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What happened at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Minneapolis?

976-26, 943-74, 861-137, **676-338**, 695-285, 344-670, 771-230, 407-576, 619-402, 559-451, 667-307

976 Yes; No 26 (97% prevailing) The rules by which the assembly would govern itself were taken up as the first order of business in the First Plenary Session, held Monday night, August 17. Months before the content of the Task Force recommendations was known, the Church Council met, in November 2008. In its role of facilitating the work of the Assembly, the Council recommended a set of rules to supplement Robert's Rules and relevant provisions in the

Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions. As a practical matter, that meant that the Social Statement on Human Sexuality required a two-thirds majority to be adopted

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Our Logo

The Lutherans Concerned logo unifies visual symbols of our Christianity and our sexuality into a single image. It has two parts: the fish and the pink triangle. The IX-Thus, or fish symbol, originated as a secret recognition symbol for the early Christian community. The pink triangle was used by the Nazis to identify the European homosexuals who perished in the concentration camps of the Third Reich. Both symbols are now used by their respective communities as honored signs of recognition and support.

Statement of Sanctuary

The ministry of Lutherans Concerned, its meetings and its mailing lists are protected by our understanding of sanctuary. No participants need fear exposure or abuse in subscribing, joining or attending chapter functions.

All information that individuals may reveal of themselves is to be honored by others with total confidentiality. Mutual trust and respect, in the spirit of Jesus Christ, is offered to all who may elsewhere experience alienation, distrust or rejection. For the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we welcome you.

Diversity and Anti-Racism

An equal-opportunity employer, LC/NA welcomes candidates for paid or volunteer positions who share our commitments to full participation for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and anti-racist accountability to communities of color.

Reflections on the Minneapolis ELCA Churchwide Assembly

By **Herbert W. Chilstrom**, Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, from its inception in 1987 to 1995

The final votes had been taken on Thursday. On Friday evening many of us gathered to worship and reflect on what had happened. The room at the Minneapolis Convention Center was filled to near capacity. We were a mixed

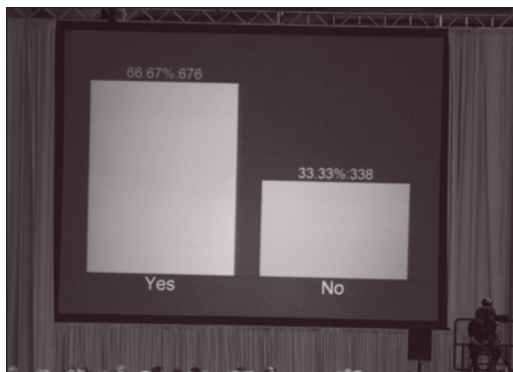
group: A synod bishop, straight couples like Corinne and me, straight and gay singles, gay couples, clergy and lay, young and old – a microcosm of the ELCA.

There was no shouting, “*We won!*” There were no banners proclaiming, “*Victory at last!*”

The mood was one of quiet and calm. We began with a simple plainsong:

Eternal Spirit of the Living Christ,
Come, pray in us the prayers we need this day.

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PAUL NIXDORF

The Editor

DALE TRUSCOTT



“Hallelujah! Praise God from heaven, praise God from the mountaintops; Praise God, all the angels... Praise God, sun and moon, praise God, you morning stars; Praise God, high heaven, praise God, heavenly rain clouds; Praise, oh let them praise the name of God – he spoke the word, and there they were!” — PSALM 148, Peterson *The Message*, emended

I am one of those who, if the ELCA had not acted as it did last month in passing the Social Statement on Human Sexuality and the four resolutions, would have faded away into the woodwork of practicing Lutheran, organized Christianity. One can only wait so long for affirmation. One can be careful about when to use singular pronouns and when to use plural only so long. After 39 years of ordination in this church, that time was about up for me. But, hallelujah, the church finally affirmed the will of God. In the days following the decision, I crafted an email that

It is a wonderful thing, because my humanity is affirmed. I am a person again!

I sent to the Heart of Florida conference of pastors and rostered leaders in the Florida-Bahamas Synod. I referred them to our Lutherans Concerned/North America website, www.lcna.org, as well as to another site with resources in support of full inclusion. And I offered them my encouragement and help as they lead their congregations through the time of reaction, adjustment and learning that we are in now.

However, I made it clear to them that I was not interested in

so-called “open forums” where opposing points of view are flaunted, in which I might be unfairly ridiculed or heckled. I’m not sure whether LC/NA ever put this policy on paper or not, but, when I was on the board years ago, we agreed that our members would always be willing to share our perspective with others in the church, but we would not participate in forums or panels with persons representing a discriminatory or

condemnatory perspective on our issues. My plea to my colleagues in ministry is that they provide the leadership they are called to provide through the gospel and their calling, not to fret and worry about whether they or their congregation will be negatively affected by these changes.

We could open to almost any of the great prophets of the Hebrew Bible and find there the clarion call to Israel to be faithful to God and not to cater to the false securities offered by the foreign gods and

governments. In the same way, faithfulness to our “finally found” statement of the gospel with lesbian and gay partnered persons in ministry and to LGBT persons throughout the church needs to be clear and confident so that people will trust their pastoral leaders and move into new understandings of their own faith.

I know that LC/NA is ramping up our ability to help our church as congregations plead for helpful resources for education and change. We have been developing those resources for decades. We are ready! Requests to me have included Biblical perspectives, medical perspectives and pastoral guidelines – all of the “classical” resources that these leaders should have looked at already, but have not, perhaps not out of avoidance but of simple human nature to deal with difficult issues only as they arise.

Having said all that, I am thrilled to have been able to respond openly and proudly to colleagues and friends: “Here I am. Here is who I am. I am here for you, for Jesus and for the church.” It is no more than my “straight” colleagues have been able to do for their whole lives. And it is a wonderful thing, because my humanity is affirmed. I am a person again!

These psalms that end the collection simply overflow with joy. They are ecstatic. Whomever the author is, she/he is exploding with gratitude and praise to God. So are we! Not because the journey is finished, it isn’t; but because the will of God has been done to affirm us as God’s humble children. That is all we were asking for in the first place! ▼

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Executive Director



EMILY EASTWOOD

ELCA Churchwide Assemblies always feel like a whirlwind, but when we look back at CWA09 and its historic decisions, it will likely always take the blue ribbon for drama, including a real twister. Whether that whirlwind was the result of the collision of two currents coming from opposite directions or a temperature inversion where the cold air could no

Resting on the shoulders of decades of extraordinary work...and seven years of LC/NA-led faith-based community organizing.

longer hold the warmer air in check, the metaphors of the moment continue to be rich indeed. As one in the convention hall when the announcement of

tornado touchdown was made, I can say that for 15 to 20 minutes as we continued Bible Study and until the all clear was sounded, the assembly was of one mind...nervous and prayerful. When the storm outside had passed, we did not find ourselves in Oz. Bishop Mark Hanson was definitely not the “man behind the curtain.” There were no Ruby Slippers or Glenda the Good Witch.

From opening night, we knew that the legislative team was prepared, Goodsoil volunteers were vigiling, and allied voting members were more than ready for the task ahead. We were equipped with faith, heart, mind, and courage. There was no Yellow Brick Road, but with God as our guide, our legislative team, meal engagers, and allied voting members carried out a simple plan to take the high road, to engage with scripture, to tell stories, and to be graceful with non-anxious presence and self differentiated leadership.

We did all that resting on the shoulders of decades of extraordinary work by committed volunteers and organizations and seven years of LC/NA-led faith based community organizing and movement building. On Wednesday night after the twister and the passage of the social statement, the Holy Spirit called 1100 people to the Goodsoil worship. In organizing terms it was a public meeting, a foretaste of the church as it should be. There was a spirit in the place. As we sang “Give me Jesus,” many of us welled

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Thanks from the Executive Director

The honor has been mine to serve you these last seven years. I had an idea; you peopled and funded it. Together with all that had gone before we created a new kind of movement, which has spread beyond Lutheran corners to our ecumenical partners. I have been so blessed with the care and confidence of the officers, board members, staff members and regional coordinators of LC/NA especially in this past year during my illness. At the Saturday night celebration when the assembly had finished its business, co-chair Pastor Gladys Moore presented me with a print of the CWA worship banner. I believe it represents Jesus taking a meal with Cleopus and the unnamed disciple after their encounter on the Road to Emmaus. What Gladys did not know was that when I interviewed for this job back in the winter of 2002, I preached on that very text. How fitting that the day of our celebration be commemorated with a print of that meal when the two disciples knew him in the breaking of the bread. As my friend Pastor Barbara Lundblad has said, that day Jesus left them, and us, with all that we need, pieces of broken bread and each other. For my seven years with LC/NA, this has been most certainly true.

