



Lutherans Concerned for Gay People

The Beginning

Dedication

This first installment of the history of Lutherans Concerned is dedicated to:

Jim Siefkes

the amazing ally who made possible the meeting in 1974 that resulted in the
founding of Lutherans Concerned for Gay People

* * *

Allen Blaich

Howard Erickson

Diane Fraser

Marie Kent

Jim Lokken

the five individuals who founded Lutherans Concerned for Gay People

* * *

Chuck Lewis

a (Lutheran) pioneer in what was then called the "gay liberation movement"
and
the preacher at the first Assembly of Lutherans Concerned for Gay People
July 7 - 9, 1978, Milwaukee

* * *

Introduction

During my six years (2002-2008) as Co-Chair of Lutherans Concerned/North America (LC/NA), I have participated in many conversations about the importance of preserving and archiving LC/NA's historical documents and telling its story.

Before "Gather Us In," the 2004 LC/NA Assembly that marked the 30th anniversary of LC/NA's founding, I met with Jim Siefkes and initiated contact with some of the five founders and other early leaders. One of the founders (Jim Lokken) and I lived in the same city (San Francisco) and were members the same congregation (St. Francis).

When the 2004-2006 LC/NA biennium got under way, other more immediate and current matters occupied my time as Co-Chair, including preparing for the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. So, I didn't think about our history again until "Together in Toronto," the 2006 LC/NA Assembly, when I had a wonderful conversation with Leo Treadway. Leo is very interested in telling our story and is one of the few early LC/NA leaders whose papers are officially archived (with the Minnesota History Center).

Then, on September 27, 2006, Jim Lokken died. Jim's death, which was untimely and a complete surprise, reminded me that there is some urgency to capturing the history of an organization founded over 30 years ago. I convened a meeting in April 2007 for the sole purpose of discussing LC/NA's history and archives. Present at the meeting were LC/NA Archivist Ken Marks, long-time LC/NA member Frank Loulan, Frank's partner, Richard Pearce-Moses, Rachel Vagts, LC/NA staff Emily Eastwood and Brett Bowman, Leo and myself. (Marks, Pearce-Moses and Vagts are all professional archivists).

We came away from the April 2007 meeting with an aggressive to-do list, but then there was the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to prepare for. So, it was not until December of 2007 that Leo and I began in earnest a series of conversations about telling the LC/NA story. We sketched an outline of what we called a "history piece" to be distributed at "Hearts on Fire," the 2008 LC/NA Assembly. But, the more Leo and I talked, the more we realized we could not prepare a complete history in just a few months. Rather, we could only realistically prepare what Leo called "a teaser." Since Leo works full-time and I only work part-time, I volunteered to compile and edit this "teaser," this first installment of the LC/NA story. And I thought, what better place to start than the beginning.

"The Beginning" focuses on how Lutherans Concerned for Gay People (LCGP) came into existence and its activities in the earliest days. "The Beginning" is told primarily by Jim Siefkes and the founders in reflections written specifically for this booklet and in reprints of articles from early issues of "The Gay Lutheran," the LCGP newsletter. There is also a piece about Chuck Lewis whose significant role in the beginning became clear in my conversations with Jim Siefkes and the founders. "The Beginning" concludes with articles from "The Gay Lutheran" about the first LCGP Assembly (held July 7 - 9, 1978, in Milwaukee), and the announcement of the name change from Lutherans Concerned for Gay People to Lutherans Concerned.

To give you an idea of how things were in 1974, I wrote "Setting the Scene," which includes an excerpt from "The Lesbian and Gay Liberation Movement in the Churches of the United States 1969-1993," by James D. Anderson. Mr. Anderson's paper included an "Appendix of Brief Histories of Other Groups." Despite the fact that Lutherans Concerned had already been in existence for nearly 20 years, there was no information about its history in Mr. Anderson's "Appendix."

So, it's time . . . in fact, it's getting late. We must continue to capture our history and tell our story.

Jeannine Janson, LC/NA Co-Chair, June 2008

Setting the Scene

Editor's Note: The font I have used throughout is Courier. I have used Courier because (as I learned via the internet) it was designed (in 1955) to resemble the output from a strike-key typewriter. By presenting this booklet in the Courier font, I hope to impress upon you that Lutherans Concerned for Gay People (LCGP) was founded well before computers were commonplace. The LCGP newsletter, brochure, early resources and correspondence (that was not handwritten) were all "input" on typewriters and, thus, labor-intensive . . . requiring a special kind of dedication and commitment by the founders and early leaders.

Following is an excerpt from "The Lesbian and Gay Liberation Movement in the Churches of the United States, 1969-1993" by James D. Anderson, (then) Communications Secretary, Presbyterians for Lesbian & Gay Concerns.

Mr. Anderson prepared his paper for a conference where, he said, "we are looking at a variety of voluntary groups in and beyond the institutional church. We are interested in knowing what inspired them to begin and to continue"

"The situation leading up to the creation of lesbian and gay liberation groups in the churches was silence and secrecy, with lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender people and other sexual outcasts living in dark closets. But too many lesbian and gay Christians became fed up with the closets, with lying, with misinformation and secrecy. Inspired by the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and the liberating themes that flowered in the 1960's, the modern lesbian and gay liberation movement was born, at least figuratively, with the Stonewall rebellion in Greenwich Village, New York City, in 1969. For the first time, queers fought back against police during a routine raid at a gay bar. Secular gay and lesbian liberation groups quickly blossomed. Lesbian and gay liberation groups in the churches followed soon after."

Sometimes we tend to chuckle at being called Lutherans Concerned, but Lutherans were not the first to be "concerned." Other "concerned" groups formed in the 1970's were:

Friends (Quakers) Committee of Concern, 1970

United Church Coalition for Lesbian/Gay Concerns, 1972

Presbyterians for Gay Concerns, 1974

Brethren/Mennonite Council for Lesbian and Gay Concerns, 1976

Other things going on in 1974 . . .

Patty Hearst was kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army

Watergate, Watergate, Watergate, Nixon Resigns, Gerald Ford becomes President

Hank Aaron broke Babe Ruth's homerun record

Moderates and conservatives in the Lutheran Church were divided

Seminex

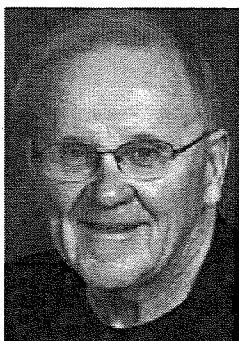
"The Beginning"
The Bullet-Point Version

The 21st Century is a fast-food, bullet-point world of text-message abbreviations. For some, the personal reflections and reprinted articles that comprise this booklet may be too long, too much to read, to get to the "facts." So, following is a bullet-point version of "the beginning."

- Lutherans Concerned for Gay People was founded as the result of a meeting held June 16 and 17, 1974, at the University of Minnesota, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- The June 1974 meeting was made possible by the Rev. Jim Siefkes who, at that time, was serving as Director for Discovering Ministries of the American Lutheran Church (ALC). Pastor Siefkes secured a grant from the ALC "To enable at least one national meeting of up to twenty ALC homosexual persons plus 5 resource persons to discuss their sexual orientation and their relationship because of it, to society and their church; to the end that they may address the church and the church might respond to them and become less a source of oppression to ALC and other persons with homosexual orientation."
- Present at the founding meeting were five Lutherans¹ and three facilitators from the gay caucuses of three other denominations.
- The Lutherans were:
Allen Blaich--Student, University of Utah, Salt Lake City
Howard Erickson--Reporter, Minneapolis Star Tribune and The Advocate
Diane Fraser--Assistant Professor, Gustavus Adolphus University, St. Peter
Marie Kent--Instructor in a home for the mentally challenged, Minneapolis
The Rev. Jim Lokken--American Bible Society, New York City
- The facilitators were:
Louise Rose, American Baptist, Philadelphia
Ron Mattson, Quaker, St. Paul
John Preston, Episcopalian, Twin Cities
- By the end of the two-day meeting, the following had been decided:
 - The organization would be called "Lutherans Concerned for Gay People" ("LCGP"). Allen Blaich came up with the name, which was inspired by "Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam."
 - LCGP would be run by a "Steering Committee."
 - LCGP would have two "Coordinators" who could be "named," i.e., "out." The first two Coordinators were Allen Blaich and Diane Fraser.
 - LCGP would publish a newsletter and the editor would be Howard Erickson.
 - The LCGP newsletter would be called "The Gay Lutheran." Diane Fraser came up with the newsletter name.
 - The LCGP Treasurer would be Marie Kent.
 - Dues would be \$3.00.
 - The LCGP mailing address would be a post office box in Salt Lake City maintained by Allen Blaich.

¹ A sixth Lutheran, Carl Griffin (also with the Minneapolis Star Tribune), attended the first day but not the second.

- "The Gay Lutheran" was circulated widely to religion news media, clergy, congregations, district, synod, and national church offices, college libraries, news bureaus, every list the founders could think of. It had an impact way out of proportion to LCGP's numbers.
- Quite soon after the founding meeting, representatives of LCGP were making presentations and meeting with church officials.
- The first brochure was green, was developed a few months after the first issue of the newsletter, and included "A Statement" that was addressed "To Our Church."
- The first Lutherans Concerned information table and hospitality suite were at the ALC Biennial Convention, held October 9 - 15, 1974, in Detroit, Michigan.
- LCGP was vehemently attacked by some conservatives, notably Herman Otten's "Lutheran News" (later renamed "Christian News"). Otten's attack gave "The Gay Lutheran" much wider circulation than it would have had otherwise. Otten included the LCGP membership coupon in some of his reprints, garnering new members who clipped it from Otten's paper and sent it in. Very quickly LCGP chapter groups were organized in major cities.
- Chapters
 - According to "The Gay Lutheran," the first LCGP Chapters were in the Twin Cities and Chicago. The Twin Cities Chapter met at the University of Minnesota. The Chicago Chapter met at Hyde Park Lutheran Church.
 - By December 1978, there were 22 LC Chapters: New England; New York City; Philadelphia; Washington-Baltimore; Atlanta; New Orleans; Houston; Dayton; Michigan; Indiana; Chicago; Milwaukee; Twin Cities; Fargo-Moorhead; St. Louis; Omaha; Phoenix; San Diego; Los Angeles; San Francisco; Portland; and Seattle-Tacoma.
- The Lutheran Rose was the first "logo" of Lutherans Concerned because, as Howard Erickson said, "We wanted something that said, 'We are Lutheran, we are not outside the church, this is our church, too.'"
- The Lutheran Rose that was used for "The Gay Lutheran," was cut out from a book Howard Erickson purchased at Augsburg Publishing, specifically to get the Lutheran Rose for the LCGP newsletter.
- The First Lutherans Concerned Assembly was held in Milwaukee July 7 - 9, 1978. The gathering featured a keynote speaker, workshops, a business session, and worship. The keynote speaker was Dr. Elizabeth Ann Bettenhausen, a Secretary for Social Concerns at LCA National Headquarters. The preacher was the Rev. Chuck Lewis.
- Effective December 28, 1978, Lutherans Concerned for Gay People changed its name to Lutherans Concerned.
- About the survival and longevity of Lutherans Concerned, Howard Erickson said, "Chalk that up to the Holy Spirit."



