as Grassroots Coordinator; and Travis Van Horn, a student at Western Oregon University, will work this summer as an intern, first on the Lutheran Day on Capitol Hill visits by participants of Reconciling Works 2012 to their congressional officials and then representing ReconcilingWorks at the ELCA Youth Event this summer.



Tim Feiertag



Travis Van Horn

Constitutional Changes to a Three-Year Cycle for Assemblies and Boards of Directors

In 2013, both the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

(ELCIC) will have the second and final readings and votes to change their constitutions to move to a three-year cycle for their national gatherings. The result of that change will push the next such gatherings in both churches from 2015 to 2016. ReconcilingWorks’ constitution also mandates that we hold our assembly every two years and sets the term of office for the board of directors at two years. The constitution further states that the constitution can be changed at just one of our assemblies. Accordingly, the board of directors passed a resolution to send a contingent change to the constitution to the upcoming July assembly for its approval. If approved, that contingent change will automatically change the constitution to a three-year cycle for assemblies and board of director’s terms of office, assuming the ELCA and ELCIC take such decisions in 2013. This will prevent us from having to hold an assembly in 2014, pushing that assembly to 2015. ■

Luther Place Memorial

continued from page 6

Pastor Bob Holum announced to the Church Council that despite the threat of ELCA sanctions, he was going to offer same-gender commitment ceremonies. People were nervous. They felt they were putting themselves at risk.

But discussions continued for a total of four years of study. A request to assist a visually handicapped member by having the proposed statement read aloud right before voting came at the perfect time: it encouraged final prayerful reflection. The vote was overwhelming for an intentionally inclusive statement. Luther Place became officially RIC in 2000.

Reverend Brau has been at Luther Place since 2008. She comments that the membership of Luther Place has been growing over the last several years in membership of both gay and straight people, and that there is “a joy in expanding with both congregational and community LGBT ministry.” She continues that the congregation has for the last several months moved ministering to LGBTQ people in small groups, people gathering bi-monthly for fellowship, spiritual conversations and mutual support. She points out that Luther Place is located in a neighborhood with a large LGBTQ population, so “we are seen as being in sync with our immediate mission field.” ■

Marriage Matters News

ReconcilingWorks is working with Lutherans in as many states as possible to support marriage equality, including Maryland, Minnesota, Illinois, and Washington. What follows is a round-up of news from these efforts.

Washington State Passes Marriage Equality, Bishop Boerger Speaks Out

On February 13, 2012, Governor Christine Gregorie and the Washington Legislature extended the civil right to marry to all people, becoming the seventh state to legalize marriage between same-gender couples, joining Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, New Hampshire, Vermont and the District of Columbia, all having marriage equality as the law of their lands. The Washington measure included language to protect freedoms of religion for all faith communities and religions organizations.

ReconcilingWorks expresses thanks for the prophetic witness of ELCA members and pastors, including Bishop Chris Boerger of the Northwest Washington Synod, in educating representatives, senators and the Washington public about the synod's position on marriage for same-gender couples. In his testimony before a Washington State Senate committee, Bishop Boerger said he was in favor of LGBT couples being able to have legally-recognized marriages that are equal in the state:

"In 2009 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America voted to commit itself to find ways to allow congregations who choose to do so to support and hold publicly accountable lifelong monogamous same gender relationships.... One of the people who had questions about our doing this asked, 'Bishop, isn't that marriage?' And my response is, 'Well, in everything but name.' The reality is, the Lutheran church has always held that it is the state that defines what marriage is; it's the church that then blesses people who enter into that relationship. We have now stated our desire to bless those who are publicly accountable in lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships. We can't call it marriage—you can. That's why I am here today to say there will be those in my church who will not participate; we understand that freedom. There are those who want to, and we ask for that freedom."

Executive Director Emily Eastwood said, "We thank Bishop Boerger for his courageous witness. His statement reflects the fine line of the ELCA social statement which allows freedom of choice for those pastors and congregations wishing to perform marriages for same-gender couples in



Bishop Chris Boerger, Northwest Washington Synod, ELCA

See ReconcilingWorks' Marriage Matters Website

For updates on marriage-equality news, statements from Lutheran leaders, and information on how you can get involved, go to www.ReconcilingWorks.org/mm.

states where such are legal. The Northwest Washington Synod has long supported full participation for LGBT people in the life of church and society. Bp. Boerger's statements reflect the views already expressed by the synod. Nevertheless, by taking these views to the legislature and, therefore, into the media, Bp. Boerger has acted for justice. Our thanks are due."