Our thanks are due to the extraordinary leadership of our 07-09 legislative team ably chaired by Pastor Chris Berry (Northwest

Washington synod): Mr. George Watson Esq. (Southeast Michigan synod), Mr. Eric Peterson (South Central Wisconsin synod), Mr. Jeremy Posadas (Metro New York Synod), Pastor Jon Vehar (South Dakota Synod), Mr. Steven Krefting (Sierra Pacific Synod), Ms. Rose Beeson (Grand Canyon Synod), Joanne Chadwick (Sierra Pacific Synod), Pastor Paul Tidemann (St. Paul Area Synod), Mr. Tim Fisher (LC/NA Staff, Minneapolis Area Synod), CWA Voting Member and legislative team consultant, Mr. Dave Lilehaug, Esq. I am honored to have served with these fine people. Their dedication and commitment over a two year period are unmatched in my experience. Their concern for and encouragement of me during my illness and at CWA09 remain treasured gifts.

Our thanks also to the staff of LC/NA, especially Interim Associate Director, Ross Murray who was the chief convention planner for Goodsoil activities and Operations Manager, Brett Bowman who was our technical wizard and virtual office manager for Goodsoil Command Central. These guys ran on nothing but energy and almost no sleep for ten days. During my illness, they have carried the ongoing work of LC/NA with grace, commitment, and great care. Thanks to staff members Lissa Messner, the Goodsoil registrar; Dylan Flunker, Special Projects Coordinator; Bryan Wuest, our Media intern who filmed, edited and produced the DVD, *One*

Baptism, Many Gifts; and finally Tim Fisher, who not only served as staff to the legislative team but also was project manager for the devotional booklet, *One Table, Many Blessings*. Special thanks also to Tim’s wife, Christine Hurney, who served as my personal chaperone during the assembly. There are so many things I would not have been able to do without Christine’s help. Thanks, too, to Jerry Vagts who appeared in Goodsoil Central in full regalia on multiple occasions to celebrate what we have accomplished together. Tears and laughter flowed almost imperceptibly from one to the other.

Our thanks also to Phil Soucy, LC/NA Director of Communications and Ann Craig of GLAAD who briefed, informed and helped the press, as well as conducting several media training sessions for us – quite a balancing act. Phil’s “man in the hallway” nightly blogs have spread across the world. His expertise, good humor, and steadfastness as a full time volunteer have graced me and propelled our movement in ways I could not imagine. He sat in Goodsoil Command Central with Ann watching events unfold as they streamed on line. Our press release went out within 35 seconds of the final votes on the social statement and rostering recommendations. As he is fond of saying, “Brilliant!” I say, thank you, which just doesn’t cover it.

All Peoples Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

By Pr. Steve Jerbi

All Peoples Church has been on a journey of inclusion for a long time. Our congregation rose up out of the ashes of a faithful and diminishing ministry in an 80 year-old congregation. When the

neighborhood changed, the church did not and soon Sunday morning in the building looked very different from the neighborhood – racially and economically. The congregation closed and gave both facilities and an endowment to launch a new community in this place. All Peoples was born on All Saints Day, 1991.

Our church is in the center of the Harambee neighborhood where the average income per capita is \$14,940 and the average household income is \$26,700. The population is 63% African American, 11% Hispanic and 19% Caucasian. The vast majority of residents in our neighborhood are renters. All Peoples reflects this as a core part of our identity.

While we are rooted in our neighborhood, we also strive to be “a house of prayer for all peoples.” Our community is diverse in all ways: we are African-



American, Anglo, Latino and African. We have folks who are wealthy, folks barely scraping by and everything in between. More than half the church is under the age of 18. We have people at church who are wearing Sunday best sitting next to a homeless man. We have kids in baggy shorts and adults in khakis.

This radical welcome is part of our

identity. With the resolutions that emerged at both churchwide and synod assemblies, the congregation began in 2000 an intentional look at sexuality, starting with a theological statement from the pastor. It followed with 1:1 meetings and a lengthy group study and discernment.

By 2001, we incorporated a statement of inclusion into the core values of the congregation. This, along with other values, is rehearsed with the congregation and new members frequently.

We remain a congregation for “all peoples.” We not only allow but welcome individuals all along the spectrum of how they understand sexuality, homosexuality, and faith. Some believe being gay is a sin, some “hate the sin, love the sinner,” some live by “don’t ask, don’t tell,” some support unions and same-gender couples, and some want and work for full inclusion in the church and in society. Everyone knows that statement of the church: that all peoples means *all peoples* and this includes LGBT sisters and brothers. Even if they don’t agree, they know what their church believes. And we all together strive to live into that identity of *all peoples*.

We are not defined by sexual orientation any more than by race, gender, education, employment, residency, or class. So we allow for different perspectives while holding fast to the one truth that binds us: Jesus.

This makes life together complex. We have LGBT leadership in the church,

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Executive Director

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with overdue tears of release and completeness. We always knew that we belonged to Jesus, but finally the church, our church, had said so too.

While the two-thirds vote on the social statement was amazing, especially because every voting machine had worked and the margin was one vote and one vote only, the most meaningful vote of the week was the 68% on the final rostering

recommendation which effectively will end the policy of discrimination against partnered LGBT ministers. The previous vote on “finding ways to roster” partnered LGBT ministers had been closer, only 55% in favor. That the final vote was better than a super majority meant that once the decision had been made by a simple majority to “find ways” to roster LGBT ministers, 13% of those who had made their point voting no on “finding ways,” voted yes to eliminate the policy. That was a good sign that the center of the ELCA would hold. A few individuals left the hall and did not return, but the next day delegations from synods that had defeated policy change or passed negative motions at their synod assemblies, were back in their chairs engaging the process. Thanks be to God!

While the staff and legislative team took a small break the week after CWA09, we are now fully engaged once again. We have no

illusion about Oz, but in a way, as Phil said in his final blog from the assembly, we have come home. The work of implementation of the actions of the assembly has begun. LC/NA and the legislative team have pledged to stay at the table at every step. In many ways our work at this moment in history is just as important as the work leading to CWA09 and policy change. We have reached the place where two currents converge... “It is Finished” and “Now it Begins.” It is a place of progress, but not elation. We must move seamlessly from one into the other, defending policy change through CWA2011 and promoting implementation so that the new policy does not become a few sentences in a document, but real practice at all levels of the church. The church as it should be is no longer beyond the rainbow; it is in sight, and with God as our guide, and hopefully within our lifetimes, what was a dream will become reality. Amen. Let it be so. ▼

RIC Settings

Added to the Roster since last issue

All Peoples Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Ballard First Lutheran Church, Seattle, Washington

Holy Faith Church, Saline, Michigan

Salem Evangelical Church, Chicago, Illinois

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

FROM THE DESK OF THE
Development Vice-
Chair



RICHARD ANDERSON

“All this is from God who reconciled us through Jesus Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”

— II CORINTHIANS 5:18

It is becoming apparent that the Reconciling in Christ program is going to be even more important now after the ELCA voted to accept gay and lesbian clergy and to find ways to bless same-sex partners. Because of the vote at Churchwide this summer there will undoubtedly be RIC congregations that will be having conversations about the blessings of committed couples and the possibility of calling a pastor in a committed same-gender relationship.

Our experience shows that change in the church happens slowly, opening up individuals to healing and deep spiritual reconciliation. Maybe a closeted lesbian member will bring her partner to church for the first time. Perhaps parents with a transgender

One way to provide a **life-long commitment** is to create a **legacy gift**.

child may finally be able to feel they are not guilty of failure in raising their child. A bisexual person, hearing of a Reconciling congregation, might return to church after an absence of many years. A gay member of your congregation will feel freer to tell his friends about his church. It's amazing how the Holy Spirit works when we are willing to be an instrument of God's grace.

We anticipate that some congregations across the ELCA will now become RIC. We invite and encourage these congregations to join us.

Reconciling Lutherans

Reconciling Lutherans is to individuals what RIC is to congregations: it is an affirmation of welcome. *Whether you are a member of an RIC congregation or not*, it is important for your voice to be heard as a Reconciling Lutheran.

Each name added to this public roster of Reconciling Lutherans will strengthen the call to the church to become truly welcoming and inclusive. By revealing the true depth and breadth of support for change, the Reconciling Lutherans roster will give courage to all members and leaders, bringing closer the day when gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons will be welcome in every community and

every congregation. There is no fee for becoming a Reconciling Lutheran.

Become a member of Lutherans Concerned/ North America

We believe faith is a lifelong journey. Your support helps promote healing and positive self-esteem for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people of faith. Whether your congregation chooses to become RIC or you as an individual member seeks to become a Reconciling Lutheran we invite you to become a member of Lutherans Concerned/North America. You may become a member by making a one-time annual gift of \$50 or more or you may make a regular monthly contribution in any amount.