A Strange Milieu
The Rev. Jim Siefkes

When LC/NA Co-Chair Jeannine Janson called to ask for an article about the beginnings of Lutherans Concerned, I was embarrassed. Truth of the matter is, I was not present at the meeting when Lutherans Concerned was organized in June 1974. So what was there to say? My wife, Sally, and I did attend a celebratory gathering the evening after the two-day meeting was over. But, I had decided not to attend the meetings in order to afford sanctuary for those who participated and to afford a "no-strings-attached" relationship regarding the American Lutheran Church grant that made the meeting possible. After reflection, a couple phone calls and file searching, some interesting facts surrounding the events returned to memory.

A Strange Milieu

As far as I was concerned, Lutherans Concerned came into being in the midst of a milieu of related events and experiences in my own ministry beginning in the early 60's. I had been serving the nine-state/two-district West Coast Region of the former American Lutheran Church (ALC) as the Western Region Stewardship Director with an office in Palo Alto, California.

On behalf of ministry, and in an attempt to assist congregations come to a sense of the cultural reality of their time, and with the help of regional office colleague and youth director, Rusty Halaas, we designed a program called "Matrix." Matrix finds its root meaning in the latin word "mater" (mother) and can be defined as a womb or birthing place. Hopefully, in this instance, a birthing place for ministry.

In brief, the plan was to bring together a group of clergy (and their spouses or "significant others") for a several-day experience and reflection on the issues of the day. Participants experientially had exposure to issues such as race, the environment, sexuality, drugs, campus riots, poverty, Vietnam, a night on the town with "runaway" youth, communes, etc. Initial Matrix events were held in the San Francisco tenderloin area, and people like (Lutheran) Pastor Chuck Lewis, of the San Francisco Night Ministry, were on the scene. Chuck did important work in establishing the San Francisco Council on Religion and the Homosexual, the first such religious organization of its kind. Chuck also was a valuable resource in planning Matrix in San Francisco and in identifying the presence of Lutheran folk in the gay¹ community.

The Milieu Widens

Matrix caught the attention of the national offices of the ALC, and I was offered a position (in Minneapolis) to establish and direct a new department in the ALC to be called, Congregational Social Concerns. It was to be housed in the Division for Social Service, Paul Boe, Executive Director. (Two years earlier in 1967, this division of the ALC had made the initial grant (\$18,000) that made the founding of the American Indian Movement a reality.

¹ Editor's Note: Since "gay" and "homosexual" were the language of the day, I have used those words rather than the "GLBT" references Jim Siefkes originally used.

This grant had already caused some heat in the Division for Social Service, which was breaking out beyond its traditional work with agencies and nursing care facilities to a wider perspective.) To write an expected "How-To" manual for congregations about social ministry was not the answer. The question was posed, "So what shall we do?" A decision was made to continue with Matrix programs across the country and enter into in-depth exploration with persons already directly involved, one issue at a time. "What issue?" was the next question.

Since the San Francisco Matrix experiences showed that the greatest impact on participants was around sexuality, it was decided to explore human sexuality. This aspect had been facilitated by The National Sex Forum located at the Glide Memorial Methodist Church (Pastor Ted McIlvenna, Director). So, the National Sex Forum was invited to come to the Twin Cities to present a program that included the use of sexually explicit films and media. I gathered the names of sixty or so persons, including Lutheran and Catholic Social Services, ALC executives, interpretation people, an ALC bishop, the YWCA, the University of Minnesota Medical School, etc. They and their spouses or "significant others" were invited to this seminar to assist in evaluating and defining the potential for ministry/strategy in the area of human sexuality.

The Milieu Heats Up

It so happened that one of the participants, who was Director of Catholic Social Services of St. Paul/Minneapolis, was scandalized by the seminar and wrote an article about it for the national Catholic journal "COMMONWEAL." The "COMMONWEAL" article featured the words, "Sex, Sex, Sex," on the cover and inside described the program that was "sponsored by The American Lutheran Church Headquarters." This experiment in program development was thus "outed," so to speak, into the public arena. More heat! (If the author had only known that the media/films that had disappeared during the night after the second day of the seminar had later been discovered to have been stolen by the FBI. That's another story in itself. More heat!)

One significant effect of the seminar was that the University of Minnesota Medical School faculty participants who attended were so impressed that they ended up making a near duplicate of the ALC seminar a required course for students at the medical school. There were no funds to get it off the ground, so, with full board approval, I was able to make a \$10,000 grant to get things started. I was also allowed part-time service at the medical school in an advisory capacity. The seminaries in the Twin Cities became involved. United Seminary led the way. Luther Seminary dropped out shortly thereafter.

More heat came from an anxious arm of the ALC constituency that took the matter as far as the state legislature and ALC national conventions (in Detroit and Washington, DC). There was a call for hearings, a very large amount of threatening as well as some encouraging correspondence, and a National Assembly order for a report for evaluation and study to a committee appointed by the Church Council Executive Committee of the ALC. More heat! Another long story. With some careful planning, I was able to continue to make grants over the next five years that helped keep the program church relationship afloat. The program is now 35 years old and is the only medical school in the U.S. that offers a Ph.D. with a permanent chair in Human Sexuality.

Lutherans Concerned for Gay People Is Born

In the midst of this milieu and rather heated environment, I was paid an office visit by a young reporter from the Minneapolis Star Tribune, Howard Erickson by name. Howard was also a writer (under the pen name Lars Bjornson) for "The Advocate," a national gay journal. Howard did a person-to-person interview with me about Matrix as a national program sponsored and funded by the ALC. The article was published in "The Advocate." As a result, I received mail from gay Lutherans from around the country. I was able to add these names to my list of other gay Lutheran folks I had met through the

Program in Human Sexuality, and folks like Chuck Lewis, Howard Erickson, and the Matrix programs. If we went back far enough, we could say that the first seeds of Lutherans Concerned were sewn by folks like Chuck and Howard.

I attended the First National Conference on Religion and the Homosexual in March of 1971 held at the Inter-Church Center, 475 Riverside Drive in New York City. It was obvious that gay folks in various denominations were getting themselves together, but there was no Lutheran caucus in sight.

The suffering on the part of gay persons and their families was apparent, as was the inability of the churches to cope with the issue. It seemed important that ALC homosexual persons needed to get together to discuss their common faith in relationship to their common problems and their compelling need for personal identity as human beings. So, in 1974, as the ALC Director for Discovering Ministries, I wrote the following work objective:

"To enable at least one national meeting of up to twenty ALC homosexual persons plus 5 resource persons to discuss their sexual orientation and their relationship because of it, to society and their church; to the end that they may address the church and the church might respond to them and become less a source of oppression to ALC and other persons with homosexual orientation."

This objective and a grant of \$3,000 were approved by the Division for Social Service Board.

I sent invitations to about 20 people. About half sent thanks but were not able to attend for various reasons. Five people did not respond. So on June 16 and 17, 1974, five Lutheran people and three facilitators gathered at the facility of the University of Minnesota Program in Human Sexuality in Minneapolis. In attendance were:

Allen Blaich (sounds like "Bly")--Student, University of Utah, Salt Lake City
Howard Erickson--Reporter, Minneapolis Star Tribune and The Advocate²
Diane Fraser--Assistant Professor, Gustavus Adolphus University, St. Peter
Marie Kent--Instructor in a home for the mentally challenged, Minneapolis
The Rev. Jim Lokken--American Bible Society, New York City

Facilitators were:

Louise Rose, American Baptist, Philadelphia
Ron Mattson, Quaker, St. Paul
John Preston, Episcopalian, Twin Cities

The result of that meeting was the organization of "Lutherans Concerned for Gay People," which defined themselves as "a national organization of gay and non-gay people who are working within the church for change, in behalf of a Gospel of love, understanding, and reconciliation for all women and men, regardless of their affectional preference."

The rest is history, and a marvelous history it has been.

The Heat Continues

The heat continues to be turned up in the church, but this time it's from the other side of the issue. With "Hearts on Fire," Lutherans Concerned/North America will be gathering in San Francisco this summer to pray about, celebrate, plan and strategize for their future in the church. In the midst of this strange and exciting milieu, LC/NA is here to stay, and they continue to hold the feet of the church to the fire

² Another Minneapolis Star Tribune reporter, Carl Griffin, was also present on the first day, but he did not return on the second day.

"Dollars for Disobedience"

Thanks to Jim Siefkes, another small grant was made to Lutherans Concerned for Gay People in 1975. The grant was reported in a press release, picked up by "Christianity Today," which resulted in an editorial entitled, "Dollars for Disobedience." Following are excerpts from the May 1975 "Christianity Today" editorial and a related article--"ALC 'gay' grant draws fire--in "The Lutheran Standard."

"Dollars For Disobedience (Christianity Today). The American Lutheran Church has the dubious distinction, apparently, of being the first denomination officially to make a cash grant to a "gay" caucus within its ranks. Lutherans Concerned for Gay People, headquartered in Salt Lake City, proudly announced in its February-March newsletter that last December it had been approved for a grant of \$2,000 by the board of the ALC's Division for Service and Mission in America. The group, which includes both gay and non-gay members from the three largest Lutheran bodies, had its budget for 1975 increased by more than one-third by the grant. The money is to be used to expand distribution of the newsletter, to advertise in periodicals, and 'to assist in providing a visible gay presence at major church conventions.' The media representative of the ALC confirmed the essential accuracy of the newsletter's report.

"Other denominations, such as the United Methodist Church and the Unitarian Universalist Association, have previously given grants to gay organizations, but not to gay caucuses working within their own denominations.

"Doubtless gay Lutherans will invoke Martin Luther's stance for conscience and against Rome. A minority battling for public recognition in the face of strong and widespread opposition naturally tugs on the heartstrings of many Christians. However, Luther's appeal was not to himself but to the authority of God as revealed through His Word. Because the Scriptures speak strongly and repeatedly against the practice of homosexuality, most Christians are nonplussed by the presence of gay activism within the churches.

". . . For a major board of one of the country's major denominations to identify through its budget an organization promoting the blatant transgression of the revealed word of God is a sign of a sinking back to the level of official immorality that prevailed when Christianity emerged. Concerned members of the ALC will know how to express their outrage at what their denominational officialdom has done without any prompting from us. . . ."