Sadly, however, we know that the likelihood of a statewide referendum to repeal the law is very high. ELCA members in Northwestern and Southwestern Washington synods have submitted resolutions to their assemblies calling for the synod to support the new marriage equality law and oppose a public referendum, should one be brought in November.

Maryland Passes Marriage Equality

On March 1, Governor Martin O'Malley and the Maryland Legislature enacted the Civil Marriage Protection Act, extending legal protection for civil marriage to all couples in the state of Maryland. Richard Graham, bishop of the ELCA's Metropolitan DC Synod (which includes parts of Maryland) along with many other faith leaders in Maryland, participated in rallies and lobbying at the Maryland capital in favor of marriage equality.

Metro DC Synod Assembly Supports Marriage Equality

On April 27-28, by majorities greater than two-thirds, the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod passed resolutions in support of the Maryland Civil Marriage Protection Act and the Uniting American Families Act. On the Maryland Civil Marriage Protection Act, the assembly called for welcome, care, and support of same-gender couples and their families, as well as advocacy for their legal protection. Further, the assembly commended the governor and legislature of Maryland for extending the protections of marriage to all couples, while protecting freedom of religion and the freedom of congregations and pastors to act in accord with their consciences. Most importantly, the assembly stated its support of the law as enacted and its opposition to repealing the act (such an action will be offered by referendum on the Maryland ballot in November).

On the Uniting American Families Act, the assembly directed the synod bishop to communicate with the President of the United States and the members of Congress serving the territory of the synod, asking them to co-sponsor, support, and press for passage of this act as part of inclusive, comprehensive immigration reform that ends the long-standing discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender immigrant families. Under current law, a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident is permitted to sponsor his/her spouse, child, or parent for immigration but not same-gender partners.

Minnesota Lobby Day, Faith Leadership Training

On March 29, ReconcilingWorks staff and members participated in the annual "Lobby Day for LGBT Equality", which has been hosted for over a decade by OutFront Minnesota. OutFront

Minnesota is the state's largest organization working for LGBT rights. Hundreds of LGBTQ people and allies from across the state, including quite a few Lutherans, came to the state capital to meet with their representatives and senators to discuss issues of marriage equality, legal protections, bullying in schools and in the community.

At noon that day, Lobby Day participants gathered on the front lawn of the capital to rally for equality. Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton, the first sitting governor to address the annual rally, addressed the crowd to great applause.

Immediately following the Governor's address, the Rev. Kelly Chatman, pastor of Redeemer Lutheran in Minneapolis, delivered a rousing speech, saying "I encourage you to stand with your church and your faith, to stand in solidarity for all of the people, so that if marriage is valued for some it is value for all."

ReconcilingWorks thanks Rev. Chatman for his passionate witness.

Rev. Chatman's speech at the rally reflects the special emphasis on faith-based organizing seen in the state-wide campaign to defeat the amendment. Although voices of faith were raised in all of the nearly 30 states that currently have constitutional amendments limiting marriage freedoms, the Minnesota campaign is the first to place significant emphasis on organizing within faith communities.

The next day, twenty-four ELCA Lutherans and scores of other people of faith from the United Church of Christ, Universalist Unitarian, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Episcopal, Jewish, Presbyterian, Quaker, Wiccan, Mormon, and other traditions spent a full day receiving training. The training focused on the Minnesota campaign's "conversational" strategy. The most powerful way to change hearts and minds is through one-to-one conversations with people you know. Research has shown that folks who are on the fence about marriage equality are far more likely to vote in favor if they have had conversations with people they know, particularly LGBT people, about why marriage matters to them. This strategy closely parallels the storytelling techniques that ReconcilingWorks has been teaching for nearly four years. Our goal is that Lutherans in Minnesota will have 100,000 such conversations between now and November 6, 2012.