Evergreen Giving allows you to support LC/NA by periodic withdrawals from your checking, savings, or credit card account. It helps us plan our revenue and meet our goals from a more predictable income stream. And you don't need to remember to write those checks each month! Just download and print the PDF authorization form found on-line at the www.lcna.org website, fill in the personal information and institutional donation sections, attach a voided check or savings deposit slip and mail it all to LC/NA, PO Box 4707, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104. Evergreen Giving utilizes the Simply Giving® program of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

Reconciling is a Life-Long Journey

Now is the time for reconciliation within ELCA and among all Christians. As Ishmael Noko of Zimbabwe, president of the Lutheran World Federation, said in his address to the ELCA churchwide assembly, “I believe that the whole Christian Church will be served well if Lutherans can provide an example of living together in love, speaking truth, confessing the faith, and sharing one another's joys, challenges and conflicts.” This is the work of reconciliation.

Becoming a Reconciling Lutheran is a life-long journey. One way to provide a life-long commitment is to create a legacy gift. We invite you to become a “Friend of Andy” by making a planned gift to support the LC/NA ministry of reconciliation. You may sign a “letter of intent” to indicate a legacy gift. A few examples of planned gifts include: Gifts made through your will or trust, through a beneficiary designation, a retirement plan or IRA or through a life insurance policy.

Thank you for your support of the RIC work within our churches, thank you for becoming a Reconciling Lutheran, thank you for your continued financial support of LC/NA and thank you for considering a life-long legacy gift. And together we thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ who gave us this ministry of reconciliation. ▼

What Happened in Minneapolis

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because the Bylaws require that for social statements. But all other matters would require a simple majority, including the Recommendation on Ministry Policies. There were two failed attempts to impose a two-thirds majority requirement for matters related to sexuality – at the November 2008 and March 2009 Church Council meetings.

On Monday, the rules came onto the floor of the assembly en bloc, a single motion representing the rules divided into parts. Motions were passed to pull out two of the parts, Three and Ten, for individual consideration. The rest of the rules were then adopted en bloc, 976-26.

The motion to **impose** two-thirds majorities on **changes** to the **ministry** policy of the church related to sexuality... **failed** 436 to 584.

943 Yes; No 74 (93%) Part Three was considered. A motion was made to limit the length of speeches during debate on resolutions, motions, and amendments to 2 minutes. Failing to achieve the two-thirds necessary to override the standing rules as they came in from the Church Council, speeches remained at up to 3 minutes long.

861 Yes; No 137 (86%) Part Ten contained the specification from the constitution that requires two-thirds to adopt any social statement. Various motions were made attempting to add a



Christine Hurney distributes the devotional booklet *One Table Many Blessings*

PAUL NIXDORF

Prayer Shawls being blessed



PAUL NIXDORF

requirement for two-thirds for any changes to the ministry policies of the church, for any subjects related to the sexuality study, for any matters related to sexuality, etc. You get the drift. The principal argument supporting these motions was that two-thirds would demonstrate that the church had greater consensus on this controversial subject. Great and lengthy debate was held, well past the 9:00 pm time the agenda set for the session to end. The motion to impose two-thirds failed 436 Yes; No 584 (57%), and in the end the rules on this subject were adopted as the Church Council had said.

676 Yes; No 338 (66.67 %) On Tuesday, August 18, the Social Statement on Human Sexuality was introduced to the floor of the assembly. Two sessions as a Committee of the Whole were held, one as the whole assembly, the other in small groups. Committee of the Whole is without parliamentary

A Host of Faithful Volunteers

by Jean Etsinger

Like the thousand-plus other people who came together for the August 17-23 Churchwide Assembly, they were male, female... teens, young adults, middle agers, seniors... gay, straight... short, tall, thick, thin, on their feet or wheelchair assisted... from north, south, east, west, between and beyond. If you listened to their stories, you learned that they were liberal and conservative... they had jobs, had lost jobs, were retired, were students, were stay-at-home caregivers... some were clergy, some were lay.

What made the Goodsoil volunteers different is that they were so committed to what the Social Statement on Human Sexuality and the Ministry Policies recommendations represent for change in the ELCA that they paid their own way to be in Minneapolis that week – or had it paid by others who wanted them to be there advocating for that change.

To be recognized, most wore a colorful hand-made prayer shawl.

Following are just a few profiles of the more than a hundred volunteers who came to Goodsoil Central to give of their time, talent and spiritual treasures.

Kevin O'Hara

Two weeks before assembly, Kevin O'Hara reached the decision to volunteer. "God called me, if nothing else, to stand with my brothers and sisters, whatever happens," he said midway through the week.

His parents have known he is gay for a couple of years and "are struggling" with it. He is in his third year of study at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and plans to do his internship as the fourth year.

This past year at a suburban Philadelphia congregation he was working with youth ministry, music, preaching and assisting in worship. After he came out to the congregation, the pastor asked if he could commit to being celibate. "If I'm involved, no," he replied. The pastor took the matter to the congregation



council, a meeting Kevin was asked not to attend, and the council "decided this was not the right time or place" for him.

When he went to say goodbye to the congregation, "there were lots of tears," he says, "and they paid my way to be here."

When he came out to his candidacy committee, he found a lot of support. But "they asked me what my backup plan was." He said Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries – "because I'm a Lutheran."

He came to the assembly "with hopes that people can put down their differences, because both sides feel strongly, and just remember to love one another. Lutheran theology is the most amazing thing for all people."

Jan Guetschow

"Because of the hypocrisy of the church," Jan Guetschow said while knitting a prayer shawl at Goodsoil Central early in assembly week, "we have lost all of the younger generation in my family. They



rules governing debate: no motions can be made, no amendments made, no votes taken. People simply go to microphones to state their opinions, for or against.

Late that afternoon and evening there was a series of hearings held on a variety of subjects including the Social Statement and the ministry policy change.

After dinner, the ministry policy change was again in the packet of hearings, for the benefit of those who went to the social statement one in the afternoon.

On Wednesday, August 19, the parliamentary debate was held on the social statement in the afternoon. There were thirteen motions to amend the social statement, as well as 42 memorials from synod assemblies, advocating everything from editorial changes to wholesale changes to the intent of the existing text. An attempt to alter the text of the social statement by replacing the entire section concerning same-gender monogamous relationships with text describing homosexual behavior as contrary to God's intent failed, **303 Yes; No 667** (69%).

As the parliamentary consideration of the social statement began, a weather front came through, giving birth to 4 weak tornados, one of which came down next to the convention center, doing minor

Goodsoil singers raising their voices in praise



PAUL NIXDORF

know who is openly gay and feel there is no place for them."

Her daughter "was deeply wounded at confirmation" and is no longer involved in the church. Neither are her sister's children or her husband's nieces and nephews.

Jan was raised in the United Church of Christ and her husband attended a Missouri Synod school. When they fell in love in college, they went looking for a church home that would reflect "how grounded we both are in our faith." Today, she's a member of St. Paul's Lutheran in Minnetonka, Minn., which last spring became "the newest RIC congregation in the Minneapolis Synod."

The transformational ministry coordinating group at St. Paul's "decided this should be the first part," she says. After study that took about four years, "we got serious in the last four months when there was no question where we were going. It was a wonderful process."

Her motivation for volunteering with Goodsoil: "I wanted to be here to support everyone who has worked so hard and so long."

One Table, Many Blessings

In what appears to qualify as a tradition, another devotional booklet was published for the Church Wide Assembly. Produced by Goodsoil, and distributed early each morning by Goodsoil volunteers to voting members arriving for the day's business, the booklet is called, "One Table, Many Blessings."

Inside are daily devotions alternating with personal stories of the lives and ministries of twelve LGBT or allied individuals and families. Pastor Bradley Schmeling, whose own story was the focus of much of the 2007 Assembly, crafted each day's devotion. And the stories of eight Lutheran pastors and eighteen lay people are revealed through photos and first-person accounts of their coming to terms with LGBT issues, finding their places in the world, and how central the Lutheran church continues to be for them.

Last year's booklet featured 83 names of LGBT individuals called to ministry, and serving in roles of pastors, associates in ministry, seminarians, and candidates approved for ordination. This year's booklet features 96 names.

"One Table, Many Blessings" was available at no charge to the participants of the Assembly. The devotional booklet may also be found at www.goodsoil.org under Churchwide Assembly and the date of 8/18/09.

—Gail Sieckman



damage to the spire of Central Lutheran and destroying tents set up to offer meals and drinks for the assembly attendees. There were those who tried to paint this as a "sign from God of the wrongness" of the assembly considering the change to policy. Of course, none of those offering such analysis mentioned that the sun came out as the assembly voted to adopt the social statement. Truth is both events were just weather, unrelated to actions in the hall of the assembly.