"ALC 'gay' grant draws fire (The Lutheran Standard). Strongly negative editorial criticism of the American Lutheran Church (ALC) for a \$2,000 grant to Lutherans Concerned for Gay [Homosexual] People was published in the May 23 issue of 'Christianity Today.' The objective of the relatively small grant, according to the Rev. James Siefkes, was to provide 'consultation services and resources' so that members of this organization 'may discuss their sexual orientation and their relationship to society, to their church, and to one another'

"Siefkes, head of the Office for Discovering Ministries in the Division for Service and Mission in America (DSMA), says the grant was made 'because these people are saying, 'It's our church, too.' They're not people on the outside. They are Lutherans, and many of them have deep hurts.'

". . . Dr. John Houck, executive director for DSMA, said, 'it is unfortunate that such a grant is subject to misinterpretation and misrepresentation.' He said the grant was made because the ALC is concerned. 'We know the subject of homosexuality is an issue that is greatly disturbing to many individuals, congregations, pastors and other agencies. It is not uncommon for the church to make small, short-term grants to constituent organizations or even to groups with which the church is not in agreement. This is done to further dialog and to facilitate study of those issues troubling both church and society. . . .'"

A Recollection
June 16-17, 1974
Howard Erickson, Founder

The six of us hardly knew each other when we gathered in an informal room at the University of Minnesota on Saturday morning, June 16, 1974. Diane Fraser and Marie Kent I had seen just once, at a gay political meeting across town a few days earlier, when I had told them, during a coffee break, of plans for the meeting of gay Lutherans. Pastor Jim Lokken of New York City and Allen Blaich (pronounced "Bly"), a Mandan, N.D. native enrolled in Salt Lake City, were new faces to all of us; they had read a profile of Pastor Jim Siefkes I'd written in March for "The Advocate," a national gay newspaper, and they'd sent him notes of thanks for his continuing efforts to raise gay awareness in the old American Lutheran Church. Only Carl Griffin did I know from the Minneapolis Tribune newsroom and as a neighbor in Loring Park - adjacent to Minneapolis. In all, Siefkes had mailed over two dozen invitations to the meeting, but he himself did not attend, hoping for a completely independent cadre of gay/lesbian American Lutheran Church (ALC) members to be created, to address their church.

Siefkes had also engaged the three facilitators who led us for a half-day each: Louise Rose of Philadelphia, from the American Baptist Gay Caucus; Ron Mattson of Minneapolis, leader of the Committee of Concern, a Quaker gay group; and former Minneapolitan John Preston, a leader of the tiny Episcopal Gay Caucus. "What did we think about being gay in the church?" they asked us (all us Lutherans were more or less closeted then; Allen was "out" only in the Lutheran Student Movement, but not where he worshiped). "What did we feel we wanted to do about the situation?" they asked us, sharing little about how their cadres acted or functioned, just that their groups existed.

The Lutheran women said little, but when Diane spoke, her words were quiet, well-chosen and usually 8 1/2 months pregnant with meaning. Jim, the only cleric present, understood church polity far better than the rest and contributed with measured deliberation. I've rarely succeeded at keeping my mouth shut, but oft-silent Allen kept a second level of communication going as we spoke, through his churning, charming body language, quietly endearing himself to us all as the day wore on.

At Sunday's gathering, it was time for us Lutherans to meet without our able facilitators, to sketch out our future alone. Our first decision was to proceed as a pan-Lutheran outfit, not ALC only. Diane was a member of a Lutheran Church in America (LCA) congregation and was on the sociology faculty at the LCA's Gustavus Adolphus College, while Allen knew a knowledgeable Chicago man in the Missouri Synod who knew lots of young gay Missouri members. It seemed foolish to leave anyone out, which led to our next decision: to reject the model of our facilitators' "gay caucuses" and instead to "go for the numbers" like Dignity, the gay Catholic group; someday, we speculated, we could even have chapters in different Midwestern cities.

We'll need some bylaws, I figured, so I excused myself and found a typewriter next door, returning 20 minutes later with the barest bones of by-laws: the five of us (Carl did not return Sunday) would stay in touch as the "Steering Committee" (who would be served by "Coordinators") as many in number and with duties as the Steering Committee decided; the Steering Committee could add new members to itself and amend by-laws at any time; we needed to keep things flexible, we agreed.

It was clear that we'd want a newsletter and that I'd be the editor; Diane named it "The Gay Lutheran." Inspired by "Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam," Allen came up with a name, "Lutherans Concerned for Gay People." Marie agreed to become Treasurer; we set dues at \$3.00 a year.

Meanwhile, I began a mental sketch of our initial news release: we'd want openly gay leaders, ideally male and female, whose names we could announce, and only Allen and Diane were in positions where they could become so (not long after, Diane came out to her dean at school and Allen told his congregational meeting he was gay). I thought we should also issue "A Statement," revealing what gay Lutherans had to say for themselves. Simple enough? Alas, it led to the only rancor of the day.

I reached for words of righteous indignation about how our church had isolated, castigated and vilified the gay women and men in its pews, but Jim would have none of it. He and the other gay pastors he knew felt perfectly comfortable in the church, even if well into the closet (even at Jim's post at American Bible Society headquarters in New York).

We--mostly Jim and I--went round and round about that, and "A Statement" held our attention for over two hours. Our afternoon meeting stretched past dinnertime, and it was 7:30 before we finally wrapped it up, and went to the Sunday meal and party, where Jim and Sally Siefkes and our three facilitators awaited us. We read aloud our final draft of "A Statement."

"Gee, you guys sure are nice!" Louise Rose said dryly.

"Well, I could have gone for some anger in there," I replied, "but we had not consensus."

Somebody poured me a drink. I wolfed down a plate of food as Louise, a gifted vocalist, entertained and relaxed us all at the piano.

We five had our differences, all right, but it started to look like this nestling we'd hatched just might be around for a while.



the GAY LUTHERAN

July-August, 1974

Published in Minneapolis, Minn.

No. 1

Official organ of LUTHERANS CONCERNED for GAY PEOPLE, Box 15592, Salt Lake City, Utah 84115

We confront church

A national Lutheran gay caucus, called LUTHERANS CONCERNED for GAY PEOPLE, was organized in Minneapolis June 17 to work within the church to end its condemnation and oppression of gay people.

"Our church has misled, misunderstood, confused, alienated and unjustly condemned us," the group said in a statement. But the group said it will not leave the church.

"Some of us have rejoiced to find through the ministry of Lutheran churches that we are included among those whom Jesus Christ has redeemed," the statement said. "We ask our church to receive and welcome us as it receives and welcomes others."

LUTHERANS CONCERNED, which includes current or former choir members, deacons, Sunday School teachers and Lutheran pastors, has ties with members of all three major Lutheran denominations.

The June 17 meeting was arranged with the help of a \$2,000 cash grant from the ALC's Division for Service and Mission in America, whose staff has been regularly helpful in working for an honest understanding of gay people. The money was used for travel, postage and duplicating expenses.

LUTHERANS CONCERNED agreed to become a rallying point for gay clergy and lay people, to provide a visible gay identity the church can no longer ignore. It authorized a regular newsletter to be published in Minneapolis, and sent out 25 press releases to daily newspapers, TV stations, and the church and gay press.

Birth of the group makes Lutherandom the 10th American faith to find a gay caucus of its members, following Dignity, the Roman Catholic group; and similar caucuses in the United Presbyterian, United Methodist, Episcopalian, American Baptist, Quaker, United Church of Christ, Unitarian-Universalist and Disciples of Christ churches.

The LCA's 1970 position on gay people is ostensibly sympathetic, but LCA President Robert J. Marshall later was quoted as saying the LCA could not ordain a gay

minister because the LCA considers homosexuality "a departure from God's heterosexual order."

The Missouri Synod was asked in 1973 to affirm the validity of the gay lifestyle, but the synod's New Orleans convention branded "homophile behavior" as sinful and said it would minister only to repentent sinners.

The ALC has taken no position since 1966, when it passed judgment on same-sex affections that was simultaneously medical ("...can be treated and sometimes cured"), theological ("...contrary to God's will") and moral ("warped").

How we'll do it

The structure of LUTHERANS CONCERNED, as contained in the constitution adopted June 17, is the essence of simplicity and flexibility.

A Steering Committee of five was elected--Diane Fraser and Allen Blaich, the coordinators; a Twin Cities Lesbian and gay man, and a New Yorker. The Steering Committee can enlarge itself and appoint new coordinators at any time.

But the bulk of the work of LUTHERANS CONCERNED is expected to be done by various task forces, caucuses, subgroups and committees which the Steering Committee, or the members themselves acting on their own initiative, may form at any time.

The subgroups can be set up along geographic, denominational or task/project lines--the Lesbian Lutheran Caucus of the Bay Area, for example, or the Theology Task Force of Lutherans Concerned.

These committees can be organized by groups of friends on their own, or by recruiting interested members of LUTHERANS CONCERNED. One way is through the HELP WANTED column in this newsletter. Another way is by drafting a separate notice or letter which we can include with the newsletter--to all North Dakota members, for example, or to all Missouri Lutheran subscribers in Milwaukee. Just send us the draft and we'll duplicate it and send it out. Because our mailing list is confidential, it's up to individual members to respond on their own.

Needed: Members

LUTHERANS CONCERNED needs members, and that means you and your friends, gay or intelligent non-gay.

We need members who will keep informed and support us with their prayers, even if they cannot become active.

We need members who can provide substantial financial support, gifts of \$10 or \$100 or more to cover mailing and duplicating costs, long-distance telephone bills, travel expenses so that a gay identity can be visible at every major Lutheran convention and conference.

But most of all, we need active members, who will take the initiative in organizing task forces and committees to do the work of justice and humanity that cries out to be done.

A well-grounded, compassionate theological stance needs to be articulated. Who will write it?

Our seminary students and pastors need to meet real, in-the-flesh gay women and men, to dispel stereotypes and prepare them to counsel and teach about gay people intelligently. Who will call on them?

And that doesn't begin to list the work that needs doing so that our church can begin to teach and act towards gay people in a way that is consistent with a gospel of love, joy and reconciliation for all human beings.

We need members. We need you. (H.E.)

HELP WANTED

This regular feature of The GAY LUTHERAN will bring together Lutherans who want to form committees and task forces, national or local, to do the work that needs to be done--confronting the church, visiting seminaries, etc.

Items should be addressed to Newsletter Editor, Box 15592, Salt Lake City, Utah 84115. Items should describe the nature of the group (national, local) and purpose, and list an address.

We have one volunteer item already:

ALC CAUCUS: ALC lay and clergy uniting nationally, especially in Detroit area, to approach ALC officials and educate them; to staff a display booth at ALC convention in Detroit in October, and to raise funds to send LUTHERANS CONCERNED members to the convention. Write ALC Caucus, Box 3589, Upper Nicollet Station, Minneapolis, MN 55403.