Minnesota Synod Assemblies Opposes Constitutional Amendment, Bishops Speak Out

Since mid-February, five of the six Minnesotan synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) have met in assembly—and each has spoken out in opposition to the proposed amendment to the state constitution that would deprive the right to a civil marriage to same-gender partners. None of these resolutions binds the individual members of the synod to vote in any particular way. Nonetheless, they provide an important sense of the synods' reactions to the



Rev. Kelly Chatman, Minnesota State Capital, St. Paul, Lobby Day for LGBT Equality

Marriage Matters News

attempt to change the constitution to restrict rather than protect freedom of religious communities to choose whom they marry.

Although the wording differs slightly synod to synod, the resolutions passed at these assemblies call the synod to oppose the constitutional amendment. Four of these resolutions explicitly recognize that the amendment would “prevent one group of committed couples and their families from pursuing ordinary legislative or legal means to gain the support and protections afforded to all others” and oppose it on that basis. All of the resolutions also urge the synod bishop to “make the synod’s position on the matter known throughout the synod and to the public at large.”

Executive Director Emily Eastwood said, “The very idea that the civil rights of a minority in our society can be put to a popular vote is a tremendously important issue for America, our society, and every citizen in Minnesota. It is right that the church voice an opinion based on its social statement and bound conscience to support civil rights, to support and care for same-gender couples and their families, and to advocate for their legal protection. The proposed constitutional amendment does none of that. In fact, the amendment would limit our families to a second class status.”

“In several cases so far, the debate has been lengthy and thorough as the voting members turned back all attempts to water down the resolution. We are gratified by the growing Lutheran witness in support of continued conversation about marriage for same-gender couples and against any decision which would limit that possibility. We give thanks for the courage of those voting members at the assembly who came forward to witness for the protection of all families, including those of same-gender couples, and for saying “no” to discrimination, and “yes” to equality.”

Minneapolis Area Synod. On February 18, in a sea of green voting cards with the word “yes” printed on them, the Minneapolis Area Synod, the largest synod of the ELCA, met in Prior Lake, Minnesota, and voted by an estimated 85 percent in favor of the resolution.

Northeastern Minnesota Synod. On April 27–29, the Northeastern Minnesota Synod (ELCA) met in assembly in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, and passed the resolution by about two-thirds (estimated). It also called upon synod congregations to “continue to welcome, care for, and support same-gender couples and their families.”

A few weeks prior to the assembly, Bishop Thomas Aitken of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod indicated his personal view on the subject of the constitutional amendment, saying in a Pastoral Letter that he intended to vote against making such a change. Bishop Aitken wrote:

“The ELCA does not tell its members how to vote in the public arena. It is worth noting that we Lutherans live well in



Bishop Thomas Aitken, Northeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA

paradox, able to hold prayerful convictions in respectful tension all the time. We recognize that faithful Christians, tending to Scripture and confessions, live together with differing understandings of capital punishment, war, and genetics, just to name a few ethical issues. We’ve made a commitment to live together with diversity. Since life will continue to present us with complexity and grey areas, I prefer to live into the future together with respect for this diversity, while focusing on Christ and the gospel as our theological core. The proposed Minnesota



Emily Hamilton and Jamie Hofmeister, Lutheran Volunteer Corps interns for ReconcilingWorks and St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran, respectively, demonstrate how in the 2012 synod assembly season in Minnesota, a Yes vote means Yes to equality and No to the discriminatory constitutional amendment.

marriage amendment would preclude some congregations in our synod from providing a ministry of marriage they regard as appropriate and may well deny equal treatment to couples under the law. Therefore, I will vote against it. That doesn’t mean you have to. We stand firm on the principle of honoring the bound conscience of each other.”

For the full text of the letter, see <http://ReconcilingWorks.org/mm/support-for-marriage-fromlutheran-leaders>.

ReconcilingWorks gives thanks for the leadership of Bishop Tom Aitken and for the continued prophetic witness of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod.

Southeastern Minnesota Synod. On May 4, the Southeastern Minnesota Synod met in assembly in Rochester, Minnesota, and passed a resolution explicitly opposing the proposed “marriage amendment.” The margin was 229 in favor of the resolution, 179 opposed.

Northwestern Minnesota Synod. On May 12, the Northwestern Minnesota Synod met in assembly at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, and passed the resolution by an estimated 70–75 percent.

