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Lutherans Concerned Canada

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Thoughts from the Editor

Be Proud! Words to live by.

Words to ponder on. Even though Pride is still a long way off, I think we need to keep those feelings of empowerment in these uncertain times. As I write this, we are days away from the Canadian Federal Election. Same gender couples from all over the country are racing to get married before Stephen Harper's Government can take that rite away.

It is important that these marriages happen. We (my husband and our four children) had the distinct honour to be part of two very special "EQUAL Marriages" since it became legal in Alberta. The first gay couples to receive *Equal* marriage licenses in Alberta. Their weddings were filled with love and the Creator's blessings.

Thankfully we have many devoted individuals in this country on many levels, in many places working to ensure that the Charter of Rights allowing for Equal Marriage will be around for as long as our country stands proud and free.

In the mean time, we should keep praying, and speaking out.

Christina Mårtensson

LCEditor@shaw.ca



Lutherans Concerned Canada -

Statement of Sanctuary

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

All information which individuals may reveal about themselves is to be honoured 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 all people to this sanctuary.

Reinie's Reflections

Disappointment and Hope

As most of you know, the ELCIC has decided against the local option for parishes to celebrate same gender marriage ceremonies. That was very sad for us who attended the Convention in Winnipeg as delegates and visitors. Yet we were touched by quite a few positive comments by delegates, who advocated for a "yes" vote. Still, the outcome was not positive. But immediately after, the following resolution was almost unanimously accepted in support of a resolution from the floor, stating "that our church's leaders, congregations and pastors seek to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3), rejecting all words and actions hostile to gays and lesbians in our churches and communities, and taking steps to create a more

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welcoming place in this church for gays, lesbians, and their families.”

With this positive step of the ELCIC in mind, the Edmonton and Calgary chapters are planning a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) event with Emily Eastwood, the LC/NA executive director. Emily was not able to come last March because of illness. So we are planning again for the last week-end in February in Edmonton, the 24th and 25th. Details will be forwarded later, as well as plans for Calgary and BC. I attended the LC/NA retreat at Holden Village and participated in a sample workshop that Emily held. It was absolutely amazing!

So spread the word and talk to folks who are either curious or interested, and those who want to walk the talk and do something about becoming a welcoming congregation.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact me at
<hireinie@telusplanet.net>

Let's not give up hope!

Reinie Heydemann

Marked Forever with the Ambiguity of the Church

August 17, 2005

“We’re going to Orlando to be the Body of Christ!” proclaimed Mark Hanson on behalf of the ELCA. With the 2005 Churchwide Assembly over, it

seems we went there to *wound* the Body of Christ instead.

Four times now (1991, 1995, 1999, 2005) the ELCA has officially welcomed gay and lesbian persons into the life of the church. According to this year’s theme, they, too, are “marked with the cross of Christ forever.” Yet since its inception in 1988, the ELCA has added an asterisk for homosexuals: “marked forever,” yes, but regardless of personal piety, Christ-centered theology, confessional commitment, biblical understanding, or ethical integrity, this church believes their sexuality somehow marks them more deeply than the cross of Christ. Spoken aloud that claim would be heresy; in practice, however, it passes for good church policy.

I was in Orlando with Goodsoil, the alliance of Lutheran groups pressing for full participation for gay and lesbian persons. If we appeared at times weary, weeping, even wounded, it was because we embodied what was being done to the Body of Christ.

Worship was painful. As our lives hung in the balance of Assembly deliberation, no prayer, responsive reading, or sermon ever spoke the word gay or lesbian – in any of the seven Assembly worship services. Liturgy, song, and sermon abounded with justice; Sunday’s final worship texts highlighted God’s welcome to persons long considered outcast. But the absence of our names invited anyone who wished, to imagine

us outside the claims of God, outside the reach of this justice. Aiming to avoid any appearance of “politicizing worship” by praying for the very people it claims to welcome, the church instead politicized worship by abandoning them in the sanctuary while debating them in the plenary. We wept on Sunday morning as much for the church as for ourselves.

The Assembly voted overwhelmingly to continue in a “unity” that is increasingly violent toward and toxic to many gay and lesbian persons. Like a dysfunctional family that denies the abuse that distorts it, we voted to stay together for more of the same.

The Assembly was decisively ambiguous about whether gay and lesbian relationships, so deeply blessed by God, might also receive the church’s blessing – “decisively,” because multiple amendments to specifically ban or endorse such blessings failed. The church promised “pastoral care,” with intended ambiguity, to the same persons it claims unambiguously to “welcome into its life.”

The Assembly defeated a resolution to create a separate process of ordination for selected gay and lesbian persons. Hailed by some as a step forward, a gracious gesture of compromise, it offered a “two-door” ordination process, with one door marked “queers use this entrance.” Under the guise of progress it would have

institutionalized a failure to discern the Body of Christ.