Our leaders

Elected coordinators (leaders) of LUTHERANS CONCERNED at the June 17 meeting were a Minnesota Lesbian and a Salt Lake City gay man.

Diane Fraser, 31, is an LCA member who is an instructor in sociology at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn. The holder of a master's degree from Duke University, she lives with her lover on a farm at Route 1, Kasota, Minn. 56050.

Allen Lee Blaich, 23, is an ALC member who is a senior majoring in theater at the University of Utah. For the past two years he has headed the Committee on Homosexuality of the Lutheran Student Movement, and he is on LSM's national council. In addition, he attends the all-gay Metropolitan Community Church in Salt Lake. A Mandan, N.D., native, he formerly studied at the University of North Dakota. He will be answering the LUTHERANS CONCERNED mail.

news notes

BOULDER--The Lutheran congregation of the University of Colorado endorsed a gay rights discrimination bill in that city and members rang doorbells to campaign for it. Two Lutheran campus pastors testified for it at a public hearing. The measure was rejected by voters in a May 7 referendum by a 2-to-1 margin after heated and angry public debate.

HOUSTON--The United Church of Christ executive committee declared that being gay is no bar to becoming a minister, and asked its conferences to ordain gay candidates. The Rev. Bill Johnson, San Francisco, is the first up-front gay the United Church has ordained (1972).

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Salt Lake City, Utah 84115

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Name _____

Address _____

Zip _____

Our mailing list is strictly confidential

how we do it

Our national leaders are called coordinators, who are responsible to the Steering Committee. But much of our work is meant for smaller groups:

Local chapters, already organized for prayer and support in the Chicago area, Minnesota and elsewhere.

Task forces dealing with theological, social, political and other questions and needs.

Denominational caucuses to approach regional and national leaders within each major Lutheran body.

We also need calling committees to visit the colleges and seminaries of our church; speakers bureaus to appear at parish forums; counseling units to assist individual gay Lutherans and to aid counseling pastors in their work.

Members or the Steering Committee may form new task forces; chapters or committees on their own at any time.

Communication among members is kept alive through our newsletter, The GAY LUTHERAN, published in Minneapolis. In it, members may insert free Help Wanted notices to recruit others for task forces, to announce meetings and the like.

Subscriptions are \$3 a year. An order form and membership blank is on this folder.

how many are we?

No one has counted the numbers of gay Lutherans. A STUDY OF GENERATIONS (1972) did ask a sampling of Lutheran congregations how many "had homosexual intercourse".

Some 1 percent said Frequently, 3 percent said Occasionally; and 7 percent gave No Response, which may include some gay people. There was no count of the proportion of gays who are celibate, or who have left the church.

Still, projected to a national Lutheran membership of 8.5 millions, a total of at least 338,900 gay Lutherans becomes apparent—125,420 in the LCA, 98,600 in the ALC, and 114,960 in the Missouri Synod.

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Count me also as a member.

Please check ☐ ALC ☐ LCA ☐ Missouri ☐ Clergy ☐ Non-Luth.

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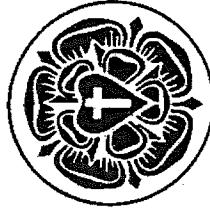
Name

Address

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LUTHERANS CONCERNED for GAY PEOPLE



BOX 15592
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84115

ALC Convention
Informational Headquarters
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84115
Thur.-Fri.-Sat., Oct. 10-11-12

BOX 1111 11 p.m.
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84115

Who are we?

PEOPLE is a national organization of gay and non-gay people who are working within the church for change, in behalf of a Gospel of love, understanding and reconciliation for all women and men, regardless of their affectional preference.

Since our founding in Minneapolis on June 17, 1974, we have grown rapidly, drawing members from California to New York; LCA, Missouri Synod and ALG, gay and non-gay; laypeople and clergy.

We seek to unite gay Lutherans and their supporters for mutual assistance, support and communication.

We seek to join with other groups, religious and secular, in mutual concerns.

We seek to persuade our church to face honestly, aggressively and forthrightly the questions and needs of gay people, both those within the church and those who have left it, in light of the church's failure to understand them.

We seek to work with the church in proclaiming the Christian gospel of joy and love to all gay women and men everywhere.

Our members include gay people who speak from public platforms in the church. But we have many, many other members who work actively behind the scenes, donating funds for travel and communication, aiding in recruitment and doing other invaluable work. Our non-gay members also lend their vital support, efforts and prayers in our behalf.

Statement

from LUTHERANS CONCERNED for GAY PEOPLE
issued in Minneapolis, Minn., June 17, 1974

TO OUR CHURCH:

As gay Lutherans we affirm with joy the goodness of human sexuality which God has given us.

We are to be found in the pulpits and pews, the schools and offices of Lutheran churches and organizations throughout the land. We have received the sacraments, listened to the preaching of God's Word, taught in the schools and worked in the committees and organizations of Lutheran churches.

Some of us have rejoiced to find through the ministry of Lutheran churches

that we are included among those whom Jesus Christ has redeemed.

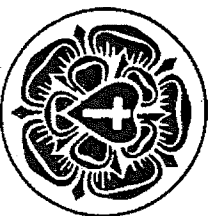
But many of us have found that our church has misled, misunderstood, confused, alienated and unjustly condemned us, so that we have sometimes been driven to despair and robbed of the peace and joy which the Gospel of Jesus Christ brings to all people.

We call upon our church to further a greater understanding of human sexuality in all its manifestations. We ask our church to seek to remove discrimination against gay women and men wherever it exists.

We ask our church to receive and welcome us as it receives and welcomes others.

TO GAY PEOPLE:

To our gay sisters and brothers, we affirm that the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for all of us, too. We call upon you to explore that gospel message and to receive it, for we believe that it can free us from the bondage of a misunderstanding of self, and empower us to express true Christian love in our relationships with others.





Are Gay Lutherans Really Ahead of the Times?
Marie Kent, Founder

Editor's Note: Marie wrote this piece for a panel presentation made up of Quaker, Dignity, Integrity and Lutherans Concerned for Gay People representatives for Neighborhood Counseling Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, November 13, 1975.

In June, 1974, concerned gay (homosexual) Lutheran men and women from across the country met in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to form a Lutheran Gay Caucus and to lay groundwork and develop strategies for approaching the Lutheran Churches at the local, regional and national levels, on the matter of gay oppression within their traditional religious denomination.

An intensive two-day discussion led to the completion of an organizational structure, as well as the formation of an official statement, addressed to the church, and, also serving as an outreach to other oppressed gay Lutherans within the Church. We decided to call ourselves Lutherans Concerned for Gay People (LCGP).

Throughout the summer, the LCGP Steering Committee of three men and two women (a New Yorker, a student from Salt Lake City, and three Minnesotans) corresponded to develop further group strategies. Also, one member of the Steering Committee was a member of a local Lutheran College faculty. It was her decision to advise her superiors of her participation in LCGP. With the permission of her university's administrators, it was recommended that the Minnesota Reps of the LCGP Steering Committee meet with Synod officials to explain further the purpose and direction of the newly organized LCGP, and, perhaps, gain some support. For one reason or another, only one synod official was available when the three LCGP representatives arrived for this meeting.

At the conclusion of a 4-hour discussion, the Acting Synod Official confessed that he could not "get his head and gut together" on the whole gay (homosexual) phenomenon, but agreed that it was time the Church dealt with the issue. He added that he felt it would have to be up to LCGP to approach the church hierarchy and laity, because he was concerned about a negative reaction from the Church constituency.

As the American Lutheran Church (ALC) prepared for its national convention in Detroit in early October 1974, the newly-formed LCGP was also making some preparations for the convention. We chose to go through regular channels and follow the established protocol to gain admittance to the ALC Convention, as opposed to any radical surprise move.

In spite of cooperation by ALC staff, efforts to get a statement presented from the convention floor were futile. We were informed of a predetermined agenda and the scant chances of adding to the agenda. Alternate plans were made to be available for dialogue when delegates had free time.

"Gay Headquarters" signs, posted near the convention floor, were torn down several times by some threatened delegates, but, the few who did get the word of LCGP's presence at the convention, were receptive and supportive. And, not unexpectedly, we found ourselves administering to the counseling needs of

other gays present at the convention who sought emotional support in coming to terms with their personal conflicts of sexual identity, in light of the Church's stand on the matter of gayness (homosexual behavior), i.e., acceptance of the person, but not his/her sexual identity behavior.

As the months passed, and the LCGP newsletter - "The Gay Lutheran" - went out to its growing membership throughout the U.S. and Canada, interest and support (and perhaps some curiosity) emerged from seminaries and Lutheran colleges, as well as individual clergy and laity across the country. Local and state Lutheran gay caucuses expressed desires to form and join forces and were encouraged to work at local/state levels in the LCGP organizational structure.

In December 1974, the Minnesota LCGP group began holding Sunday services as a special ministry to gay Lutherans and welcoming visitors to share religious experiences with and from a gay perspective. Here is one of the few instances, to this writer's knowledge, where women were voicing their opinions on female participation in what had traditionally been a male-dominated liturgy conducted from a patriarchal perspective. Gay women were not only participating in the liturgy, but they were also in on the planning of future guest ministers, in which female clergy were to be sought out wherever possible. And, the response of female clergy as visitation pastors had been 99% positive.

This concept of worship so intrigues this writer that I find myself wondering why we are wasting our energy trying to persuade the traditionally-organized religions that we are acceptable as human beings worthy of equal participation and consideration in church affairs and functions when, in fact, this new approach to Christian worship services is a more acceptable, humane and relevant religious experience in today's world.

We live in a time when people are demanding openness and honesty - in government and in human relationships. Yet, for those of us who are gay to be open and honest about our affectional being can cost us our very survival - economic, physical, and psychological. For, in spite of new laws and changing moral attitudes, the risk of losing painstakingly-built careers and reputations is still great, simply because people find subtle ways of discriminating, intimidating, and discrediting gays.

Yet, until we who are gay can step forward and say, "We are not ashamed of who we really are," straight (heterosexual) people will continue to believe the myths that gays are weirdos, "out there" somewhere, who do obscene things in dark alleys. And, we will continue to believe these myths, and go on feeling shame and guilt, withdrawing into ourselves, thus denying and depriving ourselves of total fulfillment as human beings.

In my opinion, gays need to encourage and give support and strength to one another in order to overcome this fear of being different. We all know who we are--not freaks, but for the most part, obedient daughters and sons, some honor students, most, charitable and giving members of society, in every corner of this great and this grand and mysterious world. Not new to the 20th Century, but having existed since time immemorial. Some achieving greatness in spite of hidden pain.

We need to stand tall and declare that we are not ashamed of who we are . . . each and every one . . . a child of the universe, no less than the trees and stars. And, we have a right to be here. For, the greatest danger, as I see it, is that this fear of declaring "who we really are" has and can produce the very sickness that straight society sees in us.