The Rev. Anita Hill, Regional Director, ReconcilingWorks, said of the vote on this resolution and the opposition to amending the constitution, “By a margin of more than 70%, the Northwestern Minnesota Synod assembly today voted to support equality and inclusivity in our state’s constitution. Voting against the proposed Minnesota constitutional amendment on marriage, Lutherans in Northwestern Minnesota stand on the side of same-gender couples and their families. During the debate, voting

members often referred to the command of Jesus that we love one another, noting the Lutheran imperative to love and care for our neighbors.”

About a week before the assembly, Bishop Lawrence Wohlrahe of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod wrote a Pastoral Letter to members of the synod. His letter asked several important, thoughtful questions, including:

“Is it wise for people of Minnesota to decide such questions via constitutional amendments rather than the political process that involves all three branches of our state government?”

“Is this constitutional amendment really only about marriage? Does the phrase “shall be valid” (in the proposed amendment) indicate that the amendment, if passed, could preclude any consideration of future legislation allowing for domestic partnerships or civil unions for same-gender partners in Minnesota?”

Saint Paul Area Synod. On May 18, the Saint Paul Area Synod met in assembly in Burnsville, Minnesota, and passed the resolution overwhelmingly. The resolution also called upon the synod’s congregations and members to also oppose the constitutional amendment.

On April 23, Bishop Peter Rogness of the Saint Paul Area Synod sent a Pastoral Letter to the synod. He wrote:

“I do not support this amendment that prohibits the marriage of same-gender couples. I believe such a position is consistent with the work our church has done on these matters.

We recognize that neither our church nor our society is of one mind. Our church has said both understandings and practices should continue to exist, side-by-side, both held by the conscience of faithful people. We affirm differing patterns of ministry and response to same gender couples. Some congregations have seen it as faithful and appropriate to offer support to what we have called ‘publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships.’ This amendment would appear to preclude these congregations from offering that ministry and that support. More broadly, the amendment removes the possibility of our coming to an increased understanding of and support for such life-long, committed same-gender relationships as a society. It puts into the constitution one view, which denies equal treatment to some couples under the law. I don’t believe it is either a conclusion to which our social statement leads us or a compassionate way for us to shape human community in this state.”

For the full text of the letter, see <http://ReconcilingWorks.org/mm/support-for-marriage-fromlutheran-leaders>. ■



Bishop Lawrence Wohlrahe, Northwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA



Bishop Peter Rogness, Saint Paul Area Synod, ELCA



Kirsten, Charlette, Sarina, Emily and Phil Beckler
 very church that we joined when Charlette was born, the church where Charlette attended Sunday School, youth activities, and was confirmed, I realized how wrong the ELCA's stance on marriage equality is.

Why I Support ReconcilingWorks

BY KIRSTEN BECKLER, mother of Charlette Beckler, Youth Representative on the Board of Directors

I always considered myself a tolerant person. I had never understood why someone should be discriminated against for any reason, including their sexual orientation. But to be honest, I didn't give it much thought. As the marriage equality movement began to receive more and more press coverage, I thought that the LGBT community should be satisfied with the right to get married in a civil ceremony. A legally recognized marriage would give the lesbian or gay couple equal rights under the law. That should be enough, right?

And then my oldest daughter came out to me as a lesbian and everything changed. Well, not everything—my love and support for her NEVER changed. She always has been and always will be my beloved child. But the way that I began to view things changed radically, primarily due to two incidents.

The first was when my beautiful, precious daughter asked me if I thought that maybe some of the Christians who condemn the LGBT community were right; was she going to go to hell? That rocked me back on my heels—here was my daughter who was completely accepted in her family and who belonged to a church whose views on the LGBT community were evolving and, if not perfect, were, at the least, accepting of her. The answer came to my lips so easily that I knew that the words were God's, not mine. I told her that I knew two things to be absolutely true down to the core of my being. The first was that God does not make

mistakes and the second was that He had made her. That meant that she was completely perfect and completely as God

"My daughter asked me if I thought that maybe some of the Christians who condemn the LGBT community were right—was she going to go to hell?"

had intended her to be, so how could she be anything but a beloved child of God?