In the end the social statement was adopted by a vote exactly two-thirds, 66.67%. No more unusual than passing by any other number, all being equally possible, but again those opposed spun the vote as being "by only one vote." The fact is it passed by two-thirds of the assembly voting for it, exactly what had been said would demonstrate strong consensus just two days prior.

Dr. Robert Goldstein

This assembly reminds Pastor Bob Goldstein "of our human limitations. I feel kind of helpless about people threatening to leave the church, and look to God for help in building bridges." At the same time, he cannot help reflecting on "how many have turned away from the church because of who they are."

He is lead pastor of St. Francis Lutheran in San Francisco, rostered with Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries. The congregation was one of two in that city removed from the ELCA in 1996 for calling and ordaining a gay man and a lesbian couple.

"Forty years ago I knew I was gay, but there were no models to follow except to hide it," he reflects. "So I decided to go the route of deception." He was married for 19 years. He chose to be openly gay, "though a little guarded," in 1995.

Pastor Bob contrasts his young adult life with that of Javen Swanson, a candidate for ELCA



ordination, and his spouse. The gay Yale Divinity School couple was featured on the DVD sent to voting members and on a Goodsoil panel at the assembly. "It's great to see the life-giving choices they have," Pastor Bob says.

He volunteered because "this is the best shot we've ever had for gracefully engaging one on one." At the end of the week he sat with a solemn group from central Illinois. "One woman said, 'I'm totally opposed [to inclusiveness], but I'm not going to leave the church.'" He adds, "I wish I had met with the CORE people. They're hurting. I think of the many times we've been hurt by the assembly, so we know what they're feeling."

Sharon Bost

A member of Holy Trinity Lutheran in Marietta, Ga., Sharon Bost relates her story wrapped in three prayer shawls to protect her from the Goodsoil Central air-conditioning. She found out her son is gay about the same time she realized



695 Yes; No 285 (70.9%) On Thursday, August 20, the assembly took up the Implementing Resolutions that accompanied the social statement passed the day before, not to be confused with the ministry policy changes, which were completely separate from the social statement. In some of these implementing resolutions, congregations were asked to continue the study of sexuality, to encourage comprehensive sex education in public schools, to welcome members who are gay or lesbian. Augsburg was asked to consider developing materials about Christian values to aid parents and children to make responsible choices. All of these implementing resolutions serve to begin the work of inculcating the social statement into the work of the church.

344 Yes; No 670 (66.0%) Late Wednesday, following the passage of the social statement, the Recommendation on Ministry Policies was introduced onto the floor of the assembly. The assembly went into Committee of the Whole on Thursday to discuss its four resolutions, first in small groups and then as the whole assembly. On Friday morning, the parliamentary consideration of the policy change proposal began, continued in the

afternoon into the evening. The debate was certainly heartfelt, passionate, and aired strongly-held opinions.

Early in the debate a substitute motion was made that would have replaced the recommendation made by the Task Force with an encouragement to uphold and strongly enforce the provisions already found in Vision



Many prayers were lifted up by all during voting

and Expectations and Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline. This was defeated 344-670.

771 Yes; No 230 (77.0%) The assembly decided to re-order the four resolutions from the Task Force that formed their recommendation on ministry policies, so that what had been the third resolution became the first resolution, moving the others to the order 3-1-2-4 from the original. The revised order #1, committing the ELCA “to bear one another’s burdens, love the neighbor, and respect the bound consciences of all” passed 771-230.

407 Yes; No 576 (58.6%) Following the vote on resolution 1 of the ministry policies recommendation, another attempt was made to impose a two-thirds majority requirement on all remaining portions of the recommendation and any other matters that might come up related to sexuality. The same arguments were repeated from Monday’s rules debate. The motion failed to achieve the necessary two-thirds majority to install a new rule, nearly 59% of the assembly voting against it.

Bishop David Brauer-Rieke of the Oregon Synod presided at the Goodsoil service, Pr. Robin Hartwig assisting



that her younger sister is a lesbian. Her reaction in both cases was to “be there” for the people she loves.

Her son went through gender therapy in high school. One day he disappeared in his car; five hours later he had gotten as far as the Florida state line when he finally answered his parents’ cell phone voice mails. Their message was “Is it your sexuality? Whatever it is, it’s all right.” After they talked, he came back home.

Sharon’s father and uncle were Lutheran pastors. Her son wanted from a young age to follow in their footsteps. “He went to seminary and through candidacy, she says. “He’s a go-by-the-rules kind of person, and he thought he would remain celibate. When they encouraged him to go to the United Church of Christ or somewhere else, he said, ‘No. I’m a Lutheran.’”

He has been working in a secular Lutheran setting for several years and worshipping at an Episcopal church. He’s in a relationship of which Mom approves. “His partner is interested in finding a church,” she says. “Their friends mostly aren’t churchied.”

Having first volunteered with Goodsoil at the

2005 assembly in Orlando, Sharon says, “I wanted to be here when [adoption of inclusiveness] happened, and I wanted to be here if it didn’t happen. I love the camaraderie, the acceptance and the love in this place.”

Hans Eric Becklin

He’s the very picture of Old School Ivy League: horn-rim style glasses, khaki slacks, dark blazer over an oxford shirt. And he lopes in his leather shoes. It’s hard to believe Hans Eric Becklin is only 17, going into his senior year of high school.

His family lives in a rural area of Madison, WI, and are members of Advent Lutheran Church, an RIC congregation “since the ‘80s.” He says he came to assembly and volunteered with Goodsoil “because I had a ride” – his father is a voting member. But there’s more to his story.

“I have had a life blessed by God,” he says. “I’ve been able to experience lots of things fueled by the Spirit” including gay and lesbian friends sustained by their faith. The church is



slowly moving toward embracing the idea that everyone is a child of God, he believes, but it troubles him that “all sorts of people want to exclude all sorts of other people.”

He quotes his 82-year-old grandmother: “I don’t understand the complexities, but I know that it doesn’t matter who you are. Everyone needs to be part of God’s kingdom.”

A family member he loves dearly “is a better Christian than lots of people I know, but Christ has become irrelevant to her.” He adds, “Putting limitations on God’s grace is destructive... I strongly believe that change will come from within and that the Christ-based church will be able to welcome all.”

Hans Eric plans to major in religion in college and to become a pastor. “But, he says, “I will not join a church that excludes LGBT people.”

Pastor Nancy Kraft

It may surprise some that Charlotte, N.C., has four “open” ELCA congregations. Nancy Kraft’s explanation is that “LGBT people tend to flock to the cities because they can be out there, something they can’t do in small communities.”

619 Yes; No 402 (60.6%) Revised order #2 committing the ELCA “to finding ways to allow congregations and synods that choose to do so to recognize, support, and hold publicly accountable life-long, monogamous, same gender relationships” was next up. Debate was intense, one of the arguments from those opposed being that this was a slippery slope leading to blessing same-gender committed relationships, even marriage. This allegation notwithstanding, the resolution passed with more than 60% of the assembly voting in favor of it. The time for parliamentary debate on the ministry policies having expired, the assembly went to worship and lunch. The debate would continue in the afternoon session in a just-in-case-needed slot in the middle of that plenary.

559 Yes; No 451 (55.3%) After other scheduled business that preceded it in the Friday afternoon plenary, the debate on the remaining two resolutions in the ministry policies recommendation continued. Revised order #3 committing the ELCA “to finding a way for people in such publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders of this church” was taken up next. The debate was lengthy with strong opinions on both

wanted. In this, congregations that wished to call a minister in a committed, same-gender relationship can do so, while none will be required to. Only those entities acting as a calling body have authority in this: there is no new authority created. Bishops and synods only act when they are part of a call process, for instance in specialized ministries where the synod council is the calling authority. No synod can opt out or in by legislative action. There will be the same central roster of ministers currently maintained. An attempt was made to re-insert the somewhat confusing text removed by the church council, wording that made it vaguely appear as if bishops, synod councils, and synods had the power to impose their “bound conscience” in all calls. The attempt failed. The final resolution, which removed the previous ban, substituting for the ban the single, high standard for ministers expressed in Vision and



LC/NA Co-Chair Gladys Moore, Emily Eastwood and Ross Murray confer

PAUL INXORF

The assembly **affirmed** allowing rostered persons in life-long, **committed**, same-gender **relationships** to serve in the church

sides, everyone realizing how significant this was. Having committed itself to recognizing the validity of life-long, committed, same-gender relationships, the assembly now passed allowing ministers in them to serve in the church by 559-451.

667 Yes; No 307 (68.4%) The final resolution laid out the “structured flexibility” that was the way proposed by the Task Force to do what the assembly had said it

Expectations, passed by more than 68% majority.