In the Beginning . . .

Editor's Note: "In the Beginning . . ." was originally written for "Concord" in 1998 by LC/NA founder the Rev. Jim Lokken. Jim died in September of 2006.

In the beginning there was Jim Siefkes. In 1974 Siefkes was Director for Discovering Ministries in the American Lutheran Church's (ALC) Division for Service and Mission in America. In an interview reported in "The Advocate,"¹ Jim observed that every other major denomination had a gay caucus, and he thought it was high time the Lutherans did as well.

A man of action as well as words, Jim arranged for the ALC to fund the eclectic gathering that became "Lutherans Concerned for Gay People." The first day, there were six of us and three advisers at that Minneapolis meeting in June 1974: Diane Fraser, faculty member at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota, and her friend Marie Kent from Minneapolis; two journalists, Carl Griffin from Willmar, Minnesota (Carl did not come back the next day), and Howard Erickson, reporter for the Minneapolis Tribune; a student, Allen Blaich, from the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, member of a liturgical dance group called "God's Toes," and myself. I was the only clergy member of the group.

The advisers were John Preston, at that time on the staff of the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), later an editor of "The Advocate" and prolific author; Louise Rose from Philadelphia, a member of the American Baptist Gay Caucus. The third adviser was Ron Mattson, a member of the Quaker gay group.

Our experiences were very different. We talked for two days. Out of that meeting came a decision to form a group called "Lutherans Concerned for Gay People." (The last three words were later dropped.) An open letter to the churches was drafted, debated, revised, and approved. Allen Blaich was chosen as our first national spokesperson. Of all of us, he was in the best position to be "out." Our first mailing address was a post office box in Salt Lake City. Howard Erickson was the first editor of our newsletter, "The Gay Lutheran" (later renamed "Concord").

We circulated "The Gay Lutheran" widely to religion news media, clergy, congregations, district, synod, and national church offices, college libraries, news bureaus, every list we could think of. It had an impact way out of proportion to our numbers. The very idea that a publication could be called by that name boggled the minds of many church bureaucrats. Some had never entertained the idea that any of "those people" might be found in the church, or that any would dare to be "out" in such a public way.

"The Gay Lutheran" never disclosed the actual number of members, but hinted that the number was significant by quoting from Merton Strommen's "A Study of Generations" (Augsburg 1972) the results of a survey of 5,000 Lutherans ages 15 to 65. Respondents were asked if they "had homosexual intercourse" within the past year. One percent said "frequently," three percent said

¹ The Advocate article was written by LC/NA founder, Howard Erickson, under the pen name, Lars Bjornson.

"occasionally," and seven percent gave no response. The clear implication was that something like ten percent of Lutherans were, to some degree, gay or lesbian. Adding the numbers of their families and friends, it was estimated that something like 250,000 Lutherans were personally affected by the church's teaching and policies concerning homosexuals.

We were vehemently attacked by some conservatives, notably Herman Otten's "Lutheran News" (later renamed "Christian News"). Herman's attack gave "The Gay Lutheran" much wider circulation than it would have had otherwise. He included our membership coupon in some of his reprints, garnering new members who clipped it from his paper and sent it in. Very quickly LCGP chapter groups were organized in major cities.

At first, the LCGP Steering Committee was scattered -- New York, Chicago, Minneapolis, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles. We could meet only twice a year. There were debates and disagreements, but much was accomplished. Our visibility and credibility increased rapidly, largely through circulation of "The Gay Lutheran," which benefited from the dedication of editor Howard Erickson, a professional news writer, and the input of well informed contributors throughout the church. While there were some emotional diatribes, normal for advocacy publications, there were also well written, well-researched articles exhibiting knowledge of the church and its ministry, sound theology, and familiarity with current scientific findings about homosexuality, as well as knowledge of what was currently happening among gay and lesbian people.

We debated whether Lutherans Concerned for Gay People should fund chapter groups or vice versa; whether membership dues should be collected locally or nationally; whether the national leadership should be scattered and representative, or located near each other so they could meet more frequently. Some favored local autonomy and diversity; others wanted more centralized control and discipline. A constitution for Lutherans Concerned was eventually put together about the time of the 1980 Assembly in San Francisco.

The experience of the New York City Chapter in the 1970's typifies what happened in many chapters. There was a long discussion about what our felt needs were, and thus the nature of the chapter's activities. Four areas of interest emerged: (1) discussion of theological issues and dialog with the church; (2) a social alternative to bars and baths; (3) personal counseling; (4) political activism within the local gay community. No one was interested in all of those, but everyone could identify with at least one of them. So we agreed that the chapter would offer a variety of activities, not expecting that everyone would show up for everything, but that over time we would be able to touch the needs of every individual.

Chapters in places where there are few opportunities for gay people to gather tend to meet frequently and regularly, often including a worship experience. Those in cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, Minneapolis/St. Paul, San Francisco, New York, and Washington, D.C., where several Lutheran churches offer an explicit welcome to gay and lesbian people, tend to meet less often and focus on a narrower range of issues.

We've come a long way in 25 years, but we still have a long way to go. On this issue the church moves at a glacial pace, slowly but surely. I am confident that one day the walls will come down and the vision of full participation in the church for lesbians and gay men will become a reality. Patience and persistence will eventually win the day.

Coming out in church

Allen Blaich, 24, a student in theater at the University of Utah, has served quietly as coordinator of LUTHERANS CONCERNED as--so far as we know--the only gay Lutheran in Utah. On Stewardship Sunday, Nov. 16, he read this statement to his ALC congregation there:

"Love compels. This theme has been running through my mind the last few months. In thinking about it, I have come to some conclusions as to what it means to me and what I must do to serve my Lord.

"Stewardship of the resources God has given us has a limited use if we try to confine it to the church. It is in the world outside that we can use His gifts to best advantage. Christ's ministry was an outreach into a world needing the freedom of the Gospel. So too must we reach out into the world to show that freedom. It is not the church's task to tell people to come to it, but rather to go out to the people and serve them. In our community, in our state and in our nation are unlimited opportunities to serve in Christ's ministry.

"Commitment often means sacrifice. It means giving up our own security to the security that doing God's will provides us. It means choosing the gifts that are most valuable, and using them to do the will of Christ. When we have seen the grace of our Lord in our own lives, we should be willing to help others see it also. We love because He first loved us.

"When we minister, we must ever be mindful that we are caring for the totality of a person. So often we limit ourselves to some aspect of that person's personality, which is short-changing the humanity of that person. By reuniting the different aspects of a person, we bring about the newness of life that that person can feel in Christ's love.

"Last, commitment means reconciliation and reunion within the body of Christ. When ministries start with commitment, they often seem strange and unworthy. That begins the process of showing the need for such a ministry to those who are not involved in it. Thus, we center it

once again in the congregation, to provide the support and the prayers needed when we commit ourselves to Christ's ministry of helping those in need of it.

"I have a specific commitment, and tonight I wish to share that with you. Many years ago, God gave me to the grace to know that as a gay person, I was included among those whom Christ has saved. With this knowledge I have sought to make others aware of this love, and so have been actively involved in ministry to gay people--first through the Lutheran Student Movement, then through a church whose main mission is to minister to gay people, and most recently to help organize Lutherans Concerned for Gay People, an organization which seeks to reconcile the gay Lutheran with his church.

"Now, before you and before God, I wish to make my commitment to this ministry on a local basis. I ask your prayers and your support, as I seek to minister and as I seek to bring reconciliation between the church and its gay people. This commitment is one I have been called to, and I share the gladness of doing the Lord's service with my fellow Christians."

Allen adds:

After I finished, there was dead silence. The pastor asked if there was any reply.

"He's got guts," one person said.

The pastor then said he had known about my activity for some time. He reiterated the church's formal position and said the church must still receive such people--at the same time hinting that the act was still condemned.

Afterwards, a woman asked me how long I had been at this work, and other questions. Another person came up also.

The future holds further reactions, but I hope this article may give a few people some idea how one person "came out" to his congregation.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The ALC's formal position, cited by Allen's pastor, is that being gay "is contrary to God's will," and that a gay person is "in need of help and healing for his warped sexuality."

Gay and rejected at 16

By DIANE FRASER

The good Christians who lead our churches can be fine, upstanding and admirable people. But their misunderstanding of gay people, a misunderstanding that is often abetted by the church itself, can lead them to most unChristian deeds. I can cite my own experience when I was 16, when I first recognized that I was attracted to a girl.

She was 17 and we were working on summer science projects in the Los Angeles area, where I grew up. Our projects were on the same floor of a research building.

And I knew she had a driver's license, so I suggested one day that she get her parents' car so we could drive up to Mulholland Drive. Why? she asked. Oh, to look at the lights and things, I replied. What kind of "things"? she answered. Well, I confessed, hugging and kissing and such.

She turned me down--so politely that I didn't realize that anything gay was supposed to be "wrong." She said she sometimes had the same feelings I did and she recognized them as homosexual, but she said she didn't want to do anything about those feelings. She was pretty well together about gay questions, for her mother's best friend was a lesbian.

Unfortunately not everyone has the same stable approach. I told my best friend in Burbank about the incident, being turned down and all. My friend's head was definitely not together, and she told all the rest of my friends that "Diane is queer." By the time school resumed in September all the kids in high school had heard it.

I didn't know what "queer" meant. Since I was always considered a "brain" and had been taunted about it before, I thought it was just a new word for "egghead." But many of the parents went to our church, and it took the church to tell me what "queer" meant.

You should understand that I was kind of a Jesus freak of that time--active in the church since I was a kid, singing in the choir and attending both Sunday School and worship service every Sunday morning. And I'd be right back at church Sunday night for Youth Fellowship, where I was financial secretary.

The church session called me in, at age 16, and asked me about this reputation I had around school. What did I have to say for myself? they asked. Well, I told them about the summer incident and added that, while I had no experience in bed with a woman, I did have these feelings.

Their answer was along the lines of--I can't remember precisely today--maybe I should stop taking communion until I got over these feelings, or maybe they'd revoke my membership. I told them they needn't bother, that I'd leave the church if that was the way they felt.

So I left the church--it happened to be Presbyterian, but that makes little difference--and it was two years before I found a new church home.

During that time I must have attended or checked out just about every Christian denomination there is. And then I heard The Lutheran Hour radio broadcast. The subject was sexuality, and the sermon said that sex was a gift from God, to be used responsibly. That was the first positive thing about sex I had ever heard out of the church.

Of course, I figured all Lutheran churches were the same. So I picked up the phone book and started attending the nearest Lutheran church--St. John's in Sacramento, the biggest parish in the LCA's Pacific Southwest Synod. I attended for a couple of months, liked the worship and felt really comfortable and at home. So I was reconfirmed as a Lutheran.