Charlette's question got me thinking about all sorts of LGBT issues in new ways. And one day, as I sat in church, I realized that as things currently stand in the ELCA, two of my three daughters could walk down the aisle of our church and be married to the partner of their choice. But one of them can't, simply because of her sexual orientation. As I looked at the church that we have supported financially for 20 years, the church that we have given countless volunteer hours to, the

And I was struck with how important a marriage ceremony is for the couple and for the community. There is something deep and abiding in saying your marriage vows in front of all of your loved ones and in being blessed by the church. As you and your partner state in front of God and witnesses that you will love, honor and cherish each other until "death do you part" I believe that your commitment to each other undergoes a transformation; it is deepened and solidified, made sacred and profound in ways that you only understand as the years pass and together you face all the joy and sorrow that life offers. I can tell you that there have been very difficult times in my own marriage where I believe that the vows my husband and I spoke reminded us of the commitment we had made to each other and helped us to find our way back to each other.

Is there any reason why God would not want all couples to be in a loving, committed relationship, blessed and bound in His sight? Should my daughter be denied the beautiful, meaningful and holy rite of marriage within the ELCA because of who she is? The only possible answer to both of these questions is no, God would not and no, she should not... and so my husband and I will continue to support the ReconcilingWorks with our hearts and our pocketbook until and beyond the day that Charlette walks down the aisle to marry her partner. ■

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

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
Marlene June Beekmann	In memory of Marlene June Beekmann	Judy Garza & David Baram
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
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	David Moen
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
Paul W. Egertson	In memory of Paul W. Egertson	Greg Egertson
ELCA in Idaho Falls	In honor of the ELCA community in Idaho Falls, Idaho	Wayne & Cherie Stevens
Joanne Engquist & Kari Lipke	In honor of the wedding of Joanne Engquist & Kari Lipke	Chris Pollari & Ann Fereatz; and 14 anonymous
Mary Farmer	In Honor of Mary Farmer, Brainerd, Minn.	Glenn Leaf & Patricia Lundeen
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
Daniel Fujimoto	In memory of Daniel Fujimoto	Deanna, Bennie, Kevin, and Kathie Badgett
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 Rev. Anita Hill's 60th birthday	Dan Ranum
James C. Hill	In memory of my brother, James C. Hill, 1945-2010.	Rev. Anita C. Hill
Paul & Karen Jolly	In honor of Paul & Karen Jolly for their faithful work on behalf of ReconcilingWorks	Jeannine Janson & Mari Irvin
Jonathan and Mike	For Jonathan and Mike	Allen G. Holcomb
Marie Kent	In memory of Marie Kent, one of the founders of Lutherans Concerned	Rev. Barbara Lundblad & Nicole Johnson
Kathe King & Dave Eitland	In honor of Kathe King and Dave Eitland	John Stoltenberg & Joseph Hamilton
Frank Loulan	In honor of Frank Loulan	Judy Garza & David Baram
Anders Mathiasen	In honor of Anders Mathiasen	Kathy & Jim Shattuck
Doyle Morris	In memory of Doyle Morris	Wayne Morris
ReconcilingWorks Board	In honor of the ReconcilingWorks Board	Mary Farmer
Vaughn Roste & Erica Roste Dolmar	In honor of my grown kids, Vaughn Roste and Erica Roste Dolmar who are both great supporters of ReconcilingWorks and whom I love dearly.	Rita Roste
Kelley Scott & Trina Thornton	Donation in Honor of Kelley Scott & Trina Thornton's Commitment Ceremony	Sara Abbott, Carolyn Zimmer
Rev. James Siefkes	In honor of Rev. James Siefkes	Rev. David & Lorna Halaas
Thomas	In honor of my partner, Thomas	Adam K. Krueger
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
Rev. Charles Worley	In honor of Rev. Charles Worley, Providence Road Baptist Church, Maiden, N.C.	Elizabeth Swanson, Ami Layton, Sue King, Marilyn Stoeckig, Susan & Mark Bolick, Bonnie Jean Doerr, Michael Flanagan, Beth Bennett-Hill & Rev. Dr. J. David Hill, Amy & Robert Carpenter, Sheila Linn, Sara Bone, Amanda K. Hefner, and Anonymous



Four of the five founders of Lutherans Concerned for Gay People, (l to r) Allen Blaich (inset), Jim Lokken, Marie Kent, and Diane Fraser shown gathered at the 2004 Assembly in the Twin Cities. On the right is Jim Siefkes, who caused the founders to come together in 1974.