It will be months from passage before policy and process for these changes are in place. They will be developed by appropriate staff, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, and approved by the Church Council. In the meantime the previous policies remain in effect. ▼



She is pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran, the one congregation that is an RIC church and has been for more than a decade. She has been there for four years, after previously having served one of the others, which she describes as also “very open.”

This assembly was her first as a Goodsoil volunteer, although she had previously been a voting member. “My congregation wanted me to be here and paid my way,” she says, after she told members she knew change was going to happen, “and I would give anything to go.”

She appreciates how important that change is for gay people she has pastored: “People who’ve come out to me and others in the congregation, I’ve felt their pain.”

Still, she came to Minneapolis, “knowing that if the proposals were not passed here, they would be the next time,” she said at mid-week. “I feel a little guilty – like I’m here for the celebration when I haven’t done the hard work.”

Of those who have left the church because

they’ve not felt accepted, “It will be interesting to see how many come back,” Pastor Nancy says. “The ELCA needs to be intentional about providing resources to reach out to those people.”

Steven Walker

Grace Lutheran Church in Houston, Texas, lives out its mission statement commitment to “boldly proclaim the love of Christ,” Steven Walker says. Evidence? Grace sent nine Goodsoil volunteers to the assembly, himself among them — after having sent eight to Chicago two years ago. It’s the only RIC congregation in his synod, which covers about a quarter of the Lone Star State.

Steve, a former LC/NA treasurer and board member, entered into a relationship with his partner for life 17 years ago; they were married about a decade ago. He came to Minneapolis expecting everything to pass but acknowledged toward the end of the week, “It’s



been a roller coaster.”

In Chicago, he recalls, “We came away with the body having said ‘no’ to efforts to table the Social Statement. Then we added the “refrain and restrain” [the resolution asking bishops to take no action in the next two years against gay clergy in relationships or congregations they serve]. Last year Grace called a pastor rostered by Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries; “The synod bishop,” he says, “has been very respectful.”

Graceful engagement was largely satisfying for Steve, although a one hour-long discussion with “a couple of guys against the changes” who approached him proved “exhausting.” At one plenary, a voting member came back to her husband in the visitor section in tears because she felt the pain of both sides.

Steve is pleased that the ELCA Council led on this issue. “It’s shown real leadership. The way the church is being empowered now is huge.” ▼

Reflections on the Assembly

continued from page 1

Our hope, our homing ever in your grace,
We've come this far by faith; we can't turn
back.

We listened to words of healing from the
Bible:

MATTHEW 11: 28–30: Come to me, all you
who are weary and are carrying heavy
burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my
yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am
gentle and humble in heart and you will
find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy
and my burden is light.

ACTS 15:28: For it has seemed good to the
Holy Spirit and to us to impose no further
burden than these essentials....

1 CORINTHIANS 1: 23–25: We proclaim Christ
crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and
foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are
called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the
power of God and the wisdom of God. For
God's foolishness is wiser than human
wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger
than human strength.

We heard words from Gerhard Frost's
Homing in the Presence, and John Vannorsdall's
Pieta, and Walter Brueggemann's *You*
Beyond our 'Weary Selves'.

We had prayers for healing and hope:

Come near and listen, as your children pray,
Your hope and healing cradle us till dawn.
We've come this far by faith; we can't turn
back.

Interspersed through the service were quiet
selections by Cantus, a group of eight men
(gay and straight) who exemplified their
excellent musical training at St. Olaf College.
We sang:

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord,
have mercy. Grant us peace and healing,
hope and courage as we live these days.

At the end of the evening I was invited to
share a few thoughts before I pronounced
the benediction. Here is what I said:

I have been asked many times since the
voting ended, "What are your thoughts?" I
could only come up with one word:
"Bittersweet."

This is surely a moment of sweetness, of
thanksgiving at the end of a very long
struggle.

But there is also a heavy stone at the bottom
of my heart this night. I realize that words I
have written and spoken almost surely have
contributed to the decision of some to leave
our dear church. Along with so many others
I poured my heart and soul into the

formation, birth and early years of our
ELCA. I do not want even one to leave.

But over against this heaviness is the
memory of all those – and their families and
friends – who have already left our church.
And I am also thinking tonight of all those –
and their families and friends – who would
leave in even greater numbers had they
heard another word of exclusion from this
Assembly. The door has been opened. We
can't turn back.

What can it mean for us that those who **once** so clearly **rejected** now seem to say we can **come home**?

When I came home from the Assembly
there was an email waiting for me from my
friend Jeff. Twenty years ago he finished
Luther Seminary, eager to serve the Gospel
ministry. But Jeff is gay. He could not
fathom living a life alone without the
shared joy of a partner and a home. His
bishop – as I did when I was a synod bishop
– said that there was no place for him in our
church. Jeff went to the United Church of
Christ and now serves on the staff of a large
metropolitan congregation. "There is no
way to tell someone they are not welcome
in the church that does not cause a deep
wound," he wrote. "For 20 years we have
been away, making investments in a new
spiritual home. What can it mean for us
that those who once so clearly rejected us
now seem to say we can come home?" He
added that his elderly mother, a devout, life-
long Lutheran, had finally given up any
hope for change and had joined another
denomination some time ago.

Now nearly a week later that same mixed
feeling persists. Here are some of my most
poignant memories from the Assembly:

■ As one who presided at many tense
and potentially conflicted church
conventions and assemblies, I have only the
highest admiration for Bishop Mark
Hanson for the fair and even-handed way
he led us in Minneapolis. Thus, I am
dismayed by one former synod bishop who
wrote to Bishop Hanson, "You have
destroyed the church I have loved and
served all my life. I have changed my will
and my giving patterns will follow." Or the
comments of another former synod bishop
who wrote that the Assembly was "the most
thoroughly managed and manipulated
gathering that I have ever seen." He went on

New DVD Available through Goodsoil and LC/NA

This year at the Churchwide Assembly, a new DVD was introduced, and with it,
three ELCA pastors and their ministries and lives. Entitled **One Baptism, Many
Gifts**, the film shows three diverse settings in which these individuals live out
their calls, and witness to the love of God in Christ Jesus. Their stories reflect a wide
range of experiences, in diverse venues, as well as varying decades in which they
began their ministries.

Katrina Foster serves in the Bronx neighborhood of New York City. She has been
at Fordham Lutheran Church for fifteen years, in an urban setting with many low-income members. During her
tenure, she and her partner Pamela Kallimanis became parents to their daughter Zoia, now 7 years old and going
into second grade.

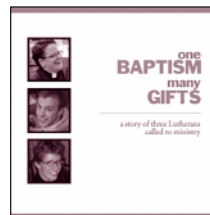
Robyn Hartwig serves St. Andrew Lutheran in Beaverton, Oregon, near Portland, in a three-quarter call with
the congregation. One-fourth of her time is spent in "Eco-faith Recovery" ministry focusing on heightening
awareness of environmental issues as an aspect of faithful living.

Finally, Javen Swanson has completed work at Yale Divinity School, and intends to return for his "Lutheran
Year" at Luther Seminary, in hope of becoming ordained soon thereafter. He and his partner, Oby Ballinger, were
married in May after finding one another at Yale. Oby is studying to become a pastor for United Church of Christ.

A panel discussion in Minneapolis presented each of the pastors, along with their partners (and child), so that
CWA participants could meet them and hear their stories. In this setting Katrina, Robyn, and Javen spoke of their
journeys to ministry in the context of the issues being debated at CWA that very week. Katrina's partner, Pamela,
captured the truth of this moment in history, when she observed, "The Holy Spirit is a mess! [Its process] is not a
neat, ordered policy" that holds everyone in the comfort of full agreement.

The DVDs were a nominal five dollars, and as soon as I got home, I watched mine. Seeing these called
individuals in their respective, current milieus, with the people and ministries that surround them, was inspiring
and instructive. Each of them is living a life that manifests healing of fears and alienation along the way, joyful
embrace of the promise of God's grace, and a commitment to serving the broadest range possible of God's
children. You can order copies at <http://infox.lcna.com>.

—Gail Sieckman



to call the entire process leading up to the Assembly “a joke.” The former head of the predecessor Lutheran Church in America wrote that, “The ELCA is no longer the church to which I can give my loyalty.” Those who make comments like this are obliged to be specific about their charges. Until they do so we must dismiss their remarks as scurrilous and as breaking the commandment not to bear false witness against one’s neighbor. We must also ask of these persons: “What about all of us who have waited for change for so many years?” We did not leave. We did not reduce our support for the mission of the church. We did not change our wills and estate plans. We allowed for differences within our family of faith.

■ A man at the microphone said that if the vote passed our church will be like a delicious-looking brownie, but impregnated with “dog doo.” Dog shit? God’s children dog shit? I feel full of fury even as I write these words! Thank God that most who opposed change do not agree with such a comment. Yet, try to imagine the hurt felt by brothers and sisters in Christ who are gay. And how would anyone feel who has a son, daughter, sister, brother or friend who is homosexual?