That was at age 19, and I knew I was gay--intellectually, that is. It was three years later before I came out, and that was at a Daughters of Bilitis meeting. I was teaching Sunday School and singing in the choir at St. Michael's in Berkeley, where I was living then. I met my first lover a couple of months later, and I felt happier then than at few other times in my life. I'm glad I'm gay.

Should I feel bitter toward the church, for telling me to get out at the age of 16? Well, I don't. I'm just waiting for the majority of the church to discover the message it has been teaching all these years--that Christ offers love, joy and reconciliation to all human beings.



About Chuck Lewis

According to Jim Lokken, "In the beginning was Jim Siefkes."

According to Jim Siefkes, in the beginning were Howard Erickson and Chuck Lewis.

According to Howard, in the beginning was Chuck Lewis.

Editor's Note: Much of the information in this piece about Chuck Lewis is from the LGBT Religious Archives Network at www.lgbtran.org.

While not a founder of Lutherans Concerned for Gay People, the Rev. Chuck Lewis was very much a part of the milieu Jim Siefkes describes in his reflection for this booklet.

In 1963, Chuck was assigned by the Lutheran Board of American Missions to develop a mission congregation in the North Beach neighborhood of San Francisco. A "LIFE" magazine article about the "sad gay life" in America prompted Lewis' supervisor to suggest that he explore this ministry area further because the church had no relationships with homosexuals.

Around the same time, an ecumenical group of urban ministers were completing a study of services available to residents during nighttime hours. Their conclusions that few such public services were available led to the formation of the San Francisco Night Ministry in the fall of 1964. Developing relationships with young homosexuals was a key element of this crisis ministry. Chuck became a part-time assistant to the first Night Minister, and after 12 years of part-time service, Chuck became the full-time Night Minister in 1976.

Also in 1964, Chuck was asked to be a clergy representative on the constituting board of The Council on Religion and the Homosexual (CRH). According to its first brochure, "The Council on Religion and the Homosexual was formed out of the growing awareness on the part of clergymen of the extent to which homosexuals had been shut out of the church and society. Clergymen joined with interested homosexuals, heterosexuals and homophile organizations to embark on an urgently needed action program aimed at disseminating accurate information about human sexuality."

As one of the early leaders of CRH, Chuck was present at the Mardi Gras Ball at California Hall on January 1, 1965. The blatant police harassment of the homosexual participants in this gala fundraiser for CRH led Chuck and other CRH clergy to hold a press conference the following morning to express their outrage at the police and city officials. The widespread media coverage of their press conference and other reactions to this incident spurred the development of the gay and lesbian rights movement in San Francisco.

Because Chuck was with the San Francisco Night Ministry and CRH, he worked with Jim Siefkes and the clergy Jim gathered in San Francisco in the early 60's for the Matrix program.

Chuck organized the San Francisco Chapter of Lutherans Concerned in 1974 (and is still an active member of the chapter and organizer of the Lutheran presence in the San Francisco Pride Parade).

In the spring of 1975, Chuck was invited to speak at a meeting of the Minnesota Chapter of Lutherans Concerned for Gay People. Marie Kent's write-up of Chuck's presentation is reprinted on the next page.

Chuck Lewis was the preacher at the first LCGP Assembly which was held in Milwaukee July 7 - 9, 1978.

MINISTRY IS ALL PEOPLE, NOT JUST "THE GUY" WITH BACKWARD COLLAR, SAN
FRANCISCO PASTOR TELLS LOCAL LUTHERANS CONCERNED GROUP

Editor's Note: This write-up of Chuck Lewis' presentation at the Minnesota Chapter of LCGP in the Spring of 1975 was written by LCGP founder Marie Kent.

"The Church is people and all people" the Rev. Charles Lewis, Minister of North Beach Fellowship, San Francisco, told members of the Minnesota chapter of Lutherans Concerned for Gay People at their monthly meeting held on the University of Minnesota campus in the early Spring of 1975. "North Beach Fellowship," Lewis continued, "is people, there's black and white, there's gay and straight, educated and uneducated, rich and poor . . . a whole bunch of people. The one thing we have in common is that the Holy Spirit somehow calls this crazy bunch of people together. We're interested in the liberation of ALL people, whether women, black, prisoners, or gay . . . whoever's hurting."

In Minnesota at the invitation of the Gustavus Adolphus Sociology Department at St. Peter and a local LCGP member, Lewis went on to express his fears of "a woman's church," "a man's church," "a black church," "a gay church," or any church which becomes "narrowly-defined" by one class . . . even existing white middle-class suburban churches run the risk of this same kind of narrowness. "When this occurs," he said, "you end up with a group of individuals who come together just to buck up each other's spirits . . . And, in the long run, no one learns anything. . . that's very different from the kind of situation where one life comes in contact with a different kind of life, lifestyle, or person and 'WOW' . . . what a growing experience."

Rev. Lewis expressed his delight at seeing so many women in the LCGP group. "For too long the homophile movement has been dominated by men. And those days are over, I hope," he added, "because the women have made it very clear that there is a difference between being lesbian and being a male homosexual and those differences need to be spelled out and shared as part of the total community and total dialogue." He also expressed his satisfaction at the name selected by the group, Lutherans Concerned for Gay People. To him, it indicated that non-gays sympathetic to the struggles of gays within traditionally-organized religion could also get involved. "There is value in having non-gays take part," said Lewis. "Straights have something they can add to the movement because, in the long run, the people who are going to make the decisions as to who gets accepted and who doesn't are going to be, for the most part, 'straight' people. Then, rather than making the decision out of guilt, like, oh, those poor homosexuals, what we've done to them all these years, if I could only know, what could we do for gay people, the answer is . . . nothing . . . we're here. Let's work together. That's the Liberation Movement and that's the difference, for me, between the Freedom Movement of the 60's and the Liberation Movement of today. And it is not a matter of going to the church and begging to be accepted . . . it is not a matter of asking the church to confer some kind of dignity upon you . . . or anything like that . . . it's simply a matter of saying, well here we are . . . where are we going from here? We are all part of the church . . . we're human beings . . . we happen to be gay, you happen to be straight, but we'll no longer be shut out, we've had that too long."

Asked by one member of the group about how to get past the subtleties of being graciously ignored or put off by the church hierarchy, Lewis replied, "keep pushing those new frontiers forward . . . keep the pressure going." "Lovingly, of course," added another member of the group.

Talent tapped coast to coast

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.

Thus, 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.

The planning emphasized creating opportunities to build understanding between women and men, and members of both genders were involved simultaneously or consecutively at virtually every stage of the weekend's program. Attendance was close to 60 gay and non-gay participants, speakers and leaders.

Libby and Keith Olstad of Minneapolis, seasoned leaders in men's and women's issues, prepared and directed a 90-minute experience for all Assembly participants on male-female working relationships, aided by Cathy Spooner of Minnesota and Todd VanLaningham of Topeka, Kan.

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.

Local Assembly arrangements were handled by a Milwaukee man fully experienced in convention preparation. Over-all supervision fell to a Chicago man, also a seasoned planner; while he stepped down from that post in April, preparations were able to proceed without difficulty.

Coordinators Diane Fraser and Howard Erickson reported to the Assembly on their activities--taking part in the ALC's consultation on sexuality in April, speaking before church audiences and preparing for our presence at national church conventions. Erickson reported that membership rose 36% in the preceding 12 months--due largely, he said, to a developing gay and non-gay backlash to Anita Bryant. "She has made a lot of people angry enough to get out of their chairs and do something," he said.

LUTHERANS CONCERNED

ASSEMBLY '78

'Very fine gathering' in Milwaukee

It was worth every penny. It was good to know the people who have been involved in LUTHERANS CONCERNED from all over the country, doing the fine work that's been done.

--LCA, Pennsylvania

I agree with Elizabeth Bettenhausen fully, that one way gay women and men can witness to the church is to witness to the arbitrariness of denominational boundaries; for if one branch is affected, we are all affected.

ASSEMBLY '78 was a growth experience for me, a person, a Christian, gay and a seeker after a meaning that transcends what we in our weakness perceive as reality.

--Episcopalian, Indiana

Thank you and everyone involved in the Assembly. It was a very fine and spiritual gathering of men and women concerned for the witness of the Gospel. God is indeed with us!

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

I thought ASSEMBLY '78 was a roaring success. I know you all put in many long hours of hard work; it must be good to have it pay off in such a big way.

The whole thing was very meaningful to me. I could really feel God's presence with us as we

worshipped. It was beautiful.

One by-product of the Assembly was certainly something I did not expect. On Tuesday, July 11, I told my folks I am gay. It was clearly the right thing to do, though not an easy thing. They (and I) are going through a lot of hurt right now. I'm sure it will all work out in time. I just wish that time would come soon.

LUTHERANS CONCERNED was the biggest contributor to my finally getting up the gumption to be who I am; I wanted you to know that.

--LC/MS, Missouri

I enjoyed the Milwaukee experience. We accomplished much--personal growth! Questioning! Searching! We have much to do, and now we have a beginning!

--ALC, Indiana

Chuck Lewis's sermon was excellent. It truly enflashed the Word.

--LCA, San Diego

ASSEMBLY '78 was a learning and growing time for us, and will linger with us for a long time. Milwaukee gave us the chance to put names with faces; a nicer group of people we couldn't have asked for!

--LCA, Georgia

(AN EVALUATION of the Assembly, on papers turned in as it closed, provided helpful comments and criticisms. The over-all rating, on a scale of 1 to 10, was 9.14 (favorable).--ED.)

Witness to wholeness: Bettenhausen

Dr. Elizabeth Ann Bettenhausen of New York called on ASSEMBLY '78 participants to witness to the church, and to return to their Bibles in behalf of wholeness in the church.

A secretary for social concerns at LCA national headquarters, Bettenhausen delivered the major Assembly address the morning of July 8. She said gay Christians and their non-gay supporters have a prophetic role to fulfill in witnessing in behalf of "an undistorted view of human sexuality--that it's part of God's good creation, part of our embodiment as human beings...

"We have to get away from the idea that God created our souls, but the flesh is evil. This misconception is at the heart of the issue of homosexuality which our church is facing today."

Bettenhausen said this witness should characterize sexuality as more than just biology, but must recognize that sex "is less than all of life. If there's anyone who debases sexuality, it's Anita Bryant--reducing sexuality to genital sexual terms," she said.

"Sexuality is no more open or closed than any other aspect of life," Bettenhausen added. "It's neutral. You aren't saved or damned by being straight or gay." Similarly, she said, it's a mistake to reduce morality to sexuality.

Bettenhausen also predicted that understanding will be advanced through the proper use of the biblical disciplines of exegesis and hermeneutics. "The heterosexual majority in the Lutheran churches must be compelled to read scripture the way we Lutherans have always insisted on--not with literalism and legalism," she said.