When nothing more than second-class citizenship was left on the floor for consideration, 100 members of Goodsoil moved themselves onto the voting floor for consideration as well. Peacefully, respectfully, silently. But we were quite visible, and the Assembly's agitation at our presence was palpable. Some called us "intimidating." Imagine 100 African-American persons taking the floor during an all white Assembly in the 60's; no matter the peacefulness of their demeanor, they would've been perceived as intimidating for the same reasons we were. We embodied the "other" that many in the Assembly hall feared. And we embodied it in the very moment that they wanted us to be patently invisible so they could discuss our fate without seeing our eyes.

I have heard that our full welcome is "only a matter of time" and that we actually hurt our own cause by "disrupting" the Assembly. This charge fails to hold in the balance the countless depressions, shattered families, collapsed relationships, lost faiths, and suicides, by which this church has disrupted our lives – and has wounded the Body of Christ. To have stood silently in the visitors section while the church yet again proclaimed welcome while inflicting wounds would have been to deny Jesus as truly as Peter denied him by the campfire. "Surely, you, too, were with him, for I see the

mark of Christ on your forehead." And, for us, in that moment there was no other choice but to say, "Yes," with all our hearts – and with all our feet moving from the margins of this church to the center. From now on this conversation is not about us. It is us. We, too, are the Body of Christ.

David R. Weiss

David R. Weiss coordinates the Twin Cities Reconciling in Christ Program of Lutherans Concerned/North America. He lives in St. Paul.

Upcoming Events

Invitation to Learn How to Welcome Gays, Lesbians and their Families into our Church

Holy Spirit Lutheran, Edmonton
11223 – 51 Ave NW
February 24-25
Friday @ 6.00 Potluck
Saturday 9.30-4.30 Workshop

The resolution that was almost unanimously past at the convention in Winnipeg states "that our church's leaders, congregations and pastors seek to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3), rejecting all words and actions hostile to gays and lesbians in our churches and communities, and taking steps to create a more welcoming place in this church for gays, lesbians, and their families."

With this vision in mind Lutherans Concerned has invited Emily Eastwood, the executive director LC/NA, to speak and do a workshop for us with the goal to teach what it means to be a "Reconciling in

Christ" community, where every baptized Lutheran is welcome, unconditionally. Recognizing how difficult this may be for some individuals and perhaps are cautious about the consequences of an unconditional inclusion of gays and lesbians in their congregation, this would be a great opportunity to dialogue together.

Emily Eastwood will come to Edmonton February 24 – 25, 2006. The Board of Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Edmonton, is opening their doors for the event. Lunch will be provided at noon and the workshop will end at 4:30 PM. There is no registration fee, however a donation to cover the cost of the lunch and Emily's travel expenses are appreciated.

Emily will also be part of services at Grace Lutheran in Wetaskiwin on the morning of Feb 26.

The Rainbow Community Church of Calgary began weekly services on Sunday, January 8, 2006.

*Services at 4pm
Hillhurst United Church
1227 Kensington Close NW
Calgary, AB*

Please contact Ron Eberly at 283-8815 or by email to roneberly@shaw.ca for additional information about the Rainbow Community Church of Calgary.



Together in Toronto 2006: Claiming an Open Spirit is jointly hosted by Affirm United/ S'affirmer ensemble (AU/AE), the Brethren Mennonite Council (BMC) for Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Interests, and Lutherans Concerned/North America (LC/NA). The four day conference will gather upwards of 400 people on the beautiful campus of the University of Toronto. Participants will be drawn primarily from the Lutheran communion in North America, the Mennonite and Brethren streams of the Anabaptist tradition, and the United Church of Canada tradition, and will span a variety of gender identities, sexual orientations, ages, abilities, and ethno-cultural diversities.

The wide range of participants, crossing many borders will make this truly a North American first! The spirit in this event emerges from the long standing work of the 3 organizing groups to challenge homophobia and other forms of oppression, and to offer supportive places for healing and empowerment. The mission to build and support this

conference resonates with our strong commitment to diversity and inclusivity, an expansive embrace including, but not limited to gender identity, ethno-cultural identity, race, sexual orientation, ability, political leanings, age, and class. We are seeking to remove barriers to participation which includes a commitment to avid outreach, and to support for those who would not normally be able to participate due to economic or accessibility issues.