[Editor’s note: Shortly after the “brownie” story was delivered, a prominent leader with Lutheran CORE apologized to a member of the Goodsoil Legislative Team for the speech, expressing deep disagreement with both the language and the intention of the speech.]

■ During the debate the pastor of one of our largest congregations threatened to take his church out of the ELCA if the proposals passed. I’m reminded of childhood days when the sons of wealthy families warned us that they would take their toys and leave if we didn’t play by their rules. No, we didn’t want them to leave. But we soon learned that we could play without them.

■ After the final vote Bishop Mark Hanson, with the artfulness of a skilled physician, spoke the first words of healing, using Scripture to begin the process of binding up the open wound. We were shocked when the pastor of a large Minnesota congregation went to the microphone, completely out of order, and tried to reopen the debate. In all of my more than 50 years of attending church conventions and presiding at many of them, it was the rudest and crudest act I have ever seen. It was like opening the wound again and pouring on salt.

■ I remember with admiration the words of former Minnesota governor, Al Quie. He was opposed to the proposals. But like the statesman and churchman he is, Quie reminded those on the losing side that the church is bigger than this decision and that we must all remain loyal.

■ I take some encouragement from the vote on the final recommendation, the call for implementation of the actions that had been approved. That it passed by nearly 70% tells us that many who were disappointed by the outcome also realize that we must move on, living out the implications of the decisions.

■ I was impressed by the youth who spoke. I don’t

think I would have had the courage to speak at such a huge gathering when I was a teenager. The word we heard from them was that the issues we were debating are not at the top of their list of concerns. They want a church that does not exclude any who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Where does all of this leave us? Here is my hope:

That all of us will take a deep, deep breath, asking the promised Holy Spirit to be our Guide, Helper, Counselor, and Friend in the days to come.

That we will give ourselves the time we need to live into this new reality.

That we will pray earnestly for those who lead us.

That we will concentrate on evangelism, accenting that we are now, more than ever, a church that invites all to share in our rich treasures of Word and Sacrament. ▼

Notes from the International Program Committee (IPC)

India is a land of considerable diversity but is not always accepting of diversity. Recall that but a few months ago five transgender persons were arrested and sent to jail in Bengaluru where they were abused and subject to humiliation before advocacy groups finally obtained their release. Now we read that in Delhi the high court has decriminalized homosexuality for that city alone. Of course various religious groups called this action unconscionable and made formal protest. Do not expect decriminalization for the whole of the country any time soon.

Latin America has its ups and downs as well, and despite some progress we still hear of attacks on transgender persons in such countries as Chile. There are undoubtedly many more such attacks that go unreported.

What does get reported is not always certainty. A recent claim that the US military in **Iraq** killed gay Iraqis in an execution style setting is yet to be substantiated. It is the first time such allegations have surfaced, and since marginalized people are always vulnerable, advocacy groups are pressing for more details. The issue surfaced at a fund-raiser sponsored by Human Rights Campaign (HRC) for the Lebanese Protection for LGBT Persons (HELEM), a Lebanon-based center that works to address the plight of LGBT people in the Middle East. Mark Bromley, Chair of the Council for Global Equality doubts there will be a substantiation but urges taking the matter seriously. Reported evidence has yet to be made public by any source.

There is an interesting debate going on in **Singapore** centering on Arming Women Against Rape and Endangerment (AWARE), a much-vaunted women’s professional group. The internal fight has spilled into the political and religious arenas. A younger, conservative Christian group is trying to push out the older more liberal leaders on the basis that this liberalism is promoting sex and gay education and approving lesbianism. The dispute has gotten a bit ugly and reflects the overall tensions in Singapore as the government seems ready to liberalize many of its attitudes but it all gets played out like four-sided table tennis.

The International Program Committee has just been contacted by the newly formed LGBT Christians of **Ukraine** who have registered with the government as an official group and are busy organizing. It is always difficult to evaluate the representativeness of such groups and to know how to show support to their cause without stepping into a potential land mine. We do know that the LGBT community in Ukraine faces discrimination both in the context of society in general and in the position of the traditional churches in Ukraine. The leaders of this group claim that some priests have expressed support for them, but even as a registered organization this group has a big task ahead of them, especially in decriminalizing homosexuality. Stay tuned.

[Correction from Summer Issue of IPC News: Marti Scheel is our European liaison for IPC.]
—Philip Moeller, Director, IPC



Goodsoil, Great Worship

Gratitude and Amazement at the Midweek Communion Celebration reported **by the Rev. Wendy Sherer**, Region 6 Coordinator

Unreal. It felt dreamlike on Wednesday, as we vested for the evening's Goodsoil worship celebration. What had just happened? And what was about to happen in the wake of

the Sexuality Social Statement's passing earlier that day, by exactly two-thirds of the assembly vote?

There was palpable electricity in the air, echoing the afternoon's unlikely tornado, which dissipated almost as soon as it had formed, leaving very little damage, but plenty of musing in its wake. In his pre-worship remarks, Ross Murray reported being asked

A tornado came and went. "A great windstorm arose," said the scripture. "That's what it says!" said the preacher.

what it meant that a tornado formed just as we were preparing to discuss the statement, to which he replied, "Probably the same thing it meant that the sun came out just as the vote was being cast."

It was this surreal mood in which we gathered together in a happily crowded sanctuary, with a full choir and over thirty vested clergy – "regularly" and "irregularly" ordained alike, for what has become a Goodsoil tradition.

The mood was augmented by the scripture chosen (well ahead of time, by the way) for the evening. Both Psalm and Gospel proclaimed deliverance from tumultuous seas. At the words "A great windstorm arose," preacher Barbara Lundblad paused for the resulting laughter with the added comment, "That's

what it says!" She then proceeded to masterfully weave together the winds, the Spirit, the Body and the remarkable events of this unfolding week.

As a participant in this my third Churchwide Assembly worship with Goodsoil, I can attest that this one felt decidedly different. In those two preceding assemblies, this event was always my favorite, and this year was no exception. But 2009 felt less like "How Long, O Lord?" and more like "Could this be the time for which we have waited?" as we dared to anticipate the week's remaining votes with something that felt a lot like well-founded hope.

The evening's music and worship was punctuated by thanksgiving, praise, prayer, contemplation, joy, and no shortage of amazement. The presence of so many worshippers, voting members, guests, present and former bishops – all witnessing to the one Body – was a powerful visual affirmation of God's kingdom, as it has been in past years. And we felt the presence of those who joined us spiritually, though not physically, whether simply absent or having already passed from this life. It was a time for unity in the bond of Spirit.

After the recession, people spontaneously streamed outside onto Central Lutheran Church's front plaza, heads and hearts turned toward the carillon bells reverberating through the fresh night air. My thoughts reached toward a quickly approaching day when my "extraordinary" brother and sister clergy would be vested with every rostered privilege I have received. As I looked at the upturned faces of those around me, I could only imagine the ponderings of their own hearts. ▼

RIC Corner

continued from page 4

including on our Executive Team. We have same-gender couples that worship here and participate in our couples small group ministry. We figure out how to be the body of Christ, even through dissent and disagreement. This makes us a grace-filled church.

With such a long-standing, public witness for welcoming the LGBT community, we knew there was no reason not to be Reconciling in Christ. The dissenting voice said, "Why take a position or join a group that might limit someone that doesn't believe the same thing? Doesn't that push others out?" While we know this to be true, we also know we need to seize every opportunity to say we are a church for all. By working with the local neighborhood associations, we express our welcome to the community. By advertising in the city's black newspaper, we express our welcome. By partnering with schools, we express our welcome. RIC is just one of many ways we can express our welcome. ▼

More than 1,000 worshippers attended the Goodsoil service.

We Stand on Shoulders... Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!

By **Jeannine Janson**, LC/NA Co-Chair, 2002–2008

The decisions made at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are the result of decades of educating, nudging, pushing, challenging, confronting and engaging the Lutheran Church through its varieties of organization (ELCA, Lutheran Church in America (LCA), American Lutheran Church (ALC), The Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), etc.). This work has been done by countless individuals and organizations. I won't even attempt a list of categories beyond "individuals" and "organizations." Rather...

Thank you, thank you, thank you... to everyone who has ever contributed time, talent and/or treasure to bring us to this place. Our work is by no means finished. There is now and always will be much to do for the welcome and full participation of

interacted with the ELCA in a variety of ways, including letters, meetings and churchwide assemblies. Here, I am only commenting on The Alliance and churchwide assemblies. Since I can only speak to the churchwide assemblies in which I participated, I begin with 2001 in Indianapolis. Of necessity, my comments are very brief, with just a few details about 2001, 2003 and 2005 to connect a few dots.