"And you know, it's impossible to study the Word of God, in the body of Christ, and nothing happens. That's just impossible. As it says in Jeremiah, 'Is not My Word like a hammer that shatters rocks?'

"And so let's study our Bibles. But let's insist on disciplined, tightly reasoned thinking on issues of justice. Make sure hard facts are provided in response to emotionalism." For even in this day and age, she noted wryly, "some people want to be given a list of commandments to equate with Lutheran ethics."

Cautioning her listeners to "avoid the trap of self-righteousness," however, she indicated that progress in dealing with gay-related concerns will be made by confronting also the questions of who men--and women--are.

"If Jesus Christ was fully human, then He had both masculine and feminine characteristics," she noted. She paralleled this observation with "the idolatry of defining Christ and God in our own terms, and rejecting terms that aren't comfortable to the definers--whether it's the majority or the minority that's doing the defining."

Bettenhausen added, "We must be very hard-nosed about the power of the majority to define morality for everybody else." She said self-deprecation comes about when someone in the minority "buys the majority's definition of second-class status." Efforts to discard second-class definition must not, she said, "overlook the political arrangement that made it possible for the majority to have done the defining in the first place."

LUTHERANS CONCERNED ASSEMBLY '78

Worship a vital part

Worship played an important role in Milwaukee, with daily provision for the Lord's Supper. And morning devotions were led by an East Coast graduate of an LC/MS seminary (Saturday) and by Midwest alumnus of an LCA seminary (Sunday).

The Assembly opened with a Folk Eucharist Friday evening prepared by Larry Wheelock, a liturgist and professional church musician from Philadelphia. It included 2 of Wheelock's own hymns, "We Are God's Family" and "A Song for Gay Christians." The celebrant was the Rev. June Nilssen of Lutheran Campus Ministry in Milwaukee, whose sermon noted the parallel between the gay and the women's movements.

A quiet and touching Folk Eucharist Sunday closed the weekend, prepared and led by Coordinator Diane Fraser. Bobbi Byrd of Michigan led songs with her guitar, and an ALC pastor was celebrant. Both Folk Eucharists made careful but unobtrusive use of both language and imagery that is inclusive of both genders.

In contrast, the Festival Eucharist Saturday night, at Lake Park LCA Church in north Milwaukee, used the second setting in the Service Book & Hymnal. A Midwest LCA pastor chanted it; Kris Warmoth of Chicago assisted in serving.

The non-inclusive language in this liturgy and the hymns were in stark contrast to the Folk Eucharists, prompting lively discussion and a learning experience for many. Still, the beauty of the service, and of the Lake Park altar, made it the high point of the weekend for some.

Parish gives \$100

A tiny Washington, D.C., congregation has given \$100 to LUTHERANS CONCERNED for use in our ministry of education to the Lutheran churches.

It is the second cash gift from the Community of Christ. The ALC parish, which has only 30 baptized members, made a \$300 grant in 1977.

Come out of ghetto: Lewis

When Christ freed us, He meant us to remain free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.
Galatians 5:1

By Pastor CHARLES H. LEWIS

The yoke of slavery is the law. And the law is the Big Lie. Paul is talking about the local belief of his day--if people follow certain rules, regulations and customs, they can save themselves. That's the law, and that's the lie.

But of course, we already know that. Or do we? For if you hear the lie often enough, you begin to believe it.

Gay people for years have bought the Big Lie about themselves--that they were heretics, lunatics, criminals, sinners, and finally the misfits who are the unfit: unfit to teach in our schools, to preach in our pulpits, to serve in our armed forces, to serve among straight people, especially those who still hold to the nuclear family; unfit to be adequate role models for our youth; even those who already know they are gay.

No longer heretic; no longer lunatic, in many places no longer criminal; and for at least one branch of the Lutheran Church "sinners only as are all others." What remains are the misfits who are the unfit. And that's the lie that far too many gay people have bought; as once again they have submitted to the yoke of slavery.

How do I know? Because I have watched the increasing ghettoization of gay people in our society, and gay people have bought it, pretending that if they go into the ghetto, at last they will be free. Not so! For any ghetto is only another form of the Big Lie--the law, which again submits us all to the yoke of slavery.

The ghetto sucks. Its existence depends upon a symbiotic relationship with the very oppressive powers that created it. Witness the formation of Metropolitan Community Church. At the very least, its existence is God's new judgment upon all denominations for refusing their wholeness by excluding gays. At the same time there is not a single denomination which has raised questions about such a thing as a "gay church." For the most part, they are content to casually acknowledge its existence--"At last 'they' have a place to go of their own." The corollary is, "Now we don't have to be bothered with them." Witness what happens every time a local MCC asks to join a council of churches. Who creates the ghetto? The oppressor does, of course--but not without the consent of the oppressed, who have submitted again to the yoke of slavery.

The choice is clear. LUTHERANS CONCERNED has arrived. We are, but we have to determine what

MR. LEWIS, an LCA pastor and night minister for the San Francisco Council of Churches, is a former president of the Council for Religion and the Homosexual. This article is excerpted from his Festival Eucharist sermon at ASSEMBLY '78.

it means to be. Should we choose to be "Gay Lutherans Concerned for Gay People," then in still one more way we will have submitted to the yoke of slavery. It will mean that once again the church will dismiss gays to the ghetto.

On the other hand, should we stand firm and exercise the freedom for which Christ set us free, then we are "Lutherans (who are) Concerned for Gay People." It means we are not a gay organization. It requires us to involve straight, bisexual and gay people at every level, with equal sharing of power between men and women. A great many gay people have come out of the closet; it is time now to take that one additional step and come out of the ghetto, too.

I find our text tonight significant in one more way. In a different translation our text is rendered, "For freedom Christ has set us free." Savor that on your tongue for a while. If the first translation told us what we are to be, this one gives us the style with which to go about it. "For freedom Christ has set us free."

It is not for gay people that Christ has set us free--not for the church, not for the world, not even for Christ's sake that we are set free. We have been set free for freedom's sake. In other words, it's that we might make known what real freedom is all about in this world. Now freedom becomes not something you talk about. Freedom becomes something you live.

It's what happened in San Francisco in June, when 18 people marched in the Gay Pride Parade behind a banner, "Love one another as I have loved you. Jesus." And we carried posters: "The Lutheran Church in America supports gay civil rights." Of our 18, 3 came right out of the crowd as we marched. Together they represented 8 straights, 9 gays and 1 bisexual; 1 black and 17 whites; 3 clergy, 3 seminary students and 12 lay people, 1 of whom was an ex-seminarian; 9 married and 9 singles. And we had a good time!

As we walked, a voice said, "M'God, here come the Lutherans!" Sort of like, "If the Lutherans are coming, Judgment Day can't be far behind."

In each block the applause came, until I turned and said, "I've been here 14 years and never knew there were so many closet Lutherans just waiting to come out."

And pictures? Yes, we were photographed too, and this time not by the police. In fact, one little blond guy jumped out, snapped his Instamatic and shouted, "Wow! Just wait until my mother sees this." So look out, Minnesota or North Dakota! Some little gray-haired mother just got a present. I bet it just made her 4th of July.

You see what living your freedom does? It doesn't stop the oppression, but it sure makes it a lot more manageable. And it sets many of the captives free. That's the message for tonight. Live as becomes the children of God. For freedom, Christ has set us free. Amen.

God created you beautiful

By KENT NAASZ

Grace and peace from I AM, the God of our ancestors Ruth and Naomi, and David and Jonathan; the Christ Who came that we might have life and have it more abundantly, and the Spirit Whose gifts of love, peace and forgiveness are ours.

I pray that you all had a very blessed Christmas and a blessed Epiphany as well, filled with the love of God.

Just as Christmas was for the Jew, and Epiphany was for the Gentile/heathen, so today is Christmas for the non-gay Christian and Epiphany is for the gay Christian--and all who are rejected by the institutional Church.

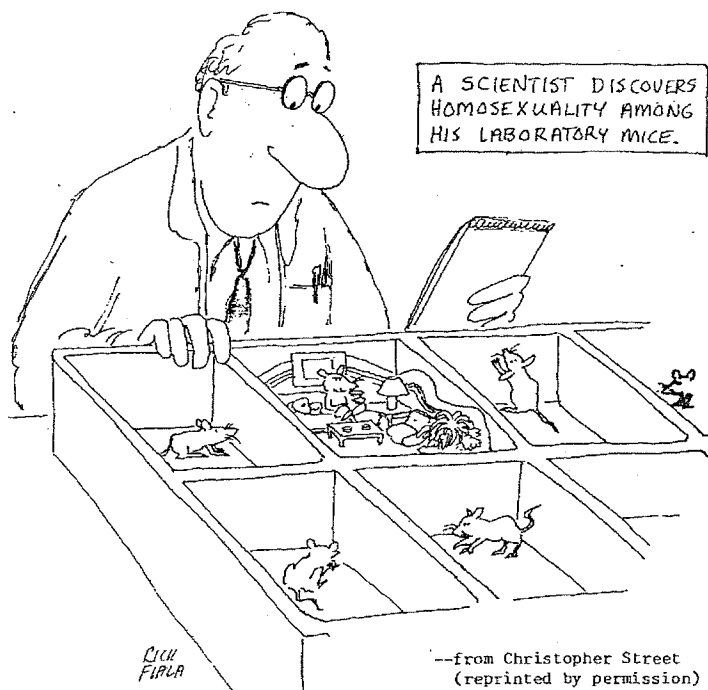
Today the Wise Men remind us that the Christ came that we all--the Gentiles, who are gay and non-gay; children, women, and men, black, brown, yellow, white and all the colors and lifestyles in between--might have life and have it more abundantly.

The Wise Men also remind us that we are to see the beauty of all of God's Divine Creation, for God has seen the beauty of the Divine Creations created in the image of God, and "Behold, it was very good."

Since I AM has created us in the image of God and said, "Behold, we are very good"; and since God loved us enough to send the Christ to die in order that we might have life, and might have all sins forgiven and be washed as white as snow; and since the Spirit of God's Love dwells in us; therefore we will want to respond in love.

We will start by seeing ourselves as beautiful Divine Creations of God. We will no longer

KENT NAASZ of Houston, born on a South Dakota farm, is a 1975 graduate of Christ Seminary-Seminex, St. Louis.



--from Christopher Street
(reprinted by permission)

feel guilty about who we are. We will come to love ourselves.

And the fruits and gifts of the Spirit--love, peace, joy and forgiveness--will flow through us to all those around us. We will love our sisters and brothers as ourselves. We will stop judging and condemning them just because their ways, lifestyles or mannerisms are different from ours. We will come to understand our oppressors and accusers, and in love show them that Eternal Life is here and now, and that the Life after this life is an added bonus--a gift which is not earned by given by grace alone.