African American and Canadian Aboriginal Theologians - Key-Note Speakers for Ecumenical Queer Conference

*:I am extremely excited by the key note speakers, the Rev. Irene Monroe and Dr. Martin Brokenleg, who will bring a truly North American theological and spiritual perspective to our conference" says **Ralph Wushke**, Co-Chair, " They are both prolific writers and as speakers they will enrich us."*

" The size of this conference, as well as the diversity and creativity of the planning group, offers everyone the chance to find the type of connection,

*involvement, fun, and rejuvenation that they crave," says **Shannon Neufeldt**, Co-Chair, " From workshops that challenge to hanging out with new friends, from watching a great movie or dancing the night away to reflective times of worship, it will all be held together with the spirit of mutuality and receptivity for which the event is named."*

As partners in a larger community, we invite participation from anyone committed to the work of justice. Our intent is to give voice and visibility to the characteristics and cultures of the three organizing groups while striving to weave together distinct threads into a united event. The three welcoming movements, Reconciling In Christ, Supportive Congregations Network, Affirming Ministries, and lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender persons, queers and friends from other faith traditions are invited to share in our vision.

In July 2006, we will be Together in Toronto: Claiming an Open Spirit and sharing our vision, "**Living out of the resources of our spiritual traditions, the dreams of justice-based civil and human rights movements, and the integrity of our lives as diverse people spanning a variety of gender identities and sexual orientations: we gather for**

inspiration, community, empowerment and life, in the co-creative Spirit-led act of crossing boundaries and opening doors to imagination and love in order to claim a more humane church and society."

For more information on this unique event, visit our website www.openspirit.ca

AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT ONLINE REGISTRATION

TOGETHER IN TORONTO: CLAIMING AN OPEN SPIRIT 2006, our ecumenical conference that includes the Biennial Assembly Of Lutherans Concerned/North America And RIC Gathering, being held Thursday, July 27 - Sunday, July 30, 2006 at New College, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

We want you to save the dates, register, and come to this unique event. But, if you were planning on registering online beginning on January 23rd as noted in the brochure, you will have to wait just a bit.

There are some technical difficulties being sorted out now about the full automation of that process. Those should be sorted out and tested, and the site open online shortly. We will send another All Member Email to tell you when online registration is open.

Of course, you can still register by mailing the registration form in the brochure you received.

NOTE that a registration form is required for each individual attending with you - partners, spouses, and children. If you require additional registration forms, you can download the form from the Registration Page at www.openspirit.ca as of the 23rd of January. We encourage you to register early: it's cheaper before April 15th and spaces at the conference are absolutely limited to 500 persons.

Questions about registration can be answered by calling 416-833-1795 or by email to register@openspirit.ca.

Together in Toronto will be a first-of-its-kind ecumenical conference, drawing participants of all sexual orientations and gender identities primarily from four Christian traditions: Lutheran, Brethren, Mennonite, and United Church of Canada. The biennial assembly and Reconciling in Christ gathering of Lutherans Concerned/North America will occur during Together in Toronto.

Chapter Information

Membership Opportunities

If you do not receive the Concord, becoming a member of Lutherans Concerned/Canada can rectify this. To make this easy, yet life-fulfilling change, you may send your payment to:

Lutherans Concerned/Canada
#302, 9505 – 77 Av
Edmonton, AB
T6C 0M3 Canada

Email:

LCEDMONTON@LCNA.ORG

Website:

<http://www.lcna.org>

Fees are:

Household	\$75.00
Individual	\$50.00
Limited Income	\$20.00

Membership dues and special contributions solely support Lutheran's Concerned. We thank you for your support.

We are looking forward to an exciting year of sharing, support, togetherness and community.

LC – Calgary Chapter

Snail Mail in Care Of
Lutherans Concerned Canada:

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The telephone number (with answering machine) is (403) 220-3899.

<http://members.shaw.ca/lccalgary>

The email address is lccalgary@lcna.org

RIC Congregations

It is our pleasure to announce three new RIC congregations in our Canadian midst.

St Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church 210 Silvercreek Pkwy
N, Guelph ON M1H 7P8
St John Evangelical Lutheran Church 270 Crichton St, Ottawa
ON K1M 1W4

First Lutheran Church, ELCiC
5745 Wales Street, Vancouver
BC V5R 3N3

Alberta

Lutheran Campus Ministry,
Augustana University College,
4901 Forty-Sixth Ave, Camrose,
AB T4V 2R3

Lutheran Campus Ministry, U
of C, 318 MacEwan Hall, 2500
University Dr NW, Calgary, AB
T2N 1N4

Saskatchewan

King of Glory Lutheran Church,
209 Fairmont Dr, Saskatoon, SK
S7M 5B8

Lutheran Student Centre, 1302
College Dr, Saskatoon, SK S7N
0W5

Ontario

Augsburg Lutheran Church, 224
Mill St South, Brampton, ON L6Y
1T8

Advent Lutheran Church, 2800
Don Mills Rd, North York, ON
M2J 3B6

Toronto Council of Lutheran
Campus Ministry, 21 Sussex
Ave, Room 611, Toronto, ON M5S
1J6