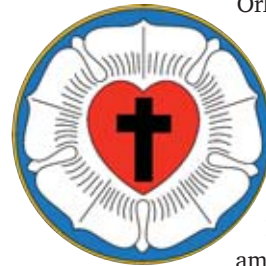
Notes from ReconcilingWorks' Early History

A Brief History of Names and Amazing People

On June 16 and 17, 1974, five people gathered at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis at the invitation of Pastor Jim Siefkes. There were no cell phones, the only computers in existence were massive mainframes controlled by “priests and attendants” in government and large corporations, and there was only postal service mail and long-distance phone calls for not-in-person communication.

The Rev. Jim Siefkes, a straight ally, then Director for Discovering Ministries in the American Lutheran Church (ALC), had been given a grant by the ALC to hold a national meeting of homosexual persons and resource persons for the purpose of discussing their sexual orientation and its affect on their relationship with society and the church. The

under bylaws typed out ad hoc in twenty minutes by Howard on a typewriter he found in the next room. The organization’s name was Allen’s idea. The first two Coordinators were Allen and Diane. Marie Kent became the Treasurer. Dues were three dollars. There would be a newsletter, *The Gay Lutheran*, that Howard would edit, of which *The Concord* is



publication and the fact that he re-published the entire newsletter in order to foment about it, including the cut-out coupon to join LCGP. Help comes from the unlikeliest quarters. Smile here; you gotta love it.

The first logo was the Lutheran Rose, cut from a book by Howard Erickson.

The first assembly of LCGP was in 1978. By then there were twenty-two Chapters across the United States, from New England and New York City to Atlanta and New Orleans, from Baltimore to San Francisco, from Indiana to Fargo, San Diego and Los Angeles, among others.

It was at the 1978 LCGP Assembly that the decision was made to shorten the name to just Lutherans Concerned because, among other reasons, some thought the longer name was cumbersome. Late in 1978, the United States Post Office granted non-profit status to Lutherans Concerned.

The name of the organization was further changed in 1980 to Lutherans Concerned/ North America, to make visible the continental reach Lutherans Concerned had achieved through its programs and influence. The shortened name, Lutherans Concerned, continued to be used as the working name except in more formal documents and press releases.

The 1980 name change reflected the international nature of the organization, with members, chapters and movement-building within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. Lutherans Concerned in Canada is independently-led, with its own board and officers, but also has voting representation on the main board of ReconcilingWorks.

The fish logo, so familiar to most of you, was created by Steve Broin and adopted by LC/NA in 1982. Steve also created the logo for the RIC program. The explanation of the fish logo has been part of the *Concord*. Elements of this logo are incorporated in the logo of ReconcilingWorks, as you can see in the companion article about how the new logo came to be.

In 1983, the Internal Revenue Service recognized LC/NA as non-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3). All of this brings us to ReconcilingWorks. ■

The first logo was the **Lutheran Rose**, cut from a book by Howard Erickson.

ALC’s purpose was to open a dialogue so that the church would become “less a source of oppression.”

Met in that meeting were Allen Blaich (student, University of Utah in Salt Lake City), Howard Erickson (Reporter, *Minneapolis Star Tribune* and contributor to *The Advocate*), Diane Fraser (Assistant Professor at Gustavus Adolphus University), Marie Kent (Instructor in a Minneapolis home for the mentally-challenged) and the Rev. Jim Lokken (American Bible Society, New York).

By the end of the meeting, the group had founded Lutherans Concerned for Gay People (LCGP), run by a Steering Committee

the grateful latter-day descendent.

Shortly thereafter, as the ALC intended, representatives of LCGP found themselves in dialogue with officials in the church. LCGP had an information table and provided hospitality at the ALC Convention in Detroit in October 1974.

Equally quickly, LCGP came under persistent and vociferous attack from conservatives, particularly the *Lutheran News* run by Herman Otten, founder of the current publication *Christian News*. The effect of his attacks was somewhat like “a book being banned in Boston”—it increased sales exponentially. Membership rose because of the wide distribution of Otten’s