When we respond to the love of God by seeing ourselves and our brothers and sisters as Divine Creations created in the image of God, and by wanting to treat ourselves and our sisters and brothers in love, we will be worshipping and glorifying God in the highest and purest form. We will be doing the will of God.

The message of this Epiphany is that I AM loves you, sees you as God's Divine Creation and says, "Behold, my creation of you is very good. Go now! Enjoy! this creation which I have made for you, knowing that the Christ died so that you might have life, and that the Spirit dwells in you, producing the fruits of love, joy, peace and forgiveness." Amen.

Our name changes

The name of LUTHERANS CONCERNED has been changed--to LUTHERANS CONCERNED, period.

The change was made after close to a year's discussion and reflection by the Steering Committee. The original name adopted in 1974, including the phrase FOR GAY PEOPLE, was considered by some to be cumbersome, nor was it always quoted correctly. Some thought it implied an air of condescension, too.

The name-change was adopted as part of a series of constitutional revisions in December, in order to make explicit the non-profit charitable, educational and religious purposes which have always been implicit in our goals and program.

Thus, on Dec. 28, LUTHERANS CONCERNED was recognized by U.S. postal authorities as a non-profit organization, entitling us to mail The GAY LUTHERAN to U.S. readers at substantial savings. The non-profit declaration would also be the first step towards gaining non-profit status with the Internal Revenue Service under Section 501(c)3, which if sought and granted would permit donations to be deducted on federal income-tax returns, for those who itemize their deductions.

These constitutional revisions involve no change in the structure and organization of LUTHERANS CONCERNED, which is under review by the Steering Committee at the request of participants in ASSEMBLY '78.



the GAY LUTHERAN

November-December 1974

Published in Minneapolis, Minn.

No. 3

Official publication of LUTHERANS CONCERNED for GAY PEOPLE, Box 15592, Salt Lake City, Utah 84115

Gays win friends at ALC convention

Four members of LUTHERANS CONCERNED visited the ALC's biennial convention in Detroit Oct. 9-15, maintaining a low-key presence and winning new friends to the cause of gay justice in the church.

Representing LUTHERANS CONCERNED were Coordinator Allen Blach, an ALC member from Salt Lake City; Treasurer Marie Kent (LCA) of Minneapolis; a New Yorker and a Pennsylvanian.

Their presence was repeatedly visible to the 1,000 delegates and church leaders, reminding everyone of the thousands of devout gays within Lutheran ranks.

The gay presence was noted in the first issue of the daily convention newsletter, which called attention to the LUTHERANS CONCERNED information room at the Sheraton-Cadillac, the main convention hotel.

The group also maintained a display table for a variety of gay informational literature near the Augsburg Publishing House array--the only non-official display at Cobo Hall.

In all, 400 informational brochures about LUTHERANS CONCERNED were distributed at

the convention, and a wide variety of informal contacts with the delegates was recorded.

While some voices of criticism were heard in convention hallways, just as many defenders spoke up with words of support. When our hand-lettered sign at Cobo Hall was removed by one delegate, it was quickly replaced--and joined by another one in the Cadillac lobby.

No at the convention or to bring

The g The LCA's official position is that gay people and clergy are "entitled to understanding and justice in church room, sex and community," but at least two LCA groups act too, are otherwise:

CERNED TORONTO--The LCA's Canada existing Section executive committee assistant, praised the Manitoba was dis decision not to recognize November-December 1975

The ister same-sex marriage. The official newsletter published a char PHILADELPHIA--The gay polio diocese in opposing CERN bill to protect and c. Endorsir of D' the Un- T of

R- Gays are visible

Members and representatives of LUTHERANS CONCERNED have appeared at several Lutheran gatherings lately, to remind Lutheran pastors and lay members of their churches.

Several staffers in October of the Chicago convention group in LC/MS. Others distributed our information brochure at an ELIM meeting in San Francisco Nov. 15.

LUTHERANS CONCERNED also had a booth at an all-Lutheran Festival at St. Mark's LCA parish in San Francisco Nov. 9.

NEWARK--The church said the civil rights of ev with him marks the

FRANCISCO--Two LCA

Church voices divided over gay rights

Richard Bennett and Earl Johnson, enrolled for a symposium Nov. 8-10 on the varieties of gay life styles, conducted by the Council for Religion and the United Methodist Council on

Ill ask that church's 1976 con- all anti-gay language from its declare that "sex, race, marital tentation shall not be a bar to

torian-Universalist Assoc- finance an office for its denominational subsidy

professors, students and a day-long symposium Oct. 12, sponsored by the Gay Caucus

ies. LCA seeks policy

The LCA's synod presidents have directed that guidelines be prepared for dealing with pastors who are divorced, alcoholic or gay.

The leaders made their decision at a New Orleans meeting late in an address Brooklyn psy- the ALC

size changing about sin," t when you there are

a project- a-Lutheran blished Generations." tion that the ready for the LCA

convention in Boston July 21-28. Lutheran practices regarding gay clergy are not consistent. Some district and synod presidents still try to quietly ease gay pastors from their pulpits as soon as their gay-ness comes to light.

Others, LUTHERANS CONCERNED has learned, are aware of gay pastors serving under them, and support them.

Convention coming

A national convention of the members of LUTHERANS CONCERNED will be called in summer 1978 in the Midwest, the Steering Committee decided.

Cities under consideration include Chicago, at or about the time of the LCA national convention July 12-19, 1978, and Minneapolis during the ALC Assembly of Congregations Aug. 9-13, 1978.

The decision to call this first convention reflects our steady growth since our founding in Minneapolis June 17, 1974, as well as a desire to involve the members more deeply in the activities and decisions of the movement.

Ads rejected

The official news magazines of all three Lutheran churches, which in July refused the news of LUTHERANS CONCERNED, have now declined paid ads.

Although the LCA teaches titled to understanding and justice community," The Lutheran rejects ified ad as "inappropriate."

The ALC's Lutheran Standard ed. Muedeking, quoted a 1966 ALC con tion which alleges that being "is God's will" as he rejected our \$15 ad

The Lutheran Witness, organ of the Synod, declined a \$106 one-inch display (smallest allowed) as "contrary to editorial

Each ad read, "Seeking love, justice understanding in our church," adding LUTHER CONCERNED name and box number.

September-October 1976

Official newsletter of LUTHERANS CONCERNED for GAY PEOPLE, Box 19114A, Los Angeles CA 90019

LCA gives women nod; gays on hand

The LCA's biennial convention in Boston July 21-28 approved a series of recommendations from its Consulting Committee on Women aimed at equal treatment for women and men in the church.

Also on hand were eight members of LUTHERANS CONCERNED, led by Diane Fraser of Kasota, Minn., and Richard Dematteis, 34, a member of St. Peter's LCA Church in New York City.

April 1977

Since 1974, the newsletter of LUTHERANS CONCERNED for GAY PEOPLE, Box 19114A, Los Angeles CA 90019

Missouri, ALC papers affirm bias

The American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church/Missouri Synod are about to circulate study papers on gay ministry that recognize--for the first time in either denomination--the negative attitudes and rejection encountered in the church by gay women and men.

"Due to social ignorance, the prevailing attitude...is negative," says the paper being sent to MS pastors. "This results in social isolation and rejection." Says the ALC draft: "Members of congregations may need to change their attitudes and actions toward the homosexual person. They need to open channels of honest, two-way communication." The ALC paper also mentions civil liberties and the prospect of job, housing and other protections for gay people.

These observations are a significant advance, reflecting an awareness of the cause advanced by LUTHERANS CONCERNED. The formal positions of either church do not discuss the problems faced by gay men and women, but are confined to the opinion that gay sexual expression is "sinful--a view that is repeated and defended vigorously in both new papers. The new documents are to be circulated only a few weeks before the important LC/MS convention in July, at which the future of ALC-LC/MS altar and pit fellowship is in jeopardy. The ALC fellowship, and even conservative LC/MS President Jacob A. O. us himself, have come under attack from ultra-conservative quarters within the Missouri Synod

ISSN 0360-571X

No. 15

November-December 1976

Official newsletter of LUTHERANS CONCERNED for GAY PEOPLE, Box 19114A, Los Angeles CA 90019

ALC to revise stance; dialog due

The ALC is revising its negative official statement about gay people, President David W. Preus indicated Oct. 6.

Further, Dr. Preus called for "genuine dialog...between the church and people of homosexual persuasion."

ISSN 0360-571X

No. 20

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HOUSTON--The United Church of Christ executive committee declared that being gay is no bar to becoming a minister, and asked its conferences to ordain gay candidates. The Rev. Bill Johnson, San Francisco, is the first up-front gay the United Church has ordained (1972).

BOULDER--The Lutheran congregation of the University of Colorado endorsed a gay rights discrimination bill in that city and members rang doorbells to campaign for it. Two Lutheran campus pastors testified for it at a public hearing. The measure was rejected by voters in a May 7 referendum by a 2-to-1 margin after heated and

ALC official pursues exchange

Four leaders of LUTHERANS CONCERNED's Minnesota chapter were to meet with Dr. Walter Wietzke of the ALC Jan. 26, to provide input into the theolog study of the Bible and

Dr. Wietzke was invited to engage in dialogue with our group last July for his study. His invitation to the Minnesotans to meet with him marks the

news notes

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More About LC/NA's History and Archives

Telling the LC/NA Story . . .

"The Beginning" is just the beginning. There are many aspects and many layers to the LC/NA story, e.g., what it has accomplished; how it has changed and grown, both internally and externally; how it has served its members; how it has both confronted and served the church; watershed assemblies that changed the course of the organization and how it functions (e.g., when Robert's Rules of Order gave way to Consensus, when bisexual and transgender people were officially added to the Reconciling in Christ Program); the role of worship; the integration of faith and sexuality. And, amidst all of this, there are stories to tell of the dedication, passion and commitment that have motivated people to serve so faithfully for over 30 years.

If you are interested in helping to tell the LC/NA story and/or making a financial contribution to this continuing effort, please e-mail Leo Treadway at let@mtn.org or Jeannine Janson at jeanninejanson@aol.com.

LC/NA Archives

The Official Archives of LC/NA are located at Gerber-Hart Library in Chicago, Illinois. The first deposit of LC/NA materials at Gerber-Hart was made by Bill Host whose papers span 1974-1994.

For more information about Gerber-Hart go to www.gerberhart.org

LC/NA historical documents can also be found at the following repositories:

Minnesota History Center

Leo Treadway Collection
www.mnhs.org

GLBT Historical Society/San Francisco

Chuck Lewis Collection
www.glbthistory.org

See also the LGBT Religious Archives Network at www.lgbtran.org

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**Four of the Five Founders of Lutherans Concerned for Gay People
Allen Blaich, Jim Lokken, Marie Kent and Diane Fraser, with Jim Siefkes**