At the request of The Alliance, our presence at the 2001 churchwide assembly in Indianapolis was a Soulforce Direct Action, and Soulforce was the chief organizer. Our presence, including vigiling and civil disobedience, was all under the

Decades of educating, nudging, pushing, challenging, confronting and engaging.

LGBT people in the Lutheran Church. But, to all of you who have brought us this far, thanks be to God for you!

The coalition/collaboration known as Goodsoil... began as The Lutheran Alliance for Full Participation (The Alliance). Formed in the early '90s, at the suggestion (I believe) of Lynn Mickelson, following (I believe) a March on Washington, The Alliance was comprised of: LC/NA; Wingspan Ministry; the Network for Inclusive Vision; Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministries (LLGM), and the Extraordinary Candidacy Project (ECP). [*LLGM and ECP merged and are now known as Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries (ELM)*]. The Alliance described itself as "an association of groups with related missions, yet organizationally distinct goals, regarding gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Lutherans" that "work cooperatively to provide a multifaceted approach to generate a climate of change toward the common goal of a Lutheran church which is truly inclusive of sexual minority people in all its forms of ministry and service."

After its formation, The Alliance

direction of Soulforce. Our presence in Milwaukee in 2003 was more of a partnership between The Alliance and Soulforce, but Soulforce still provided leadership, expertise and resources in organizing and logistics, and (I believe) their website was the primary organizing tool. In Milwaukee our gathering place was "Soulforce Central," and rainbow-colored "stoles" were first introduced to identify supporters. And for Milwaukee, we had also determined that we needed to connect with the voting members and invite conversation. In 2005 in Orlando, The Alliance led the way and Soulforce assisted in the responsibilities for planning and implementation. It was in 2005 that we called ourselves "Goodsoil" and established the goodsoil.org website. "Soulforce Central" became "Goodsoil Central," and, again, we distributed rainbow-colored "stoles" to supporters. For more information on The Alliance/Goodsoil partnerships with Soulforce, go to www.Soulforce.org and click on "Archives." They are quite extensive.

By 2005, LC/NA Executive Director,

Emily Eastwood, had already incorporated community organizing into the work of LC/NA and established RIC Core Team Trainings, which would serve us well at the 2007 and 2009 churchwide (and synod) assemblies.

For our presence in Chicago in 2007 (and in Minneapolis this past August), the Goodsoil collaboration changed and was comprised of LC/NA, Wingspan, and the Network. Soulforce was no longer a participant, and LLGM and ECP would soon merge and become ELM and devote their energy and resources to encouraging congregations to "live the future now" and consider calling sexual minority clergy from the ELM Roster. While ELM was no longer an official Goodsoil collaborator, many members of the ELM Roster were very much a part of the Goodsoil presence both in Chicago in 2007 and in Minneapolis this past August.

And so... LC/NA, Wingspan, the Network, ELM and its predecessors (LLGM and ECP), and Soulforce, ... thank you, thank you, thank you... for everything you have done to bring us to this place. Thanks be to God for you!

Finally, because they are infrequently acknowledged and in a category by themselves, I do use this space to name and

thank the Rev. Kevin R. Maly and Susan Salomone, the gay and lesbian voices on the Task Force for ELCA Sexuality Studies. Thank you, Kevin and Susan, for seven years of difficult and faithful service.

Again, please contact me at jeanninejanson@aol.com and share your sense of our story and our work so far. By "our story" I mean not only LC/NA's, but that of all the The Alliance/Goodsoil collaborators. Whether you are more closely affiliated with LC/NA, Wingspan, the Network, ELM and its predecessors (LLGM and ECP), or Soulforce, please, please, please contact me and share what you know, so that, together, we can record and preserve the story of our work. ▼

A Letter from the Goodsoil Legislative Team Convener

By **Pr. Christopher D. Berry**, 2007–2009
Goodsoil Legislative Team Convener

A few weeks ago, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, history was made. Not just in our church but in the world. Institutionalized discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people has its roots in the sacred texts of Judaism and Christianity. Our church took a leap of faith in eliminating some of these discriminatory practices in the very institution in which they were grounded.

I was a voting member of the assembly and the chair of the Goodsoil Legislative team. But I don't think the absolute magnitude of what we accomplished really hit me until we were singing "One Bread, One Body" during the closing Eucharist. When I finally realized that the actions of the assembly totally changed the meaning of the words of that hymn, the tears flowed. It was right and proper. Finally, tears of joy and thanksgiving instead of tears of anger, betrayal and sorrow.

I have been a member of the Goodsoil Legislative Team for about six years and have attended three churchwide assemblies as a member of this Team. Almost two years ago, the Team that coordinated our efforts at CWA '07 came together at Saint Paul Reformation and brainstormed what 2009 would look like. We identified goals and challenges. We named those things we did well in 2005 and 2007 and we named things we didn't do so well. We prayed and communed together. We ended our retreat with several core (pardon the pun) convictions that turned into a covenant that we would not repeat past mistakes. We agreed to trust each other in our individual groups and to support each other in the work for which we were corporately responsible. We agreed to hold each other up in prayer. We took the risk to change our style of leadership and the way we worked toward consensus. We celebrated when things worked well and regrouped when



things did not.

We also covenanted to strengthen the relationships we were already in and to develop new relationships everywhere in the church. We redefined relationships with leaders in the church—bishops, task force members, and churchwide staff people. By the time we arrived in Minneapolis, we were not

only actively working closely with many of these people, who were allies, but were in constant conversation with many who were on the opposite side of this issue. Much of our work in the future will be with those who stood at the opposite microphone colors than we during the assembly's debates. But through Emily Eastwood's

*I firmly believe that by addressing our fears and lifting our dreams to **God**, our goals were **achieved**.*

prophetic work on graceful engagement, even many whom we have called opponents are now listed as our friends in conversation with us as we wrestle with this new, more inclusive church.

Today our church has a Social Statement on Human Sexuality that addresses and does not preclude marriage between same-gendered people. Today our church is committed to recognizing some sort of blessing for same-gendered people. Today our church has eliminated the absolute prohibition of people living in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships, from fulfilling their callings as rostered leaders in our church. Today we have assurances from church leaders that there will be an expedited process for reinstatement and/or reception for those negatively affected by the past

policies of our church. We no longer have to live in the uncertainty of "refrain and restraint" and the fear that uncertainty fostered. I firmly believe that by addressing our fears and lifting our dreams to God, our goals were achieved—some of them even by over two-thirds supermajority.

At the Goodsoil Celebration on Saturday night, Emily mentioned that she hopes that someday the history of this movement will be written and that the names of those who have worked so diligently be included in a prominent place in that history. We know who made this happen. We know the names of the hundreds of voting members who heard the cries of our brothers and sisters and responded to the call of justice by Jesus. We know the names of the solid allies we courted, conference-called, mentored and held hands with—who finally went to the microphones and spoke truth to the power of tradition and fear. We know the names of the whips and floor leaders. And we know the names of many for whom we have worked so faithfully.

Many have served on numerous Leg Teams through the years. We would never have come this far if not for the work of those who have come before us. But never has a Leg Team been better prepared, been more ready or dedicated to change, been as committed to each other, to the movement or to our church. And I think it's time for their names to be lifted up in our movement and our church. The Leg Team members who served during 2007–2009 were Rose Beeson, Christopher Berry, Emily

Eastwood, Tim Fisher, Steven Krefting, Eric Peterson, Jeremy Posadas, Paul Tidemann, Jonathan Vehar and George Watson. I can't imagine ever working with a more dedicated, focused, loving, accepting, opinionated, brilliant, gifted and supportive group of individuals—or better texters.

We know that our work is not yet finished—but we are well on the way. We are committed to seeing the task through. We ask for your prayers as we work in the name of the Name above all names who calls us forth to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God.

May peace and justice reign! ▼

Let **Justice** Roll Down Like Waters Happens Next Summer

By **Ross Murray**, Interim Associate Director,
Lutherans Concerned/North America

This summer, we have focused on the ELCIC National Convention and the ELCA Churchwide Assembly. The actions of these assemblies will have far-reaching impact on our lives



as Lutherans who are working for the inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. In the summer of 2010, Lutherans Concerned/North America will gather so that all can participate in God's justice, and so that God's Church can be open to all.

Lutherans Concerned/North America invites you to be a part of *Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters*, the LC/NA biennial assembly and Reconciling in Christ Conference, July 8–11, 2010, at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, MN. This assembly promises to be an event that will move us beyond simply talking about the politics of the Lutheran Church to how God's justice can use us to make the church a place that cares for the vulnerable among us.

Come to *Let Justice Roll* to be refreshed, energized, and invigorated. Meet old friends and connect with new people who want to widen the circle of welcome. Participate in hands-on workshops that will equip

you to reach out for justice in your own communities. Worship God with music, movement, preaching, and the sacraments.

Let Justice Roll is working on a stellar line-up of speakers, including Dr. Miguel De La Torre, Religion Professor at Iliff School of Theology. Dr. De La Torre is the author of several books, including *Out of the Shadows, Into the Light: Christianity and Homosexuality*. Dr. De La Torre has been a scholar-activist concerning ethical issues, mainly Hispanic religiosity, LGBT civil rights, and immigration rights.

Let Justice Roll will also feature Dr. Mary Lowe as a keynote speaker. Dr. Lowe is Assistant Professor of Religion at Augsburg College. Her current research focuses on new understandings of the human person with special attention to the doctrine of sin, the image of God, and human sexuality. She has also developed an interactive exercise for faith communities on "Narrating Your Theological Legacy." Dr. Lowe has been a long supporter of Lutherans Concerned/North America, presenting a workshop at the 2008 Assembly in San Francisco.

Before *Let Justice Roll* begins, we will hold a series of Pre-Events on July 7. These pre-events will be an opportunity to gather as LGBT clergy, folks working toward anti-racism, or those wishing to practice their graceful engagement skills. Those who wish to come a day early are welcome to participate in one of the pre-events that best suits their interests.

We will spend time at the assembly talking about justice, not only for ourselves, but for the rest of the church and for the world. Justice flows from God's creative and redeeming work, and we have the opportunity to be a part of that justice. Come and join us July 8–11, 2010, in Minneapolis! ▼

"In Honor of... "

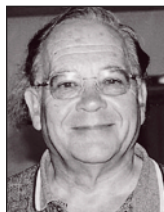
In Honor of...

Honored by...

Joe Brown	In memory of Joe Brown	Mike Crandall, Dorothy Klefstad
Troy Buckaloo	In honor of Troy Buckaloo's 40th Birthday	Neal & Tiina Buckaloo
Michael Corcoran	In honor of Michael Corcoran	Kenneth Dragseth
Tom Fenton	In memory of Tom Fenton	LC/Central Florida
Donald Whipple Fox	In honor of Donald Whipple Fox's Birthday	ohn & Eudora Rettger
Rev. Dr. Ted Fritschel	In honor of the 45th anniversary of the ordination of Rev. Dr. Ted Fritschel	Nicole Garcia, Lynn Johnson, Nancy Konvalinka
Franklin D. Fry	In memory of Franklin D. Fry	Franklin G. Fry
Bishop Ed Hansen	In memory of Bishop Ed Hansen (ALC) 1917–2009—a Reconciling Lutheran in every way	Lee Anne Lack, Shirley Hansen, Linda Hansen
Robert Joppa	In honor of Robert Joppa's MBA graduation	Marti Scheel
Ada Kane	In memory of Ada Kane	Fanny Johnsson
Lisa Klosterboer & Susan Mullins	In honor of Lisa Klosterboer & Susan Mullins	Jim Klosterboer
Annette Luther	In memory of Annette Luther	Joyce Peltzer & Linda Marousek
Steve Miller & Wayne Morris	In honor of the Blessing Service for Steve Miller & Wayne Morris	Doyle and Lucienne Morris
Ian Plowes	In memory of Ian Plowes	Richard Krug & William Gebauer
Dale Truscott & Kin Xuxa	In recognition of the work of Dale Truscott and Kin Xuxa	The Jennifer M. Lee and Jeffrey S. Chapski Family Fund of the Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund
Len Weiser & Kent Bollman	In honor of the Union of Len Weiser & Kent Bollman	Maureen Heckler

Harry Wick, In Memoriam

Harry Wick, lay minister and custodian at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Duluth, Minnesota, died on August 1st.



Said Pastor David Carlson, “As a son of this congregation (also his grandparents’ church), the life of this thoughtful, gentle servant of the Lord and of this church have been deeply intertwined for decades. He was part of the family, and, for many, a minister.” The community knew him as the “wind beneath the wings” of others – reflecting God’s Spirit in his life. As the face of Gloria Dei to the community, whether leading a service at a nursing home, presiding at a memorial service for someone he had met at Hardees, or traveling to our companion parish in Tanzania, Harry was received as a minister, meeting people where they were. As a gay man in the ELCA, he didn’t have official credentials. He just did it; he just lived it.

Harry did not think he would see an inclusive ELCA in his lifetime, and he was right. Yet it was Harry who helped Gloria Dei in becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation.

Harry served on the Northeast Minnesota synod council, was interested in church history, philosophy, and religion. Pastor Carlson said, “God knew Harry, his gifts as well as his burdens, his joys as well as his pain. God blessed this parish through Harry, and God also blessed and cared for him through it. This is where he could live out Christ’s call.”

—Susan Anderson, member, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Duluth, Minnesota

New Lutheran Volunteer Corps Intern, Ben Refling, Serves LC/NA

Ben Refling grew up in Montana, with parents, an older brother, Great Pyrenees dogs and one exceptionally crabby cat. In school he developed interests in classical music, history, literature, and a proclivity for the French horn. He attended St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota.



Ben was active in social and political causes in high school. He was drawn to the

St. Olaf music department, where he played his horn with the St. Olaf Band and St. Olaf Orchestra, but actually majored in religion. He joined the Main Street Moravian Church, small, predominantly blue-collar, with a socially progressive mission and became the youngest member of the Board of Elders. After he came out as a female-to-male transgender guy in his junior year, he took a turn towards LGBT activism, both within his church as well as the college.

With his help, the church inaugurated its first annual LGBT-themed community Bible study and invited its first transgender speaker. He helped organize the campus LGBT community’s response to the invitation of “family values” Representative Erik Paulsen as commencement speaker in 2009. Using simple tools like Facebook, Ben and a handful of other students organized a peaceful, inclusive demonstration against intolerance and indifference. Their campaign and celebration of the diversity of the Class of ’09 garnered media attention.

After graduation, Ben chose to serve with the Lutheran Volunteer Corps in its mission to build intentional community and social justice. Given his interests and experiences, LC/NA was a natural match for him. He hopes LC/NA will find some way to make use of his experience, skills, and talents as they move towards creating a more just and equitable community of faith. After his year with LVC and LC/NA, Ben plans to get his master’s in education and teach either history or literature in Montana.

LC/NA Is a Part of ELCA National Youth Gathering, “Jesus, Justice, Jazz”

For the first time, LC/NA participated in the ELCA National Youth Gathering, July 22–26, 2009 in New Orleans. With Church Council approval, we had a display area in the Interaction Center.

The theme of the Gathering was “Jesus, Justice, Jazz.” Youth groups chose from six justice areas: literacy, art and culture, health and wellness, wealth and poverty, the environment, and housing. Activities at the Gathering varied: a dynamic Bible study about justice, or going out into the city for a service project related to the justice theme. Youth also participated in the Interaction Center. The LC/NA booth was very popular.

Ross Murray, Interim Associate Director, and Dylan Flunker, LVC Special Projects

Coordinator, represented LC/NA and were joined by Youth/Young Adult Board Representative, Geoff Abel. Hundreds of youth, adult leaders, and pastors came by, some only for a sticker or tattoo, others to join the roster of Reconciling Lutherans. Some listened to LC/NA’s “I Love to Tell the Story” and browsed the “For All the Saints” stoles project. Many wrote prayers to the church on prayer shawls, for the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

Bishop Mark Hanson closed the Gathering with a homily that touched on themes of justice, racism, and how we can work to overcome injustice. The proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality and the Ministry Recommendations were mentioned when hotel pastor, and ally Chris Berry spoke to 800 youth and adults. He got a standing ovation.

Many expressed appreciation for the presence of LVC/NA. Many more wanted to hear about the upcoming ELCA Assembly. Voting members and youth convocation participants said they planned to participate in Goodsoil activities.

After the Youth Gathering, Ross Murray traveled with about 220 youth to Hattiesburg, Mississippi, for the Convention of the Lutheran Youth Organization. He gave a workshop on “Welcome and Participation of People of All Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities in the Life of the Lutheran Church.” Ross served as a resource person in two Topic Sessions relating to the proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality and Ministry Recommendations.

As a result, youth wrote resolutions urging the welcome of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in the life of the Lutheran Church. One urged congregations to write a statement of explicit welcome in their mission statement. The other asked the LYO to support the adoption of both the Social Statement on Human Sexuality and Ministry Recommendations, and urged youth voting members to share this sentiment with other voting members at the Assembly. Both resolutions passed nearly unanimously.

Nicolette Faison was elected President of the 2009–2012 Board of the LYO. She is interested in follow-up conversation about how to make the church more welcoming, and how the LYO can participate in that process. By connecting with such passionate young people, LC/NA has been able to secure a new generation of allies. ▼